

Urban Desires: Practicing Pleasure in the 'City of Light,' 1848-1900

by

Andrew Israel Ross

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Joshua H. Cole, Chair
Professor Kathleen M. Canning
Professor David Caron
Professor Scott D. Spector

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In memory of Marcella Katz

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List of Abbreviations

AN Archives nationales de France

AP Archives de Paris

APP Archives de la préfecture de police de Paris

ABSTRACT

Urban Desires: Practicing Pleasure in the ‘City of Light,’ 1848-1900

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Chair: Joshua H. Cole

This study examines the relationship between public sexual activity and the transformation of Paris during the Second Empire (1852-1870) and early Third Republic (1870-1940). It argues that prostitutes and male homosexuals were central to the city’s everyday life. Urban administrators, including the Comte de Rambuteau, Baron Haussmann and others, built boulevards, parks, and public urinals so that goods and people could circulate throughout the city. Entrepreneurs took advantage of these developments to construct cafés and other establishments that developed into a consumer culture dependent on the encouragement of certain licit desires. The appropriation of these spaces by prostitutes and male homosexuals forced administrators, expert commentators, and the police to confront their inability to manage public space. This failure meant that Parisians who exited their homes in search of “proper” pleasures encountered evidence of illicit sexual activity in the course of their everyday lives. As they came face to face with prostitutes and homosexuals, Parisians had to decide whether to enjoy the sexual possibilities of Paris or reject them. By forcing everyone to confront

this choice, prostitutes and homosexuals shaped the meaning of the capital and affected the experience of modern urban life.

An examination of police reports, citizens' complaints, and administrative documents alongside published works of memoir, sexology, literature, and urban commentary demonstrates how prostitutes and homosexuals influenced nineteenth-century urban culture. The first chapter shows that the use of the Tuileries garden by prostitutes and homosexuals challenged administrators' ability to perpetuate a stable social order. Next, through an examination of the area around the Champs-Élysées, "Urban Desires" shows that the divide between the licit and illicit pleasures of Paris was thin at best. Chapter 3 argues that by blurring that boundary, prostitutes challenged middle-class men's faith in their dominance of urban culture. The following chapter then shows how men and women who wished to enjoy the sexual possibilities of the city used drinking establishments to enjoy a culture of public sexuality. Finally, the project concludes by exploring how male homosexuals' use of public urinals demonstrated the limits of official efforts to define the division between normal and pathological pleasures.

Introduction

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Paris was transformed into the “city of light” we know today. Its broad boulevards and grand vistas, café culture and public sociability took form under the aegis of a concerted and conscious effort by administrators and expert commentators to remake the city “as a whole” in the service of strengthening a social order predicated on emerging norms of capitalist market relations and consumption. “Paris is transformed,” wrote Emile de Labédollière in 1860, “the gothic ruins of our fathers have fallen under the hammer of the demolishers. The old narrow streets have given way to large arteries that flood the sun. Great paths of communication open themselves every day...Everything follows this progressive movement: luxury propagates and infiltrates all classes.”¹ The city of medieval alleys and narrow twisting streets had given way to a regularized and rational city of large, straight boulevards built to foster economic development, encourage the circulation of goods and people, and generate a new kind of public spectacle of consumption. But this promise of a new order also contained within it the potential for disorder, as the spaces of the modern city became sites of struggle. To what use should these spaces be put? What behaviors were to be permitted within them? Who would be allowed to enter them? The

¹ [“Paris est transfiguré; les gothiques mesures de nos pères sont tombées sous le marteau des démolisseurs. Les vieilles rues étroites ont fait place à de larges artères qu'inonde le soleil. De grandes voies de communication s'ouvrent tous les jours...Tout suit ce mouvement progressif: le luxe se propage et s'infiltré dans toutes les classes.”] Émile de Labédollière, *Le nouveau Paris: Histoire de ses 20 arrondissements* (Paris: Librairie Gustave Barba, 1860), 1–2.

attempt to find answers to these never-settled questions would come to define the meaning of the city. The transformation of Paris destroyed the city of Labédollière's ancestors; the city had become modern and its purpose turned towards the values of capitalism, its past forgotten in a frenzy of movement.² Labédollière's vision of modernity struggled to reconcile its order – the broad straight boulevards – with its disorder – the confusion attendant with a lost past.³ To those witnessing Paris's redevelopment, modern life seemed intractably torn between the desire for control and the persistence of chaos.

The project of urban change in the nineteenth century rested on strategies of order in the face of increasingly obvious disorders that accompanied the development of market capitalism.⁴ Not only revolution, but also disease, uncontrolled desires, unstable social hierarchies, the ephemeral nature of modern finance, and the entry of sex into the market all challenged people's faith in the benefits of modernization, urbanization, and economic

² Labédollière's evocation of the Paris's past, however, implies the ways in which its history continued to inform the city's present. As Lynda Nead has argued, "Modernity is... a set of processes and representations that were engaged in an urgent and inventive dialogue with their own historical conditions of existence," rather than a true rupture with the past. See Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets, and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 8.

³ A desire for continuity marked some of the discourses that emerged around Haussmannization. See, for example, Hazel Hahn's discussion of the urban commentator Alfred Delvau. H. Hazel. Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian Modernity: Culture and Consumption in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 131.

⁴ Françoise Choay, *The Modern City; Planning in the 19th Century*, trans. Marguerite Hugo and George R. Collins (New York: G. Braziller, 1970), 16. The most influential theoretical accounts of modernity have emphasized the attempt at controlling the disorder. Most important to my work has been Foucault's notion of "discipline." Foucault argued that the eighteenth and nineteenth century saw the emergence of new forms of social control that revolved around techniques of surveillance and categorization. The pursuit of total knowledge of an existing population rendered individual bodies amenable to control in the service of existing hierarchies of power, even as social movements agitated for and gained greater participation within the state. Other scholars have emphasized the emergence of the "spectacle." This concept emphasizes the ways in which modern capitalism has taken the meaning of everyday social activity out of the hands of those who actually engaged in it. Modern life, in these terms, has become a "spectacle" for ordinary people to consume, not produce. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1977). On the conflict between spatial order and disorder in Foucault, see Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, 7. On the "spectacle of modern life" in nineteenth-century Paris see especially T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 63-64.

development. Efforts at control, whether through the police, the regulation of commerce, censorship, or the remodeling of the city, could only ever partially succeed in the face of everyday social practices that utilized urban space in unexpected ways. Urban design in nineteenth-century Paris rested on a certain vision of social order, but as the city was remade ordinary people contested the connection between urban renovation and social management. Administrators sought to construct a city that would serve as a space for the efficient, safe, and secure circulation of people, goods and capital to the benefit of already existing social hierarchies. Nevertheless, that strategy failed to take into account the ways that the people who lived, worked, and played in the city made their own claims about what modern life could be.

Previous scholars have emphasized urban discourses at the expense of the lived experience of the city. In particular, scholars have argued that neither urbanists nor more “literary” commentators on the city managed to effectively capture the complexities of urban life within their texts.⁵ My focus complicates such studies by showing how an attention to social practice shifts the grounds of the debate over the meaning of modern urban life. People took up both the disorder and the order of modern life as they moved about the city, taking advantage of new opportunities and reacting to new threats. The pursuit of pleasure stood as a focal point of these conflicts; administrators and moral commentators intended the pleasures of the park, boulevard, and café to contribute to an ordered urban culture of social display and bourgeois interaction that relied on and

⁵ To take one example, Christopher Prendergast, in the course of analyzing Baudelaire’s prose poetry argues that “It is not, as is sometimes suggested, that the prose poem furnishes a style ‘adequate’ to the modern city. The question behind the experiment with the prose poem is whether there are *any* adequate, fully workable forms for the poetic representation of urban life, or whether the latter is so refractory that it puts the idea of poetry itself into crisis.” Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992), 131-132. See also Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, chap. 1; Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

reinforced traditional hierarchies of class and gender. But those same spaces also served as the location of illicit and dangerous pleasures such as prostitution and homosexuality that signified the upturning of social hierarchies.⁶ The pursuit of order – the provision of spaces of controlled pleasure – enabled men who sought sex with other men and female prostitutes to engaged in practices of disorder.⁷ As ordinary people encountered those who sought sex in public space, the meaning of urban space subtly shifted. Those who feared the disorders of public sex declared the project of modernity a failure. Those who appreciated the display of sexual pleasure, however, saw the new Paris as one they could truly enjoy. Administrators attempted to create a city that would be passively consumed; prostitutes and men who sought sex with other men helped make it into a city that its inhabitants also actively produced.

The Urban Dream

Until recently, scholars have attributed the transformation of Paris almost entirely to the endeavors of Napoleon III and his Prefect of the Seine, Baron Eugène Haussmann,

⁶ The entertainments of late nineteenth-century France have seen a great deal of scholarly attention, but less interest has been expressed in their relationship to the sexual activity that sometimes occurred in them. On nineteenth-century entertainment in Paris see, for example, Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, chap. 4 and 5; Charles Rearick, *Pleasures of the Belle Époque: Entertainment and Festivity in Turn-of-the-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); John McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth Century France* (London: Routledge, 1993); W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Vanessa R Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Those who have addressed the question have generally focused on female prostitution in cafés, the subject of chapter four below. See for example Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France After 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 168-172; Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, chap. 7.

⁷ As we shall see in chapter one, the importance of sex in revealing the possible disorders of modern life became especially important in the nineteenth century because the control of sexuality came to stand in for the management of both individuals and the social order they comprised. As Foucault once wrote, “Broadly speaking, at the juncture of the ‘body’ and the ‘population,’ sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death.” See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 147.

during the Second Empire (1852-1870).⁸ During the past decade, however, historians have traced the intellectual underpinnings of Second Empire urbanism to the late eighteenth and especially early nineteenth centuries.⁹ During that period a number of early urbanists enunciated urban visions that coalesced around the image of an ideal city whose multiple functions efficiently worked together.¹⁰ In practice, this project would involve reconstructing Paris in order to link its disparate neighborhoods into a unified whole. Doing so would encourage the emergence of a single market, allow for the circulation of goods and people, and remove dangerous slums. The project would also involve ensuring the cleanliness of the city through new sewers and practices of public hygiene. In so doing, the form of the city would more closely match the needs of its social organization. In this way, nineteenth-century urban design sought to guarantee stability in the face of the possibly disruptive consequences of urban population growth and social relations based on wealth, rather than birth.¹¹ Urbanists sought to preserve the

⁸ See for example David H Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958); David P Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

⁹ See Karen Bowie, ed., *La modernité avant Haussmann: Formes de l'espace urban à Paris, 1801-1853* (Paris: Éditions Recherches, 2001); David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Nicholas Papayanis, *Planning Paris Before Haussmann* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). It is worth noting that for all the attention the shift to the July Monarchy in narratives of urban design and modernization of Paris as received recently, it has been well known that Haussmann built upon his predecessor's ideas and physical projects for a very long time. See for example Robert Moses, "What Happened to Haussmann," *Architectural Forum* (July 1942): 58.

¹⁰ Nicholas Papayanis points to three different forms of urban planning in the early nineteenth century: functionalist, Saint-Simonian, and Fourierist. Although the three varied in their emphases – the functionalists emphasized efficiency, the Saint-Simonians saw the city as part of a larger network, and the Fourierists elaborated concrete ideas for planning Paris with an emphasis on the flow of communication – they shared a conviction that the city could be rationalized in the service of social harmony. For a summary of their commonalities see Papayanis, *Planning Paris Before Haussmann*, 247. On the emphasis on a city in which its parts functioned efficiently together see Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*, 16-18; Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 111; Papayanis, *Planning Paris Before Haussmann*, 17-33; Eric Fournier, *Paris en ruines: Du Paris haussmannien au Paris communal* (Paris: Imago, 2008), 27.

¹¹ The most influential description of the effects of population growth on the early nineteenth-century city remains Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: H. Fertig, 1973). On the rise of capitalist markets in

social order in the face of the disorders of early capitalism through the effective management of the city “from above.”

The project of reconciling the city to the post-Revolutionary social order became increasingly pressing in the early nineteenth century because experts faced evidence that they had actually already lost control of the capital. The city’s tangled streets, overflowing sewers, and crowded slums threatened social health. The problem was already clear by the eighteenth century when commentators began advocating novel strategies of urban change that emphasized the need to free the city from its morass.¹² Little, however, was accomplished before the cholera epidemic of 1832 starkly illustrated the results of a continuing failure to regain control of the city in the face of absolutely massive population growth.¹³ The cholera epidemic underscored the importance of managing urban space for the sake of social health because social investigators linked the spread of the disease to the “living conditions” of the poor, which were revealed by the state of their home and were perpetuated by their way of life.¹⁴ The city’s slums threatened every individual’s physical well being. The epidemic thus firmly linked the management of space to the individual activities that took place within the city. It

France see especially William M. Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture: The Textile Trade and French Society, 1750-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). The conviction that urban form could effectively shape social norms developed slowly over the course of the nineteenth century, reaching its height with the modernists of the early twentieth century. See Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989). On the fears of social disorder in the face of the rise of market forces see for instance Victoria Elizabeth Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

¹² Colin Jones, *Paris: Biography of a City* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 207-208.

¹³ On cholera in nineteenth century France see especially Catherine Jean Kudlick, *Cholera in Post-Revolutionary Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). On the 1832 epidemic and its relation to social reform see Andrew Robert Aisenberg, *Contagion: Disease, Government, and the “Social Question” in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), chap. 1. Louis Chevalier’s influential work has described the difficulty Paris had adjusting to its population growth. See for example, Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*, 214.

¹⁴ Rabinow, *French Modern*, 37.

highlighted not just the need to redesign the city to handle its growing population, but also the importance of effectively managing people's use of the capital.

The eruption of a crisis that linked social order, space, and morality highlighted the potential dangers of postponing urban reforms and also indicated the potential catastrophes that might ensue from poorly conceived plans for urban renewal.

Demographic change, public health concerns, the necessities of commerce, and nascent middle-class identities demanded urban projects that would enable free circulation about the city, remove dangerous slums, and ensure public hygiene, while encouraging the exercise of forms of social display, norms of propriety, and consumption deemed necessary to a capitalist society. Two possibly competing goals thus emerged: the need to control the population and the encouragement of circulation. The July Monarchy (1830-1848) made initial attempts at transforming the city towards this end. Claude Philibert Barthelot, comte de Rambuteau, Prefect of the Seine during this period, built new roads and constructed the first public urinals. His most important new thoroughfare, not coincidentally named the Rue Rambuteau, cut straight across the right bank of the city.¹⁵ Although Rambuteau did not have the stomach for the comprehensive transformations that some urbanists advocated, the Rue Rambuteau highlights how the recognition of the apparent necessity of ensuring efficient circulation in the modern city had penetrated the highest echelons of the government. In addition, Rambuteau's construction of public urinals underlines the increasing centrality of public hygiene to conceptions of urban life.¹⁶ These initial changes present an administration willing to

¹⁵ Rambuteau's urinals would also come to bear his name. See Jones, *Paris*, 398. See also chapter five below.

¹⁶ On Rambuteau's philosophy of urban development see Rabinow, *French Modern*, 75; Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 79-80; Jones, *Paris*, 284-286. The importance of circulation to July Monarchy Paris

intervene in the name of a clean and efficient city, but one still concerned not to risk a disruption to the status quo. For Rambuteau, Paris's order could only be ensured by not courting any disorder.

The administrators of the Second Empire who took over the reigns of power after the brief interlude of the Second Republic (1848-1851) had no such fears. After Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in his *coup d'état* of December 2, 1851, he almost immediately initiated a grand transformation of Paris in the terms of urbanists who advocated wholesale and systematic redevelopment.¹⁷ Finding his first Prefect of the Seine, Jean Jacques Berger, lacking the necessary vision the project required, Napoleon III sent for Georges Eugène Haussmann. Haussmann had already proved himself capable of handling the supposedly shortsighted vision of local elites around Bordeaux, possessed clear Bonapartist sympathies, and shared an absolute faith in the possibilities of total urban development.¹⁸ With the emergence of the Second Empire, therefore, those at the center of political authority – the Emperor and his Prefect of the Seine – believed in the necessity of totally transforming Paris for the regime's own stability. This project entailed ensuring that the both the uses and the meaning of the city were shaped “from above.” In the first place, Haussmann opened the city to capital accumulation, circulation, and commerce while full employment, wide boulevards, and a modern police force would ensure that social discontent never actualized itself on the streets. In the second place, the physical form of the new city emphasized the monumental in order to

is also evidenced by the emergence of the first vehicles of mass transportation, the omnibus. See Masha Belenky, “From Transit to *Transitoire*: The Omnibus and Modernity,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 408-423.

¹⁷ Neither he nor his Prefect of the Seine ever truly acknowledged this debt. Instead, they emphasized the importance and signifiacnce of the Second Empire by elaborating a myth of a total break with the past. See Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 10.

¹⁸ Jordan, *Transforming Paris*, chap. 5 and 6.

reflect a power structure based on hierarchy, Napoleonic glory, and the transparency of everyday life to administration.¹⁹ The city may have been newly opened to circulation, but it remained unavailable to individual experience.²⁰ This project entailed more than just the notion of “strategic embellishment,” a term that designated Haussmann’s attempt to simultaneously beautify the city while foreclosing its use for revolution. Rather, it also involved instituting a vision of class harmony and social contentment that revolved around continued employment and forms of safe bourgeois leisure, thus neutralizing the root causes of social discontent. The rebuilding of the city itself provided the employment, while the new spaces served as the sites of leisure.²¹

Haussmann saw himself as “an administrator doubled as an artist” who was “easily seduced by the harmony of vast ensembles; excited by this poetry of order and equilibrium, which fills us with the wonder of the spectacle of the firmament.”²²

¹⁹ By “monumental,” I mean a form of architecture designed to control the range of cultural meaning by dominating urban space in a direct representation of power. This mode was especially important to a new Napoleonic imperialism seeking to associate itself with the first Napoleon’s empire, but also remained central to Third Republic institutions of capitalism. The giant façades of the department store, for instance, dominated their neighborhoods. On monumental space see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 220-226. On the meaning of monumental space during the Second Empire see Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, 103. On the department store and monumental space see Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian modernity*, 162. Finally, for a different example of this representational strategy see Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 45. A monumental strategy also revolved around a panoptic mode of design that posited the availability of individual bodies to power. On panopticism see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228.

²⁰ It is no coincidence therefore that the most interesting examinations of Second Empire and Third Republic urban culture have revolved around conceptions of the crowd. Participation in urban culture required the enjoyment of a shared mode of experience shaped by existing cultural forms. See for example Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France*, 127 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*; Gregory Shaya, “The Flaneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860-1910,” *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (February 2004): 41-77.

²¹ On strategic embellishment and the boulevards see Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 12. On the control of the working population see Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 144-152. On the use of bourgeois leisure space, in particular parks, for the imagining of social harmony see Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, 167.

²² [“un administrateur double d’un artiste... facilement séduit par l’harmonie des vastes ensembles; ravi par cette poésie de l’ordre et de l’équilibre, qui nous émerveille au spectacle du firmament.” Georges Eugène Haussmann, *Mémoires du Baron Haussmann*, vol. 1 (Paris: Victor-Havard, 1890), xii. Benjamin accepted

Although Haussmann used his memoirs to imply that he treated aesthetics with the same attention he paid to the needs of administration, his actual technique favored administration; aesthetics served the purposes of power.²³ Haussmann sought to encourage the emergence of a city whose form contributed to an image of carefully controlled harmony. Miles of new streets, a completely renovated and expanded sewer system, the construction of aqueducts bringing fresh water, the creation of new train stations, the erection of monuments all served to accentuate the administration's control over the city. They served as evidence of the regime's ability to manage the effects of urbanization that had brought July Monarchy Paris to its knees. In doing so, then, Haussmann not only opened the city to circulation, but also enforced its own symbolic grandeur. The Second Empire's management of the city took place through massive physical reconstruction, which became evident on the level of representation. The new boulevards, sewers, parks, aqueducts displayed a uniform and unifying architectural style that enforced particular viewpoints of the capital by directing perspectives towards wide vistas and grand monuments.²⁴ Haussmann's style coupled political dominance – the grand view – with relative economic liberty – the ability to circulate.²⁵

The transformation of Paris during the Second Empire was, according to David Harvey, an attempt to reconcile the forces of capitalism to those of imperialism; the

Haussmann's claim that he linked between art and technology, but argues that the linking could only ever be a distortion of true art. Benjamin argues that "Haussmann's predilection for perspectives, for long open vistas, presents an attempt to dictate art forms to technology (the technology of city planning)," but concludes that "This always results in kitsch." See Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 126. Marshall Berman, on the other hand, largely accepts Haussmann's own terms in describing the redevelopment of Paris: "Great sweeping vistas were designed, with monuments at the boulevards' ends, so that each walk led toward a dramatic climax. All these qualities helped to make the new Paris a uniquely enticing spectacle, a visual and sensual feast." See Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 151.

²³ Choay, *The Modern City; Planning in the 19th Century*, 19.

²⁴ On Haussmann's architectural style see François Loyer, *Paris Nineteenth Century: Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), chap. 4.

²⁵ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 11-12, 122.

Second Empire's downfall during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) signified its failure to achieve this reconciliation. Ultimately, political authoritarianism could not be sustained on a foundation of economic liberalism and market capitalism.²⁶ However, the downfall of the Second Empire and the disruptions of the Paris Commune (1871) – including the widespread destruction of significant parts of the city – only temporarily disrupted the rebuilding of the French capital. Just as the intellectual foundations of Haussmann's transformations were laid before his rise to power, the physical development of Paris continued after his fall. The Third Republic (1871-1940), Peter Soppelsa has effectively argued, completed the process of Haussmannization.²⁷

The culture and politics of the early Third Republic rooted itself in a civic culture that developed in the course of the Second Empire. Although the Third Republic reflected the rise to power of a new middle-class, it ultimately relied on forms of social distinction that were similar to those in place during the Second Empire.²⁸ Whereas, however, the monumental strategy of Haussmann revolved around creating direct representations of imperial power through the urban environment, the Third Republic more completely gave over the city's representation to the forces of capital. The new monumentality of the city emerged from the department store and the newspaper office, rather than the grand vista of imperial power; “[d]uring the early Third Republic,” Hazel Hahn has recently argued, “monumentality was decisively dissociated from imperial

²⁶ Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 88.

²⁷ Soppelsa, “The Fragility of Modernity,” 44-51.

²⁸ Philip Nord has described the process by which a new elite of the middle classes gradually displaced old elites during the Third Republic. The greatest threat to the Republic, Nord argues, did not emerge from labor or feminist agitation, but rather from the older class of elites that the Republicans did not dismantle. Philip G. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 248.

grandeur and more appropriated for commercial purposes.’²⁹ Although Hahn overemphasizes the break between the Second Empire and Third Republic in this passage – both the Bon Marché and especially the Louvre department store buildings were certainly “monumental” during the Second Empire – she correctly orients the specifically commercial nature of the designs during the last third of the nineteenth century. In the cultural realm, the art of the Impressionists after the Commune also reached back to the hierarchies of the past as they portrayed supposedly democratic spaces filled by women and men rooted in class distinction.³⁰ The political and economic liberalization of the Third Republic did not necessarily entail loosening the type of ties that had bound Parisian society together throughout the nineteenth century, even as the particular makeup of the elite had changed. Indeed, the humor of Marcel Proust’s depiction of Third Republic society relied a great deal on the *haute bourgeoisie* doing their best to ape the style and social mores of the old aristocracy.³¹

The attempt by both regimes to create a city oriented towards a nascent consumer culture underscores a final continuity between the two visions of Paris. The various

²⁹ Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian modernity*, 162.

³⁰ Albert Boime, *Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris After War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

³¹ See, for example, Swann’s interaction with the Verdurin clan in *Swann’s Way*. Swann, for instance, is able to ingratiate himself with the parvenu Verdurin clan by using the skills he learned by moving about in high society, even though those very skills were supposed to have labeled him a “bore,” in the eyes of the Verdurins: “In telling the Verdurins that Swann was extremely ‘smart,’ Odette had alarmed them with the prospect of another ‘bore.’ When he arrived, however, he made an excellent impression, an indirect cause of which, though they did not know it, was his familiarity with the best society. He had, indeed, one of the advantages which men who have lived and moved in society enjoy over those, however intelligent, who have not, namely that they no longer see it transfigured by the longing or repulsion which it inspires, but regard it as of no importance [En disant aux Verdurin que Swann était très ‘smart,’ Odette leur avait fait craindre un ‘ennuyeux.’ Il leur fit au contraire une excellente impression don’t à leur insu sa fréquentation dans la société élégante était une des causes indirectes. Il avait en effet sur les homes même intelligents qui ne sont jamais allés dans le monde, une des superiorities de ceux qui y ont un peu vécu, qui est de ne plus le transfigurer par le désir ou par l’horreur qu’il inspire à l’imagination, de le considerer comme sans aucune importance.]” Translation is from Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 199. Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Volume 1: Swann’s Way*, trans. C. K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Modern Library, 1998), 285.

administrations of the second half of the nineteenth century all believed that social harmony would result from the city's transformation because the emergent urban environment upheld the primacy of a bourgeois social order predicated on private property and economic exchange. Haussmann's Paris was – supposedly – created for an idealized upper middle-class, its financing based on rising property values and commerce, its entertainments reliant on the removal of the working-classes and other undesirables from the city center, and its form resting on an image of social hierarchy.³² The redevelopment of Paris depended upon certain assumptions regarding the benefits of a social order based upon hierarchy, private property, and the circulation of capital. Presented as an egalitarian endeavor of social health, therefore, the transformation of Paris actually reinforced social hierarchies.

Michel Foucault once argued that beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing through the nineteenth century, just as juridical equality began to dominate Western society, so too did a variety of micro-processes intent on perpetuating asymmetrical power relationships through practices of surveillance and knowledge.³³ The transformation of Paris allowed those micro-processes to take place. Cohorts of city planners claimed they could form a “comprehensive vision of all [the city's] parts” as they hoped its newfound rationality “would elevate the moral and physical condition of all its inhabitants – by which the planners meant, whether consciously or not, the subordination of popular culture to middle-class values, thus creating social harmony or

³² David Harvey has described the ways in which imperialism and commerce combined during the Second Empire to provide space for bourgeois business and entertainment free from the working classes. See Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 150.

³³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 221-222.

at least social control and hegemonic order.”³⁴ Paris would allow middle-class elites to display their social power and keep those who tried to reject it under watch.

A City of Pleasure

Public sex challenged the administration’s visions of a controlled and controllable city.³⁵ Whether accomplished by women who sold sex or men who sought sex with other men, public sexuality illustrated the possibility of using urban space against the grain of social expectation and political management. The increasingly mobile population and the proliferation of spaces of sociability entailed novel opportunities for public interaction with strangers and led to greater opportunities for sexual encounters with strangers.³⁶ Those who sought sex in public found a far greater audience for their advances and, at the same time, an increased chance for reciprocity. In the case of female prostitution, these developments contributed to the decline of the regulated brothel and an increase in the number of unregistered prostitutes circulating about the city.³⁷ Men who sought sex with other men, for their part, found new opportunities for social interaction in the cafés and

³⁴ Papayanis, *Planning Paris Before Haussmann*, 247.

³⁵ I define public sex and public sexual activity relatively broadly. Rather than implying solely a sexual act that occurred in a public space, I mean to refer to any activity that invoked the possibility of sex that occurred in view of a public. This definition could include, for example, direct solicitation of sex – whether verbally, visually, or aurally – an implied solicitation of sex, or simply a flirtatious act that implied the potential for sexual attraction. My particular focus on female prostitution and male homosexual came about incidentally through the materials available in the archives. Although “public sexuality” refers to far more than sex between men or between a client and a prostitute, material documenting consensual public sexual relations, exhibitionism, or the display of pornography is rare. When applicable, however, I have tried to point out the relation between these activities and those that remain my primary analytical focus.

³⁶ Previous scholars have noted how Haussmannization provided new venues for both female prostitution and men who sought sex with other men. See, for example, Alain Corbin, *Les filles de noce: Misère sexuelle et prostitution (19e siècle)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), 87-88; Régis Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris: 1870-1918* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 19-20.

³⁷ Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 87-88. On the regulationist system see chapter one.

public urinals of Paris.³⁸ In both cases men and women who sought sexual partners and clients in public found new opportunities to do so in the spaces that proliferated during the second half of the nineteenth century.

These activities presented both challenges and opportunities for those who sought to enjoy nineteenth-century Paris. People took up the city's implicit and explicit opportunities and in doing so, helped to define new meanings for the spaces associated with Paris's newfound "modernity." Some Parisians took the state's efforts at social control at face value and looked forward to the emergence of a city where they would no longer have to fear social disorder or a chance encounter with a prostitute. For these Parisians, the pleasures of the park, the café and the street never extended beyond the intentions of those who built and operated them. In other cases, Parisians took advantage of Paris's implicit possibilities in order to find illicit pleasure with their fellow citizens. This group comprised not just prostitutes and men who sought sex with other men, but also ordinary people who sought sex in public. Thus, a group of bourgeois elites sought to emphasize the order of modernity by collaborating with the imposition of official meaning onto the city; another, more heterogeneous group comprised of prostitutes, pederasts, and otherwise ordinary people sought to enjoy the disorders of modernity by extending the implicit opportunities of the city.³⁹ The novel opportunities afforded by a

³⁸ It is worth noting that men who sought sex with other men did, like prostitutes, have a public presence before this period. Michael Sibalis, "The Palais-Royal and the Homosexual Subculture of Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3/4 (2001): 117-129. On male homosexuality during the eighteenth century see Michel Rey, "Police et sodomie à Paris au XVIIIe siècle, du péché au désordre," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 29 (1982): 113-24; Michel Rey, "1700-1750, Les Sodomites parisiens créent un mode de vie," *Cahiers Gai Kitsch Camp* 24 (1994): xi-xxxiii.

³⁹ I use the terms "pederast" and "pederasty," derived from the Greek notion of man-boy love, to refer to homosexuals and homosexuality not only because they were the most frequently used terms in nineteenth-century France to refer to male same-sex sexual activity, but also because I do not wish to imply that these men shared a homosexual identity similar to that of the twentieth century. My use of "pederast" therefore should be taken as an attempt to evoke the particularities of past modes of sexual organization, rather than a

city that encouraged public interaction thus engendered two conflicting reactions: an entrenchment of the social values of hierarchy and restraint and an extension of opportunities to find public pleasure. As those who sought stability and those who sought sex encountered one another on the streets of Paris, the city itself became the grounds on which people disputed their own understandings of what urban life could mean.

The decision whether or not to pursue, enjoy the sight of, or fantasize about public sex became a way for everyone to understand the possibilities of urban life. The activities of both prostitutes and men who sought sex with other men thus had far greater significance than the services they offered to bourgeois men, their regulatory status, or their “subculture.”⁴⁰ What I wish to show, following the work of historians of everyday life, are the ways in which illicit sexual activities were relevant to everyone who moved about the city. Alf Lüdtkke once explained that the history of everyday life aims “to demonstrate how social impositions or stimuli are perceived and processed as interests and needs, anxieties and hopes; indeed, how they are generated in the very process...[T]he focus is on the forms in which people have ‘appropriated’—while

description of the particular forms of sexual activity that took place in nineteenth-century Paris. According to Claude Courouve, the earliest occurrence of the term “homosexual” in French occurred in a review of Krafft-Ebing’s *Psycopathia Sexualis* (1886) in 1891. See his entry on the term in Claude Courouve, *Vocabulaire de l’homosexualité masculine* (Paris: Payot, 1985), 129-137.

⁴⁰ Alain Corbin’s influential work argues that a change in sexual demand amongst Parisian men shaped the transition of prostitution from the *maison de tolérance* – or regulated brothel – to the *maison de rendez-vous* – or unregulated house of pleasure. For a useful summary of the argument found in Corbin’s *Filles de noce* (1978), cited above, see Sima Godfrey, “Alain Corbin: Making Sense of French History,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 2 (2002): 384. Jill Harsin’s important monograph on nineteenth century French prostitution forcefully showcased the regulatory status of working-class women at the mercy of the Paris police. See Jill Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Although most work on male homosexuality in nineteenth-century Paris has simply assumed the existence of a subculture, William Peniston’s work attempted to quantify its existence during the 1870s. See William A Peniston, *Pederasts and Others: Urban Culture and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth Century Paris* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004).

simultaneously transforming—‘their’ world.’⁴¹ Given a particular social environment designed to facilitate the perpetuation of a social order predicated on bourgeois values, prostitutes, pederasts, and ordinary people all interpreted the values of that environment differently, put them to use in a variety of ways, and struggled to contend with that variability.⁴²

Discussions and acts of public sex served as one avenue through which these conflicts took place. Prostitutes, pederasts, and ordinary people all struggled to determine what meaning the pursuit of pleasure in a capitalist city held to their own lives. Did it imply that they could give free rein to all their desires? Or did it necessitate even greater self-control? Was the responsibility for defining these boundaries their own or that of the state’s? Other historians, following Michel Foucault, have shown how the management of sexuality became essential to modern population control; disciplining a population required channeling sexuality.⁴³ What follows is not an analysis of bio-power. Instead, it takes the evident importance of sexuality to nineteenth-century social control as a starting point in a discussion of how the pursuit of pleasure on the streets of Paris signified people’s reckoning with both the possibilities and limitations of modern city

⁴¹ Alf Lüdtké, “Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?,” in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtké, trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 7.

⁴² In emphasizing this side of the creation of cultural meaning, I also follow Michel de Certeau who has argued that “consumption” of given artifacts of an idealized social order was also a form of “production” that found new uses for the forms expounded in an idealized discourse. In other words, “social impositions and stimuli” emerge as much from dominant discourses as they do from fragmented responses to them on the level of social practice. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 29-31.

⁴³ “[S]ex,” Foucault wrote, “is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures.” Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 155. For historical considerations of Foucault’s insight see Arnold Ira Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); David M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), chap. 3; J. Weeks, “Foucault for Historians,” *History Workshop Journal* 14 (1982): 106.

life. Modern life encouraged certain controlled pleasures while forbidding others and individuals wishing to participate in that experience had to successfully navigate the distinction.

The presence of sexual activity in public space underscored the difficulty in controlling the cultural significance of the city to those who used it. The regularization of Paris implied the emergence of an “abstract space” that required, in Henri Lefebvre’s terms, the separation of biological need from human desire; sexual pleasure was replaced with a neutered representation of it.⁴⁴ Leisure space emerged in order to perpetuate the distinction. There, one could safely imagine the possibilities of desire without enabling their complete fulfillment. Such a taste of desire, however, only increased the possibility of full enactment. As Lefebvre explains, “The dialectical link...between need and desire thus generates fresh contradictions – notably that between liberation and repression.”⁴⁵ Although it would perhaps be better to term the contradiction as one between “undirected” and “managed,” Lefebvre’s point evokes a key paradox explored throughout this project. As the state reconfigured urban space, it provided sites of pleasure where individuals could give in to certain desires – to buy some lace, to look at a pretty lady, to drink. These spaces gave official imprimatur to certain pleasures in order to establish a firm line between orderly and disorderly social practice; they were built to render desire into something controlled and controllable. And yet, as Lefebvre has noted, even as the city dispersed some threats to the urban milieu’s coherence, it enabled others.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 309-310.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 353-354. For instance, in a more concrete example, but also following Lefebvre, Phil Hubbard and Teela Sanders have effectively argued that spaces of sex work simultaneously constrain and enable female prostitutes’ agency. See Phil Hubbard and Teela Sanders, “Making Space for Sex Work: Female Street Prostitution and the Production of Urban Space,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 1 (2003): 83-84.

⁴⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 386-387.

parks, streets, and cafés where men and sometimes women could engage in these prescribed pleasures also offered the possibility of finding supposedly forbidden pleasures. Those who frequented Paris's pleasure spaces often understood their true potential and were faced with a choice: to participate in a culture of sex or to retreat to a culture of imagined propriety. Both, ultimately, remained cultures of pleasure, only requiring a small step for one to turn into the other.

Public sex showed how the modern city remained tangible in some of the most material ways: everyday social activity suffused the city with sights, sounds and smells that refused the control of those who sought to regularize the city. The city's entry into modernity may indeed have also entailed "the modernization of its citizen's souls," but that does not necessarily imply their regularization as well.⁴⁷ The power of public sexual activity illustrates well Michel de Certeau's call to greater attention to the "microbe-like, singular and plural practices that an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress."⁴⁸ On the one hand, lay discourses of discipline represented by an urbanism seeking to mold the city to the ends of social order. On the other hand, stood the unexpected social practices of marginal social actors that signified disorder. The two possibilities did not interact in simple conflict, with the former repressing the latter. Rather, their constantly shifting dynamic relationship shaped the culture of nineteenth-century Paris.

Before summarizing the scope of the argument that follows, a few words on my sources and terminology. As a cultural historian, I analyze historical meaning through

⁴⁷ Berman, *All that is solid melts into air*, 147.

⁴⁸ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 96.

the interpretation of discourse and social practice. Although I lean heavily on published police memoir, medical texts, literature and other urban commentary, I most significantly rely on a series of reports and letters contained in the archives de la préfecture de police de Paris (APP) or Paris police archives. By using these mundane documents, I hope to illustrate the utility of sources normally associated with social history for cultural history.⁴⁹ The most nuanced interpretations of nineteenth-century Paris have worked with the artifacts of high culture, most notably painting and literature.⁵⁰ Even historical geographer David Harvey's important *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (2003) opens with an extended exploration of Balzac's *Comédie humaine*.⁵¹ This work has deepened our understanding of nineteenth-century Paris by highlighting the discordant cultural trends that administrators such as Haussmann sought to efface. However, the archival record of police reports, resident complaints, and moral commentary also constitutes a dense fund of information about the culture of nineteenth-century Paris. As texts written to serve the interests of their authors, they often reveal more about the meanings attached to sexual acts than they do about the acts themselves. Each document may not possess the complexity of a Manet painting, but together they still show how the meaning of modern Paris fractured and was constructed on an edifice of distinct motivations, opinions, and beliefs in a constantly shifting dialog between ordinary people, expert commentators, and administrators.

⁴⁹ In pursuing this goal, I have been most usefully influenced by Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

⁵⁰ In particular, art historians like T.J. Clark and literary critics like Christopher Prendergast have explored how representations of Paris that emphasized its disorder hid its continued order. The myth of a society in which the older roots of social order – notably class – had disappeared emerged in order to render palatable the continued importance of social hierarchy. See Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 49-50; Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, 15-16.

⁵¹ Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 23-57.

My analysis of these documents relies on an understanding of their terms. In an effort at capturing the implications of nineteenth-century writers, I usually refer to marginal individuals in the terms used to describe them at the time.⁵² “Prostitute” remains the general term for a woman assumed to be selling sex for monetary gain; prostitutes were also often referred to as “public women” (*filles publiques*). A “registered prostitute” (*fille soumise*) refers to two types of women: the first were those confined to brothels and the second those who registered with the police but acted independently and were known as *filles isolées* or *filles en carte* because of the registration card they carried. A “clandestine prostitute” (*fille insoumise*) encompassed all women who sold sex – or potentially sold sex – without registering with the police. The most popular term for naming men interested in sex with other men was “pederast,” and I thus use it interchangeably with phrases such as “men who sought sex with other men.” My use of the term is not meant to imply a coherent identity, such as ‘homosexual’ might, because few “pederasts” would have designated themselves as such. Other terms used to signify a homosexual were “invert,” “sodomite,” and “antiphysical.” When I refer to “urban administrators,” I mean to imply a broad range of social actors, not only those who actively built the new city as government employees, but also those who contributed to a general discourse of urban administration. The term thus encompasses public hygienists, the police, and others who commented on the transformation of the city. Finally, “moral

⁵² I do so in order to emphasize my attempt to complete a “just reading” of my sources that captures not only their implicit, but also their explicit meaning. A “just reading” seeks to understand not only what lies between the lines, but what authors made manifest on the surface of their texts. Documents possessed both explicit and implicit significations; my analysis addresses both. On “just reading” see Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 73-81.

commentator” means those other “experts” who enunciated their opinions on nineteenth-century urban culture.

The Argument in Brief

Modern Paris emerged through a complex interaction between urban change, expert discourse, and everyday social practices. In the course of the nineteenth century, experts enunciated a vision of Paris in which people, goods, and capital would freely circulate without challenging essential social hierarchies of class and gender. In order to accomplish this goal, Second Empire and early Third Republic administrators transformed the fabric of Paris by constructing miles of wide boulevards, razing insalubrious neighborhoods, renovating the sewers, and building leisure space. Experts intended these material changes to facilitate the emergence of a bourgeois city in which the wealth and social expectations could be effectively displayed and propagated to the broader population. New streets, for instance, not only provided the means for the transport of goods and services necessary to commerce on which property owners, shopkeepers, and investors based their class status, but also enabled the display of that status. Just as certain spaces overtly enabled contact between members of different social groups, they also provided the means through which the hierarchies that shaped those interactions were maintained.

Chapter one discusses how public sex challenged visions of a stable political and social order in nineteenth-century Paris. During the early nineteenth century, Paris

threatened to succumb to the worst excesses of rapid urbanization under early capitalism. The pursuit of wealth threatened to dissolve social bonds and disrupt hierarchy, while experts feared that the city itself had become “pathological” and thus dangerous to people’s health. In response, these experts enunciated a project wherein the city would be transformed to contain a growing population, while sexuality would be successfully managed through police regulation. In combination, experts envisioned a city built to contain the effects of capitalism through the provision of different outlets for the working class and the bourgeoisie. Smooth circulation of people and goods was necessary both materially and physiologically and the management of urban space thus came to require the control of public sex as well. Successfully managing the sexual uses of the city came to signify social stability and a failure to do so implied instability. Through the lens of urbanist texts, commentary on the transformation of Paris, and citizens’ letters to the police, chapter one explores this dynamic with a close look at the Tuileries, a palace and garden next to the Louvre. As a space built and used for the display of bourgeois social values as well as political power, the Tuileries stood as an important representation of urban order. By successfully managing this space, existing authorities signified their mastery of the city as a whole. However, the continuing presence of prostitutes and pederasts threatened this control. As administrators wrestled with their inability to prevent this appropriation, they asserted their own mastery in discourse by associating previous regimes with illicit sexual activity. The complex struggles to manage the sexual uses and significations of the Tuileries thus stood in for the attempt to dominate the nation as a whole.

The inability to eliminate evidence of public sex from sites of Parisian leisure complicated the ways in which people enjoyed the city. In chapter two, we explore how illicit public sexual activity inserted itself into the everyday pleasures of the built environment. As an early mass culture began to emerge that revolved around particular visual experiences that signified one's self-control in the face of the urban crowd, the signs of one's social place became increasingly important. People learned how to understand and recognize the signs of social hierarchy, even as they moved about the city and encountered innumerable strangers. Other languages circulated at the same time and in the same spaces, however. The experience of modern life required careful attention to the codes of social address, but it became difficult to separate the language of acceptable pleasure-going from those of illicit sexual pleasure. Prostitutes and men who sought sex with other men addressed strangers who may or may not have understood their solicitation. In doing so, these activities showcased for everyone the possibilities of public sex in spaces of bourgeois pleasure. By providing space for encounters between strangers, Paris provided the opportunity not just for the emergence of mass culture, but of a sexual culture as well. Public sexual activity signified disorder, but it also stood as the logical extension of strategies of hierarchy that required displaying one's knowledge of the language of urban pleasure. An examination of published urban commentary, guidebooks, police memoirs and other moral commentary, reveals that the everyday acceptable pleasures of nineteenth-century Paris very often led to the possibility of sexual pleasure as well.

Not all Parisians appreciated the opportunity to seek sex in public. In chapter three, we explore the ways in which one segment of the middle-classes responded to their

encounters with prostitutes and pederasts. These men and women felt threatened and unsafe when they left their homes and they blamed the transformation of the city for exacerbating their sense of insecurity. The letters they sent to the police in response remained indebted to a vision of middle-class privilege predicated on the strict division between private and public space, but they also reveal gaps in the effective management of the city, showing how attempts to clean and organize city spaces left room for a wide variety of sensory experiences that punctured the personal space of bourgeois walkers. As these informants asked the police to forcefully protect a clearer division between the proper and improper uses of space they also implicitly encouraged them to use their public authority to police private spaces. But by inviting the police to invade private and personal space, they also revealed how the division between private and public lives had been rendered thin by public sexual activity.

Those who wrote to the police complaining of public indecency sought to construct an image of a city cleansed of imperfections and perfectly indexical to middle-class aspirations. Other Parisians took advantage of the mixing of licit and illicit pleasure that so marked public pleasure. In chapter four, we examine three different arenas where people sought out sexual pleasures in late nineteenth-century Paris through readings of police reports and moral commentary. First, following the liberalization of laws regulating the opening of new drinking establishments, proprietors, facing increasing competition, sought to entice customers to drink with the promise of sex. One strategy involved hiring serving girls to flirt and drink with the customers while also emphasizing the possibility that they were themselves also for sale. Although both customers and proprietors expected these activities to conform to established hierarchies of gender and

class whereby the serving girl remained available to the advances of men, the waitresses' ability to manipulate the customers' desires illustrated how spaces of pleasure exceeded their ostensible purposes. The sexual play of the café could not completely sustain assumed gender hierarchies. Second, men who sought sex with other men tried to use their acknowledged right as men to utilize public space to their advantage. Spaces of sociability provided sites for men to interact with other men, but constant police surveillance revealed the willingness of the police to interfere in order to prevent gender inversion. While the *brasseries à femmes* escaped persecution because they played with, rather than broke, gender and class hierarchies, spaces of exclusively male sociability only managed the same feat so long as they did not become sexualized. Finally, spaces did exist for those wishing to indulge a desire to lose oneself in a frenetic mixing of class, gender, and sex. These spaces – namely, dance and music halls – served as relatively safe spaces in which to enjoy the extremes of sexual play in public.

The first four chapters all discuss spaces intended to serve, in some form, a permitted pleasure that was then appropriated by prostitutes or men who sought sex with other men. The final chapter examines the appropriation of a space not intended for pleasurable purposes at all. Urban administrators made concrete improvements to the city in order to facilitate an urban dynamic wherein people could freely enjoy the city while also observing forms of proper decorum and social control. A key component of these developments were the public urinals that first appeared during the July Monarchy. The public urinal provided facilities for public hygiene that preserved men's ability to move about the city. In order to do so without threatening bourgeois identity by bringing private functions into public view, hygienists designed urinals that would hide urinary

activity. In doing so, public urinals served to facilitate the emergence of both a middle-class city and middle-class propriety. As chapter five demonstrates, however, the very qualities deemed essential to good public urinals by public hygienists were precisely those that led to their appropriation by men who sought sex with other men. As they entered spaces seen as necessary to the proper functioning of the urban environment, men interested in sex with other men interacted with men looking to use the facilities as they were intended. This mixing, in turn, challenged experts to effectively differentiate normal from pathological users of urban space. Relying on assumptions of the physical signs of pederasty, these experts ultimately failed to enunciate a coherent categorical schema that could effectively differentiate between the two groups. Despite expert claims to complete understanding of urban life, administrators could not effectively manage the city they so decisively transformed.

Nineteenth-century Paris contained two possibilities. The one revolved around administrative control, efficiency and stability. The other involved spontaneity, pleasure, and potential disruption. Ultimately, neither overcame the other. Rather, the two always existed in a complex relationship; some people invested themselves in one, some in the other. Nineteenth-century Paris, then, emerged not only from those who transformed the city, but also from all those who actually used it. Sex became one point around which these dynamics crystallized because it ostensibly represented a point at which control had to be exercised even as it became increasingly evident that it was actually at the center of a public culture that formed outside the imagination of expert administrators. Public sexual activity galvanized a struggle for control that took place every day in the streets and alleys, dancehalls and cafés, parks and urinals of the city. Illicit sexual activity may

have involved marginal people, but it stood at the very center of understandings of modern urban life.

Chapter 1

Transforming Paris: Social Order, Sexuality and the Modern City

Introduction

Writing shortly before his death in 1885, the former Communard Jules Vallès published a series of articles as a new *Tableau de Paris*.¹ Shaped by his experience with the Paris Commune of 1871, Vallès sought to present the city as it truly was, through a prism of social practice. What, Vallès asked, have people made of this city, the site of so much struggle and trauma? The Paris he laid before his readers was one of contradiction, where momentary triumph soon gave way to recognition of temporary defeat. He described, for instance, the Tuileries garden, where “one perceives... a bit of grass and a little shadow in the former reserved garden, where the emperor [Napoleon III] had the sole right to walk [*flâner*] and where the girls [*filles*] now came to prowl the evenings in search of poor libertines. It’s the promenade of courtesans of twenty *sous* the caress, just past the one for the courtesans of twenty thousand *écus*.”² During the Second Empire, the highest representative of political authority possessed the “sole right” to use this particular tract of Parisian landscape. That right was not explicitly extended to

¹ My interpretation of Vallès has been greatly influenced by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson’s. See Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 76–79.

² [“Tout au plus aperçoit-on un peu de gazon et trouve-t-on un peu d’ombre dans l’ancien jardin réservé, où l’empereur avait seul le droit de flâner et où les filles viennent maintenant rôder le soir à la recherche des libertins pauvres. C’est la promenade des courtisanes à vingt sous la caresse après celle des courtisanes à vingt mille écus.”] Jules Vallès, *Le tableau de Paris*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1932), 223.

prostitutes after the emperor's fall. Instead, they utilized the logic of an urban culture that contrasted with the very idea of any one person possessing the sole right to access a "public" space. Commentators ranging from the Communard Vallès to the imperial Baron Eugène Haussmann imagined Paris as a city open to the circulation of people. Although not necessarily included in any category of acceptable users of public space, prostitutes took up that transideological idea to inscribe their own place within nineteenth-century Parisian culture.

The reserved garden's use by prostitutes illustrates well the possibility of inverting relationships of power through the creative use of space. However, the simultaneous presence of both cheap and expensive courtesans highlights a continuing instability of the reserved garden. Who, precisely, controlled this space? Who could use it? Those administrators, commentators, and ordinary people invested in the stability of existing power structures depended on demonstrating their ability to control urban space. Thus, any instability in that control also signified a weakness of political power. Vallès thus underscored his investment in a vision of Paris outside the bounds of politics by highlighting the garden's transition from a space of empire to a space of illicit sex, rather than to a space representative of republicanism. In fact, his use of prostitutes to make his point regarding the transitory nature of absolute power revealed the importance of sexual practices to political and social stability. If the presence of illicit sex represented a lack of control, then the management of sex stood for absolute power. The stability of political power and social hierarchy depended on the management of urban space through the control of public sex.

The necessity of establishing clear control over the city became especially urgent

during the first part of the nineteenth century, when Paris threatened to succumb to the effects of early capitalism as it wrestled with massive population growth and the growing importance of liberal economic theories that emphasized social advancement through wealth accumulation and thus threatened traditional social ties. First, demographic change highlighted the city's inability to house a rapidly growing working-class population. As the cholera epidemic of 1832 showcased, Paris's lackluster infrastructure quite literally threatened the health of those who inhabited, worked in, and visited the city. Second, new hierarchies of wealth threatened to upturn a social order traditionally based on blood. The debased search for "gold and pleasure," in the words of the Honoré de Balzac, broke apart the bonds that once held society together.³ Commentators, administrators, and other experts conceived both problems in terms of the excesses of early capitalism. On the one hand, the city lacked sufficient space to contain its growing population. On the other hand, excess greed led to a breakdown of social ties. The problems facing the city threatened to reveal experts' inability to manage the effects of the early urbanization of the post-Revolutionary era.

Commentators and administrators figured both the problem of urban population growth and the problem of destabilizing social hierarchies in terms of sex. Rather than directly addressing the difficulties attendant with encouraging the development of a market economy, these experts deflected their concerns onto already marginal people and activities. Population growth caused two problems couched in terms of sex. First, the influx of immigrants into the city transformed the urban sexual economy by increasing

³ Honoré de Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, vol. 5 (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 1039. See below for more on Balzac's particular concerns.

the demand for non-conjugal sexual outlets.⁴ Early nineteenth-century medical doctrine emphasized the need to expend sexual energy as much as it did the necessity of mastering its drives.⁵ For the good bourgeois, such expenditures were to take place within the conjugal unit; for single workers, prostitutes would serve the purpose. Second, public hygienists who investigated the causes of urban disease – in particular cholera – declared “living conditions” as a root cause of urban pathology, by which they meant a variety of social practices that represented the physical and moral state of the home.⁶ Included in such a broad categorization lay practices of gender and sexuality that revolved around the stability of an idealized heterosexual couple that the working poor found difficult to achieve. Thus, the population of male workers demanded the continued presence of female prostitution in Paris, while indulging in non-procreative, non-familial sexual activity signified the danger a worker posed to social health. Excess population and illicit sexual activity fed off of one another in a circular relation that undermined the power and legitimacy of public authorities.

The possibly destructive effects of capitalist development did more than threaten the social order by way of the squalor and sexual practices of the poor and working classes. Rather, those in a position to benefit from a greater emphasis on individual social advancement also risked falling into total depravity. The pursuit of wealth so fundamental to post-Revolutionary society became not only a source of advancement, but also a possible avenue to degradation. A variety of novelists, moral commentators, and

⁴ Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France After 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 186–188.

⁵ Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 61.

⁶ Andrew Robert Aisenberg, *Contagion: Disease, Government, and the “Social Question” in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 24–25.

public hygienists elaborated a vision of a social system that threatened to degrade in the face of the pursuit of social advancement and wealth accumulation.⁷ For those already wealthy, moral commentators warned that the pursuit of pleasure risked turning into an end in and of itself in a dangerous cycle of renewal.⁸ For those wishing to climb the social ladder, other moralists feared that selling sex came to stand as a possibility for social advancement.⁹ In both cases, pleasure itself became corrupted, detached from the family and turned into a commodity to be sold in the marketplace.¹⁰ As a figure whose body was always potentially bought by those with means and sold by those without, the prostitute came to stand in for the degradation of capitalism.¹¹ But because capitalism's new economic relations stood as the foundation of the post-Revolutionary social order, the economy itself could not become the target of any proposed solution. Instead, the regulation of sexual activity came to stand in for the control of an urban socio-economic system that was threatening to unravel.

Two problems thus emerged with the onset of early capitalist social relations: urban population growth due to migration towards the capital and unstable social hierarchy due to the quest for individual social advancement. Ultimately, both were linked to visions of a “pathological” city marred by sexual dangers. The medieval

⁷ In response, a variety of commentators enunciated a series of discourses that shaped definitions of what it meant to participate in the public marketplace without losing control of one's private “virtue.” See especially Victoria Elizabeth Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). On these themes in a slightly later period see Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-De-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁸ Flévy d'Urville, *Les ordures de Paris* (Paris: Sartorius, 1874), 9; François Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions: 1860-1870* (E. Dentu, 1887), 29. I analyze these texts below. See page 46.

⁹ Louis Canler, *Memoires de Canler, ancien chef du Service de Sûreté*, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1862), 266; Pierre Delcourt, *Le vice à Paris* (Paris: Alphonse Piaget, 1888), 103–105.

¹⁰ For a description of this process in a different context, see Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: Norton, 1992).

¹¹ As Judith Walkowitz once argued, the prostitute was “a powerful symbol of sexual and economic exploitation under industrial capitalism.” Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 3–4.

foundations of Paris were simply not equipped to handle the rapid changes attendant with urbanization. This condition both reflected and caused the moral state of the population; the sexual practices associated with the difficulties facing nineteenth-century society in turn became linked as well to the materiality of the city. The city itself thus became a source of moral concern. Its effective management signified society's continued stability in the face of rapid socio-economic change, while its structure influenced the ways in which people experienced everyday life. As the Napoleonic engineer, Pierre Emmanuel Bruneseau once argued, "the cleanliness of the city is the image of the purity of the morals of its inhabitants."¹²

The emergence of a "regulationist" system to manage prostitution, as well as the willingness to persecute men who sought sex with other men, during the early part of the century was as an attempt to place the city firmly under control.¹³ Alongside the development of a system of sexual regulation emerged a growing awareness of the need to directly intervene into the fabric of the city by completely remaking the streets, infrastructure, habitations, and other public spaces to ensure the efficient circulation of people, goods, and capital while effectively representing the social stability so evidently desired by commentators. Early nineteenth-century administrators such as Prefect of the Seine Rambuteau were largely unwilling to radically transform Paris according to ideas

¹² Pierre-Emmanuel Bruneseau, "Observations sur la salubrité de Paris", n.d., F8 95, AN, quoted in and translated by Donald Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), 22.

¹³ For the most complete descriptions of these systems of regulation see especially Alain Corbin, *Les filles de noce: Misère sexuelle et prostitution (19e siècle)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982); Jill Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Régis Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris: 1870-1918* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005); William A Peniston, *Pederasts and Others: Urban Culture and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth Century Paris* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004); Michael Sibalis, "The Regulation of Male Homosexuality in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France," in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 81-101; Jean-Marc Berlière, *La police des mœurs sous la IIIe République* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

that emphasized systematic reconstruction, but by the middle of the century a new cohort of administrators, under the leadership of Baron Eugène Haussmann rose to power.¹⁴ These men put great faith in their ability to totally transform the French capital. A focus on urban circulation and architectural grandeur inscribed the values of liberal economic relations onto the everyday life of the city and supposedly channeled the forces of capitalism in the service of stability.¹⁵ If the construction of a system of sexual regulation could provide the necessary outlets for the growing working-class population, then the transformation of the city could redirect the forces that encouraged elites to turn to debauchery. In the first case, the direction of sexual energy would reconcile a city's growing population with its capacities. In the second case, the management of city life would reconcile the pursuit of social advancement of wealth with a desire for stability by diverting that pursuit away from venal avenues. In both instances, a problematic of urbanization and capitalism were to be solved in and through the control of sexual activity.

The history of the Tuileries garden in the nineteenth century illustrates the circular relation between public sex and political authority because it possessed particular resonances that coincided with the encouragement of economic development and new forms of consumption as well as the use of the city for illicit sexual activity. Kings and emperors opened the Tuileries as a space for the display of political and social power, but it became a much more ambiguous space that also served as a site of illicit sexual activity. The Tuileries' appropriation by prostitutes and pederasts throughout the century

¹⁴ On the distinction between Rambuteau and Haussmann see David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 81–82.

¹⁵ François Loyer has effectively described all aspects of this process. See François Loyer, *Paris Nineteenth Century: Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), chap. 4.

symbolized the threat that sex posed to contemporary notions of urban life. As a site of conflict between urban administration and Parisians engaging in illicit sexual practices, the Tuileries forced Parisians to ask who ultimately had the right to use city space and to what ends? Parisian history has been riddled with revolutionary attempts to answer this question. Both the conflicts of 1848 and of 1871 were in part conflicts over the form politics would take in the nineteenth-century city.¹⁶ During both these events, the Tuileries became a target of revolutionary action that brought together the sexual and the political. As each revolutionary moment failed in turn, the authorities that took up political power utilized the association to their own advantage by accusing their political opponents and representatives of conflicting values of sexual deviance. The security of the Tuileries thus came to be partly defined by the management of sex. The continuing failure of both the Second Empire and the Third Republic to complete that project shaped the meaning of nineteenth-century Paris.

Sexual and Social Anxiety in Post-Revolutionary Paris

Napoleon's final fall in 1815 did not presage a return to the Old Regime as many members of the old aristocracy may have hoped. Rather, although the political order initially returned to an authoritarian, hereditary monarchy, the socio-economic order continued to develop into what would be deemed "capitalism," by the mid nineteenth century.¹⁷ The increasing importance of market relations in this context not only

¹⁶ Harvey has described the conflict of June 1848 as one over "two radically different conceptions of modernity." One was "bourgeois. It was founded on the rock of private property and sought freedoms of speech and action in the market." The other "was founded on the idea of a social republic, capable of nurturing the population as a whole." Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 85–86.

¹⁷ The *Grand Robert* dates the first appearance of the term *capitalisme* in 1842, while the English term "capitalism" first appeared in 1854 according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

showcased the possible benefits of capital accumulation and private enterprise, but also unleashed forces that caused deep anxieties regarding the stability of the post-Revolutionary social, political, and economic order. The social hierarchy would continue its gradual detachment from the value of blood and instead would be based on wealth. In theory, then, anyone could climb the social ladder and such ascent became a primary goal amongst those privileged to possess the means to play the game. “Enrich yourselves,” François Guizot famously advised those who wished to gain the vote during the July Monarchy.

Guizot’s advice, however, raised a number of questions. On what basis was social order to be founded if there were no longer any absolute barriers to advancement? What limits could and should be placed on the pursuit of wealth? If participation in the market depended on fulfilling consumer desire, what forms of pleasure were permissible which ones were not? As they struggled to answer these questions, nineteenth-century expert commentators struggled to locate a point at which they could legitimately intervene without threatening the basic foundations of a transforming social order. As an effect of desire that was increasingly entering the marketplace as well, sex became one of those points.¹⁸ Beginning in the beginning of the nineteenth century and accelerating with the rise of the Second Empire, experts acknowledged the ways in which sex became a chip to be played in the course of advancing one’s position in the market. The use of sex became a useful representation of the possible degradations of capitalism. As venal

¹⁸ As Timothy Gilfoyle once described for New York, “Prostitutes, together with abortionists, pornographers, distributors of contraceptive aids, and the organizers of various leisure institutions in which they flourished, turned sexuality into something to be sold, displayed, and utilized to yield income. Sex became a profit making venture. Subject to the conditions of commerce, sex was no longer restricted to nonpecuniary satisfactions. It was part of the public culture, structured by the market, organized into institutions, ranging from the brothel to the theater, that guaranteed commercial efficiency, ostentation, and publicity. Sexuality thus lost some of the mystical and piritual functions it enjoyed in earlier eras.” Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 20.

activities available to lower class women and men, both female prostitution and male homosexuality threatened to upend not just traditional social hierarchies, but also new hierarchies of wealth. Prostitution and homosexuality came to stand for some of the worst possibilities of fully indulging in capitalist desires. And yet, although this discourse recognized immoral behavior as a result, rather than a cause, of the problems of market behavior, it actually deflected solutions away from ideology. Instead, the city came to serve as the vector for the problem; the failure to manage the city was seen as a cause of the spread of both prostitution and homosexuality throughout Paris.

Honoré de Balzac's *Comédie humaine* stands as one of the more explicit examples of this critique from the first half of the nineteenth century. Throughout the work, Balzac explored the ramifications of new sources of wealth and social order. In the opening description of *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* (1835), for instance, Balzac describes a city that irresistibly drew people to care only for themselves and their own advancement. "In Paris, no emotion can resist the drift of things, and the struggle to swim against the tide dampens the passions," Balzac writes, "Here, love is a desire and hatred a whim. There is no real bond of kinship but the thousand-franc note, no friend but the pawnbroker."¹⁹ The pursuit of wealth proved an irrepressible tide, separating man from man as each swam his own way in pursuit of his own goals. This movement destroyed people's ability to experience real feeling and made love nothing more than the exercise of a never fulfilled wish. These pursuits made all pleasure false even as the search for wealth revolved entirely around seeking it out. Every social class, Balzac

¹⁹ ["A Paris, aucun sentiment ne résiste au jet des choses, et leur courant oblige à une lutte qui détend les passions: l'amour y est un désir, et la haine une velléité; il n'y a là de vrai parent que le billet de mille francs, d'autre ami que le Mont-de-Piété."] Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, 5:1040. Translation is from Honoré de Balzac, *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, trans. Carol Cosman (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1998), 3.

argues, suffered in its own way. Moving through the social ranks, Balzac describes in turn each one's fall in the pursuit of "gold and pleasure." Balzac's "third social circle," for instance, comprised of "the crowd of lawyers, doctors, notaries, barristers, business men, bankers, manufacturers, speculators, and magistrates" who

all overeat, gamble, keep late hours, and their faces grow coarse, ruddy, and dull. For this terrible waste of intellectual energy, these manifold moral contradictions, they shore themselves up not with pleasure, which is too pale a contrast, but with debauchery, a secret and terrifying debauchery, for they have every means at their disposal and write society's moral code.²⁰

According to Balzac, modern pleasure was nothing more than debasement. And this particular social group's fall conditions all the others because they "write society's moral code." Their pursuit of "gold and pleasure" stands as nothing more than an excuse to pursue yet more wealth in a never-ending cycle that leads them further down the "this inferno, which may one day find its Dante."²¹

As the century progressed, Balzac's critique grew, if anything, only more relevant. The July Monarchy's relatively laissez-faire attitude towards the market began a process that only accelerated with the economic policies of the Second Empire and then the Third Republic. Balzac, in other words, elaborated a critique that was slightly ahead of its time, but by the last decades of the century it became a common foundation of a discourse that bemoaned urban culture's depravity. Even those writers seemingly invested in modern forms of urban life recognized the danger of giving in to the implicit logics of capitalist

²⁰ ["la foule des avoués, médecins, notaires, avocats, gens d'Affaires, banquiers, gros commerçants, spéculateurs, magistrats... Tous mangent démesurément, jouent, veillent, et leurs figures s'arrondissent, s'aplatissent, se rougissent. À de si terribles dépenses de forces intellectuelles, à des contradictions morales si multipliées, ils opposent non pas le plaisir, il est trop pale et ne produit aucun contraste, mais la débauche, débauche secrete, effrayante, car ils peuvent disposer de tout, et font la morale de la société."] Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, 5:1046–1048. Translation is from Balzac, *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, 14–16.

²¹ ["cet enfer, qui, peut-être, un jour, aura son Dante."] Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, 5:1046. Translation is from Balzac, *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, 14.

desire. In contrasting the pleasures of the past with those of the Second Empire, for instance, the journalist and novelist Gustave Claudin declares that the Paris of the late Second Empire was no Babylon, but did risk becoming one if the city's young *viveurs* continued to "abandon the traditions of our fathers."²² Claudin follows his contemporaries when he declares that "Paris is the city of pleasure," but clarifies that it "rather will once again become the city of pleasure, the day when a true descendant of the comte d'Orsay will take upon himself to reform gallantry and the elegant life."²³ Like Balzac, Claudin feared the loss of an older social hierarchy, but he did not consider his present to be irrevocably lost. By alluding to the "ill-considered manias" of the pleasure-seekers of his time and emphasizing the possibility of the well-considered pleasures of the aristocrat, Claudin warned of falling prey to the same phenomena written of in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* and underscored people's ability to find pleasure without losing themselves in it.²⁴ He accepts the possibility that the pursuit of gold and pleasure could lead to disorder and depravity, but implies that attaching new money to old tradition could attenuate the worst excesses of the search. Modern Paris had not already become a Babylon; the key to taming the new city lay in rebuilding it on the old foundations of aristocratic mores.

Claudin's vision of Paris remained fairly sympathetic, claiming that those who saw Paris as a modern Babylon that had no true inhabitants were mistakenly taking segments of the city as representative of the whole:

²² ["abandonner les traditions de nos pères."] Gustave Claudin, *Entre minuit et une heure: Étude parisienne* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1868), 16.

²³ ["Paris est la ville du plaisir, ou plutôt redeviendra la ville du plaisir, le jour où un vrai descendant du comte d'Orsay entreprendra de réformer la galanterie et la vie élégante."] *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

They live under the conviction that Paris is a modern Babylon, and insist in considering as capital sins simple and inoffensive amorous adventures... Because in that portion of Paris between the chaussée d'Antin and the porte Montmartre one does not go to bed, they conclude that one does not sleep anywhere in the big city.²⁵

Claudin, however, represented a minority voice in a growing chorus of anxiety that gained even greater currency during the Third Republic. These commentators believed that the desire for wealth led, first, to social alienation, second, to a general depravity, and then finally to venal sexuality in the guise of either prostitution or pederasty. Moral commentator Flévy d'Urville, for instance, in an 1874 book dedicated to warning of the dangers of prostitution, almost precisely replicated part of Balzac's critique by arguing that the Parisian, "[a]bsorbed, stunned by the care of his affairs, he walks, runs, bustles about, without ever really seeing anything [*sans rien approfondir*]."²⁶ The Parisian's selfishness rendered him incapable of truly relating to his fellow men. François Carlier, the chief of the moral police during the Second Empire, extended this critique in his memoir of the 1880s by attacking the stock exchange and directly implicating capitalism in the demoralization of French society. The stock exchange – *la bourse* – signified not just rampant speculation, but illicit sexual activity as well: "La Bourse, which, during a certain period, raised so many rapid fortunes, has been as well one of the elements of general demoralization... The stomach and the prostitute were, outside of financial monkeying around, their [parvenu financiers] only preoccupations."²⁷ Speculation leads

²⁵ ["Ils vivent tous dans cette conviction que Paris est une moderne Babylone, et s'obstinent à considerer comme autant de péchés capitaux de simples et d'inoffensives fredaines... Parce que dans cette portion de Paris comprise entre la chaussée d'Antin et la porte Montmartre on ne se couche pas, ils en concluent qu'on ne dort nulle part dans la grande ville."] Ibid., 19–20.

²⁶ ["Absorbé, ahuri par le soin de ses affaires, il marche, court, bouscule, sans rien approfondir."] d' Urville, *Les ordures de Paris*, 9.

²⁷ ["La Bourse, qui, à une certaine époque, a élevé tant de fortunes rapides, a été aussi un des éléments de la démoralisation générale... Le ventre et la prostituée étaient, en dehors des tripotages financiers, leurs seules préoccupations."] Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 29.

not only to financial aggrandizement but to overindulgence. The reference to both the financiers' stomach and the prostitute refers to a generalized "debauchery" of Parisian society, linked directly to movement of capital that was becoming increasingly foundational to Parisian society.²⁸ Capitalism itself, d'Urville and Carlier imply, rendered ordinary people susceptible to the logics of pleasure described by Balzac in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*. Wrapping oneself up solely in one's affairs, speculating on the stock market, led to depravity.

Concerned experts represented the possibility of this fall as a turn to prostitution. "Prostitution is the commerce of pleasure," wrote the physician Louis Martineau, "The generic term of prostitution applies to all immoral acts accomplished in the spirit of lucre."²⁹ In expanding his definition beyond those officially sought by the police, Martineau underscores his ultimate concern: that the desire for wealth justified, to certain depraved people, the sale of sex. Others agreed, imagining a society where social advancement justified temporary social debasement; selling one's body became the lowest common denominator source of income. The head of the Sûreté during the July Monarchy, Louis Canler, declared in his Second Empire memoirs that Paris featured a group of pederasts, known as *persilleuses*, which was "entirely composed of young men for the most part belonging to the working class, and who have been taken to this degree of abjection by the desire for luxury, for pleasure, by greed or laziness, that first cause of

²⁸ The French word *débauche* meant excess eating and drinking before to also referred to demoralization. See the entry for *débauche* in ARTFL's "Dictionnaires d'autrefois," <http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdicolook.pl?strippedhw=débauche>.

²⁹ ["la prostitution est le commerce du plaisir. / Le terme générique de prostitution s'applique à tout acte immoral accompli par esprit de lucre."] Louis Martineau, *La prostitution clandestine* (Paris: A. Delahaye et É. Lecrosnier, 1885), 35. Léo Taxil concurred and differentiated those who indulged in illicit pleasures for pleasure's sake from those who did so for monetary gain. See Léo Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d'une question sociale* (Paris: Libraire populaire, 1884), 7–8.

most people's depravation."³⁰ Similarly, moral commentator Pierre Delcourt warned in 1888 of married women who, seeking to "augment...the matrimonial revenue, with or without the connivance of the husband," would wander the public spaces of Paris looking for sexual clients.³¹ Poverty did not motivate the search, Delcourt claimed, but rather the desire to "augment social capital or satisfy some exaggerated needs of luxury."³²

These men ignored the very real factors of socio-economic class that often motivated the turn to prostitution. Rather than a means of making ends meet, they argued that women and men became prostitutes in order to most quickly ascend the social ladder. Almost certainly they did make this argument because they were unaware of the real reasons people turned to prostitution, but rather because the prostitute was not their whole subject. Rather, talk of prostitution became a way of imagining the worst possibilities of capitalism without directly attacking the very foundation of post-Revolutionary economic and social life.

The prostitute came to stand in for the possible disintegration of social order in the face of mobile hierarchies. Both Canler and Delcourt implied that men and women turned to prostitution in order to attain the trappings of their social betters; for the *persilleuse* as well as for married women, "luxury" proved an irresistible draw. The attempt to escape their assigned place within the social order thus led them to their ultimate degradation. Other commentators were even more explicit. In 1851, for

³⁰ ["La première catégorie est entièrement composée de jeunes gens appartenant pour la plupart à la classe ouvrière, et qui ont été amenés à ce degré d'abjection par le désir du luxe, du plaisir, par la gourmandise ou la fainéantise, cette cause première de la dépravation du plus grand nombre."] Canler, *Memoires de Canler, ancien chef du Service de Sûreté*, 266. *Persilleuse* was also a slang term for a female prostitute. We will discuss this conflation of male and female prostitution in the following chapter.

³¹ ["Ces femmes mariées augmentent de la sorte le revenu matrimonial, avec ou sans (105) la connivence du mari."] Delcourt, *Le vice à Paris*, 104–105.

³² ["our augmenter le capital social ou satisfaire à des besoins exagérés de luxe."] *Ibid.*, 103.

instance, the hygienist Alfred Becquerel described courtesans as “declassed women or girls, having received an education which does not correspond with their little affluence or their social position.”³³ The famous writer Maxime du Camp, for his part, warned that prostitutes who made it big in the city would retreat to the countryside and pretend to be honest women.³⁴ In addition, the early criminal pathologist Ambroise Tardieu feared pederasts’ ability to appear above their station and others saw relationships between upper and lower class men as particularly threatening.³⁵ Prostitutes and pederasts, by definition, could not be members of any sort of elite. Their imagined facility in ascending the social ladder reveals these experts’ fear that the social order of the nineteenth century rested on unstable foundations.

These threatening activities did not occur in a vacuum, but were rather encouraged and enabled by the city. Public space became the vector for the problem because administrators had, under the guise of economic liberalism, given up their right to effectively regulate the city. During the second half of the nineteenth century, commentators became intent on associating illicit sexuality with particular locations of urban pleasure. Both Delcourt and Canler related the fall into sexual depravity to particular Parisian spaces. According to Delcourt, “[t]he married woman, ordinarily the

³³ Alfred Becquerel, *Traité élémentaire d’hygiène privée et publique* (Labé, 1851), 582.

³⁴ Maxime Du Camp, *Paris: Ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle*, vol. 3, 5th ed. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1875), 349–350.

³⁵ On the fear of pederasts’ violating social hierarchies see Vernon A Rosario, “Pointy Penises, Fashion Crimes, and Hysterical Mollies: The Pederasts’ Inversions,” in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 151; Michael Sibalís, “The Palais-Royal and the Homosexual Subculture of Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3/4 (2001): 118; Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris*, 91; Pierre Hahn, *Nos ancêtres les pervers: La vie des homosexuels sous le Second Empire* (Béziers: H & O, 2006), 82. Some queer activists have recently argued that this class mingling is one of the direct benefits of public sexual activity because it loosens class hierarchies in favor of a more democratic urban environment. See Samuel R Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), pt. 2.

spouse of a modest employee, rarely frequents the streets, she is particularly fond of the public gardens and has her general districts at the Luxembourg, the Tuileries, and above all the Palais Royal, near to which one finds numerous hotels."³⁶ Canler, moreover, declared that *persilleuses* haunted some of Paris's most popular spots for nightly entertainment that included the "passages des Panorama, de l'Opéra, la galerie d'Orléans au Palais-Royal, where they walk two by two."³⁷ The city itself enabled the sexual practices so threatening to social stability. According to Carlier, lax enforcement of city regulations encouraged this tendency: "It's a relatively recent date that the appetites of the comfortable, that the taste for luxurious pleasure having been developed and generalized, that authority has become so liberal in matters of *lieux de plaisirs*."³⁸ The same fears that drove the turn to prostitution and pederasty encouraged the proliferation of spaces of both licit and illicit pleasure. Thus did capitalism lead to difficulties of urban management, even though that control had already been deemed absolutely essential to the stability of modern life.

The Pathological City

The fact that anxieties over prostitutes revolved around social ascension reveals the class dimension to discussions of illicit sexuality during the nineteenth century. This fantastic fear of a marketplace that encouraged people to turn to venal avenues of social

³⁶ ["La femme mariée, d'ordinaire l'épouse d'un modeste employé, fréquente peu les rues, elle affectionne les jardins publics et a ses quartiers généraux au Luxembourg, aux Tuileries et surtout au Palais Royal, à proximité duquel se trouvent de nombreux hôtels."] Delcourt, *Le vice à Paris*, 104.

³⁷ ["passages des Panorama, de l'Opéra, la galerie d'Orléans au Palais-Royal, où ils se promènent deux à deux."] Canler, *Memoires de Canler, ancien chef du Service de Sûreté*, 266.

³⁸ [C'est à une date relativement récente que les appétits du confortable, que les goûts de plaisirs luxueux s'étant développés et généralisés, l'autorité est devenue aussi libérale en matière de lieux de plaisirs."] Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 27.

advancement upended the notion that order could be reestablished on the same terms as the Old Regime. That discourse, however, did not emerge independently of the material conditions of the city in which so much of it was published. Commentators linked their fear of illicit sexuality to the urban environment as they associated the “immoral” practices of the poor and working classes with the city’s “pathologies,” that emerged most overtly by diseases such as cholera. Metaphorically, commentators used the sewers that were always threatening to overflow with filth, but were also central to a vision of an efficient city, as a way to speak of these interconnections. Just as the above-ground required an efficient street system to facilitate the movement of goods and people around the capital, so too did the below-ground need an efficient sewer to evacuate the city’s waste. The sewer became a central interpretive device for understanding a vision of the city that linked abject social practices to urban pathology. The pathological city required cleanliness on the streets, in the home and even in the brothel.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Paris struggled to absorb a wave of immigrants from the provinces. Although Paris was not yet seeing the emergence of large-scale factory work as in Great Britain, a general lack of opportunity in the provinces led to vast migration of working-class men to the capital. Although Paris’s physical area hardly grew, the city’s population nearly doubled from around 500,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the century to about one million in 1850.³⁹ Although this growth occurred through the migration of people of all classes, the lower orders comprised the bulk of new arrivals. As revolution and disease continued to disrupt the

³⁹ David H Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), chap. 7; Johannes Willms, *Paris, Capital of Europe: From the Revolution to the Belle Epoque*, trans. Eveline L. Kaner (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1997), 163–164; Peter S Soppelsa, “The Fragility of Modernity: Infrastructure and Everyday Life in Paris, 1870-1914”, 2009, 39, <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/62374>.

city, the inability of the urban environment to effectively absorb this growth became increasingly evident. On the one hand, the city's failure to provide adequate space for the lower orders led to discontent that sometimes preceded violence. On the other hand, experts linked the immoral social practices of the poor to the spread of disease. Both urban development and the management of social practice thus became necessary to solving Paris's problems.

In his influential book, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes* (1958), Louis Chevalier describes how Paris's unprecedented population growth revealed the city's shortcomings in two primary ways: insufficient housing and inadequate infrastructure. According to Chevalier, the housing crisis mostly affected the poor and those newly arrived in the city, while the problems of infrastructure affected everyone. The laissez-faire attitude of early nineteenth-century authorities encouraged building for the well off and left the poor to fend for themselves in increasingly compact living spaces.⁴⁰ Chevalier correctly emphasizes the ability of elites to procure housing even as they shared a lack of sufficient clean water, sewage, and other amenities with the downtrodden.⁴¹ Alongside the Paris of the *grands boulevards* and the Tuileries emerged a Paris of slums and filthy tenements, where odors emanated from the sidewalks and air rested stagnant.⁴² Paris, put simply, was literally overflowing.

To Chevalier, this pathological city turned the working classes into criminals. Chevalier saw prostitution, theft, and begging as evidence of social pathology, but in fact

⁴⁰ Willms, *Paris, Capital of Europe*, 176.

⁴¹ Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: H. Fertig, 1973), 186–214.

⁴² For descriptions of this situation, see for instance, Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris*, chap. 1; David P Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann* (New York: Free Press, 1995), chap. 1, 4.

this diagnosis was itself a product of a new kind of expert discourse that convincingly defined them as such.⁴³ The social practices of the poor – encapsulated by social investigators in the notion of “living conditions” that were revealed by the state of the poor’s home life – were constructed as the cause, not the effect, of crises such as the cholera epidemic of 1832. Absent mothers, drinking, sex outside of marriage, and uncleanliness all led to the dangerous state of Paris’s slums, which in turn threatened the health of everyone. As an effect of individual activity that influenced everyone’s lives, disease justified intervention within the social.⁴⁴ The poor’s immoral social practices, insofar as they were represented by the condition of their home, also came to signify the health of the urban environment more broadly.

The “sickness” of the urban environment became clear through visible evidence of the city’s incapacities. As Victor Hugo reminded his readers in his famous description of the Paris sewers in *Les misérables* (1862), the medieval infrastructure of the city could not fulfill the needs of a modern urban center: “Sometimes, the sewer of Paris took itself into its head to overflow, as if that unappreciated Nile were suddenly seized with wrath. There were, infamous to relate, inundations from the sewer. At intervals, this stomach of civilisation digested badly, the cloaca flowed back into the city's throat, and Paris had the

⁴³ For a useful critique of Chevalier’s thesis see Barrie M. Ratcliffe, “Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle?: The Chevalier Thesis Reexamined,” *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 542–574.

⁴⁴ Andrew Aisenberg has argued that this discourse was part of a larger process of justifying government intervention in private lives despite ideological emphasis on individual liberty. By displacing the problem of “contagion” onto the immorality of the poor not only justified that intervention, but also effectively evaded the question as to what caused that poverty to begin with. Aisenberg, *Contagion*, 25–26. See also Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 36–38; Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

aftertaste of its slime.”⁴⁵ Hugo evokes a city barely tolerating its inhabitants. Humanity’s waste unsettled the stomach of the city and threatened to poison it. Hugo did not simply mean to imply, however, the danger of the population’s physical waste. Rather, Paris’s pathology – its need to vomit – also emerged from the same (social) causes of the cholera. For a range of commentators – from Hugo to the public hygienist Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet to the engineer Pierre-Emmanuel Bruneseau – the sewers represented the link between social practice and the urban environment. It thereby revealed the necessity of urban management to the security of a social order threatened by marginal social practice. For Hugo, for example, the sewer contained the detritus of Paris’s social history alongside the remnants of crime, itinerancy and revolution. “The history of men is reflected in the history of the cloacae,” Hugo wrote in *Les Misérables*, “Crime, intelligence, social protest, liberty of conscience, thought, theft, all that human laws pursue or have pursued, have hidden in this hole.”⁴⁶

The sewer functions as society’s metaphorical, as well as literal, system of repression, flushing away all the disruptive remnants of the city’s everyday life. It thus stood in for the entire city as well; the control of the sewer meant that the capital was itself also firmly under control. But any failure to do so implied the reverse: the failure to capture and direct the filth that ran through the sewer signified the city’s apparent pathology. Despite his ambivalence over the effects of Haussmannization, Hugo

⁴⁵ [“Quelquefois, l’égout de Paris se mêlait de déborder, comme si ce Nil méconnu était subitement pris de colère. Il y avait, chose infâme, des inondations d’égout. Par moments, cet estomac de la civilisation digérait mal, le cloaque refluit dans le gosier de la ville, et Paris avait l’arrière-goût de sa fange.”] Victor Hugo, *Les misérables* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), 1288–1289. Translation is from Victor Hugo, *Les misérables*, trans. Charles E. Wilbour (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 1092.

⁴⁶ [“L’histoire des hommes se reflète dans l’histoire des cloaques...Le crime, l’intelligence, la protestation sociale, la liberté de conscience, la pensée, le vol, tout ce que les lois humaines poursuivent ou ont poursuivi c’est caché dans ce trou.”] Hugo, *Les misérables* (1951), 1285-1286. Translation is from Hugo, *Les misérables* (1992), 1092.Ibid., 1089.Ibid., 1089.Ibid., 1089.

provided one of the most vivid images of this process. Imagine Paris's sewer as its "intestine," Hugo asks his readers, thoughtlessly expelling valuable waste — human fertilizer — into the sea. With proper foresight, Hugo explains, one could turn excrement into something useful: "A great city is the most powerful of stercoraries. To employ the city to enrich the plain would be sure success. If our gold is filth, on the other hand, our filth is gold."⁴⁷ Rather than repress the city's waste and risk its eruption into the streets, it would be better to effectively manage it.⁴⁸ By transforming excrement into wealth, Hugo envisions a city that did more than just render its filth innocuous, but actually made it beneficial; the excess filth of early nineteenth-century Paris thus becomes, not a threat, but a boon. Efficient circulation did not just benefit the body, but the social order as well because it could ensure that all the city's products were directed to the most use. Haussmann sought to accomplish this goal in reality by molding the entire city to this idealized vision. By enabling circulation above ground as well as below, Haussmann could facilitate market relations while preventing its pathologies.

Social and Sexual Reform

As the city came to be conceived in terms of biological health, it also began to be understood as a social organism that could be worked on and made efficient in a similar manner as the human body itself. Paris could be made over – it could undergo surgery – in order to encourage useful and productive relations between its inhabitants and thereby

⁴⁷ ["Une grande ville est le plus puissant des stercoraires. Employer la ville ç fumer la plaine, ce serait une réussite certaine. Si notre or est fumier, en revanche, notre fumier est or." Hugo, *Les misérables* (1951), 1281. Translation is from Hugo, *Les misérables* (1992), 1086. Ibid., 1086.Ibid., 1086.Ibid., 1086.

⁴⁸ Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen*, 3–4, 22–23.

attenuate its pathological state.⁴⁹ Although enunciated during the July Monarchy, these themes were not actually put into practice until the Second Empire when Napoleon III and Prefect of the Seine Haussmann began planning the systemic transformation of Paris. Haussmann's primary concern was opening the city to movement in order to create a proper circulatory system for the organism that was Paris.⁵⁰ In an idealized world, such circulation would prevent the types of demographic, economic, and sexual excess associated with early nineteenth-century Paris and thereby dampen the revolutionary impulse that erupted in 1848.⁵¹

Those who descended into the depths of the old sewer in the first half of the nineteenth century thus sought to tame not just the material environment, but the social order as well. The link was not just a metaphor. A well functioning city enabled moral practice, but so too did practice shape the form of the environment. For Bruneseau, the Napoleonic engineer whom Hugo would later immortalize in *Les misérables*,

Cleanliness of the body is the image of the cleanliness of the soul; the cleanliness of a house is the image of the order which reigns there. So I think I am justified in saying that the cleanliness of the city is the image of the purity of the morals of its inhabitants, one more attraction, something foreigners truly admire and respect, and that insalubrity is among the major causes of depopulation.⁵²

By creating a parallel between the body/soul and house/order, Bruneseau links the moral practices of the individual worker to his or her living conditions and in doing so also

⁴⁹ Nicholas Papayanis, *Planning Paris Before Haussmann* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 16.

⁵⁰ Françoise Choay, *The Modern City; Planning in the 19th Century*, trans. Marguerite Hugo and George R. Collins (New York: G. Braziller, 1970), 17–18; Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 122; Eric Fournier, *Paris en ruines: Du Paris haussmannien au Paris communard* (Paris: Imago, 2008), 27.

⁵¹ On Haussmann's attempt to prevent revolution through "strategic embellishment," see for example Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 12, 121.

⁵² Pierre-Emmanuel Bruneseau, "Observations sur la salubrité de Paris", n.d., F8 95, AN, quoted in and translated by Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen*, 22.

connects practices to social stability. The “cleanliness of the body” ensured the “order” of the home. Bruneseau then extends the metaphor to encompass the public infrastructure of the city as well. The “cleanliness of the city” stood in for that of the body and represented the social practices of those who lived within the urban environment. Bruneseau therefore linked individual morality — social practice — directly to the meaning of the wider city. To clean the sewer meant cleaning the soul, an act that stood as a key to ensuring social order.

This project required direct intervention into the “body” of Paris. Examination followed by surgery were required in order to clean the city and make it safe once again for inhabitants’ use. In 1874, for instance, d’Urville published his exploration of Parisian vice, *Les ordures de Paris*. The title — *The Filth of Paris* — perpetuated the link between the physical cleanliness of the urban environment and its moral cleanliness. Introducing his project, he explained that “[t]o those who find it too brutal, we respond that to hide evil is to protect it, while to unveil it in its most revolting nakedness, is to begin the work of sanitizing [c’est faire oeuvre d’assainissement].”⁵³ Justifying his project in terms familiar to anyone current with the thematics of sex and urban vice in the nineteenth century, d’Urville leaned explicitly on a relationship between notions of sex and space.⁵⁴ Revealing the immorality of urban life was to undress the city, leaving it open to the ravishing gaze of the expert moralist. At the same time, such (supposedly)

⁵³ [“A ceux qui le trouveraient trop brutal, nous répondrons que chacher le mal, c’est le protéger, tandis que le dévoiler dans sa plus révoltante nudité, c’est faire oeuvre d’assainissement.”] d’Urville, *Les ordures de Paris*, 1.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault has noted how rhetorical moves that seemingly acknowledge an unwillingness to address the filth of illicit sex while emphasizing the absolute need to do so contributed to a flowering of sexual discourse in the nineteenth century. Speaking of sex became necessary in order to manage it; the moralism of such statements thus only serve as a mask for the need to speak of sex constantly and incessantly. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 24.

revolting nakedness rendered this embodied city submissive to the work of cleaning. The term *assainissement* refers specifically to public hygiene and thus brings the nude body back to the initial referent of the urban environment. D'Urville, in other words, couched the necessity to clean the city in terms of the body, while the nakedness of that body highlighted the significance of sexual desire to any understanding of urban space. Indeed, d'Urville seemed hardly able to escape the connection. Continuing his justification, he exclaimed: "Let's say it loudly: it is not scandal that we seek out; but a moral autopsy of a city like Paris must necessarily lay bare [mettre à nu] many repulsive things, and it is painful during this work if we encounter an honest figure, standing bewildered there, like a pearl on a dunghill."⁵⁵ Here again Paris had to be revealed in its nudity for the eyes of the expert commentators and, as he peels away the layers of "repulsive things," he might reveal a solitary upright person amidst the shit of the city.⁵⁶ D'Urville's curious image of the pearl on the dung heap seems almost like a pre-emptive attempt to counter the charge that he found the filth to be attractive itself.

D'Urville's embodiment of Paris was part of a longstanding discourse that justified urban change in organic terms. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, commentators began conceiving of Paris as a living body, complete with respiratory and circulatory systems and conceptualizing the urban environment as parallel to human biology; just as human beings required functioning circulatory and respiratory systems, so too did the city.⁵⁷ Second Empire and Third Republic administrators and

⁵⁵ ["Disons-le hautement: ce n'est pas le scandale que nous cherchons; mais l'autopsie morale d'une cité comme Paris doit nécessairement mettre à nu bien des choses repoussantes, et c'est à peine si dans ce douloureux travail, nous rencontrerons une honnête figure, égarée là, comme une perle sur un fumier."] d'Urville, *Les ordures de Paris*, 7.

⁵⁶ Note as well how d'Urville links excrement to sexual depravity.

⁵⁷ Papayanis, *Planning Paris Before Haussmann*, 119.

commentators therefore sought to justify the transformation of the city in terms of the body. As one urban commentator wrote in 1855,

[i]n this giant city, center of the universe, mankind brought in and brought out by the veins and arteries of railways, as blood in the heart, will from now on circulate without embarrassment or confusion, because this is not only the palace of the sovereign [the Louvre] that embellishes itself, the city also aerates, cleans, and streamlines and makes the *toilette* of civilization.⁵⁸

The circulation of people was the circulation of blood; the embellishment of the Louvre was a civilization washing up. The well functioning city ensured the health of individual bodies; urban transformation was an exercise in social health.

The experts and moral commentators who asserted the link between health, practice, and environment focused in part on working class sexual practices as a site of intervention. Until well into the Third Republic, female prostitution stood as a key sign of the degradation of the working-class family. Prostitution, in other words, was one of the practices that threatened urban health because it represented the immorality of the working classes that led to the city's illness.⁵⁹ And yet, commentators recognized that an influx of young workingmen into the city had created new demands upon Paris's sexual economy.⁶⁰ Although prostitution signified social disorder, it also served as a possible key to securing order. Enter Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet (1790-1836), a public

⁵⁸ Edouard Fournier, *Paris démoli: Mosaïque des ruines* (Paris: August Aubry, 1855), x–xi.

⁵⁹ Aisenberg, *Contagion*, 38–39. The immoral state of working class families continued to be linked to the turn to prostitution amongst young women well into the Second Empire and early Third Republic. Maxime du Camp, for instance, insisted that remarriage amongst the working-class was a major cause of “demoralization.” Whether it was a mother jealous of the advances of her new husband towards a daughter, or a step-mother unwilling to care for her new step-child, the situation resulted in the girl living on the street. Léo Taxil similarly blamed “promiscuity” within poor families as “one of the indirect causes of prostitution,” by which he meant to imply the threat that children, upon waking up in the middle of the night in a family's only room would witness the “conjugal frolicking of their parents,” as well as the problems attendant with a brother and sister sharing the same bed. Du Camp, *Paris*, 3:337; Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d'une question sociale*, 13–14.

⁶⁰ On the changing demographics of early nineteenth-century Paris see Colin Jones, *Paris: Biography of a City* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 282.

hygienist who provided the most important theoretical justification for regulated prostitution in the service of urban health of the nineteenth century. Parent's view was essentially Augustinian; prostitution could solve the problem of excess male sexual need without threatening the larger urban social order if authorities ensured that it was well observed and kept out of public view.⁶¹ Parent related prostitution to his other large concern: the sewer. Both, he argued, were essentially natural phenomena amenable to human management in order to bring under control the excess waste and sexual need that emerged with population growth.⁶² As a later moral commentator would explain, prostitution is "the social sewer; there is no city without the sewer."⁶³ The key to asserting control over both sewers was ensuring the ability of physical and sexual waste to circulate without infecting either the urban environment or the social body. Fundamentally conservative, Parent did not advocate the wholesale restructuring of the urban environment or of the police's system of sexual regulation. Rather he sought to define techniques that could contribute to the effective management of existing social relations and urban structures. Parent thus explained that prostitution was simultaneously evil and necessary. Prostitution never lost its connotations of disease and disorder, but Parent believed that effective administration could defuse such threats in order to render prostitution safe for working class men to utilize. In doing so, he sought to solve both problems of working-class sexuality. Women who turned to prostitution would be placed

⁶¹ Donald Reid has noted Parent's debt to Saint-Augustine. See Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen*, 23.

⁶² I use the term "natural" to reflect the importance of the fact that Parent saw both the sewers and female sexuality as already-existing problems that only need to be placed under the control of man. See Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 16–17.

⁶³ ["C'est l'égout sociale; il n'y a pas de ville sans égout."] A. Granveau, *La prostitution: Situation des mœurs à Paris*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie Martinon, 1872), 4.

under the control of the police, while male sexual need would be satisfied. Both sources of possible disorder would thus be neutralized.

The police constructed the regulationist system in order to reconcile the inevitability of prostitution with its perceived dangers. Public order was threatened by prostitution because of its associations with disease and the violation of social boundaries, but also demanded its continued existence as an outlet for excess sexual energy. Early steps toward the total regulation of prostitution began in the early eighteenth century. Before the French Revolution, according to a Second Empire report, “the ordinances on prostitution were so confused that the *filles de joie* were not made subject to any fixed rule, and the punishments so barbarous that one recoils before their application.”⁶⁴ At this point, Police Lieutenant Lenoir attempted to regulate the trade by enunciating rules that set out where prostitutes could live, where and at what time they could show themselves and by regularizing the process for dealing with infractions. Some of these initial regulations remained in effect during the Second Empire, but the following decades also saw some basic refinements to the system.⁶⁵ Napoleonic era decrees, for example, provided for the inscription and examination of prostitutes, while the police began trying to fully enclose prostitutes within the *maisons de tolérance* –

⁶⁴ [“les ordonnances sur la prostitution étaient tellement confuses que les filles de joie n’étaient de fait assujettis à aucune règle fixe, et les chatiments tellement barbares qu’on reculait devant leur application.” “Rapport du 11 Juin 1853”, June 11, 1853, 2, DA 222, APP. In his recoiling before the “barbarous” punishments of the past in comparison to present day techniques of surveillance and examination, the report nicely illustrates the transition described in Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1975). See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977). Such punishments included splitting prostitutes found near military camps nose and ears. On Old Regime laws concerning prostitution see Colin Jones, “Prostitution and the Ruling Class in Eighteenth-Century Montpellier,” *History Workshop*, no. 6 (October 1, 1978): 8–9.

⁶⁵ “Rapport du 11 Juin 1853,” 2–9. See also Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 102.

brothels – during the 1820s.⁶⁶ These initial steps all attempted to control prostitutes’ use of the city in order to manage the appearance of illicit sexuality in public space.

The July Monarchy saw the regulationist system’s fullest practical implementation. An 1830 ordinance promulgated by Prefect Claude Mangin limited prostitution to the *maisons de tolérance*. *Filles isolées* – registered prostitutes who lived outside the brothels – were enjoined to only practice their trade within one. They were forbidden from soliciting on the street, presenting themselves so that passers-by recognized their profession, and were directed to “dress simply and with decency.” The *maisons de tolérance* were permitted to indicate themselves by a lantern and an old woman who stood near the door.⁶⁷ These attempts to regulate public sexual practices reveal the difficulties in successfully determining what kinds of circulation were permissible in Paris. The police registered prostitutes who moved between their living quarters and their easily recognizable spaces of work in the name of total enclosure and freedom from sight. In doing so, the authorities lent an official imprimatur to certain signs because people had to be able to locate a brothel as much as they had to be able to avoid individual prostitutes. The attempt to limit prostitutes’ ability to move about the city made other signs of venal sex more obvious than they otherwise may have been.⁶⁸

The regulationist system was an attempt to stamp out the root cause of urban disorder by placing one of the central threats facing the city – sexual practices – under the

⁶⁶ “Rapport du 11 Juin 1853,” 4–9; Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 51–52; Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 41.

⁶⁷ “Rapport du 11 Juin 1853,” 8–11; Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 42–45.

⁶⁸ In addition, by creating a category of registered prostitutes, the police essentially also defined the unregistered prostitute as well: the clandestine prostitute who did not register with the police, confine herself to a brothel, nor, most dangerously, submit to medical examination. As François Carlier once admitted, “Clandestine prostitution is... a consequence of regulation [“La prostitution clandestine est... une conséquence de la réglementation.”]” Thus, the attempt to effectively manage prostitution for the good of social order led directly to the emergence of a figure who would directly threaten it. See Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 19.

control of existing authorities. Doing so preserved, not just the sexual health of those who frequented a prostitute, not just the ability of elites to manage the working classes, but also the stability of the city. The stability of the urban social order demanded not just new infrastructure, but new modes of social control. “We find ourselves in the presence of an essentially human fact,” wrote Maxime du Camp,

that is in the purview of natural history itself and that no legislation has created, but that remains a necessity of the first order because it touches on public health, on the safety of cities, on the exterior department of morality [*moeurs*], on the necessary repression of all excessive forms of perversity[. It] has forced the use of cramped regulatory measures, administratively applied for the greatest good of all, in order to combat a scandal that is always ready to display itself, in order to try, in a word, not to cure, but to attenuate as much as possible, a constantly open social wound that would not wait to spread in a dreadful way if it were not incessantly watched.⁶⁹

Although Du Camp wrote several decades after Parent-Duchâtelet, he continued to indulge in some of the most cliché arguments of regulationists. Prostitution was an effect of natural history. Its ramifications extended to the health of the entire social body. It was simultaneously “necessary” to “repress all forms of perversity” and not possible to “cure” them. Immorality stood as a festering wound on the social order constantly threatening to spread should one avert one’s eyes even for one second. By its own logic, then, the constant surveillance of the city was both completely necessary and totally impossible. The city was never fully secure and this fact simply justified in turn another round of enforcement. The implicit cycle of repression and eruption justified the continuing importance of this discourse of regulation. Rather than questioning the basis

⁶⁹ [“Nous nous trouvons donc en présence d'un fait essentiellement humain, qui est du ressort de l'histoire naturelle même, que nulle législation n'a créé, mais que des nécessités de premier ordre, touchant à la santé publique, à la sécurité des villes, au maintien extérieur des moeurs, à la répression nécessaire de toute forme excessive de la perversité, ont forcé d'enfermer dans les étroites prescriptions de règlements sévères, administrativement appliqués pour le plus grand bien de tous, pour combattre un scandale toujours prêt à s'afficher, pour essayer, en un mot, non pas de guérir, mais au moins d'atténuer, dans les ressources du possible, une plaie sociale constamment ouverte, et qui ne tarderait pas à s'étendre d'une façon effroyable, si elle n'était pas incessamment surveillée.”] Du Camp, *Paris*, 3:316.

of a social system that encouraged women to turn to prostitution and single working-class men to enjoy it, commentators elaborated a theory that pinpointed those practices as a cause of urban disorder and then constructed a system designed to perpetuate them. Even though commentators such as du Camp recognized their inability to fully control prostitution, they continued to rely on a regulationist system because it enabled them to continually provide an excuse for their inability to effectively manage the city.

Although same-sex sexual activity fell under the jurisdiction of the moral police as well, the regulationist system strictly defined only concerned female prostitutes. Nevertheless, the police were also invested with the management of same-sex sexual activity that occurred in public. Just as regulationism was built upon a foundation of police ordinances and decrees, rather than explicit legislative authority, the regulation of same-sex sexual activity was extra-legal. The Napoleonic Penal Code of 1810 defined a broad range of sexual offenses under the heading “attentats aux mœurs” and included “articles on rape and sexual assaults (#331-333), public offenses against decency (#330), the incitement of youths to debauchery (#354-335), and adultery and bigamy (#336-340),” as well as the distribution and/or display of “songs, pamphlets, figures or images contrary to bonnes mœurs” (#287-288).⁷⁰ Left vague, these legal prohibitions enabled the police to define enforcement themselves. By 1870, article 330, which banned “offenses against public decency,” almost exclusively signified homosexual activity, but its generality remained a subject of discussion and concern.⁷¹ Although the article may have colloquially meant pederasty, it continued to also signify something far broader,

⁷⁰ Peniston, *Pederasts and Others*, 16–17; J.-B. Duvergier, *Code pénal annoté. Edition de 1832* (Paris: A. Guyot et Soube, 1833), 47, 53–55, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54717901>. On the origins of Article 330, Public Offenses Against Decency, see also Sibalis, “The Regulation of Male Homosexuality.”

⁷¹ Peniston, *Pederasts and Others*, 18–19.

defined essentially by publicness rather than a particular individual or act. In other words, the repression of same-sex sexuality revolved as much around concern over the city as it did around fears of an illicit sexual act. For example, taking the meaning of “decency” as self-evident, the medico-legalist Maurice Laugier explained that an offense “occurs each time an act against decency, such as gestures, touching, exhibition of sexual organs, happen, not only in a public area, but in a space accessible to public” whether due to “obscene intention or simple negligence on the part of the accused.”⁷² For Laugier, public offenses against decency reflected more than a preoccupation with male same-sex sexual behavior. The concern rested on conceptions of the appropriate uses of public space. The city remained the ultimate concern.

Although one could argue that female prostitution found itself the target of an “official” police practice and male same-sex sexual activity the target of “unofficial” police practice, both fell under the umbrella of a system meant to regulate public sexual activity in the service of social peace. It is worth pausing briefly, however, to emphasize how gender shaped an individual’s relationship to the policing of public space. Without explaining exactly what he meant, Ambroise Tardieu, simply declared that “ We understand how many material and moral reasons that can stop women from the public accomplishment of acts capable of harming decency.”⁷³ It was not that women were

⁷² [“il se produit chaque fois qu'un acte contraire à la pudeur, tel que gestes, attouchements, exhibition des organes sexuels, a lieu, non-seulement dans un endroit public, mais dans un lieu accessible à la vue du public, qu'il y ait de la part de l'inculpé intention obscène ou simplement negligence.”] Maurice Laugier, “Du rôle de l’expertise médico-légale dans certains cas d’outrage public a la pudeur,” *Annales d’hygiène publique et médecine légale* 50 (July 1878): 165, <http://web2.bium.univ-paris5.fr/livanc/?dico=perio&cote=90141&chapitre=public%20pudeur&p=4&do=page>.

⁷³ [“de raisons matérielles et morales peuvent arrêter les femmes dans l’accomplissement public des actes capables de blesser la décence. Ceux que j’ai eu l’occasion d’examiner étaient tous des vieillards Presque septuagénaires, des rentiers, des commerçants retirees, des oisifs, arêtes dans les lieux public au moment où ils se livraient à des exhibitions ou à des attouchements obscènes.”] Ambroise Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 3rd ed. (Paris: J.B. Baillièrre, 1859), 4.

incapable of “harming decency,” but rather that they rarely possessed the “material and moral” means to do so in public. Such means, moreover, were so well understood that Tardieu saw no reason to enumerate them. This disjuncture made sense in the context of prevailing assumptions regarding gender difference and the city. As the public hygienist J.B. Fonssagrives argued in 1874, “there is...no parity to be established between the retired and sedentary life of the gynaeceum, and the exterior, agitated life in movement taken up by men in great cities.”⁷⁴ Simply by entering public space, and certainly by entering public space as a sexual being, women violated certain expectations regarding the nature of urban life. Other scholars of Parisian prostitution have emphasized the vulnerability of working-class women to arbitrary police action not felt by men. Insofar as working-class women became suspicious by entering the public, while a man became suspicious by virtue of his particular public actions, such emphases remain justifiable.⁷⁵ The police did capture both women and men in its net, but women remained the more explicit target.

The attempt to regulate illicit sexuality in order to alleviate some of the growing anxieties associated with the development of modern Paris did not only display itself on the bodies of prostitutes and men interested in sex with other men. Rather, the city itself became a location on which administrators attempted to manage the sexual life of Paris. The mutual indebtedness of the regulation of sexuality and urban design was illustrated by administrators’ attempt to determine the relative density of prostitution in the city. As

⁷⁴ [“il n’y a sous ce rapport aucune parité à établir entre la vie retirée et sédentaire du gynécée et les exigences de la vie extérieure, agitée et en mouvement, que mènent les hommes dans les grandes villes.”] Jean Baptiste Fonssagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1874), 163.

⁷⁵ Gender difference, however, does not justify ignoring offenses against public decency, as well as other crimes that fell under the jurisdiction of the moral police, in a book that claims to be a comprehensive history of the bureau. See Berlière, *La police des mœurs sous la IIIe République*.

evidence of immorality and impurity, as well as any failure to manage capitalism, public sexual activity had to be controlled as a symbol of the control of the entire city.

Administrative rules banning the placement of brothels near certain other buildings, such as schools and churches, underlined the spatial dimension of the regulation of public sexuality in nineteenth-century Paris.⁷⁶ Regulators believed they could either concentrate or disperse urban vice at will. Both strategies had benefits. Although concentrating vice would have maintained a clear division between the clean and the infected, dispersion would better drain excess without disrupting the city.⁷⁷ As the Restoration Monarchy fell and the July Monarchy rose to take its place, the “Commission spéciale pour la répression de la prostitution,” recommended that the administration should stop risking the citizenry’s disapproval by asking their opinion before opening a new *maison de tolérance* because doing so “would hinder the administration which, in the well heard interest of morality and public safety, should apply its efforts to augmenting the number of *maisons de tolérance* in order to concentrate prostitution.”⁷⁸ Concentration stood as the explicit goal of the early regulationist regime.

And yet, as the scope of the problem revealed itself and total enclosure gradually came to seem a remote possibility, the police came to focus on securing their continued access to prostitutes’ bodies rather than total elimination of the problem.⁷⁹ Expert commentators thus began enunciating a vision that recognized the impossibility of

⁷⁶ Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 87.

⁷⁷ Alain Corbin, “Présentation,” in *De la prostitution à Paris au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2008), 47.

⁷⁸ [“ce ferait entraver l’Administration qui, dans l’intérêt bien entendu de la morale et de la sûreté publique, doit appliquer ses efforts à augmenter le nombre de maisons de tolérance afin d’y concentrer la prostitution.”] “Recueil des Procès Verbaux des Séances de la Commission Spéciale Pour la Répression de la Prostitution. Registre No 1.”, 1831 1829, 43, DA 221, APP.“

⁷⁹ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 50–52.

enclosure and advocated a balance between concentration and dispersal. Parent-Duchâtelet himself advocated “laying out a plan of a vast central area [équarrissage] but recommending at the same time tolerating small dispersed areas.”⁸⁰ Later, François Carlier acknowledged the apparent advantages of concentration – noting that it would facilitate police surveillance and render it simple for inhabitants to avoid the sequestered quarter – but also argued that too high a concentration of vice would lead to a city within a city, one organized around immorality and crime.⁸¹ He also declared that the attempt to concentrate prostitution during the Middle Ages led to the protection of all criminality within the tolerated zone and claimed that enclosing prostitutes within a hospital as Louis XIV had attempted only encouraged their continued moral degradation.⁸² These comments, in some ways, simply served to justify the preexisting situation. Early nineteenth-century Paris featured a concentration of brothels in the center of the city with others scattered throughout, especially just beyond the city limits.⁸³ For all the talk of shaping the density of venal sex in Paris, therefore, commentators’ confirmation of a well-established situation was an implicit acknowledgment of their limitations.

The transformation of the city ultimately took the question out of the hands of the police. Although administrators strove to manage the effects of urban change, Haussmannization effectively spread prostitution throughout the city. As a 1890 report delivered by the “Commission sanitaire sur la reorganization du service sanitaire relatif à la prostitution,” explained: “there has occurred, due to the transformations of Paris, of the

⁸⁰ [“Parent-Duchâtelet dresse le plan d’un vaste équarrissage central mais préconise en meme temps la tolerance des petits équarrissages disperses.”] Corbin, “Présentation,” 47. See also Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 126–127; Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 20.

⁸¹ Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 131–135.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 11–15.

⁸³ Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 55–57.

demolition of the old neighborhoods where prostitution was formerly contained, notable changes in prostitutes' habits." In the past, they had waited for clients in their neighborhoods; now they were everywhere.⁸⁴ The destruction of tolerated brothels led to a rise in clandestine prostitution, centered especially in the business establishments such as furnished hotels or *garnis*, cafés and dance halls, that sprang up in the wake of the city's development.⁸⁵ As Ali Coffignon, a "social observer and hack writer," explained, "the closure of a *maison de tolérance* always results in the immediate opening of three shady *garnis* where prostitution takes place under its most dangerous form."⁸⁶ The urban eruptions engendered by Haussmannization inadvertently brought illicit sex into the open. The police believed that they could determine the spatial organization of prostitution. Haussmann believed he could remake the city to encourage forms of social interaction amenable to capitalism and order. In practice, however, Haussmann's projects frustrated those of the police by rendering dispersal the only possible outcome.

⁸⁴ ["C'est parce que qu'il s'est opéré, par suite des transformations de Paris, de la démolition des vieux quartiers où la prostitution était jadis cantonnée, des changements notables dans les habitudes des filles publiques."] Emile Richard, *Rapport. Présenté par M. Emile Richard, au nom de la Commission sanitaire sur la réorganisation du service sanitaire relatif à la prostitution*. (Paris: Conseil municipal de Paris, 1890), 33, DB 412, APP. Carlier also blamed the decreasing number of brothels on the demolitions and annexations of the Second Empire. See Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 146–147. Alain Corbin agrees with this contemporary assessment. See Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 301–303.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 174; Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines À Paris*, 19–20. This development also took place in London, if perhaps slightly later in the century. See Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 25.

⁸⁶ ["la fermeture d'une maison de tolérance a toujours pour résultat immédiat l'ouverture de trois garnis borgnes où la prostitution s'exerce sous la forme la plus dangereuse."] Ali Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris* (Paris: Librairie Illustrée, 1888), 67–68. See also Caufeynon, *La Prostitution. La Débauche -- Son Histoire -- Corruption -- Législation*, vol. 16, Bibliothèque populaire des connaissances médicales (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Médicale, 1902), 37–38. The description of Coffignon comes from Michael L. Wilson, "Drames d'amour des pédérastes: Male Same-Sex Sexuality in Belle Epoque Print Culture," *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3/4 (2001): 189–200.

Space, Social Order, and Public Sex in the Tuileries

Just as the control of the city represented social order, the effective management of sexual activity signified the proper functioning of urban life. During the course of the nineteenth century, the entire city came to be made in the image of a bourgeois social order, facilitating social and economic exchange by opening the city to circulation and reinforcing social hierarchy through the construction of a commanding view from the top-down. As Jules Vallès recognized, certain spaces came to represent these developments in microcosm. One such area was the Tuileries, home to the Emperor, site of leisure, abutting the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli. Comprising a rectangular plot of 255,000 square meters that extends westward from the Louvre, the Tuileries remains the largest garden in Paris. Dusty paths crisscross the shaded greenery and landscape containing a public sculpture garden. Surrounding the garden proper lay a number of “terraces” of raised walkways that look down on both sides. Until 1871, the garden was also enclosed on the west by the Tuileries palace; it now opens onto the place de la Concorde and further on, the Champs-Élysées. Although it predated the nineteenth century, the Tuileries remained a symbol of the forces shaping the city. Despite its clear significance, however, authorities failed to prevent its use by both prostitutes and pederasts. Members of both groups solicited sex in the gardens. If the regulation of sexuality had become central to solving the problems associated with urbanization and capitalism, then the failure to manage the sexual uses of the Tuileries illustrates just how tenuous such control always remained.

Before 1871, the Tuileries palace represented state power while the garden enabled subjects and citizens to participate in a culture of public display and interaction.

The modern Tuileries dates to the sixteenth century, when Catherine de Medici decided to create a royal residence in order to remain close to her son Charles IX.⁸⁷ The Tuileries of the Old Regime was the prototype of the modern public garden, and was initially a site of royal leisure.⁸⁸ Louis XIV opened the garden to the general public and, between 1664 and 1789, Parisians could enter so long as they maintained an air of respect due to a space of state power.⁸⁹ Unsurprisingly, the space was placed under constant observation and access was restricted to the well to do.⁹⁰ The opening of the garden to the public of course also led to other activities; “solicitation, theft, rowdiness, begging, drunkenness and even suicide or accidents,” were all noted by the late eighteenth century.⁹¹ At the same time, moves towards public hygiene encouraged the placement of chairs and rudimentary urinals for the use of those enjoying the garden.⁹² Beginning in the late eighteenth-century, however, the central place held by the Tuileries as *the* public garden of Paris began to erode, becoming “no more than one, among others,” a process that accelerated under the Second Empire when “[b]etween forty and fifty” new green spaces emerged.⁹³ Even so, the Tuileries remained an important site of state power and urban leisure throughout the century.

⁸⁷ Genevieve Bresc-Bautier, Denis Caget, and Emmanuel Jacquin, *Jardins du Carrousel et des Tuileries* (Paris: Caisse nationale des monuments historiques et des sites, 1996), 16. For brief nineteenth-century outlines of the history of the construction of the Tuileries see C.L., “Les Tuileries,” *Liberté*, June 27, 1871.

⁸⁸ Bresc-Bautier, Caget, and Jacquin, *Jardins du Carrousel et des Tuileries*, 10, 13.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 35; Jones, *Paris*, 180.

⁹⁰ Bresc-Bautier, Caget, and Jacquin, *Jardins du Carrousel et des Tuileries*, 44.

⁹¹ [“racolage, vol, tapage, mendicité, ivrognerie, et même suicides ou accidents,”] *Ibid.*, 50.. Michael Sibalis has also pointed to the garden’s use for same-sex sexual activity during the Revolutionary period. See Sibalis, “The Regulation of Male Homosexuality,” 86.

⁹² Bresc-Bautier, Caget, and Jacquin, *Jardins du Carrousel et des Tuileries*, 50–51.

⁹³ [“les Tuileries ne sont plus qu’un, parmi d’autres.”] *Ibid.*, 68. See also Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 123.

During the July Monarchy, the Tuileries became one of the primary places to be seen by fashionable Parisians. In 1841, Valérie de Frezade published a *Physiologie du Jardin des Tuileries*, which essentially described the garden as a space of flirtation and lovers' rendezvous. The "Terrasse des Feuillans [sic]," along the Rue de Rivoli served for discrete rendezvous; the openings enabled women who waited there to avoid prying eyes while waiting to meet their lovers. Honest women, however, should instead "choose the terrasse au bord de l'eau, or even the square that ends at the terrasse des Feuillans, and your character will not be taken in doubt, and one will not say when seeing you pass; 'there's one of *demi-virtu*.'"⁹⁴ People went to the Tuileries in order to be seen, but those who went had to remain vigilant in order only appear in a certain light. Although the Tuileries served as a lovers' rendezvous, the proper placement of honest and dishonest women was supposed to ensure that such sexual encounters remained safely ensconced in established social hierarchies. Indeed, by practicing such carefully constructed forms of display that order was actually reinforced. As Griselda Pollock has argued, the interactions between men and women in the spaces of modernity serve to "structure sexuality within a classed order."⁹⁵ The Tuileries was supposed to facilitate the management of sexuality in the service of social stability, but it became something far more unstable.

Given its symbolic importance at the convergence of royal display and public assembly, it is no coincidence that scenes of revolutionary violence often cohered around

⁹⁴ ["Ne donnez donc jamais là vos rendez-vous, choisissez la terrasse au bord de l'eau, ou bien le carré qui termine la terrasse même des Feuillans, et votre qualité ne sera pas prise en doute, et l'on ne dira pas en vous voyant passer: '*voici une demi-virtu*.'" Frezade, Valérie de, *Physiologie du Jardin des Tuileries* (Paris: Charpentier, 1841), 17–19.

⁹⁵ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 170.

the Tuileries, which was first invaded in 1792 and almost put to fire. The events of 1848 proved similar, with members of the working classes assaulting the palace and invading the garden. The inversion of social hierarchy in these events was most famously figured in Daumier's "Le Gamin de Paris Aux Tuileries" (Figure 1.1). The *gamin* was a figure of Paris's restless population, a boy who wandered the streets and could be seen in other



Figure 1.1. Honoré Daumier. *Le gamin de Paris aux Tuileries*. *Le Charivari*, 4 March 1848 (From the Bibliothèque nationale de France <http://expositions.bnf.fr/daumier/grand/079.htm>). The caption reads: “Christ!...one sure sinks in.”

famous images of revolution such as Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) and Hugo's *Les Misérables*. In Daumier's depiction, the *gamin* sinks into the

throne, wondering at the comfort he find there. Taking the place of the king, the young man finds joy in his unexpected social ascension.

Daumier's depiction may have focused on class, but others saw this act of social inversion as a moment of sexual violation as well.⁹⁶ Walter Benjamin, for instance, quotes an undated description of the events: "Episodes in the June Insurrection: 'Women were seen pouring boiling oil or hot water on the soldiers while shrieking and bellowing. In many places, insurgents were given brandy mixed with various ingredients, so that they would be excited to madness...Some women cut off the sexual organs of several imprisoned guardsmen, and we know that an insurgent dressed in woman's clothing beheaded a number of captured officers...'"⁹⁷ Benjamin's reference implies the ways in which social and political disruption were figured in terms of sexual violation. The description thus reinforces the importance of sexual stability to a stable socio-political order. Flaubert viscerally brought the two together in *L'Education sentimentale* (1869):

With obscene curiosity they [those who had invaded the Tuileries palace] rummaged in all the closets, prying into every nook and cranny, leaving not a single drawer unopened. Hardened criminals thrust their arms into the princesses' beds and rolled all over them, to console themselves for not being able to rape their occupants...Motionless, with wide staring eyes, a common whore was standing on a pile of clothing in the ante-room, posing, horrifyingly, as the Statue of Liberty.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ My reading of the sexual implications of political conflict is informed by others who have noted the ways in which revolution has been represented as sexually deviant. Neil Hertz, for instances, has argued that revolution was figured as a sexual threat in order to avoid addressing the real sources of conflict and instead render them into threats that remain dangerous, but conform to established visions of the world. Lynn Hunt, similarly, has traced the ways in which the French Revolution can be read as a "family romance," where the revolutionaries sought to free themselves from the constraints of their "father" (the king) and their "mother" (the queen). See Neil Hertz, "Medusa's Head: Male Hysteria under Political Pressure," *Representations*, no. 4 (October 1, 1983): 27-54; Lynn Avery Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁹⁷ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 702.

⁹⁸ ["Une curiosité obscene fit fouiller tous les cabinets, tous les recoins, ouvrir tous les tiroirs. Des galériens enfoncèrent leurs bras dans la couche des princesses, et se reoulaient dessus par consolation de ne pouvoir les violer...Dans l'antichambre, debout sur un tas de vêtements, se tenait une fille publique, en statue de la liberté, -- immobile, les yeux grands ouverts, effrayante."] Gustave Flaubert, *Oeuvres*, vol. 2

The Revolutionaries were either potential rapists or whores. The liberty they demanded, represented by a common prostitute, led to sexual danger, castration, and transgression. 1848 realized experts' fear that they had lost control of the city. The social discontent that erupted in the streets represented as well the government's failure to manage the city's sexual life and served as one point of motivation for developing the scientific and administrative tools that emerged later in the century. The difficulty of putting into place the mechanisms of urban management advocated by experts during the early nineteenth century were realized, not only by the physical violence of revolution, but its sexual violence as well.

The revolutionary inversions of the Tuileries led, as a consequence, to its use by political authorities seeking to demonstrate their own stability. The Revolution of 1848 became an opportunity for a new government to project a republican vision of social order onto the city. Such faith was especially attractive between the revolutions of February and June, after the fall of the July Monarchy, but before the bitter split between workers and the propertied during the June Days.⁹⁹ In March 1848, for instance, a group of neighborhood business owners suggested that the garden should continue to be used by all Parisians and tourists, while the palace should hold "a national representation, whether a museum, library, or an entirely different institution which would allow the public the entire enjoyment of the garden."¹⁰⁰ The Tuileries, these entrepreneurs believed, could be

(Paris: Gallimard, 1952), 321. Translation is from Gustave Flaubert, *A Sentimental Education: The Story of a Young Man*, trans. Douglas Parmée (Oxford University Press, 2000), 315.

⁹⁹ On the two visions of 1848 see Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 85–86. On 1848 more generally, see especially Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852*, trans. Loyd, Janet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁰⁰ ["Le château des Tuileries peut d'ailleurs être utilisé soit comme demeure de la représentation nationale, soit comme musée, Bibliothèque ou toute autre institution qui laisserait au public l'entière jouissance du

an effective place at which to illustrate the harmonious nation. In a similar vein, a short newspaper article suggested turning the palace into a museum where “the republican government could give dances and parties for the notables of every class, of every profession, of every state body, which would truly be *fêtes nationales*.”¹⁰¹ Before the June Days could demonstrate the futility of class solidarity, these letters illustrated how the Tuileries could be turned to a different kind of representation, one that underscored a new harmonious social order in the very space in which the previous order was torn apart.

Just as the new regime had to find a way to manage social disruption associated with the Tuileries, so too did it need a way of dealing with its sexual disruption. Its vision of order depended not just on a coherent image of the nation that effaced class conflict, but also on sexual purity. In April 1848, the Prefect of Police reminded his officers of the need to watch Paris’s prostitutes after the revolution had interrupted their activities. Some women, he noted, had forgotten their “regulatory obligations.”¹⁰² In response to the Prefect’s circular, the officer in charge of the area around the Tuileries wrote to inform him that although there were no *maisons de tolérance* in the area, some prostitutes from the neighboring districts, as well as pederasts, came to the Tuileries during the evening. The commissar promised to follow the prefect’s instructions regarding the prostitutes and to arrest the pederasts “if need be.”¹⁰³ Later, an 1849 letter to the Minister of Public works, who had apparently taken an interest in the state of the Tuileries, reported some success in “expelling” prostitutes from the garden and declared

jardin.”] Letter to Messieurs les Président et Membres du Gouvernement provisoire, March 5, 1848, F21 1760, AN.

¹⁰¹ “Journal de Tous,” *La Presse*, March 10, 1848.

¹⁰² [“des obligations réglementaires.”] Préfet de Police to Commissaire de Police, “Repression de la prostitution”, April 27, 1848, DA 223, doc. 119, APP.

¹⁰³ Commissaire de police Avulley to Préfet de Police, May 1, 1848, DA 223, APP.

that he “hope[d]...that the organization of this service will continue so that, in a few days, the garden will be entirely purged of the frequentation of these women of impure morals.”¹⁰⁴ The interest shown by the minister is telling. The assertion of Republican dominance over Parisian space demanded the effective management of public sexual activity and thus attracted the attention of an important member of the government. Indeed, the fact that commentators associated the birth of the Second Republic with sexual aberration made policing spaces such as the Tuileries all the more necessary in the months that followed.

Such efforts nonetheless proved futile. The failure of the Second Republic after only three short years rendered it impossible for the republicans to fully dissociate their project from sexual deviance. Instead, the early Second Empire was able to encourage those associations in order to emphasize its own difference. An 1852 police report on a group of pederasts, for instance, made sure to note that “they are considered to be partisans of anarchy because it is recalled in their neighborhood that, during the days of June 1848, they loudly proclaimed the triumph of the insurrection, although apparently, they had taken no part in it.”¹⁰⁵ To the police, this group thus suffered from a dual perversion: political radicalism and sexual deviancy. Those who sought to overcome the Revolution’s limitations and justify their own projects under the Empire reinforced the association of social disorder with sexual aberration. It is no coincidence, then, that the report also emphasized that the police saw a former official of the provisionary

¹⁰⁴ [“J'espère, Monsieur le Ministre, l'organisation de ce Service se continuant, que, d'ici à peu de jours, le Jardin sera purgé entièrement de la fréquentation de ces femmes de moeurs impures.] Gally to Ministre des Travaux publics, September 3, 1849, F21 1761/1762, AN.

¹⁰⁵ [“On les considère comme des partisans de l'anarchie car on se rappelle dans leur voisinage, que, pendant les journées de juin 1848, ils ont proclamé hautement le triomphe de l'insurrection, bien qu'en apparence, ils n'y aient pris aucune part.”] Officier de la Paix [Illegible], “Rapport”, January 23, 1852, 5, DA 230, doc. 247, APP.

government dine at the leader of the pederasts' home.¹⁰⁶ To these petty administrators of the Second Empire, sexual deviancy lay at the root of the Second Republic; it was the key to its ultimate instability. The administration of the early Second Empire drew out the connection in order to reinforce its own authority and its success at purifying its own government of the evidence of perversion.

One of the new regime's first tasks was to sanitize the urban fabric of remnants of the sexual excesses of 1848. The "perverse and dangerous men" who participated in the insurrection of December had to be dealt with and "all traces of the orgies of February, if they are inscribed in history, will not at least be on the walls" of the Tuileries."¹⁰⁷ The sexual imagery of the January 1852 circular in which these statements appear was no coincidence; the purification of space had to involve the elimination of the sexual signs – the orgies – of revolution. In the following years, the Tuileries came to bear the marks of the Second Empire, transforming into a representation of imperial authority and hierarchy. After decades of planning, the northern part of palace was joined to the Louvre, which united the imperial residence to a representation of French national glory. In addition, the residential sections were completely revamped and the garden was renovated.¹⁰⁸ The garden itself remained the "aristocratic garden *par excellence*" and the lovers' rendezvous of the past as well as a site of social order and hierarchy.¹⁰⁹ The

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁷ ["ces hommes pervers et dangereux... Toutes les traces des orgies de février, si elles sont inscrites dans l'histoire ne le seront plus au moins sur les murs."] Jean Gilbert Victor Fialin Persigny, *Circulaire de M. le ministre de l'Intérieur à MM. les préfets des départements. Détail des grands travaux qui s'exécutent dans le palais des Tuileries, description de ce palais, 29 janvier 1852* (Paris: Impr. de Chassaignon, 1852).

¹⁰⁸ Bresc-Bautier, Caget, and Jacquin, *Jardins du Carrousel et des Tuileries*, 88; Émile de Labédollière, *Le nouveau Paris: Histoire de ses 20 arrondissements* (Paris: Librairie Gustave Barba, 1860), 7.

¹⁰⁹ Alfred Delvau, *Les plaisirs de Paris: Guide pratique et illustré* (Paris: A. Fauré, 1867), 37–39. See also Bresc-Bautier, Caget, and Jacquin, *Jardins du Carrousel et des Tuileries*, 112.

Tuileries became a site of imperial order, where the emperor displayed his power by appearing in his reserved garden.

Manet's well-known depiction of a gathering in the garden (Figure 1.2), therefore, was not necessarily more ordered than his depiction of a crowd at a later universal exposition because it is any less *modern*, as T.J. Clark argues, but rather because the Tuileries was a place where the modern was ordered precisely to the needs of Empire.¹¹⁰ Representations of modernity relied on the particularities of a space as much as in a gradually growing belief in the ambiguous nature of modern life. The Tuileries was not a space like the Folies-Bergère or the universal exposition, at least not during the Second Empire. While the latter two were oriented around the values of the market, the Tuileries remained a space of Empire. Space would reinforce the boundaries between the proper and improper, between the upper and lower classes, and between the normal and the pathological. Whatever ambiguities the Empire allowed for the sake of its relatively liberal economic policies did not apply to specifically imperial spaces like the Tuileries. Although the Tuileries garden remained open to the public, for instance, the populace remained firmly separated from the imperial body. While the emperor was in residence, the reserved garden of the Tuileries was off limits to the public.¹¹¹ Indeed, an 1858 letter from the prefect of police to the Minister of State suggested, in order to prevent "criminal attempts" on the body of the emperor, constructing a double grill that would form a

¹¹⁰ T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 64–66.

¹¹¹ A request to view the sculptures in the reserved garden was denied, for instance, because the Emperor was in residence. Beuscher and Jouin to Vaillant, January 18, 1864, F21 878, Archives nationales de France; Vaillant to Beuscher and Jouin, January 23, 1864, F21 878, Archives nationales de France. On the reserved garden of the Second Empire see Bresc-Bautier, Caget, and Jacquin, *Jardins du Carrousel et des Tuileries*, 88–89.

corridor between the public garden and the *terrasse du bord de l'eau* that would traverse the reserved garden, the entrance to which would be closed when the emperor was



Figure 1.2: Edouard Manet, *La Musique aux Tuileries* (1862). Oil on Canvas. National Gallery, London (From Wikimedia Commons: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manet_-_Musique_aux_Tuileries_rep.jpg)

moving through.¹¹² The physical layout of the garden itself, then, reinforced the social hierarchy of the Second Empire.

The Second Empire's emphasis on constructing an essentially public city demanded that entry to a public garden remain relatively open. They thus risked allowing subversive social practices to take place at a center of political and social power. The police feared that spaces constructed for public leisure presented a unique

¹¹² Préfet de Police to Ministre d'Etat, March 5, 1858, F21 1775, AN.

opportunity for men who sought sex with other men. “During nice afternoons,” Carlier wrote, young men, “from the idle worker to the external *collégien*,” came to the garden to enjoy themselves.¹¹³ These groups attracted pederasts who would sit on a bench and talk with those they happened to meet. After a series of questions, the pederast would offer to introduce the young man to someone who could offer him a job and they would set off, innocently stopping before a hotel where the pederast claimed to live. Offering the poor young man a drink, the drink soon turned to dinner and the young man would find himself alone at night, “enclosed in a room, face to face with a gentleman who he does not know.”¹¹⁴ The Tuileries remained open to the public in order to provide just the sort of social interaction the young men partook in. But that interaction also attracted pederasts, intent on corrupting the nation’s youth. The spread of bourgeois values through the enactment of proper forms of public leisure necessitated these sorts of spaces and the regulation of public sexual activity should have secured the garden for the enactment of these practices of social class. The inability to keep pederasts out of the Tuileries highlights the administration’s failure to effectively control its own representation of power.

The attempt to manage the sexual uses of space was but one part of a larger goal of foreclosing the opportunity to create spatial meaning from the bottom up. Participants in the Commune of 1871 reacted by asserting their power over the urban fabric, going so far as to burn much of the city when such control seemed doomed. The Communards reacted to Second Empire policies by reorganizing everyday life around the

¹¹³ [“depuis le jeune ouvrier sans travail, jusqu’au collégien externe.”] Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 433.

¹¹⁴ [“enfermé dans une chambre, en tête à tête avec un monsieur qu’il ne connaissait pas.”] *Ibid.*, 434.

neighborhood.¹¹⁵ They thus reestablished the importance of local community within a metropolis organized around national and international ties. “The workers’ redescend into the center of Paris,” symbolized their ultimate control over the city, but such power was ultimately fleeting.¹¹⁶ As the first administration of the Third Republic reentered the city by force, the Communards resorted to setting these spaces ablaze, rather than give over their neighborhoods once again. It was no coincidence that the Tuileries once again became a focus of this symbolic battle between those who lived in the city and those who sought to govern it. As Eric Fournier has put it, “the burning of symbolic monuments, such as the Tuileries or the Hôtel de Ville, underscores that the communards preferred to destroy Paris rather than give it back to the enemy.”¹¹⁷ As a repudiation of Haussmann’s projects, the fires constituted a form of urban transformation “from below.”¹¹⁸ As Colin Jones has put it, “[t]he fires of the Communards and Communardes had replaced Haussmann’s wrecking ball.”¹¹⁹

Ostensibly, the Communards’ fight was rooted in the social, but those who followed them asserted their base sexual depravity as well. The social seemed to have always been also a sexual problem. Just as the 1848 Revolutionaries were associated with sexual deviance, so too were those who set the fires of 1871. The *pétroleuse*, an image of a harpy-like woman “hurling petrol bombs to the right and left in the doomed city” was

¹¹⁵ Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 33, 41.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹⁷ Eric Fournier, *Paris En Ruines*, 98.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 90–92.

¹¹⁹ Jones, *Paris*, 325. Jones also notes that it was the Communards who opened the perspective from the Tuileries to the Champs-Élysées. Although he gives credit to the Third Republic for not rebuilding the palace, it should be emphasized that “one of the greatest political vistas” was actually created by the Commune. *Ibid.*, 98–99.

frequently figured as a prostitute.¹²⁰ The danger of prostitution exceeding its boundaries had apparently realized itself during the Commune.¹²¹ The image of the *pétroleuses* perpetuated the notion that to effectively manage the city required the control of sexual activity.¹²² Following the Commune, moral discourse reinforced the connection between social instability – or revolution – and illicit sexuality. Maxime du Camp, for instance, argued in 1875 that “[t]he Revolution [of 1789] had brought forth an unbridled license of morals...every moral wound rolled out in public; gardens, promenades, were invaded by debauchery.”¹²³ Similarly, Carlier, appreciatively citing his fellow officer C.J. Lecour, argued that “large political jolts, such as the invasion of 1815, the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, develop prostitution and, by consequence, venereal disease.”¹²⁴ An imagined link between social disruption and sexual disease was thus reinforced. This is not to say, of course, that all revolutions were treated equally: a comment on the state of the Tuileries following the Commune declared that while “the people of Paris” (read: the bourgeoisie) had taken the palace in 1830, “savages” (read: the working class) had

¹²⁰ Ibid., 325. Eric Fournier notes, for instance, how the *pétroleuse* hid her deviancy through using *bidons de lait* to carry the petrol. Her threat multiplied, in this sense. Not only did she set fire to Paris, not only did she turn away from her God-given duty of motherhood, but “she tried hard to mask her transgression [s’efforce de masquer sa transgression].” Eric Fournier, *Paris En Ruines*, 146–146. On the figure of the female communard, see especially Gay L. Gullickson, *Unruly Women of Paris Images of the Commune* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹²¹ Leslie Choquette, “Degenerate or Degendered? Images of Prostitution and Homosexuality in the French Third Republic,” *Historical Reflections/Reflexions historiques* 23 (1997): 216–217.

¹²² Leslie Choquette, “Homosexuals in the City: Representations of Lesbian and Gay Space in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3/4 (2001): 152; Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 41–42.

¹²³ [“La Révolution avait amené une licence de mœurs effrénée... tous les plaies morales s’étaient en public; les jardins, les promenades, étaient envahis par la débauche.”] Du Camp, *Paris*, 3:325. The concern that the Revolution was undermining morality was also perceived at the time. During the 1790s, “the police repeatedly expressed alarm that the Revolution had brought in its wake rampant sexual immorality, including an unprecedented incidence of pederasty and both male and female prostitution.” Sibalis, “The Palais Royal,” 119.

¹²⁴ [“les grandes secousses politiques, comme l’invasion de 1815, les révolutions de 1830 et 1848, développent la prostitution, et, par conséquent, la contagion vénérienne.”] Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 117.

destroyed it in 1871.¹²⁵ The frequent disruptions were linked to the degradation of France. Du Camp argued that the instability of social institutions led to moral instability.¹²⁶ An anonymous letter to the police declared that male prostitutes spread throughout the city ever “since the war.”¹²⁷ Dr. Cox-Algit argued that male prostitution began at the end of the Empire, “was barely interrupted by the war of 1870, and resumed soon after with an indescribable fury.”¹²⁸ A variety of expert and moral commentators linked the failures of political and social order to failures of sexual order during the early Third Republic. A coherent goal – the purification of urban space – thus emerged with newfound vigor, even as the political regime founded itself on “liberty.”

Unsurprisingly, the Tuileries again proved a central site.¹²⁹ Although the palace had burned to the ground during the *Semaine sanglante* (Bloody Week) of late May, the garden did not remain closed long. A July 24, 1871 article struck a somber note while discussing its reopening: “The *promeneurs* are still rare: some nannies, some passers-by who traverse the garden on business, and that’s it. Nothing recalls that so elegant, so Parisian crowd, which came, last year, to rest under the fresh shadows of the Tuileries.”¹³⁰ According to the article, the lack of destruction in the reserved garden made it the preferred spot for the public. Thus did the *pétroleuses* open the entire garden

¹²⁵ C.L., “Les Tuileries.”

¹²⁶ Du Camp, *Paris*, 3:351.

¹²⁷ Anonymous to Préfet de Police, July 6, 1874, DA 230, doc. 370, APP.

¹²⁸ [“à peine interrompue par la guerre de 1870, et reprise aussitôt après avec un acharnement indescriptible.”] Dr. Cox-Algit, *Anthropophilie, ou Étude sur la prostitution masculine à notre époque* (Nantes: Morel, Libraire-Editeur, 1881), 4.

¹²⁹ Albert Boime has discussed this project in the context of the early impressionists. See Albert Boime, *Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris After War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹³⁰ [“Les promeneurs y sont rares encore: quelques bonnes d'enfants, quelques passants qui traversent le jardin pour leurs affaires, et voilà tout. Rien ne rappelle cette foule si élégante, si parisienne, qui venait, l'année dernière, se reposer sous les frais ombrages des Tuileries.”] “Le Jardin des Tuileries,” *Le Pays*, July 24, 1871.

to the public. Others continued to rent chairs, to sit and “contemplate...the ruins of the Tuileries,” which would remain until the 1880s, despite an immediate desire to be rid of evidence of the insurrection.¹³¹ The garden once again became a place of Parisian pleasure, open to everyone. Just as quickly, however, the full effects of that process became apparent. The emperor’s reserved garden, for instance, did not just become an important spot for innocent walkers, but also, as we saw above, the preferred spot for “girls [to] wander during the night in the search of poor libertines.”¹³² Indeed, the Third Republic faced similar problems as the Second Empire. The opening of the garden to bourgeois pleasure in the service of class harmony only encouraged surreptitious pleasures.

The guise of proper enjoyment hid sexual subversions that were far less overt than prostitution or pederasty. Oscar Wilde himself saw the potential. His poem “Le Jardin des Tuileries,” places a narrator in one of the rented chairs of the garden during the winter, watching young “children run / Like little things of dancing gold.” Playing a trick on an “old nurse,” they “now in mimic flight...flee.../ And, tiny hand on tiny hand, / Climb up the black and leafless tree.” And these activities only make the narrator jealous of the tree: “Ah! Cruel tree! If I were you, / And children climbed me, for their sake / Though it be winter I would break / Into spring blossoms white and blue!” reads the final stanza.¹³³ The pleasure of the children encircling his body was only barely concealed as sexual, yet Wilde places his narrator as a perfectly natural part of the Tuileries’ crowd. The sexual pleasures of the garden emerged through, not despite, its other, more overt,

¹³¹ Ibid. Eric Fournier has argued that the ruins of the insurrection became sites of confrontation between different groups of the population who attributed to them their own meanings. Eric Fournier, *Paris En Ruines*, 221–222.

¹³² Vallès, *Le tableau de Paris.*, 223.

¹³³ Oscar Wilde, *Complete works of Oscar Wilde.*, Authorized ed. (Boston., 1905), 327–327.

uses. Women too threatened to take advantage of these opportunities. Married middle class women, Pierre Delcourt warned, would appear in the parks in order to prostitute themselves in order to supplement their husband's income. Such women were adept at discrete solicitation: "How many times as well, passing-by in a garden, seeing a young and pretty mother, seated on a wooden chair, modestly occupied by crochet, and only raising her eyes to observe the game of a gracious baby, without remarking the second glance...to the address of an *amateur* who makes no mistake."¹³⁴ Codes of respectability could be used, not to safely and properly access public space, but to subvert it. In other words, spaces that served as sites of respectability, where the codes of the proper management of capitalism could be displayed, were precisely those most vulnerable to appropriation.

If the techniques that enabled people to safely use the city were those that enabled its subversion, then all the various attempts to manage the effects of capitalism were for nothing. The administration found itself unable to regain control of the problem and risked revealing their inability to guarantee social peace. One 1877 surveillance report noted that not as many prostitutes frequented the Tuileries as rumor had it and that although "one surely sees some low-down women who walk on the *terrasse du bord de l'eau*...we have never seen them solicit men in an indecent fashion and by revealing their skirt."¹³⁵ In downplaying the problem, the police officer was reacting to a broad public

¹³⁴ ["Combien aussi, passant en un jardin, voient une jeune et jolie mère, assise sur une chaise de fer, modestement occupée à faire du crochet, et ne levant les yeux que pour surveiller le jeu d'un gracieux bébé, sans remarquer le deuxième coup d'oeil...à l'adresse d'un amateur qui ne s'y trompe pas."] Delcourt, *Le vice à Paris*, 104.

¹³⁵ ["on rencontre bien quelques femmes de bas étage qui se promènent sur la terrasse du bord de l'eau, mais on n'en n'a jamais vu racoler les hommes d'une façon indécente et en relevant leur jupe."] Chef du Service [Illegible], "Surveillance aux Tuileries, Champs Elysées, Le Louvre et le Chatelet", November 1, 1877, BM2 60, APP.

belief that the garden had, in fact, been overrun. That “some low-down women” frequented the garden was enough to effectively close it to respectable people. In the eyes of one Parisian, the problem of pederasty and prostitution – the writer mentions both – in the Tuileries signified that the people were abusing the privilege of the garden’s use. The Louvre and Tuileries belonged, he reminded the minister, to the state and the populace has been permitted to use them, but that privilege was not absolute.¹³⁶ Another wrote to the police in order to complain that the *terrasse au bord de l’eau* was not open to honest women because prostitutes were soliciting there.¹³⁷ An 1885 police report claimed not only that prostitutes habitually “masturbate men who hide their genitals with a newspaper or the apron of these women,” but also that such actions prevent mothers from walking their children in the garden.¹³⁸ An 1892 letter from someone living near the Tuileries declared that the pimps and prostitutes make it impossible to enjoy his proximity.¹³⁹ The list goes on: one man could not walk home through the garden, several mention that the area around the place du Carrousel, the Palais Royal, the statue of Gambetta, and the Orangerie were off limits to honest folk.¹⁴⁰ Whether real or imagined – and it was most likely a combination of both – the presence of prostitutes within the Tuileries threatened the garden’s proper function. The attempt to ensure the security of

¹³⁶ G. Redon to Ministre de l’instruction publique et des beaux-arts, June 18, 1902, F21 2413, AN.

¹³⁷ P. Dasse to Marie du Louvre, September 22, 1879, BM2 60, APP.

¹³⁸ [“masturbent les hommes qui cachent leurs parties sexuelles soit avec un journal soit avec le tablier des dites filles.”] “Prostitution dans le jardin des Tuileries”, September 9, 1885, BM2 60, APP. An earlier letter from an anonymous Parisian also mentions masturbation on the *terrasse au bord de l’eau*. See Anonymous to Préfet de Police, December 23, 1878, BM2 60, APP.

¹³⁹ Unknown to Préfet de Police, July 6, 1892, BM2 60, APP.

¹⁴⁰ On not being able to walk through the garden see Anonymous to Préfet de Police, April 17, 1900, BM2 60, APP. On the place du Carrousel see C. Pacier to Préfet de Police, August 22, 1881, BM2 60, APP. On the Palais Royal see [Illegible] to Commissaire de Police, n.d., BM2 32, APP; Inspecteur principale des palais to Préfet de Police, November 25, 1885, BM2 32, APP. On the Gambetta statue see F. Héraud to Préfet de Police, November 19, 1900, BM2 60, APP. On the Orangerie see Henry Pasco to Préfet de Police, September 7, 1888, BM2 60, APP.

the urban environment through the management of urban space and of sexuality, simultaneously and through one another, could never find total success.

Conclusion

During the first half of the nineteenth century, experts, administrators, and moral commentators sought to reconcile the disruptions of urbanization with the logics of capitalism. The population growth of the early nineteenth century, alongside the fear that the pursuit of wealth was tearing the social order apart, made it abundantly clear that the still-medieval capital of France faced dire problems. The newly important relations of the market threatened to tear apart social hierarchies. That threat, associated as it became with particular spaces, thus complemented a wide-ranging discourse that declared the nineteenth-century city to be “pathological.” Sexuality became one way for commentators to speak of these problems. Population growth was dangerous because it increased the danger of the poor’s immoral practices, while also disrupting the city’s sexual economy by increasing the amount of single working-class men within the city. The pursuit of wealth, meanwhile, threatened social order because it depended on the exercise of desires that could not, in the end, necessarily be controlled. Both ultimately became problems of prostitution and, to a lesser extent, homosexuality. The excess population of working-class men demanded safe, clean, outlets for their sexual needs, while the desire for wealth threatened to lead both men and women to venal sexuality. In response, experts sought to devise a system of sexual regulation that would both signify and require the simultaneous control of urban space. Thus, the purification of the sexual uses of space became one way of signifying a stable political and social order.

The Revolution of 1848 showcased the ultimate danger in failing to adjust the city to its new role as a capitalist market. The regimes that followed the revolution therefore strove to discursively and materially showcase their ability to conquer urban space by purifying it of evidence of sexual practices that signified social disorder, an association drawn out by representatives of new regimes as they sought to delegitimize their predecessors. It is telling that Parisians, experts, and administrators, whether during the Second Republic, Second Empire, or the Third Republic followed a similar strategy. Authorities anxious to assert their dominance of the capital sought to delegitimize their predecessors by using the specter of illicit sexuality. In doing so, these commentators reasserted the link between sexual regulation, urban management, and social stability established earlier in the century. As we saw, however, this project never found itself completed. Rather, the evidence of illicit sexual activity constantly reemerged in the spaces of modern Paris, highlighting the fact that although Haussmann and those who followed him may imagined a purified city, this image could never be and would never be fulfilled. Paris was designed to facilitate the pleasures of public space in the service of existing social hierarchy, the accumulation of wealth, and economic exchange. As we shall discuss in the next chapter, these pleasures always risked blending with those that represented the precise opposite.

Chapter 2

Streetwalking the Boulevards of Paris: Urban Life and the Emergence of a Public Sexual Culture

Introduction

Parisian society of the Second Empire and early Third Republic attempted to reconcile an ideological investment in a city of free circulation with a continuing desire for clear social, gendered, and sexual hierarchies. The public city envisioned by Haussmann encouraged those who lived in or visited it to locate and participate in a culture of public pleasure centered around practices of social display and interaction in spaces such as cafés, department stores, and boulevards that were becoming more numerous, grander, and more central to life in the city. In chapter 1, we saw how the management of urban space signified the stability (or instability) of the political and social order vis-à-vis the control (or lack of control) of illicit sexuality. The appropriation of public space by prostitutes and pederasts showcased the difficulty of maintaining authority over a city open for public use. By moving between discourse and practices of social control and those of revolution and sex, the chapter perhaps overemphasized an image of a binary conflict in order to highlight the essential problem facing administrators and other experts: the management of the early capitalist city demanded the firm control of space and social practice, but that project could never actually be completed. The public spaces of nineteenth-century Paris always contained

the possibility of both order and disorder at the same time. Parisians enjoying a stroll crossed paths with prostitutes and pederasts seeking clients and partners. The thin boundary between the licit and illicit pleasures of nineteenth-century Paris shaped one's enjoyment of the city. As people took up their public personas, shaped by considerations of class and gender, they came up against other images of public pleasure, represented most forcefully by prostitutes and pederasts. The encounter between the two groups rendered neither wholly stable; the pleasures of the innocent promenade always threatened to become the sexual pleasures of the streetwalker.

The maintenance of clear social distinctions in a city of constant, open movement put increasing pressure on public social practices because they signified one's "place" within urban culture.¹ People who acted in public relied on common understanding of signs to indicate their location within a social hierarchy. One's dress, mode of transport, and general mannerisms all served to situate a person's particular identity in the face of the urban crowd, but only insofar as those signs were understood by the public that saw them. Although one's deportment while moving through the city was supposed to indicate a secure class identity, the need for all to understand the meaning of those mannerisms lay the foundations of a far broader urban culture. The emergence of "a common culture and a sense of shared experiences through which people might begin to imagine themselves as participating in a metropolitan culture," as Vanessa Schwartz has

¹ My view of this process has been most influenced by Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "distinction." Bourdieu writes that "Knowing that 'manner' is a symbolic manifestation whose meaning and value depend as much on the perceivers as on the producer, one can see how it is that the manner of using symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence, constitutes one of the key markers of 'class' and also the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction, that is, as Proust put it, 'the infinitely varied art of marking distances.'" Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 66. Social practice, in this sense, becomes a way of distinguishing oneself from others, while also inscribing one's place within a group of similar persons. This process functions, not just in terms of class, but also in terms of sexuality as well.

described it, depended on signs of distinction.² To Schwartz, the experience of *flânerie* stands as precisely the kind of signifying practice that shaped common understandings of urban culture. The *flâneur* was a detached, urban walker who, by virtue of his gender and class privilege, was able to observe the urban crowd without ever becoming a part of it.³ As this notion spread throughout nineteenth-century French culture, by way of the emergent mass press and through a variety of “spectacles” that positioned the viewer as *flâneur*, the experience of *flânerie* became less attached to particular class and gender identities and more attached to practices of urban observation in which almost anyone could participate. *Flânerie* continued to symbolize mastery of urban culture, but anyone who understood its language could exercise its power. The signs on which social hierarchies stood circulated about the city, ready for individual citizens to use them to their own ends.

The flexibility and availability of the image of the *flâneur* begins our discussion of the ways in which the signs of social practice served to blur the lines between the acceptable and forbidden pleasures of nineteenth-century Paris. *Flâneurs* were not the only figures to wander the urban environment and shape how people experienced the streets of Paris. “Streetwalking,” remember, not only connotes the innocent promenade of the ordinary Parisian, but also the seductive gait of the “public woman.” As “two parts to the same whole,” prostitutes and pederasts comprised a public sexual culture that took advantage of the modernizing city to seek out clients and partners. And they did so

² Vanessa R Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

³ For a useful definition and description of the *flâneur* see Gregory Shaya, “The Flâneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860-1910,” *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (February 2004): 46–49. See also Rudy Koshar, “Seeing, Traveling, and Consuming: An Introduction,” in *Histories of Leisure*, ed. Rudy Koshar (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 8; Colin Jones, *Paris: Biography of a City* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 337–338.

through signs; through gesture and voice, a glance and a touch, they addressed a wide public and generated knowledge of the language of public sex. The essential tension of public sexuality in the modern city, therefore, was not between invisibility and visibility, as Matt Houlbrook has suggested, but rather between comprehension and misunderstanding.⁴ If the knowledge of the signs of urban dominance – *flânerie* – was enough to spark the emergence of a mass culture based on that experience, then understanding the signs of public sex was enough to create another culture that included far more than just prostitutes and pederasts. Through speech, looks, and gesture that were sometimes directed at a subset of Parisians, sometimes directed at all Parisians, but always potentially both, ordinary people who entered public space always risked entering the circle of either representative of sexual deviancy. This potential for inclusion within a public sexual culture was all the greater during the second half of the century because urban culture increasingly revolved around the use of public space.⁵ One could hardly avoid evidence of a public sexual culture that constantly emphasized its presence to innumerable strangers in the same spaces where encounters amongst an anonymous public were not only common, but also expected. The streets and boulevards of Paris stood as a central theatre of this dynamic; attempting to enjoy Parisian street life meant encountering other, less socially acceptable pleasures as well. The recognition of these encounters, insofar as it served as evidence of one's knowledge of sexual codes, threatened to reveal how Parisians could share in the illicit pleasures of the city, almost

⁴ Houlbrook is particularly referring to male homosexuals, but his point extends to female prostitutes just as well. See Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 45. For more on the ways in which men who sought sex with other men managed their visibility, rather than invisibility, to the police see chapter three below.

⁵ David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 113.

despite themselves. The pleasures of the street reveal how interconnected nature of the licit and illicit pleasures of nineteenth-century Paris.

Imagining the Experience of the Boulevards

The boulevards of nineteenth-century Paris served for more than just transport. Rather, they became the arena on which shared modes of experiencing and understanding the city developed.⁶ The boulevards stand as one of Haussmann's great achievements; the broad streets that give out onto expansive views, grand vistas, and imposing monuments remain intimately associated with the city of Paris. As one 1867 guidebook argued, "[t]he boulevards are not only the heart and head of Paris, they are even more the soul of the world. Paris without boulevards, that would be the universe in mourning."⁷ The streets and boulevards of Paris became the central theatre on which people showcased their place within urban culture; they became the avenues on which ordinary people shaped the experience of modern life. During the Second Empire, Paris "transition[ed] to a more extraverted form of urbanism in which the public life of the boulevard became a highlight of what the city was about."⁸ As theoretically democratic spaces to which entry was not only pleasurable, but also necessary, boulevards enabled a

⁶ In fact, I understand movement on the streets itself as a form of social interaction insofar as it demanded constant display of the self. I therefore disagree with historians who have argued that Haussmannization led to a shift from a street life based on sociability to one based on traffic. Rather, any increase in traffic was also an increase in sociability. See, for instance, W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 155–156. It is also worth noting that I use the term "boulevard" in its general sense. I therefore mean to imply all the wide streets that served public interaction and display rather than only the "grands boulevards" that traditionally served this purpose in the part of the city just north of the Champs-Élysées. On the grand boulevards see especially H. Hazel Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian Modernity: Culture and Consumption in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), chap. 6.

⁷ ["Les boulevards ne sont pas seulement le coeur et la tête de Paris, ils sont encore l'âme du monde. Paris sans boulevards, ce serait l'univers en deuil."] This particular volume was published to coincide with the 1867 World's Exposition. Alfred Delvau, *Les plaisirs de Paris: Guide pratique et illustré* (Paris: A. Fauré, 1867), 18–19. On this particular passage see Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian modernity*, 131.

⁸ Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 113.

novel visual experience – defined in part by Haussmann and his compatriots, in part by those who moved about the city – to spread throughout the populace. Those who walked the boulevards lay the founding conditions on which an early mass culture could be built.⁹

The figure of the *flâneur* has, ever since Walter Benjamin emphasized Charles Baudelaire’s vision of the alienated walker as the representative of modern life, stood in for an idealized experience of the boulevards.¹⁰ The *flâneur*, put simply, was a person who wandered the city streets seeking pleasurable sights, but who always remained somewhat detached from what he found. As a figure dependent on the freedom to move about the city secure in the knowledge that he could always look without himself becoming the subject of another’s gaze, the *flâneur* has typically been seen as a man of secure class position who sought to sate the needs of his “overdeveloped sensibilities” through refined consumption.¹¹ In response, some scholars have argued that *flânerie* represented a broader mode of understanding urban life. While some scholars have searched for the female *flâneur* or *flâneuse* in the parks and department stores of the modern city, others have more radically tried to decouple him from the particularities of identity in the first place.¹² Schwartz, for instance, has suggested that “the *flâneur* is not

⁹ This mass culture was then propagated further by a press industry that consciously replicated the experience of the boulevards within its pages. See Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, 6; Shaya, “The Flâneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860-1910,” 42.

¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973), 54.

¹¹ Shaya, “The Flâneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860-1910,” 46–47.

¹² Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 32; Greg M. Thomas, “Women in public: the display of femininity in the parks of Paris,” in *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, public space, and visual culture in nineteenth-century Paris*, ed. Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 32-48; Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 3; Janet Wolff, “The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 2, no. 3 (1985): 37-46.

so much a person as *flânerie* is a positionality of power.”¹³ As a position, rather than an identity, the experience of *flânerie* spread throughout the population. For instance, because the *fait-divers* of the early mass press recounted incidents of the lurid experience of urban life – fires, people run over by carriages, and other spectacles – in brusque prose as if one were wandering from site to site, it positioned each reader as, essentially, a *flâneur*.¹⁴ The idea of the detached walk and the objective gaze became a way of understanding urban encounters, not just a way of signifying one’s class and gender privilege.

I wish to extend this insight to other figures of modern life by arguing that the prostitute and the pederast stood, not just as actual people on the streets of Paris, but also as images that shaped the way people understood urban life. This is not to say that people necessarily identified as prostitutes or pederasts, the way some did of the *flâneur*, but rather to emphasize the ways in which the sexual life of the city became a mode of understanding the urban experience in ways that intersected uneasily with the more overt pleasures of something like *flânerie*. Although the *flâneur* continues to shape our understanding of nineteenth-century Parisian culture, the ways in which Parisians themselves used the term remains underappreciated. The influential urban commentator, Victor Fournel, once described the *flâneur* as someone who sought out “good fortune, without thinking of going somewhere and without hurrying.”¹⁵ In so defining him, Fournel emphasized the importance of leisure time, the significance of detachment, and the pursuit of pleasure as central to the *flâneur*. And yet, one Parisian saw no

¹³ Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵ [“la bonne aventure, sans songer à aller quelque part et sans se presser.”] Victor Fournel, *Ce qu’on voit dans les rues de Paris* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1867), 262.

contradiction in describing his nightly strolls “from la Madeleine to the faubourg Montmartre” as taking to the boulevard “*en flâneur*.”¹⁶ His regularity did not contradict his *flânerie*. Similarly, although the *flâneur* was supposed to gaze on others, rather than attract looks, one commentators feared that women could, “by *flânerie*, in order to kill time, go out into Paris, under the pretext of taking the baby for a walk – if there is a baby – or in order to run small errands in a store as far away as possible” in order to meet another man and commit adultery.¹⁷ Not only does this anxiety underscore that the search for the *flâneuse* should be beside the point, but it implicitly redefines the *flâneur* as someone who puts him or herself under someone else’s gaze.¹⁸ The search for a sexual partner requires attracting attention, not avoiding it. As the *flâneur* entered a popular discourse, it also found itself transformed into a figure that signified something far broader than that implied by either Baudelaire or Benjamin. It became not just a detached connoisseur, but also an everyday stroller.

I emphasize the ways in which the utilization of the term “*flâneur*” escaped that of expert commentators – then and now – in order to underscore the essential instability of a figure deemed central to understanding nineteenth-century urban culture. We have understood the *flâneur* to structure, not only a particular way of moving about the city, but also as a way of shaping everyone’s understanding of their relationship to the built environment. The *flâneur* provided a common understanding of how to experience the sights of the city, one that nicely replicated the official views of Haussmannization: the

¹⁶ [“depuis la Madeleine jusqu’au faubourg Montmartre.”] Langangne to Préfet de Police, November 18, 1850, 1, DA 230, APP.

¹⁷ [“Par flânerie, pour tuer le temps, la voilà partie dans Paris, sous prétexte de promener bébé, -- si bébé, il y a, -- ou pour de menus acquisitions à faire dans un magasin situé aussi loin que possible.”] Ali Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris* (Paris: Librairie Illustrée, 1888), 154–155. This concern is echoed in Jules Davray, *L’amour à Paris* (Paris: J.B. Ferreyrol, 1890), 6–9. See also Alain Corbin, *Les filles de noce: Misère sexuelle et prostitution (19e siècle)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), 309–310.

¹⁸ On the *flâneuse* see note 12 above.

flâneur “assumes the position of being able to be a part of the spectacle and yet command it at the same time,” in Schwartz’s phrasing. However, that common understanding proved far broader than this definition; whether a man taking the same strolls day after day or a woman seeking to find a partner for her adultery, the *flâneur* could be both less and more than the representative of an official view of early mass culture.

It is no coincidence that both of my examples come from texts warning of the danger of illicit sexuality to innocent notions of *flânerie*. *Flânerie* always threatened to degrade into the sexual practices so threatening to the urban order that I described in chapter one. Attempting to distinguish the *flâneur* from the *badaud* (gawker), for instance, Gregory Shaya argues that “[w]here the *flâneur* stood in to explain the alienation of the city, the leering male gaze, and the sexual underside of modern urban life, the *badaud* revealed a gaze of often morbid curiosity and a lowest-common-denominator culture of the street.”¹⁹ Similarly, Griselda Pollock has asserted that “[t]he gaze of the flâneur articulates and produces a masculine sexuality which in the modern sexual economy enjoys the freedom to look, appraise and possess, is [sic] deed or in fantasy.”²⁰ Both scholars use Charles Baudelaire’s “À une passante” (“To a Passer-by”) in order to make their points, but their readings of the poem efface the complicated relationship between the supposed *flâneur* (the narrator of the poem) and a woman (the passer-by of the title) in favor of a simple binary relation that corresponds too neatly to the expectation that the *flâneur* always must dominate.

Perhaps some *flâneurs* did “leer” and rendered the gaze into a form of sexual assault, but the poem can also be read as sliding between the detachment of *flânerie* and

¹⁹ Shaya, “The Flâneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860-1910,” 51.

²⁰ Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, 79.

the reciprocity of cruising, defined by Mark W. Turner as “the moment of visual exchange that occurs on the streets and in other places in the city, which constitutes an act of mutual recognition amid the otherwise alienating effects of the anonymous crowd.”²¹ The poem describes an encounter between a man walking the street and a woman passer-by who meets his gaze. As she passes, the man “drank...from her eyes” in which resided a “pleasure that kills.” Although he did not know if he would ever see her again, he “may have loved her” and “she knew it.”²² This, in other words, was love both at first and last sight. The mutual gaze of the poem disrupts the easy description of the sexual gaze of the *flâneur* as “leering,” while the “pleasure that kills” not only deemphasizes the *flâneur*’s alleged aloofness, but also implicates the woman’s part in the exchange. She remains the source of the man’s pleasure and her knowledge of that pleasure renders her complicit. If this man was indeed a *flâneur*, he defined the figure on the basis of a meeting of two gazes, rather than the domination of one by the other. This is not to say that historians should replace the *flâneur* with the cruiser as a representative of modern urban life. Rather, I wish to underline how a category, such as the *flâneur*, traditionally understood as a structuring element of modern life was actually deeply implicated in the same phenomena – public sexual activity – that I have argued signified the disorders of the city. The *flâneur* shows us how an image – a figure – could come to shape a common understanding of urban life and thus serve as the foundation of a “mass” culture, but it does little to show just what actually constituted that vision of nineteenth-century life unless one takes into account the instabilities in the ways that it was used.

²¹ Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 9.

²² Charles Baudelaire, “To a Passer-By,” in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. William Aggeler (Fresno: Academy Library Guild, 1954), <http://fleursdumal.org/poem/224>.

The *flâneur* shows, not how urban culture came to revolve around a privileged detachment, but around a constant conflict between the proper pleasures that detachment signified and the improper pleasures only barely hidden underneath.

The meaning of city life emerged through public interaction. People understood their relationship to those they encountered on the streets of Paris through signs. For the *flâneur* strictly defined, these signs revolved around one's detachment from the events being observed. An air of nonchalance as one moved about the city signified one's dominance of the crowd. The cruiser, on the other hand, relies on mutual recognition; a discrete touch or a carefully directed glance reveals the possibility of a search for a spark of sexual pleasure. These signs enable the emergence of "publics" comprised of an audience who recognizes and understands their meaning. In other words, I follow Michael Warner in conceiving of a public as something that emerges through "an address to indefinite strangers."²³ Those who understand the address are members of that particular public. The signs that form publics must be learned; whether implicitly or explicitly, people come to discover how to recognize others' place in urban culture and thereby how to signify their own. Publics are not the same thing as subcultures; while the latter are defined by practices of distinction, publics are defined by practices of relative inclusion.²⁴ Relative, because some publics utilize signifiers only accessible by those "in

²³ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 120.

²⁴ A subculture can be defined as a group of people who define themselves – via style in the terms of Dick Hebdige – in opposition to dominant cultural values. The focus on "style" as a defining characteristic of those who belong to subcultures makes them essentially exclusive groups because they depend on consciously taking up the signs of difference. See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture, the Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979), 3. This is not to say that subcultures did not either intersect with one another or become fixtures of urban culture. See, for example Leslie Choquette, "Homosexuals in the City: Representations of Lesbian and Gay Space in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3/4 (2001): 149–150; Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: Norton, 1992), chap. 7.

the know.” A public does not necessarily require active membership, but it does require recognition.

The possible emergence of a mass culture predicated on the common understanding of languages of urban experience such as *flânerie* implies the potential for other cultures to form through the same mechanism of public address. Just as *flânerie* was a system of signs that signified urban participation, so too were prostitution and pederasty. By signifying their availability for sexual encounters, they also constituted a public that addressed itself to and was understood by those who wittingly or unwittingly crossed its path. Just as the *flâneur* constituted both real people and a common language of urban experience, so too did the prostitute and the pederast. Public sex became an urban pleasure that shaped people’s understanding of city life. As Susan Buck-Morss once explained,

If the flâneur has disappeared as a specific figure, it is because the perceptive attitude which he embodied saturates modern existence, specifically, the society of mass consumption (and is the source of its illusions)...In commodity society all of us are prostitutes, selling ourselves to strangers; all of us are collectors of things.²⁵

Indeed, this possibility became a real point of concern in the second half of the nineteenth century. But this anxiety did not simply emerge due to a newfound importance on consumption, a connection we will explore more fully in chapter four. Instead, everyone who participated in the public culture of nineteenth-century Paris risked becoming a prostitute (or a pederast) because prostitution (and pederasty) became one of the images that shaped the experience of urban life.

²⁵ Susan Buck-Morss, “The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering,” *New German Critique*, no. 39 (Autumn 1986): 104. Similarly, Elizabeth Wilson has wondered whether the *flâneur* was a type of prostitute and whether the prostitute must therefore also be a type of *flâneur*. See Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, The Control of Disorder, and Women* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 55.

Hausmannized Paris offered a variety of opportunities for enjoying public pleasures in the company of strangers; indeed, it encouraged it as an essential aspect to the functioning and enjoyment of the city. However, circulation could not be limited only to particular groups. With the first large urban developments of the 1850s, people became increasingly convinced that prostitutes were overrunning the city; as ordinary people entered the public sphere, they found it frequented by prostitutes and pederasts as well.²⁶ The same developments that enabled the emergence of modern urban life also encouraged increasingly visible evidence of public sexuality. The invasion of public space by illicit sexuality made it clear that total enclosure and removal from public space was not possible. Instead, authorities came to rely on systems of typologies that would, at the very least, enable them to sort the licit from the illicit. Their attempt to do so, however, only served to highlight the mutual indebtedness of the two categories to the enjoyment of public space. They discovered and implicitly revealed, in other words, that the illicit was just as central to the city of light as was the licit. A public sexual culture provided some of the primary pleasures of nineteenth-century Paris and thus showcased the importance of public sex to participation in urban culture.

The Champs-Élysées and the Pleasures of the Modern City

Authorities and commentators found it difficult to separate the illicit from the licit because they sought to simultaneously open the city to everyone, and strictly control its possible uses. As one late-nineteenth-century senate report on prostitution declared, “[t]he street, public spaces belong equally to everyone.” Yet it goes on to note that the “monopolization” of these spaces “by some to the detriment of everyone would be an

²⁶ Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 46–47.

insupportable tyranny. Authorities have an obligation to prevent it.”²⁷ Although the streets were theoretically available to “everyone,” then, their use by some groups could not be tolerated. The fear that prostitutes’ presence on the streets threatened their use by everyone else shows that the hold bourgeois men maintained over public space was more tenuous than they wished to admit. This report justified administrative action through the fear that one of society’s most marginal figures – the prostitute – would “monopolize” public space in its absence. Absent state intervention, the battle for the streets would be lost; elites were weaker than the prostitutes. The freedom to access public space under the Second Empire and the early Third Republic threatened to overwhelm and disrupt the hierarchies that were meant to ensure that such access did not threaten social order.

Illicit sexual activity served as a particularly potent threat because the line dividing proper from improper pleasures was thin at best. In Hugo’s *Les misérables*, for example, the famous Luxembourg gardens enable the meeting of revolutionary Marius and the prostitute’s daughter Cosette. Marius, having taken to promenading in the gardens, notices Cosette’s presence and repeatedly passes by her seat without any particular emotional response. Then, one day in the throes of spring, as Marius “passed near this seat, the young girl raised her eyes, their glance met... There was nothing, and there was everything. It was a strange flash.”²⁸ Marius’s initial encounter with Cosette does not become the threatening sexual flash of Baudelaire’s “A une passante,” even though the two encounters share similar imagery – the meeting of the eyes, the flash of

²⁷ [“La rue, les lieux publics appartiennent également à tout le monde... leur accaprement par quelques-uns au détriment de tous, serait une insupportable tyrannie. L’autorité a le devoir de l’empêcher.”] René Bèrenger, *Rapport fait au nom de la Commission chargée d’examiner la proposition de loi de M. Bèrenger, sur la prostitution et les outrages aux bonnes mœurs* (Paris: Sénat, March 26, 1895), 5, DB 408, APP.

²⁸ [“il passa près de ce banc, la jeune fille leva les yeux sur lui, leurs deux regards se rencontrèrent... Il n’y avait rien et il y avait tout. Ce fut un étrange éclair.”] Victor Hugo, *Les misérables* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), 719. Translation is from Victor Hugo, *Les misérables*, trans. Charles E. Wilbour (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 609.

pleasure – because the meeting in *Les Misérables* is love at first sight, rather than love at last sight.²⁹ And yet, how could one know within the context of the meeting itself? Although the meeting of Cosette and Marius would evolve into a near perfect union, symbolized by the reconstitution a properly bourgeois family unit after the failure of the 1832 *émeute* and the death of the convict Jean Valjean at the end of the novel, their initial meeting itself has all the hallmarks of a stranger making a sexual advance.³⁰ The eventual representatives of stability and social harmony met by broadcasting their attraction at one another in a public park. At the moment it occurred, it remained impossible to know what would then become of the encounter. Would it be love at last sight as in Baudelaire? Perhaps, it would end in a hotel room? Or, as it happened, would they engage in traditional courtship and eventually marry? The line between these possibilities was anything but clear as people came to encounter one another in the public spaces of Paris. Public pleasure could not simply be eliminated from modern urban culture in order to stave off its threats because it had become necessary to the life of the city.

This confusion only emerged because the same spaces designed to facilitate proper and beneficial pleasures also became home to illicit activities. The Champs-Élysées was an exemplary location for the problem. The exact boundaries of what is called the Champs-Élysées differ depending on the commentator, but always includes more than the famous grand avenue.³¹ For our purposes, the Champs-Élysées begin at

²⁹ This moment remains “love at first sight” despite Marius’s prior awareness of Cosette because it represents their first visual exchange.

³⁰ Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992), 95–96.

³¹ Régis Revenin defines the Champs-Élysées as “de la partie boisée, de part et d’autre de cette même avenue, de la Concorde au Rond-Point des Champs-Élysées et du Cours la Reine à l’avenue Gabriel,” while nineteenth-century guidebook author Alfred Delvau took a slightly larger view, defining it as “ce large espace compris entre la place de la Concorde et l’Arc de Triomphe d’une part, et, de l’autre, entre le

the place de la Concorde outside the Tuileries in the east and end at the Arc de Triomphe in the west; they comprise all the wooded park area that straddles the boulevard, as well as the shops on the western end of the street. The area has a rich history, dating to the construction of the Cours-la Reine, a tree-lined path that follows the Seine, by Catherine de Medici in the seventeenth-century. The modern version of the Champs-Élysées began to emerge in the second half of the eighteenth century.³² Despite being “badly kept,” as Emile Labédollière described it, by 1765 the Champs-Élysées was already emerging as the city’s own pleasure garden, with small cafés frequented by people taking a promenade.³³ By the very end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the area was well under construction, attracting a new set of Parisians who enjoyed the remodeled cafés, outdoor games, and restaurants.³⁴ This trend continued as the Champs-Élysées became an important location for public interaction and festivity, including the 1855 World’s Exposition.³⁵ The Champs-Élysées, constructed by kings, regents, and emperors, inhabited by shopkeepers, café proprietors, and restaurateurs, frequented by the bourgeoisie and high society, was a space of pleasure par-excellence.³⁶

Many of these sanctioned pleasures relied on blending the proper and the improper for their attraction. For instance, the Jardin Mabille, a dancehall founded in 1840 near the Rond-Point of the Champs-Élysées, provided nightly entertainment where

faubourg Saint-Honoré et la Seine.” Régis Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris: 1870-1918* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 30n; Delvau, *Les Plaisirs De Paris*, 26.

³² Émile de Labédollière, *Le nouveau Paris: Histoire de ses 20 arrondissements* (Paris: Librairie Gustave Barba, 1860), 118; Jones, *Paris*, 142, 182.

³³ Labédollière, *Le nouveau Paris: Histoire de ses 20 arrondissements*, 118.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; Jones, *Paris*, 258.

³⁵ Labédollière, *Le nouveau Paris: Histoire de ses 20 arrondissements*, 119; Jones, *Paris*, 334; Emile Mathieu, *Les cafés-concerts* (Paris, 1863), 6–8.

³⁶ The sheer variety of things to do on the Champs-Élysées makes it all the more odd that Haine would describe it solely as a path towards the Bois de boulogne, though it was that also. See Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 155–156.

“celebrities of that half savage dance accompanied by gestures, contortions, jiggling, shine there under pseudonyms, without the public ever knowing their real names.”³⁷ The anonymous dancers, reduced to their bodily movements, evoked something primal as they displayed themselves to the crowd. John Godfrey Saxe’s poem “Le Jardin Mabille [sic]” echoes some of these themes. Though a dance begins as a waltz, “the same you have witnessed at many a ball,” it turns to something different entirely: “But see! Where the people are closing about / Two brazen-browed women, -- and hark to the shout, / ‘*La* [sic] *Can-can!*’ -- they’re at it!” – No wonder you stare, / One foot on the pavement, -- now two in the air!”³⁸ The audience of the poem, the “you,” finds him or herself drawn by the shouted name of the dance and cannot help but watch the legs fly in the air. The familiar waltz transformed to the risqué can-can, the disguised dancers brought savagery to their work rather than refinement. As “the temple of Parisian choreography,” the Mabille blurred the lines between the safe pleasures of the theatre and the more risqué excitements of the burlesque.³⁹

As a space of prostitution, the Mabille also served as the scene of illicit sexual activity.⁴⁰ The implicit sexual attraction of the dance – the space’s official entertainment – gave way as well to the explicit availability of sex. The two possible images of Parisian pleasure merged into a scene of confusion that became the ultimate source of the entertainment. Perhaps Emile Zola best captured the scene in *Nana* (1880):

³⁷ [“Les célébrités de cette danse demi-sauvage accompagnée de gestes, de contorsions, de trémoussements, y brillèrent sous des pseudonymes, sans que le public ait jamais su leurs véritables noms.”] Labédollière, *Le nouveau Paris: Histoire de ses 20 arrondissements*, 119. The “bal Mabille” was often spelled “Mabile” in the nineteenth century, but I have decided to use the more modern spelling of “Mabille.” On the history of the bal Mabille see François Gasnault, *Guinguettes et lorettes: bals publics et danse sociale à Paris entre 1830 et 1870* (Aubier, 1986), 194–206.

³⁸ John Godfrey Saxe, *The Poems of John Godfrey Saxe* (Ticknor and Fields, 1868), 104.

³⁹ [“le temple de la chorégraphie parisienne.”] Labédollière, *Le nouveau Paris: Histoire de ses 20 arrondissements*, 119.

⁴⁰ Gasnault, *Guinguettes et lorettes*, 198.

This traditional night of madness brought together all the pleasure-loving young people of Paris, a smart set bent on wallowing in the crudeness and imbecility of the servants' hall. There was a huge crush under the festoons of gas-lamps, and men in evening coats and women in outrageous low-necked gowns -- old dresses which they did not mind getting dirty -- were circling around and yelling at the tops of their voices in an orgy of drunkenness.⁴¹

In Zola's depiction, the mixing of the "smart set" with the demimonde was precisely the feature of the Mabille that drew its crowds. The "pleasure-loving young people of Paris" went to the Mabille in order to "circle around" aimlessly in the presence of prostitutes. Zola concludes the description of Nana's night at the Mabille by simply stating that "[f]atherly police officers organized the disorder."⁴² The chaos of the Mabille, in other words, not only possessed some form of order insofar as it was "organized," but was also somewhat "official" insofar as the authorities oversaw it. Not only did the police not intervene to prevent the ongoing bedlam, they also actively guided its continuation. The police's role reveals, put simply, that the wild and frenetic mixture of the illicit and the licit within the Mabille was precisely the point.

The police, alongside the dancehall's management, guided the Mabille's frenetic mélange of disorder and order. Outside, on the street itself, the intersection of the proper and improper occurred more haphazardly, outside the effective control of those who sought and offered urban pleasure. According to the urban commentator Alfred Delvau, the avenue des Champs-Élysées served the "dizzying coming and going of the *high life*, - - and by *high life* I [Delvau] mean the demimonde as well as the other one -- going to the

⁴¹ ["Cette classique soirée de folie réunissait toute la jeunesse galante, un beau monde se ruant dans une brutalité et une imbécillité de laquais. On s'écrasait sous les guirlandes de gaz; des habits noirs, des toilettes excessives, des femmes venues décolletées, avec de vieilles robes bonnes à salir, tournaient, hurlaient, fouettés par une saoulerie énorme."] Emile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 1407. Translation is from Émile Zola, *Nana* (Penguin Classics, 1972), 380–381.

⁴² ["Une police paternelle organisait le désordre."] Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, 2:1408. Translation is from Zola, *Nana*, 381.

Bois [de Boulogne].”⁴³ “Aller au Bois,” Delvau continues, was an “aristocratic tradition” that presented “an excellent occasion to show off one’s horses or one’s mistress if one is a man, or to exhibit one’s toilette and critique those of others if one is a woman.”⁴⁴ Delvau thus highlights the ways in which public space became a way of establishing one’s place within a social hierarchy and, by extension, of attempting to put into place others. The display of a horse or one’s toilette also became a way to “critique those of others.” However, Delvau continues to explain that these practices were also accomplished by “female Parisians whose principal and most lucrative occupation is love.”⁴⁵ “It is not only honest women,” Delvau warns, “who have the right to promenade their ennui throughout the afternoon, from the Champs-Élysées to the Bois de Boulogne and from the Bois de Boulogne to the Champs-Élysées.”⁴⁶ Delvau thus evokes the fear of “monopolization” of the streets of Paris, but remains far more blasé than the police report discussed above. For Delvau, the back and forth of the prostitutes from the Champs-Élysées to the Bois de Boulogne was simply one facet of the space. Although the Champs-Élysées enabled the display of social privilege, it also necessarily encouraged the display of social degradation. The Champs-Élysées was always a space of both order and disorder.

Not all writers reacted with resignation to prostitutes’ use of spaces like the Champs-Élysées. The mixture of the proper and the improper led some administrators and moral commentators to envision a Paris overrun with prostitutes and pederasts who

⁴³ [“c’est un va-et-vient étourdissant de la *high life*, -- et par *high life* j’entends le demi-monde aussi bien que l’autre, -- allant au Bois.”] Delvau, *Les Plaisirs De Paris*, 27–28.

⁴⁴ [“tradition aristocratique...une excellente occasion de montrer ses chevaux ou sa maîtresse quand on est homme, ou d’exhiber ses toilettes et de critiquer celles des autres quand on est femme.”] Ibid., 28.

⁴⁵ [“les Parisiennes dont l’amour est la principale et la plus lucrative occupation.”] Ibid.

⁴⁶ [“Il n’y a que les honnêtes femmes qui aient le droit de promener leur ennui, durant toute l’après midi, des Champs-Élysées au Bois de Boulogne et du Bois de Boulogne aux Champs-Élysées.”] Ibid.

foreclosed the city's proper use. Indeed, one police report even declared that the Mabilles attracted between one thousand and twelve hundred prostitutes a night.⁴⁷ The report's clear exaggeration underscores the author's conviction that the prostitutes had effectively overrun the dance hall; their presence transformed the pleasures-seekers inexorably into an uncontrollable crowd. In addition, the nightlife of the Champs-Élysées became tinged with the fear of prostitutes and pederasts. Although Delvau did not hesitate to recommend experiencing the Champs-Élysées after sunset, the police inspector Gustave Macé later tried to dissuade his readers from going too late at night.⁴⁸ "During the night," Macé warned, "it is as dangerous to frequent deserted and somber areas as to stop in certain *buen retiro* established at the Champs-Élysées, at the Esplanade des Invalides, on the boulevard Boudon and behind churches."⁴⁹

In the end, the image of the Champs-Élysées as a site of illicit pleasure nearly overtook its role as a site of bourgeois and aristocratic display. In 1868, the police reported that the Champs-Élysées was so encumbered with prostitutes and pederasts that a peaceful promenade was nigh impossible; one of these reports dated the problem back twenty years.⁵⁰ One letter writer, after being accosted not only "by some lost women," but also by a "very well put together gentleman with a suspect appearance" while strolling between nine-thirty and ten o'clock one night, complained in 1872 that the Champs-Élysées once again had a bad reputation.⁵¹ In addition, an 1873 police report

⁴⁷ Officier de la Paix [Illegible], "Rapport", July 4, 1868, 2, DA 223, APP.

⁴⁸ Delvau, *Les Plaisirs De Paris*, 28–29.

⁴⁹ Gustave Macé, *Mes Lundis en prison* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889), 160.

⁵⁰ Officier de la Paix [Illegible], "Rapport: Surveillances des filles prostituées aux Champs-Élysées", July 3, 1868, DA 223, APP; Commissaire de Police Angel to Secrétaire général, July 9, 1868, DA 223, APP. For the twenty-year date see Officier de la Paix [Illegible], "Rapport," 1.

⁵¹ ["des femmes perdues...un Monsieur bien mis mais aux allures suspectes."] It is unclear from the letter what the suspect man wanted, though the description gives no reason to believe it was sex. Arnaud de Pomereu, May 24, 1872, BM2 60, APP.

noted that prostitution had noticeably decreased, but also claimed that men who committed “obscene acts between themselves has multiplied in such a way as to particularly call the vigilance of the inspectors of the service aux Champs-Elysées.”⁵²

Although the experience of the Mabilles illustrates the ways in which some people sought to enjoy the mixing of the illicit and licit possibilities of nineteenth-century Paris, others feared the encroachment of proper pleasures – the promenade and social display – by prostitutes and pederasts. To this segment of the population, as well as to representatives of the police, the use of the Champs-Elysées by prostitutes and pederasts threatened, not to heighten the pleasures of public festivity, but to overwhelm them.

Of particular concern to those who feared the illicit possibilities of the city lay the realization that the use of the Champs-Elysées and similar spaces by prostitutes and pederasts occurred not despite the particular design of the space, but because of it. Administrators’ attempts to render the city open to use, but still amenable to social control, only exacerbated the perception of a city overrun by illicit sex. The parks, gardens, cafés and promenades built to serve a market culture based in part around social display also served as the ideal stage for proffering sex. The use of Paris could not be limited to only those for whom its spaces were intended. Indeed, the police officer François Carlier once lamented that the Champs-Elysées possessed everything the male prostitute needed. Referring most likely to the wooded part of the Champs-Elysées, he argued that the male prostitute required a “fairly vast emplacement, neither too light, nor

⁵² [“les actes obscènes commis en public par des hommes entre eux se sont multipliés de façon à appeler tout particulièrement la vigilance des inspecteurs de service aux Champs Elysées.”] Bauce, “Rapport trimestriel sur la Prostitution. Année 1873. 2e Trimestre”, July 2, 1873, BM2 60, APP.

too dark, little frequented, though near sought out promenades.”⁵³ The Champs-Élysées was just one example – to which one could add the bois de Boulogne, the *grands boulevards*, or the Tuileries – of the spaces of nineteenth-century Paris created for particular, safe pleasures that normally revolved around circulation, display and entertainment that also served as the theater of illicit pleasure as well. The coming together of innocent pleasure seekers, prostitutes and pederasts led one police officer to rhetorically ask, referring those who frequent the Champs-Élysées, “what distinguishes them [prostitutes] from women of the *demi-monde* and even from certain women who call themselves honest seated next to them?”⁵⁴ In the end, apparently, very little; this inability to tell the different emerged as the ultimate fear. Not just that prostitutes also used spaces of bourgeois leisure, but that such use had rendered proper enjoyment itself suspect.

Ordinary people and expert commentators believed that the problem of the Champs-Élysées was actually a problem that faced the entire city. Train stations, especially the Gare Saint-Lazare, recur in the archives as important spaces of sexual solicitation.⁵⁵ Travelers expressed dissatisfaction in similar terms as those who wrote about the Champs-Élysées when they complained to the police that both pederasts and prostitutes encumbered the stations.⁵⁶ One complaint, for example, rhetorically asked

⁵³ [“une emplacement assez vaste, ni trop éclairé, ni trop obscur, peu fréquenté, à proximité pourtant de promenades recherchées.”] François Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions: 1860-1870* (E. Dentu, 1887), 329.

⁵⁴ [“en quoi se distinguent-elles de certaines femmes du demi-monde et même de certaines femmes qui se disent honnêtes assises à côté d’elles.”] Officier de la Paix [Illegible], “Rapport,” 3.

⁵⁵ See for example C. J. Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789-1870* (Paris: P. Asselin, 1870), 145; Louis Martineau, *La prostitution clandestine* (Paris: A. Delahaye et É. Lecrosnier, 1885), 75.

⁵⁶ Complaints regarding, for instance, the Gare Saint-Lazare are located in APP BM2 60. A particularly good example is Bernaud to Commissaire de Police, December 18, 1879, BM2 60, APP. See as well the introduction to the following chapter.

whether the station's benches were intended for passengers or prostitutes.⁵⁷ The train itself also became a locus of deviant sexuality, carrying its threats throughout the urban fabric. One Parisian wrote to the police complaining that his son was accosted by a prostitute who had the habit of leaping onto the train to Versailles at the last minute.⁵⁸ In another instance, *Le Petit Parisien* described in 1880 the “caresses inexplicables” a young man performed on a boy in a train and declared that “[t]he singular epidemic [presumably pederasty] which has reigned for some time in the Champs-Élysées has just made its appearance on the rail line which leads to the Montparnasse train station.”⁵⁹ Once localized, the epidemic now threatened the entire city. Other nodes of circulation, such as public urinals, parks, gardens, bridges, arcades and tramway stations also had reputations as spaces of sexual deviancy.⁶⁰ Paris was not actually overrun by prostitutes and pederasts, but their use of spaces of circulation and leisure made the “problem” appear greater than it actually was. As they moved about the city, Parisians sometimes encountered evidence of public sex and they extrapolated from those encounters a vision of a city overrun by prostitutes and pederasts. In the social imaginary of nineteenth-century Paris, it had become impossible to enjoy the city without also glimpsing its supposed underside.

⁵⁷ [Illegible] to Préfet de Police, August 26, 1879, BM2 60, APP.

⁵⁸ Un abonné to Chef de Gare, March 16, 1876, BM2 60, APP.

⁵⁹ [“La singulière épidémie qui règnait il y a quelques temps aux Champs-Élysées vient de faire son apparition sur la ligne ferrée qui aboutit à la gare Montparnasse.”] *Le Petit Parisien*, 11 Jan 1877.

⁶⁰ On public urinals see especially APP DA 230; Andrew Ross, “Dirty Desire: The Uses and Misuses of Public Urinals in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 53 (2009): 62-88; Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines A Paris*, 36–41; William A Peniston, *Pederasts and Others: Urban Culture and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth Century Paris* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004), 140–141. On parks and gardens see chapter 1; APP BM2 32; APP BM2 60; APP BM2 42. On bridges see APP DA 230. On selected arcades see APP BM2 20; BM2 45; APP BM2 65. An example of a tramway occurs in Charles Maniget de Ponté to Préfet de Police, September 27, 1900, BM2 42, APP.

The voluminous set of complaints dating from the Second Empire and, especially, the Third Republic contained in the Paris police archives shows that many Parisians believed that prostitution and pederasty were inescapable.⁶¹ One letter writer, for instance, professed that it was nearly impossible to wander the streets without being accosted by a prostitute, despite claims to the contrary by the city administration.⁶² Léo Taxil, speaking for experts, argued that prostitutes appeared everywhere because the regulations enumerated on the cards carried by the *filles isolées* were not adequately enforced.⁶³ According to both experts and lay people, pederasts too apparently saturated the city. One letter writer claimed that the sight of pederasts constantly interrupted his daily *flânerie*, while Tardieu claimed that pederasts were bold enough to operate in the light of day.⁶⁴ By moving about the city, a person always risked encountering evidence of public sex. As the city grew and became a place of public enjoyment, both citizens and commentators worried that it was also becoming a space of illicit sex, impossible to escape because the public could not be adequately divided into proper and improper categories. Although prostitutes and pederasts did not actually appear everywhere in the city, their presence was sufficiently important to inflect nineteenth-century understandings of the pursuit of pleasure in public space. One encounter served as sufficient evidence that the city was being overrun and because those encounters frequently took place in spaces essential to fully enjoying the opportunities the city offered it seemed impossible to avoid them. Thus, prostitutes and pederasts came to

⁶¹ Although the materials contain mostly complaints regarding female prostitutes, there are significant mentions of pederasty as well. See chapter three for an extended analysis of these letters.

⁶² Anonymous to Préfet de Police, February 25, 1846, DA 223, APP.

⁶³ Léo Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d'une question sociale* (Paris: Libraire populaire, 1884), 206–207.

⁶⁴ Langangne to Préfet de Police, November 18, 1850; Ambroise Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 3rd ed. (Paris: J.B. Baillière, 1859), 130–131.

stand as fixtures of modern urban life; always potentially ready to influence and shape the prescribed pleasures of nineteenth-century Paris. In order to enjoy the promenade, one had to risk meeting the prostitute.

On Prostitutes and Pederasts

In response to the mixing of the proper and improper in the public spaces of nineteenth-century Paris, the police and other experts enunciated a schema that linked prostitution and pederasty under one categorical umbrella. Thus united, they became a single problem, but also a rather amorphous category. Experts sought to explain the problem of public sexual activity as a single phenomenon, but by describing very different acts by people of both genders as a single issue they diluted their ability to adequately define the contours of each group. Rather than effectively distinguishing either prostitutes or pederasts from the masses, then, commentators actually reinforced both groups' relative unfixity. Their willingness to identify rather loose boundaries around sexual categories underscores the ways in which the distinction between illicit and licit acts of urban pleasure also failed to cohere. That failure, in the end, became an essential aspect to the enjoyment of public space. The union of prostitution and pederasty in the expert discourses of the nineteenth century revealed the underlying importance of images of public sex to the enjoyment of public space by everyone because it underscored experts' inability to categorize, understand, and distinguish the users and uses of the city.

Few historians have pursued Jeffrey Weeks's argument, made more than twenty years ago, that "[i]n terms of social obloquy, all homosexual males as a class were

equated with female prostitutes.”⁶⁵ The regulatory distinction between female prostitution and male homosexuality in nineteenth-century France implies that Weeks’s argument regarding Victorian England would not apply to the situation under discussion here. Female prostitution was a regulated trade, while male homosexuality remained unmentioned in the law codes. In addition, while a female prostitute’s clients were generally considered “normal” men, a male prostitute’s clients risked being labeled “pathological.”⁶⁶ This essential difference has led historians of male same-sex sexual activity to explore the contours of a homosexual subculture. William Peniston, for instance, has argued that men interested in sex with other men during the 1870s formed a subculture united by their “primary goal...[of] the pursuit of sexual pleasure” among themselves.⁶⁷ Through their sexual practices, they formed “complex and meaningful relationships” and differentiated themselves “from other young, single, working-class men from the provinces, who courted women or visited prostitutes.”⁶⁸ Peniston’s analysis focuses on the social networks formed amongst individual men who sought sex with other men, but does not take into account how those connections crossed with other groups of people. For instance, the common characteristics that defined those who joined the subculture that Peniston cites – “most of these men were between fourteen and forty years of age, working in skilled or unskilled positions. Some of them were servants or

⁶⁵ Jeffrey Weeks, “Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Annes: Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin B Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey (New York: New American Library, 1989), 200.

⁶⁶ Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines À Paris*, 119–121. Weeks also points out that while female prostitutes possessed a coherent social world that helped anchor their lives, male prostitutes had no such support unless they identified with “the non-professional homosexual subculture.” This argument, however, relies on emergent identities, such as “trade,” that did not yet exist in nineteenth-century France. The distinction between a male prostitute and male homosexual, as I will argue below, was very thin in the case under discussion here. See Weeks, “Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Annes: Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” 210–211.

⁶⁷ Peniston, *Pederasts and Others*, 68.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

clerks. Many of them had come to Paris from the northern regions of France...” – are just as significant for their generality as they are for their specificity.⁶⁹ Peniston asserts, but does not prove, that a mutual desire for same-sex sexual encounters was sufficient to effectively separate men who sought sex with other men from a wider urban culture. The formation of a subculture amongst men who sought sex with other men – and Peniston does show that they formed real and important networks amongst themselves – did not preclude those men’s participation in and identification with other forms of urban pleasure.

Historians of prostitution and the moral police have similarly emphasized female prostitutes’ separation from the broader social order by downplaying their connection to other groups and highlighting their marginalization. Jill Harsin, for instance, has argued that the regulationist system created a dual marginalization: The prostitute’s “deviance from society, a result of her actions as a prostitute, was aggravated by actions of the administration that served to separate her even more completely from ordinary existence.”⁷⁰ The ability of the administration to act on prostitutes’ bodies relied on their relative weakness in a gendered social hierarchy. Women were far more vulnerable than men to arbitrary police action.⁷¹ In fact, as the regulationist system weakened, the danger represented by clandestine prostitution rose and fear of venereal disease justified intervention in the lives of all suspect women, notably those of the working classes.⁷²

The importance of gender to one’s ability to access to public space that shaped one’s

⁶⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁷⁰ Jill Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 206.

⁷¹ This truth, however, hardly fails to justify Marc Berlière’s total erasure of pederasty in a book that supposedly takes the moral police as its subject. See Jean-Marc Berlière, *La police des mœurs sous la IIIe République* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

⁷² Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 249–250.

relative vulnerability to the police, however, does not override the ways in which the actions of an overzealous police force intent on regulating the proper and improper uses of public space affected all Parisians. In 1858, for instance, a police officer interrogated two men he saw seated, twice in one night, at the Place de la Madeleine. He let them go, but declared to his superiors that it was “important to understand their habits and the nature of their relation.”⁷³ Women remained more vulnerable to police authority than men. Yet, actual police practice sometimes tended to marginalize men as well. The attempt to differentiate between the proper and improper users of public space tended to bring together, as well as separate, different groups of people who found themselves caught up in the net of an arbitrary police authority.

Expert commentators and the police saw prostitution and pederasty as two parts to one problem. For example, François Carlier once declared “pederasty and female prostitution are in fact the same whole; its prostitution in the general sense of the word. The scandals that they are able to occasion, the hazards that they spread throughout society, are of the same nature.”⁷⁴ This schema served to highlight the connections between various forms of public sexual activity, while obscuring their particularities. First, contemporaries did not recognize a difference between male prostitution and male homosexuality.⁷⁵ Commentators tended to reduce pederasty, whether overtly practiced

⁷³ [“il importe de connaître leurs habitudes et la nature de leur relation.”] Le Chef de la 1re Division, “Note pour classer au dossier général des pédérastes”, February 4, 1858, DA 230, doc. 274, APP.

⁷⁴ [“La pédérastie et la prostitution féminine sont en fait un même tout; c’est la prostitution dans la généralité du mot. Les scandales qu’elles peuvent occasionner, les dangers qu’elles font courir à la société, sont de même nature.”] Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 467.

⁷⁵ Revenin has responded to this problem by emphasizing male prostitution as “a minority phenomenon within homosexuality in the larger sense, contrary to the ‘observations’ of the authorities [un phénomène minoritaire au sein de l’homosexualité *largo sensu*, contrairement aux “observations” des autorités.]” Doing so, however, distorts the meaning of the two practices because it disconnects male homosexuality from female prostitution insofar as it emphasizes that the police were somehow “wrong” to conflate the two types of same-sex sexual activity. Perhaps that is correct from the point of view of contemporary gay rights

for pleasure or profit, into its venal form. Pederasts, according to Carlier, formed a “freemasonry of vice...which will receive him [a pederast] with open arms in their societies and who, by doing favors, procure him the means to live if he is without resources; it’s their manner of helping one another.”⁷⁶ New members of the fraternity did “favors” for the others who, in return, “procured him the means to live.” This particular freemasonry, then, constructed itself not out of true desire, but out of the implicit promise of the sale of sex. For Carlier, the pederastic society was ultimately just another society of prostitutes. Although some commentators, including Carlier, did emphasize as well a more “social” aspect to the freemasonry of vice, they ultimately reduced it to the pursuit of monetary gain. The pursuit of wealth and social advancement led young men to sell their bodies in a freemasonry of vice. Ali Coffignon, for instance, wrote that a pederast could travel around the world, “being assured of finding some means of existence near those sedentary men to whom he indulges their favors.”⁷⁷ *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1922), Marcel Proust’s chronicle of Third Republic society, also relates same-sex sexual pleasure in these terms. A sexual encounter between a servant and a duke that took place in the Champs-Élysées revolves around the confused socio-sexual codes of exchange between men of different class and different age. Instead of bestowing

discourses, but it actually distorts the very real confusion between the two categories. It is impossible to always differentiate between prostitute and client and, I would argue, is not even worth pursuing as a relevant question. Rather, the conflation was actually a key component of nineteenth-century understandings of same-sex sexual activity. Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines À Paris*, 11–12.

⁷⁶ [“franc-maçonnerie du vice...qui l'accueilleront à bras ouverts dans leur sociétés ou qui, en payant ses faveurs, lui procureront le moyen de vivre s'il est sans ressources; c'est leur manière à eux de s'entr'aider.”] Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 283.

⁷⁷ [“étant assure de trouver des moyens d’existence auprès des sédentaires auxquels il livrait ses faveurs.”] Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 330.

“favors” on the younger duke, the usher instead “received” them from his social better.⁷⁸

Same-sex sexual activity in nineteenth-century Paris cannot accurately be placed into “for pleasure” and “for profit” categories. In the terms of the day, all acts of same-sex love were also acts of same-sex prostitution.

Just as experts had difficulty comprehending how forms of same-sex sexuality could ever not be venal, they also could not effectively explain the existence of male prostitution without reference to that exercised by women. For instance, the early forensic scientist Ambroise Tardieu once claimed that “the most common and also the most dangerous conditions in which pederasty is practiced take the form of a veritable prostitution.”⁷⁹ Most often, Tardieu claims, pederasty is simply prostitution between men. Yet, he continues: “which, if it is not sheltered under *la tolérance* that protects female prostitution, is no less spread out, organized in some way like it [female prostitution] and constitutes in certain large cities the necessary complement.”⁸⁰ Tardieu cannot describe pederasty without referencing female prostitution because they were two sides to the same coin. In other words, while it is true that Tardieu conflated pederasty and male prostitution, he could only do so in terms of female prostitution.⁸¹ In the same vein, the title of Carlier’s 1887 tract, *Les Deux Prostitutions*, refers, not to sections discussing female and male prostitution, but to female prostitution and male

⁷⁸ Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 34–35. Translation is from Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C. K. Moncrieff, vol. 2 (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), 42–44.

⁷⁹ [“les conditions les plus communes et aussi les plus dangereuses dans lesquelles s'exerce la pédérastie sont celles d'une véritable prostitution.”] Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 125.

⁸⁰ [“qui, si elle ne s'abrite pas sous la tolérance qui protège la prostitution féminine, n'en est pas moins comme elle très-répandue, organisée en quelque sorte, et en constitue dans certaines grandes villes comme le complément nécessaire.”] Ibid.

⁸¹ Michael Sibalis has pointed out how Tardieu conflated pederasty and male prostitution. See Michael Sibalis, “The Palais-Royal and the Homosexual Subculture of Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3/4 (2001): 124.

homosexuality writ large. Thus, the ultimate conflation was not between men who desired sex with other men and men who were paid for having sex with other men, but rather between men who had sex with other men and female prostitutes. The term “prostitution” in the nineteenth-century sense always implied a broader category of illicit sexual practices than just venal sex between women and men.

The conflation of female prostitution and pederasty was a reaction to the perceived cooperation of the two groups on the streets of Paris. These expert discourses were linked, in other words, to interpretations of social practice. Although it is difficult to determine whether they were reacting to observed phenomena, it remains the case that the police believed that prostitutes and men who sought sex with other men cooperated in their subversion of public space. In 1891 the police reported that one female prostitute received both “men and women who indulge in debauchery” with the prostitutes of the neighboring streets and the pederasts who frequented a nearby creamery.⁸² In addition to their reputation as hotbeds of lesbianism, some brothels served both men seeking women and men seeking men.⁸³ The police took note when they saw female prostitutes and pederasts together on the boulevards. They stopped a group of the latter with a prostitute on the Chaussée d’Antin in 1864, for instance.⁸⁴ According to Carlier, some male prostitutes paid their female counterparts in order to use their living quarters to turn tricks. The female prostitute, for her part, would signal to the pederast if she encountered

⁸² [“des hommes et des femmes qui s’y livrent à la débauche.”] “Rapport au sujet de la femme Marthe, 113 rue St. Honoré”, January 26, 1891, BM2 47, APP.

⁸³ Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 128–129; Louis Alfred Becquerel, *Traité élémentaire d’hygiène privée et publique*, 6th ed. (Paris: Asselin, 1877), 845; Flévy d’Urville, *Les ordures de Paris* (Paris: Sartorius, 1874), 67–68; Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines À Paris*, 121; Choquette, “Homosexuals in the City,” 151.

⁸⁴ Carlier, “Extrait d’un rapport du service des mœurs joint au dossier de la 1^{ère} Section”, November 24, 1864, 1–2, DA 230, APP.

a client with same-sex tastes while making her rounds.⁸⁵ Several commentators noted that female prostitutes worked closely with their male counterparts. According to Coffignon, some female prostitutes would help their male counterparts, while the latter would warn the former of any danger on the streets. In exchange for a part of the takings, some women would set up lodgings for same-sex sexual encounters.⁸⁶ Gustave Macé noted the exploits of pederast *souteneurs* (pimps) who would have sex with their prostitute's clients if necessary. Linking themselves to a woman also endowed these pimps with greater protection in hiding their own proclivities.⁸⁷ Authorities believed that pederasts and prostitutes cooperated in their perversion of the city.

The conflation of female prostitution and male homosexuality by expert commentators underscores their ultimate concern: that neither group's gender effectively signified their actual identities. Indeed, experts feared that their cooperation entailed playing with gender presentation in order to subvert the ability of the police to recognize either female prostitutes or men who sought sex with other men on the streets of Paris. Tardieu, somewhat oddly, claimed that some pimps would use women dressed as men to attract pederasts, while young men would dress as women in order to escape surveillance "or hide the shameful preferences of men who searched for them and took them with them."⁸⁸ Furthermore, both Carlier and Macé declared that male solicitors shared the same sentiments and behavior as prostitutes; Macé argued that "they imitate the walk of *filles soumises*", while Carlier declared that "the solicitors, the *persilleuses* as one calls them, are true male prostitutes in all senses of the word. Between them and *filles*

⁸⁵ Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 359.

⁸⁶ Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 346.

⁸⁷ Macé, *Mes Lundis en prison*, 148.

⁸⁸ ["dissimuler les honteuses préférences des hommes qui les recherchaient et les emmenaient avec eux."] Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 129.

publiques isolées, there is an absolute identification of sentiments, of manner of being and of instincts.”⁸⁹ Just to drive the point home, Tardieu, explaining that some prostitutes had told him that they have friends amongst the pederasts, declared that a “young man, who had made his name in that hideous phalanx, was, at the moment of his arrest, found to be carrying a card of the *fille publique*.”⁹⁰ The two groups were essentially indistinguishable. Not even the physical signs of sex sufficiently separated prostitutes from pederasts. In identifying their union and rendering them into one unstable category, expert commentators showcased, not their ability to distinguish sexual deviants on the streets of Paris, but rather the ultimate flexibility of both categories of urban sexual practice. By elaborating a system wherein experts could not clearly identify the representatives of urban disorder, they also implied their inability to distinguish between the proper and improper pleasures of urban life.

The Dangers and Pleasures of the Signs of Public Sex

Experts saw the union of pederasty and prostitution as an essential threat to the coherence of urban culture, but it also stood as a major signifier of the possibilities of public pleasures that crossed uneasily with the acceptable and proper practices accessible to all privileged Parisians. Prostitutes and pederasts who sought sexual partners on the streets and in the dance halls of nineteenth-century Paris broadcast their presence through signs recognizable to anyone able to comprehend them. Even people not actively seeking

⁸⁹ [“ils imitent la marche des filles soumises.”] Macé, *Mes Lundis en prison*, 156. [“Les raccrocheurs, les *persilleuses* comme on les appelle, sont de véritables prostitués dans toute l'acceptation du mot. Entre eux et les filles publiques isolées, il y a une identité absolue de sentiments, de manière d'être et d'instincts.”] Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 354–355.

⁹⁰ [“un jeune garçon, qui s'est fait un nom dans cette hideuse phalange, a été, au moment de son arrestation, trouvé porteur d'une carte de fille publique.”] Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 129.

a sexual encounter could and did understand the signs of sexual address – a knowing glance, a discrete whisper, a move of the hand – which brought them into the purview of a public sexual culture, even if just for a moment. Just as the signs of *flânerie* were read by a “mass” public, not all of whom actually identified as *flâneurs*, so too were the signs of public sexuality read by a public, members of which did not necessarily identify as prostitutes, pederasts, or as potential clients. Prostitutes and pederasts relied on signs – some more noticeable than others – that revealed their presence to more than those actually looking for sex. In doing so, they not only revealed the sexual implications of public pleasure, but also illustrated how sex itself could serve as another way of understanding the experience of the city. Sex became a sign of how one enjoyed public space. Public sexual solicitation may have remained an illicit practice, but it became a central mode of experience life in the modern city. The mixture of illicit and licit practices of pleasure did not become an essential facet to nineteenth-century Paris simply because socially privileged people utilized the same spaces as prostitutes and pederasts, but because those two groups of people constantly interacted.

Both prostitutes and pederasts had to announce their presence in public space in order to locate partners and clients. In 1870 the police officer C.J. Lecour claimed that prostitutes solicited in the theatres by arriving “late in order to be noticed, they attract the eye by eccentric dress; they exit at each intermission, leave and put back on some clothes of gaudy colors, speak loudly, laugh noisily, play with opera glasses or a fan.”⁹¹ The prostitutes’ activities addressed a public of those who recognized or responded to the signs of their presence. Even those uninterested in interacting with a *fille publique* were

⁹¹ [“tard pour se faire remarquer, elles attirent l'oeil par des excentricités de costumes; elles sortent à chaque entr'acte, quittent et reprennent quelque vêtement aux couleurs voyantes, parlent haut, rient bruyamment, jouent de la lorgnette ou de l'éventail.”] Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789-1870*, 146.

thus brought into their orbit and made aware of the possibility of obtaining sexual gratification through monetary exchange. They announced their presence in the theater by dress and movement, not by simply announcing they were prostitutes. The signs of sex had to be learned, in other words; one had to know how to recognize them. Such education was especially important for pederasts who tended to act more discretely as they sought out partners. Pederasts, commentators asserted, could recognize each other without being recognizable to ordinary passers-by.⁹² For instance, an 1852 police report described a coterie of pederasts led by one capable of changing his self-presentation and style of interaction depending on the situation. He knew, in other words, how to behave with both the high classes and the low.⁹³ Unlike the prostitutes who showed off their public presence, pederasts learned how to hide in public while still recognizing one another.

That both groups ultimately relied on broadcasting the signs of their presence to innumerable strangers was highlighted by the confidence with which numerous commentators asserted their ability to recognize the pederast; already the vice that dare not speak its name was also the “secret that always gave itself away.”⁹⁴ If one knew where to look, the signs of same-sex sexual desire were apparently everywhere. Indeed, Michael Sibalis has emphasized the public nature of the male homosexual “subculture”

⁹² d'Urville, *Les ordures de Paris*, 69–70.

⁹³ Officier de la Paix [Illegible], “Rapport”, January 23, 1852, 1, DA 230, doc. 247, APP.

⁹⁴ Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 137–138; Louis Canler, *Memoires de Canler, ancien chef du Service de Sûreté*, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1862), 266–269; Macé, *Mes Lundis en prison*, 155. On the “open secret” see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 1992), chap. 1; D. A. Miller, *The Novel and The Police* (University of California Press, 1989), chap. 6. Similar discourses, in should be underlined, surrounded the sapphist and lesbian. They too could recognize one another without being recognizable, featuring their own signs that could in the end give them away. See Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 309; Martineau, *La prostitution clandestine*, 94.

that surrounded the Palais-Royal in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁹⁵ Men who sought sex with other men on the streets of Paris were a relatively common sight, drawing the eyes of others even as this “cruising” was becoming more and more fraught with significance. Tardieu, for instance, argued that pederasts’ dress, in addition to their personal habits, revealed their effeminacy, which helped them “attract looks in public places.”⁹⁶ In a police report, François Carlier noted that his agents had been alerted to several groups of “individuals who go back and forth along the boulevards, walking with affectation, rubbing shoulders with prowling men around some urinals” who were “scandalizing everyone.”⁹⁷ Later, during the 1880s, Pierre Delcourt claimed that

If you walk slowly, raising your nose distractedly, abandoning your hands to chance, you won’t have long to wait before you see a slippery character before you, without sound on the pavement, swaying his hips in a bizarre manner, his hands generally crossed behind his back, dressed distinctly, shaved very closely.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Sibalis, “The Palais Royal,” 117–118. I place the term “subculture” within quotations in order to emphasize my own view that men and women who sought sex in public actually comprised a public, rather than a subculture. I have found little evidence within the archives to support the view that the men who sought sex with other men in nineteenth-century Paris considered themselves part of a distinct and subordinate urban culture, even if the police seemingly saw this “freemasonry” as something like a subculture. Leslie Choquette seemingly disagrees with Sibalis’s chronology, claiming that “[o]nly at the time of the World’s Fair, with its upsurge in voyeuristic tourism, did gay men, like lesbians, become part of the urban spectacle as they were going about their ordinary business.” It is unclear if Choquette means to imply a definition of “spectacle” specific to the late nineteenth-century, but it is certainly incorrect to assert that it was only in the 1860s that men interested in sex with other men became a noticeable part of urban culture. Choquette bases her reading primarily on literary texts, which explains the more dubious assertion that lesbians were a more visible part of the urban fabric before the final years of the Second Empire. Choquette, “Homosexuals in the City,” 158. John D’Emilio has argued that men were more visible than women in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century urban settings because they managed to become financially independent more often than women who frequently remained dependent on men for financial support. His contention that public urban space can be seen as ‘male space,’ however, ignores the many women, such as prostitutes, who shared such spaces with men seeking sex with other men. John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 105–106.

⁹⁶ [“attiraient les regards dans les lieux publics.”] Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 129.

⁹⁷ [“individus qui montaient et descendaient la ligne des boulevards marchant avec affectation, coudoyant les hommes rôdant autour des urinoirs... scandalise tout le monde.”] Carlier, “Extrait d’un rapport du service des mœurs joint au dossier de la 1^{ère} Section,” 1. On the specificities of the urinals see chapter 5.

⁹⁸ [“Si vous marchez lentement, levant le nez distraitement, abandonnant vos mains au hasard, vous ne tardez pas à voir devant vous un personnage glissant sans bruit sur le pave, se déhanchant de manière bizarre, les mains généralement croisées derrière le dos, vêtu indistinctement, et rasé de très près.”] Pierre Delcourt, *Le vice à Paris* (Paris: Alphonse Piaget, 1888), 289–290.

The man's gaze, Delcourt continues, leaves no doubt as to his intentions and, if you stop at a shop window, "you will soon feel the touch" of the other man.⁹⁹ Such were the signs of queer cruising in the nineteenth-century, eerily similar to a description from Edmund White and Charles Silverstein almost a century later.¹⁰⁰ These signs were not, and could not be, directed solely towards those who welcomed them, nor, though assuredly more rare, were the signs only emitted by those who meant to do so.¹⁰¹ The numerous complaints from Parisians regarding the activities of their debauched co-residents leave no doubt that many understood the addresses of pederasty without themselves being interested.¹⁰² Knowledge of public sex became not just a necessity to finding it, but to understanding how to avoid it. Public sex thus shaped the ways in which people understood how to move about the city, even if they had no interest in finding it themselves.

That said, the presence of public sexuality in spaces of otherwise ordinary pleasure became a key aspect to the full enjoyment of some public spaces. In Guy de Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* (1885), for instance, Georges Duroy finds himself attracted to the prostitutes in the loges of the Folies-Bergère, unlike the "solid citizens with their wives

⁹⁹ Ibid., 290–291.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Silverstein and Edmund White, *The Joy of Gay Sex: An Intimate Guide for Gay Men to the Pleasures of a Gay Lifestyle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 45–46.

¹⁰¹ Indeed, a 2007 episode of the American television show, *Boston Legal*, reacting to the arrest of US Senator Larry Craig for public solicitation in a airport men's room, played on this possibility by having William Shatner's character arrested for the same crime after inadvertently displaying all the signs of seeking gay sex in the correct order: "first he came in; looked under the stall doors. Then, he entered a stall next to an occupied one. He slid his briefcase to the front, making his feet visible to the adjacent occupant...He then moved his foot over, then he began to hum quietly. Then he tapped his foot four times, up and down." Mike Listo, "Oral Contracts," *Boston Legal* (ABC, December 4, 2007).

¹⁰² One resident of Vincennes, for instance, had perceived "for a long time monstrosities," but only notified the police when he was sure of what was going on. In other words, not only did this resident note the pederasts of the bois de Vincennes, but he made sure he fully understood their signs before going to the police. E. Mallad to Préfet de Police, July 1875, BM2 16, APP.

and children, well-meaning nitwits who've come to watch the show."¹⁰³ The sexual implications of public pleasure depended on recognizing the signs of it; just standing the same space as a prostitute did not necessarily render the experience of public pleasure into a sexual encounter. At the same time, the experience of public sexuality was not limited to those who could physically partake in it. Rather, it shaped the understanding of what public pleasure meant for everyone. Later in the novel, Duroy's first mistress, Clotilde de Marelle "scarcely looked at the stage, for she was utterly engrossed by the prostitutes parading round behind her back; and she turned to watch them, wanting to touch them, to feel their breasts, their cheeks, their hair, to discover what those creatures were made of."¹⁰⁴ Clotilde is not a potential client, but she is a member of the prostitutes' public, a willing member no less. As she repeatedly turns around for another look, she enjoys the imagined tactile experience of perhaps more fully joining them in their escapades. Indeed, her recognition of the prostitutes behind her signifies the failure of the ability of the regulationist system to functionally separate prostitutes from the rest of society; although the prostitute, to Parent-Duchâtelet, was meant to be recognizable to potential (male) clients, she was supposed to also remain invisible to respectable women.¹⁰⁵ In point of fact, she remained quite visible to both. The constitution of a public sexual culture relied, not on sexual attraction, but on sexual address. The distinction between proper and improper pleasure, in this sense, not only did not matter,

¹⁰³ ["des bourgeois avec leurs femmes et leurs enfants, de bonnes têtes stupides qui viennent pour voir."] Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-ami* (Paris: Victor-Havard, 1885), 17. Translation is from Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-ami*, trans. Margaret Mauldon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

¹⁰⁴ ["ne regardait guère la scène, uniquement préoccupée des filles qui circulaient derrière son dos; et elle se retournait sans cesse pour les voir, avec une envie de les toucher, de palper leur corsage, leurs joues, leurs cheveux, pour savoir comment c'était fait, ces êtres-là."] Maupassant, *Bel-ami* (1885), 128. Translation is from Maupassant, *Bel-ami* (2008), 84.

¹⁰⁵ On Parent-Duchâtelet's system of signs, see Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, 137.

but became an essential aspect to the experience of public space in nineteenth-century Paris.

Conclusion

While both pederasts and prostitutes constituted enclosed groups of different kinds – limited to those who joined an urban subculture or those who decided to join the *métier* of prostitution – they also affected the meaning of the city for everyone by addressing a broad public. Together they formed a public sexual culture because, in reaction to their apparent cooperation on the streets, commentators argued that pederasty was simply another form of (female) prostitution. Their official separation by gender, enforced by administrative decree and regulatory distinction, was secondary to the threat they posed together through their illicit sexual practices. In the end, however, that threat became an important way of understanding and enjoying public space because both groups addressed a broad public while searching for sexual partners and clients. In order to find sex, both prostitutes and pederasts needed to assert their presence to more than those who sought them out. Those who recognized the signs – even if they did not respond by taking up the offer – understood the sexual possibilities of nineteenth-century Paris.

Prostitutes and pederasts thus revealed how urban culture was shaped by far more than the privileged walk of the *flâneur*. Just as *flânerie* provided a conceptualization of urban pleasure understood by anyone so too did the search for public sex. If the *flâneur* represented a shared urban experience, but did not require everyone who understood it to become *flâneurs*, then so too did the prostitute and the pederast stand in for a mode of

experiencing urban life that revolved around the pursuit of pleasure without necessitating people become prostitutes or pederasts. This understanding shaped people's experience of the modern city because it seemed that the evidence of public sex was everywhere. Just as *flânerie* always threatened to become something sexual, so too did the ordinary pleasures of spaces like the Champs-Élysées always contain sexual possibilities. Opportunities for appreciating the sexual opportunities of nineteenth-century Paris thus occurred through the course of everyday social life. The search for sex thus conditioned the meaning of urban life.

In chapter one, we saw how the continual appropriation of public space by prostitutes and pederasts signified an inability amongst political authorities to secure the city for the sake of social stability. Illicit sex signified the institutional weakness and thus had to be rooted out. This chapter, however, complicates that vision by showing just how central public sex had become to understandings of modern urban life. Although most experts and some ordinary people continued to warn of the dangers of illicit sexuality, the presence of prostitutes and pederasts in the same places central to the enjoyment of the city reveals the possibility that such activity was also central to that enjoyment. The next two chapters explore the ramifications of this centrality. Chapter three will discuss the ways in which people reacted against the presence of prostitutes and, to a lesser extent, pederasts in their neighborhoods. It shows that a broad swathe of bourgeois Parisians did invest themselves in the idea of a city cleansed of representations of public sex. Chapter four, on the other hand, discusses the opportunities this mixture of the licit and illicit afforded ordinary people who sought out pleasure in the cafés and dance halls of the city.

Ultimately, both responses show that public sex did shape understandings of the city.
Whether that result was to the good or the bad simply depended on whom you asked.

Chapter 3

Defending the Neighborhood: Public Sexuality and the Bourgeois City

Introduction

After reading an account of a robbery in the newspaper *La paix* in December 1879, one Monsieur Bernaud could not help but write to his local police commissar. The robbery occurred in a hotel near the train station of the gare de l'Ouest (now the gare Montparnasse) where the victim had met a “pretty blond-haired woman” who proceeded to rob him of twelve hundred francs. The police initiated an investigation, but Bernaud could only sigh in resignation after reading of their lack of success in apprehending the culprits: “I am not surprised; what most surprises me, knowing what happens at the gare St. Lazare, is that these events do not happen more often.” His evident familiarity with the regular thefts that occurred in the Paris train stations came from first-hand knowledge. “Allow me,” Bernaud writes, “to inform you that for a year, my friends and I have studied the acts and gestures of the *filles publiques* and their *souteneurs* [protectors or pimps] who exercise their professions [sic] in this train station.”¹ The waiting lounge of the gare St. Lazare, Bernaud claims, remained completely overrun by prostitutes and

¹ [“une jolie blonde...Je n'en suis surpris ce qui [me surprend le plus] connaissant ce qui se passé à la gare St Lazare c'est que ces faits ne se présentent pas plus souvent permettez-moi de vous en informer depuis un an moi et mes amis nous étudions les faits et geste des filles publiques et de leurs souteneurs qui exercent leurs professions dans cette gare.”] Bernaud to Commissaire de Police, December 18, 1879, BM2 60, APP. Like many of the letters, Bernaud's is not grammatically correct. The most striking missing element is all form of punctuation. Other letters feature poor grammar and misspellings. In general, my translations make an attempt to render the texts understandable without losing the sense of style each letter possesses. The original French – always placed within the footnotes – is largely left as it appears in the letters.

thieves. Although the number varied, Bernaud notes that almost forty women solicit sex “under the eyes of the police who tolerate them.” The police could not argue that they were unable to “distinguish these women from travelers” because Bernaud and his friends, “who are not police,” have no problem doing so. Some of the agents even “often play with them. I know one who had one as a mistress.”² Bernaud continues by explaining that the prostitutes chose this particular waiting lounge in order to accost rich merchants. He also accuses a local wine seller and neighborhood hotels of hosting the women and claims that the benches installed for travelers are almost always occupied by prostitutes. He concludes with a plea for the police to use “all the means in your power to stop these scandals that repeat themselves every day” and an assurance that “the scandal that I signal is true and made during several days of active surveillance.”³

Bernaud’s letter stands as a representative example of a series of letters contained in the Paris police archives that reveal how bourgeois Parisians conceived of their place in late Second Empire and early Third Republic Paris.⁴ Citizens actively participated in the disciplining of the population. Not only did ordinary people enforce images of class and gender hierarchy through passive social display, they also actively policed the proper and improper uses of urban space. The image of a controlled and controllable Paris rested not only on those who were officially entrusted to monitor city spaces, but also on those who were ostensibly under watch. The observer of urban space was always also at the same time the observed. This “network of relations,” in Foucault’s terms, shows how

² [“sous les yeux de la police qui les tolèrent...distinguer ces femmes d’avec les voyageurs...qui ne sommes pas de la police...les agents jouent souvent avec elles. J’en connais un qui en avait une pour maîtresse.”] Ibid.

³ [“tous les moyens à votre pouvoir pour faire cesser des scandales qui se répètent chaque jour...le scandale que que [sic] je signale et exact fait pendant quelques jours exercent une surveillance active.”] Ibid.

⁴ The series that contains these letters, BM2, begins in the early Second Empire and extends to the very end of the Third Republic. The bulk of the letters, however, date from about 1868 to the era of the First World War.

police power was diffused throughout society: “the police,” administratively defined, did not possess a monopoly over the regulation of urban space. If the early-modern police often conflicted with the citizenry, the modern police was, again in Foucault’s terms, “coextensive with the entire social body.”⁵ Thus, Bernaud and his friends’ surveillance of the train station was not so much an encroachment on police authority as it was a intrinsic part of the effective control of urban space.

And yet, the letter also reveals a continuing contrast between the police’s and some people’s expectations regarding the state’s specific responsibilities to manage the urban environment. Although the citizenry and the police cooperated in the emergence of a disciplinary society, significant sources of contention continued to influence their relationship. In razing old slums and constructing new paths of circulation, Baron Haussmann sought to turn Paris over to the forces of capital. In doing so, he essentially declared the city be a site of new wealth, given over to what can loosely be termed, for lack of a better shorthand, the bourgeoisie.⁶ The new wealth that began circulating and accumulating amongst a middle class during the Second Empire became the foundation

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 221–222. On conflict between Parisians and the police in early-modern Paris see especially Arlette Farge and Jacques Revel, *The Vanishing Children of Paris: Rumor and Politics Before the French Revolution*, trans. Claudia Miéville (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); Arlette Farge, *Fragile Lives: Violence, Power and Solidarity in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, trans. Carol Shelton (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

⁶ I use the terms bourgeois and bourgeoisie in a general sense to indicate the broad middle classes who actively participated in the opportunities afforded by the new city. These opportunities, for our purposes, largely revolved around participation in capitalism in two senses: business and leisure. These men and women did not specifically call themselves members of a bourgeois class, but they did enunciate shared expectations regarding their place in the city. And that place was always at the center of what the city should be about. I therefore do not necessarily disagree with Sarah Maza’s argument that there was no bourgeoisie in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France because the bourgeoisie was a social construct against which proper and more traditional social values were contrasted. Rather, I wish to emphasize that there did exist a public within the French polity that sought to stake a coherent claim on the city on the basis of their importance to French society. That public, for lack of a better term, was the middle class or the bourgeoisie. For Maza’s exploration of the meaning of the bourgeoisie from about 1750 to 1850 see Sarah C. Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

of their political rise during the Third Republic; as small shopkeepers closed in the face of the department store and the working-classes found their homes destroyed by Haussmannization, a new middle class arose at the center of Parisian culture.⁷ As representatives of the state with a constant presence in city dwellers' everyday lives, the police stood as the most visible guarantors of this socio-political order. Bourgeois interest had become the prerogative of the police as well.

The meaning of this guarantee in practice served as a major point of contention between members of the bourgeoisie and the police. Even as they used the terminology, city residents did not necessarily accept the implications of an expert discourse that argued that prostitution was a “necessary evil.” Necessary, because modern society required sexual outlets for social stability, but also evil because prostitution still signified the possibility of social disruption. To the police, that discourse implied a certain amount of “tolerance” towards female prostitutes, even when they escaped the bounds of the brothel. As the “problem” of prostitution became increasingly evident during the Restoration and July Monarchy, the police tended to reduce their attempts to totally enclose prostitutes in favor of guaranteeing their ability “to ameliorate the worst excesses of this group through their ability to respond instantly to specific problems.”⁸ This shift accelerated with the decline of the brothel that accelerated during the 1850s.⁹ Some people, however, emphasized the other side of the phrase “necessary evil” and argued

⁷ Philip Nord has explored this transition in two important books. See Philip G. Nord, *The Politics of Resentment: Shopkeeper Protest in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005); Philip G. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

⁸ Jill Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 50–52.

⁹ Alain Corbin has devoted an entire chapter to the decline of the brothel and the “failure of the regulationist project.” See Alain Corbin, *Les filles de noce: Misère sexuelle et prostitution (19e siècle)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), 171–273.

that their mode of life was threatened by the continued presence of prostitutes in their neighborhoods, on the streets, and in their places of leisure. Those who wrote to the police recognized the ways in which public sexual solicitation punctured their ability to move about the city while maintaining control over the experience, à la the idealized *flâneur*. The very presence of prostitution, not the inability of the authorities to manage it, signified the weakness of a social order built on the necessity of controlling the meaning of the urban environment. With the liberalization of the Second Empire during the 1860s and especially with the rise of the Third Republic, people began to recognize a right to address the state in response to this problem. A variety of people, mostly, but not exclusively, middle-class men, wrote to the police, asserted the state's responsibility to the preservation of a general interest, and demanded that the police do more to eliminate traces of public sex from the streets of Paris. And yet, as the actions of others on the streets reflects, that "general" interest remained an elite interest, one based on the preservation of notions of privacy and liberty delegated to members of their particular class, rather than the population as a whole.

The Paris police archives contain hundreds of letters similar to Bernaud's.¹⁰ Written largely by business owners and respectable *pères de famille*, they show how individual Parisians attempted to navigate and claim the city as their own. The writers normally begin with a formal solicitation, excusing themselves for taking up the prefect's time, and then proceed with a description of the problem located in their neighborhood, in recreational spaces or near their places of business. They often close by calling on the

¹⁰ I have taken an essentially random sample of letters for the purposes of this chapter. See the bibliography for a list of dossiers and cartons cited. My overarching analysis is based, however, on an evaluation of every dossier dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. Examples that I present could easily be multiplied.

police to do their duty and clean the streets. The letter writers advocate for the emergence of a city that reflected their private virtue on the public streets. The safety of the home could and should be replicated in the public sphere. However, public sexual activity punctured that possibility by loudly and obtrusively declaring the presence of prostitutes and pederasts throughout the city. The letter writers' concern for the security of the streets lay as much in their faith in the social benefits of urban modernization as it did in their implicit realization that the promises of redevelopment had not yet been met. Second Empire and Third Republic administrators promised to deliver the city to the interests of modern forms of economic and social exchange, represented by the financial institutions that funded redevelopment, by department stores that catered to a wide public, and by the emergence of an interconnected city that not only enabled, but demanded, new forms of public interaction. The inability of administrators to control the ramifications of these changes – represented in part by the continuing and apparently increasing presence of sexual immorality on the streets of Paris – encouraged ordinary people to take to their pens and make their own claims on the city.

Expert and Popular Discourses of Sexual Regulation

In 1881, René Serrand wrote to the police complaining that two prostitutes habitually followed him down the boulevard to his home. One evening, one of the prostitutes took him by the arm and claimed, “I have the right to do so, we are in a republic!”¹¹ Whether she understood it or not, in declaring her right to access public

¹¹ [“j'en ai le droit nous sommes en republique!”] René Serrand to Préfet de Police, April 14, 1881, BM2 16, APP. The phrase is essentially the equivalent of an American declaring “It’s a free country!” This letter is notable for also noting the presence of “young men with effeminate voices [jeunes garçons à voix effemineés]” as well in the same neighborhood.

space and actively interact with bourgeois Parisians, this woman played upon a prominent concern that underlay anxieties over the new liberties granted by the Third Republic. By supposedly endowing everyone with the freedom to move about the city, how could elites continue to guarantee their right to circulate without the interference of other marginal groups? The associations of prostitution with disease and disorder made them especially dangerous to those invested in a city secure from the disorders that wracked it earlier in the century. The police continued to rely on the formulations enunciated by Parent-Duchâtelet in the early July Monarchy. Although they recognized the practical difficulties in enforcing a system of total enclosure, the justification for moral police remained predicated on the notion that prostitution must be controlled, rather than eliminated, because it was a “necessary evil.” In theory, those who wrote to the police accepted this formulation, but they then extended its implications by emphasizing “evil” over “necessary.” In practice, they believed that public sex threatened the health and safety of those who sought to explore the city, not because it was insufficiently managed, but because it was allowed to exist in the first place.

When they wrote to the police, ordinary people utilized official and expert discourses. The rhetoric of Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet offered a touchstone. Not only, therefore, did his formulation of prostitution as a “necessary evil” wind its way through nineteenth-century regulationist discourse, but it also invaded popular consciousness.¹²

As late as the 1890s, an anonymous author wrote “[w]e know that prostitution can be a

¹² On the importance of Parent-Duchâtelet to expert discourses on prostitution in the nineteenth century see Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 16; Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 102–103; Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), chap. 1; Alain Corbin, “Présentation,” in *De la prostitution à Paris au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2008), 12.

necessary thing, but is it not also necessary keep it under observation?”¹³ Nine years later another letter recognized police practice in its own terms, noting that “[s]ince prostitution is tolerated as a necessary evil, the Prefecture of Police, in the hope that this degrading commerce would not contaminate public morality, has imposed certain prohibitions and obligations on prostitutes.”¹⁴ People understood the rationale for the continued existence of the moral police. Indeed, the abolitionist debates that began in the 1870s and waged throughout the rest of the century, fueled both the criticism and the defense of police procedures. As Jill Harsin has explained, attacks on the moral police forced the administration to clearly enunciate their goals in order to successfully defend the regulationist system.¹⁵ In so doing, they raised public awareness of the problem. The official and expert language of regulationism shaped the ways in which people made their own claims on the moral regulation of the city.

Just as administrators and moral commentators expressed the solution to this problem in terms of public hygiene, so too did some of the letters. The presence of themes of contamination and illness revealed the extent to which people understood, not just the system that regulated public sex, but also the danger it supposedly posed to public health. Just as experts like Parent-Duchâtelet, Emile Bruneseau, and Victor Hugo implied the reciprocal nature of morality to physical cleanliness, some letter writers linked public sex to dirt and illness. An anonymous complaint regarding a “male brothel” declared “it’s horrible what is disgustingly done in this infected hellhole,” and concludes by simply

¹³ [“Nous savons que la prostiution peut être chose nécessaire, mais faut-il encore la surveiller?”] Anonymous to Préfet de Police, October 21, 1891, BM2 60, APP.

¹⁴ [“Puisque la prostitution est tolérée comme un mal nécessaire, la Préfecture de Police, dans l'espoir que ce dégradant commerce ne contamine pas les moeurs, a imposé aux femmes publiques certaines défenses et obligations.”] Letter to Préfet de Police, June 22, 1900, BM2 20, APP.

¹⁵ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 323.

lamenting “dirty house dirty world.”¹⁶ The infected brothel here threatened to overrun the public world, even though the activities described took place inside one isolated hotel. The writer’s disgust at sodomy passes into a general moral repugnance threatening the sanctity of his world. In response to this type of threat, other writers took up the language of public hygiene and complemented expert discourse by relating the management of sexual activity to efforts to clean the city streets. One anonymous note refers to offenses against morality and lauds the “vigilance taken to clean up [*assainis*] the neighborhood of les Halle [sic] Centrales, but much remained to do. There is a foyer of infection at rue du Plat d’Étain, no 3.”¹⁷ The French verb *assainir* means literally “to clean up.” Its reflexive form, *s’assainir* means “to become healthier.” Finally, in its nominal form, *l’assainissement* can also imply “decontamination.” The Paris *Service d’assainissement*, for instance, was the municipal section tasked with caring for public hygiene, the sewer system, and clean water. The word thus referred most literally to projects of public hygiene and related to the provision of clean water and the prevention of cholera. And yet, this writer used the word in a fairly casual way to refer to the regulation of sexuality. The link between efforts of physical cleanliness and public morality had penetrated a popular discourse where it was taken up to make new demands on the officials that enunciated it in the first place.

The letters emphasized the danger posed by prostitutes and pederasts to the city as a whole. Both experts and lay people saw the bodies of prostitutes and pederasts as the

¹⁶ The text of this letter, entirely capitalized, features little grammar and is riddled with spelling errors. I have attempted to translate it into “proper” English, but here reproduce the relevant parts of the original French to the best I can discern. [“cest [sic] affreux ce qui ce fait de sale dans ce bouge infecte...sale maison sale monde”]. Anonymous to Commissaire de Police, August 14, 1890, BM2 47, APP.

¹⁷ [“la vigilance que vous mettez a assainir le quartier des Halle [sic] Centrales mais il reste encore beaucoup a faire cest ce foyer d’infection rue du plat d’étain no 3.” Anonymous to Préfet de Police, August 5, 1895, BM2 33, APP.

vehicles of infection, rather than just their actions. An anonymous writer, for instance, echoed Gustav Macé's description of pederasts as "infected beings" when he wrote that prostitutes were "living epidemics."¹⁸ One mother from Niort in the west of France wrote to the Paris police and described the fall of her son after he arrived in the big city. After arriving in Paris, her son "fell into the hands of a woman who, after using him up to his last *sous*, afflicted him with one of those shameful maladies from which he will suffer his entire life."¹⁹ Although few people seemed willing to admit having a sexually transmitted disease, the archives feature examples of those who just happened to know people infected by a prostitute. One young man complained that several of his friends had contracted venereal diseases from the prostitutes at the Wagram dancehall.²⁰ In another instance, a woman wrote and complained that a prostitute living in a garni, a cheap dive hotel, had infected her husband.²¹ The association of infection with sexual deviants threatened to overwhelm the entire city: "Syphilis loves these little Parisian corners; there, it makes fine nests of silk and velvet, but it has many disagreeable surprises for the imprudent explorer!"²² The Parisian who described a hotel of bad morals near les Halles echoed this discourse when he lamented that should the administration simply demolish the building, "the ground would still be infected."²³ Space itself had become infected; disease did not just threaten those foolish enough to patronize a

¹⁸ Anonymous to Préfet de Police, February 21, 1901, BM2 17, APP; Gustave Macé, *Mes Lundis en prison* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889), 171.

¹⁹ ["est tombé dans les mains d'une femme qui après lui avoir mangé jusqu'à son dernier sous l'a affligé d'une de ces maladies honteuses dont il se ressentira toute sa vie."] Richemond to Préfet de Police, December 12, 1895, BM2 33, APP.

²⁰ L. Trouin to Directeur du Bureau des Moeurs, May 4, 1893, BM2 32, APP.

²¹ Anonymous to Préfet de Police, n.d., BM2 63, APP.

²² ["La syphilis aime beaucoup ces petits coins parisiens; elle s'y fait de jolis nids de soie et de velours, mais elle a bien des surprises désagréables pour l'imprudent explorateur!"] Louis Martineau, *La prostitution clandestine* (Paris: A. Delahaye et É. Lecrosnier, 1885), 83.

²³ Anonymous to Préfet de Police, August 5, 1895.

prostitute, but also those who sought to explore “little Parisian corners.” Public sex threatened to render the entire city into a space of danger.

Although ordinary people took up expert discourse as they brought the problem of public sex to the attention of the police, they did not remain satisfied with expert solutions. As C.J. Lecour declared, “It is such a banal formula which designates it [prostitution] as a *necessary evil*. Necessary evil, understood, but no one wants to be subjected to its spectacle or its vicinity and each one sends it to his neighbor.”²⁴ Those who wrote to the police may have used the terms of regulationist discourse, but they did not necessarily agree with its conclusions. For example, after a new market opened in Montparnasse on July 18, 1882, the police received a petition that complained of the three brothels that faced it. The police reported that the market inspector had not received “any complaint either from the merchants or from the public on the subject of the neighboring *maisons de tolérance* in question.”²⁵ Nevertheless, a number of local merchants had signed the petition, led in particular by a Sr. Peignot, who owned two new buildings in the area. Peignot couched argued that the brothels of Paris should be further apart because they presented “an immoral spectacle for the youth of the neighborhood and above all for the renters of the buildings that faced them.” The brothels, he claimed, attracted a bad crowd, even though he also admitted that the institutions in his neighborhood were “relatively well kept and that there was rarely scenes of racket and

²⁴ [“Il y a même une banale formule qui la désigne comme un *mal nécessaire*. Mal nécessaire, c’est entendu, mais personne n’en veut subir le spectacle ou le voisinage, et chacun le renvoie à son voisin.”] C. J. Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789-1870* (Paris: P. Asselin, 1870), 17. This is not to say that people did not have any reason at all to oppose the placement of brothels in their neighborhood. Jill Harsin, for example, has noted that “bordellos did strange things to property values, tending to lower the worth of those buildings around them even as their own value went up.” Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 285.

²⁵ [“aucune plainte soit des marchands; soit du public, au sujet du voisinage des maisons de tolérance en question.”] Chef du Service de Sûreté [Illegible], “Rapport. Au sujet des maisons de tolérance du Bd Edgar-Quinet”, April 25, 1884, 2, BM2 19, APP.

scandal.”²⁶ No matter, then, that the brothels were legal and “well-kept;” no matter that no one had complained when the inspector surveyed the opinion of the neighborhood.

The brothel caused a scandal because it was a brothel.²⁷

In the end, the police seem to have capitulated to Pierot’s complaint. They decided that should one of the keepers of the brothels die, move, or lose their license, permission to keep the brothel would not be transferred to another individual.²⁸ The brothel remained a key component of the regulationist system, but only signified danger to those who wrote to the police. To these men and women, it stood, not as an example of the management of public sexual activity, but of its continuing, unfortunate, presence in the city of Paris. Those who complained in this vein did not elaborate their own solution, leaving such considerations to the police themselves. But they did indeed express the logical conclusion of an expert discourse that emphasized the dangers of prostitution and pederasty. Elimination, not enclosure, became the key to ensuring the safety and security of the city.

The Police and Public Opinion

The power the police held over prostitutes and pederasts was of the police’s own making. No legislative decree created the regulationist system, nor did any law forbid men from seeking sex with other men. Police power was, essentially, “arbitrary,” defined

²⁶ [“un spectacle immoral pour la jeunesse du quartier et surtout pour les locataires des immeubles qui sont en face...relativement bien tenus et qu’il ne s’y produit que rarement des scènes de tapage ou de scandale.”] Ibid., 3.

²⁷ Such views were particularly shared by abolitionists such as Peignot’s contemporary Léo Taxil who argued that the “*tolérance* is, in general, a calamity for the neighborhoods where they are found [Le voisinage des maisons de tolérance est, en général, une calamité pour les quartiers où elles se trouvent.]” Léo Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d’une question sociale* (Paris: Librairie populaire, 1884), 6.

²⁸ Chef du Service de Sûreté [Illegible], “Rapport. Au sujet des maisons de tolérance du Bd Edgar-Quinet,” 4.

by those who exercised it.²⁹ Their authority, however, did not exist in a vacuum. Instead, it responded and bent in response to a variety of expert and popular discourses that either critiqued or encouraged it. The very potential for absolute police authority over the bodies of prostitutes and pederasts has led scholars to focus on those discourses that finally began to restrain the moral police in the 1880s and 1890s.³⁰ The most influential of these discourses was the abolitionist movement that called for the destruction of the moral police in pamphlets and newspapers as well as on the floor the Municipal Council of Paris. Another discourse, however, tried to influence police practice and was expressed in the letters sent to the authorities in order to encourage them to do more to eliminate the traces of public sex from the streets of Paris. People believed they could influence police practice for three reasons. First, by the middle of the 1860s, the authorities had developed an awareness of the need to manage, not just the efficiency of their own mechanisms of enforcement, but their public image. Second, in response, the police had begun imposing limitations on their own authority when regulating public sex. Third, the letters couched their concerns in the terms of the general interest; the writers' particular concerns only emerged insofar as they spoke for the needs of a broader public. Thus, the letters were made possible by the fact that the police had begun to keep track of their own public image. The letters played off of this new concern by couching their own demands in terms of a broader public.

Although it remains true that the first formidable attacks on the moral police only began in the late 1870s, there remains some evidence that the police began taking public opinion seriously during the 1860s, just as the public began gaining its voice with the

²⁹ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 51.

³⁰ See especially Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 315–379. See also Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 324–330; Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 28.

loosening of political and press restrictions. The gradual development of police responsiveness can be traced by examining the ways in which the police gradually came to adjust a particular practice – in our case the awarding of bounties for successful arrests – in response to concerns over their public image. During the early July Monarchy, the police began offering monetary incentives to officers who arrested clandestine prostitutes soliciting on the streets, prostitutes who missed their medical exam, and those caught committing an *outrage public à la pudeur* or sodomy among other infractions.³¹ It took five years for a police report to appear that argued that inspectors had begun making arbitrary arrests in order to claim an award. However, the report’s primary focus did not lay with those mistakenly arrested, but with police officers who pooled their earnings together and split them amongst themselves at the end of the month, a practice that rewarded “the inactive agent, the lazy, or one who had merited a punishment.”³² Although the authorities recognized the potential for abuse within the reward system, a commission of 1843 only suggested changing the method of distributing the incentives to better reward those officers who showed initiative.³³ Any concern for the rights of those falsely arrested faded in comparison to the effort to ensure that the police functioned well.

The police revisited the question of rewarding arrests in 1858, but again only changed the distribution of rewards by introducing a “graduated [system] relative to the gravity of the crime or offense, the care taken by the officers in arriving at their conclusion, as well as the dangers to which they could have been exposed during the

³¹ Préfet de Police, “Nous, Pair de France, Préfet de Police”, January 1, 1845, DA 223, doc. 113, APP.

³² [“l’agent inactif, le paresseux, ou celui qui a mérité une punition.”] Besset, “Rapport”, July 20, 1843, 2, DA 223, doc. 83, APP.

³³ Besset, “Rapport”; “Instruction pour le service actif du dispensaire: Arrêté du 18 Aout 1844”, August 18, 1844, DA 223, Archives de la préfecture de police de Paris.

capture of the delinquents.”³⁴ Finally, mid-way through the so-called “liberal” phase of the Second Empire the police began to reconsider the entire practice. The loosening of press restrictions, the freedom to unionize, and the increasing force of Republicanism seemingly encouraged the police to begin listening and responding to their critics. An 1865 note, for instance, acknowledged that the incentives left the police vulnerable to “unjust and malicious” criticism; the “avarice” of a few agents risked damaging the entire force. The note recommended eliminating the practice and stated that the Chef de la Police municipale agreed. He therefore indicated that he would no longer deliver the bounties for arrests for *outrage public à la pudeur*.³⁵ By 1865 at the latest, in other words, the police may have still possessed ultimate authority over prostitutes, but they had also begun to listen to a larger public when deciding how to exercise that authority.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the police evinced some clear evidence that they were not willing to risk public disapproval by taking their authority over public sexuality to the extreme. Jill Harsin has argued that “the [regulationist] system was vulnerable to the good or bad intentions of the men who put it into operation; there were no structural, built-in safeguards for the women who were caught up in the system, and even the prefecture had to admit that abuses had occurred.”

Harsin emphasizes the “bad intentions” of morals agents and their use of their arbitrary

³⁴ [“gradu  en raison de la gravit  des crimes ou d lits, des soins que prennent les agents pour arriver   leur constatation, ainsi que des dangers auxquels ils peuvent  tre expos s dans la capture des d linquants.”] Boittelle, “Arr t  concernant les Primes   allouer aux Agents, pour captures de d linquants”, July 26, 1858, DA 223, doc. 129, APP.

³⁵ “Untitled”, April 1865, DA 223, APP. I have been unable thus far to determine whether the practice actually was discontinued. Zola’s *Nana*, in the eponymous novel that took place in the final years of the Second Empire, certainly still feared that an unscrupulous police officer would arrest her seeking the bounty.  mile Zola, *Nana* (Penguin Classics, 1972), 273. Certainly it is not to say that other services and offenses continued to have bounties associated with them; as Jill Harsin points out the *brigade des moeurs* was not the only service to use the system. Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 199–200.

authority to justify their intervention into the lives of working-class women. Her argument has been justly influential, but it is worth emphasizing that the police did show some concern to not bother women whose only crime was to appear in public.

As early as 1853, an incident occurred that caused a bit of a stir within the police prefecture after it was revealed that only one of two women arrested together one evening on the Rue Saint Antoine was actually a prostitute. The arresting officers explained that they had orders to arrest any women who appeared together on the public thoroughfares. Somewhat chagrined, the commissar in charge demanded in response that orders be given to cease arresting women simply for appearing in public. In doing so, the commissar laid down a principle that stated that women who had not done anything to disrupt public space were to be let alone; he put into place restrictions on police activity. Both women, it should be noted, were set free.³⁶ This is not to say that the police totally ceased bothering women on the streets of Paris. Indeed, continuing instances of mistaken arrests of “honest” women provided a great deal of the impetus for the abolitionist movement later in the century. At the same time, I wish to emphasize that at least some segments of the police were determined to exercise their authority with some restraint. They may have possessed absolute authority in principle, but in practice they were more limited.

Similarly, the police tended to restrict their pursuit of men who had sex with other men by choosing to take seriously the possibility of publicizing the crime. The police

³⁶ [Illegible], “Arrestation sur la voie publique de la femme Dumainer logeuse, et de la fille Marcon, en cela parce qu’elles se trouvaient ensemble et que la femme Dumaine était supposée inscrite à la Préfecture”, July 21, 1853, DA 223, APP. A note from a few days later asks the commissaire who wrote the initial report to make known when the orders to arrest any woman on the street were given, since that contradicted existing regulations. See Le Chef de la 1ère Division [Illegible], “Note pour M. le Chef de la Police Municipale. Au sujet d’une arrestation opérée sur la voie publique.”, July 25, 1853, DA 223, doc. 87, APP.

tended to interfere only when they had personally witnessed an offense or had reason to believe that pederasts were disrupting the public. In response to a letter from the Prefect of Police just prior to the June Days of 1848, for instance, the Commissar of the Tuileries wrote “that orders were given to expulse and arrest” the prostitutes and pederasts who came to the area “if necessary.”³⁷ In addition, a police report from the early Second Empire complained that since pederasts’ “immoral acts took place in their interiors, only luck could lead to their arrest.”³⁸ Towards the end of the 1860s, a police officer reported that he could not intervene with a group of men soliciting amongst themselves because current legislation did not allow him to do so without seeing them engage in obscene touching.³⁹ Two reports from the 1870s said much the same thing: although the police knew where pederasts were meeting in public, their activities never reached the point of a public offense against decency and thus provided no cause for arrest.⁴⁰ This apparent reticence to arrest any and all men who appeared to be pederasts lends slightly more credence to complaints by moral commentators and police officers that the authorities found their hands tied by existing legal codes when dealing with same-sex sexual activity.⁴¹ This is not to excuse the oppressive and often arbitrary actions of a police force essentially free to act as it wished when dealing with cases of illicit sexual activity. It is to say, however, that the police often acted in accordance with its own definition of a public offense against decency; such definitions relied, not on same-sex sexual activity

³⁷ Commissaire de police Avulley to Préfet de Police, May 1, 1848, DA 223, APP.

³⁸ [“Ces actes immoraux se passent dans leur intérieur, un hasard seul pourrait amener l’arrestation de quelques uns d’entre eux.”] [Illegible], “Rapport”, August 9, 1853, DA 230, doc 247, APP.

³⁹ Officier de la Paix [Illegible], “Rapport: Réponses à des lettres signalant des rendez-vous de pédérastes”, March 22, 1869, DA 230, doc. 356, APP.

⁴⁰ “Rapport: Surveillances au Palais Royal”, July 1, 1872, BM2 32, APP; Bauce, “Rapport trimestriel sur la Prostitution. Année 1873. 2e Trimestre”, July 2, 1873, BM2 60, APP.

⁴¹ François Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions: 1860-1870* (E. Dentu, 1887), 471–474; Ali Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris* (Paris: Librairie Illustrée, 1888), 353.

per se, but on their potential to disrupt public order through violations of public decorum. Because the police defined the "law" regulating same-sex sexual activity, they were able to draw their own – admittedly blurry – line between permissible and impermissible public behavior.

The complaints sent to the police were responses to these self-imposed limitations; they evince the belief that the police were not doing enough to safeguard the security of public space. Some writers could only express disbelief at the police's apparent incompetence at managing public sex adequately. One 1868 letter, for instance, claimed that "[i]f the police care about good morals, it will purge the Palais-Royal, the arcades and areas around the theatres of the mischief-makers who exploit their behind" and concludes by pointedly asking if "the Empire's police, which is so worried about political opinions, [should] be a little more active regarding morality."⁴² According to the anonymous writer of this letter, the police's priorities were totally misplaced. The root of instability lay, not with political dissidence, but with public immorality and the police proved incapable of telling the difference: "Is the police so blind," the anonymous writer asks, "that it cannot recognize all these mischief makers, because they are well dressed by the price of their prostitution and swindling?"⁴³ Pederasts' ability to present themselves as proper members of society obscured their threat to social order. This letter was written towards the end of the Second Empire, a time when the police still possessed a particular responsibility to the politics of authoritarianism. This writer implies that the security of

⁴² ["Si la police s'occupe des bonnes moeurs, elle devrait purger le palais-royal, les passages et es abords des théatres des polissons qui exploitent leur derrière... la police de l'Empire qui est aussi tracassière pour les opinions politiques, sera un peu plus active pour ce qui regarde les moeurs"] Anonymous to Commissaire de Police du Palais-Royal, June 18, 1868, DA 230, doc. 350, APP.

⁴³ ["La police est-elle aussi aveugle, qu'elle ne connait pas tous ces polissons, parce qu'ils sont bien habillés du prix de leur honteuse porstitution et de leurs escoqueries?"] Ibid.

the regime actually depended on greater attention to the morality of the streets. The letter's tone is marked by a dismissal of the priorities of the Imperial state in a larger sense, where the police, so fearful of political disruption, had forgotten their true duties.

The vast majority of the letters, however, were written during the Third Republic. They represent a constituency that believed it had the right to make claims on the state *and* that the state had an obligation to respond in turn. The self-imposed limitations of the police, therefore, proved a source of irritation even though those limitations were enacted in order to bend police practices to the perceived will of the public. In 1876, for instance, one Parisian, after coming across some prostitutes in the course of a walk, was told by a police officer to put his dog on a leash. The man then wrote to the prefecture in indignation and declared that the police cared more about loose dogs than about the prostitutes who disrupted his promenades.⁴⁴ The letters constitute a dense fund of information regarding how a particular segment of the bourgeoisie envisioned their place within a city built, financed, and governed by them. They argued that the police had failed their duties to their own constituency. For instance, one 1892 letter, from a B. Rousseau, could only express astonishment “that the police don't watch the entrance to the bois de Boulogne in the area of the pavilion d'Armenonville [near the Porte Maillot in the northeast of the park, not far from Neuilly],” where “no less than 40 prostitutes and at least as many pimps” hang out.⁴⁵ According to Rousseau, those who lived in the area were tired of complaining and being ignored by the Prefecture. He threatens to write directly to the Prefect, warning that influential people as well as the newspapers will take

⁴⁴ Anonymous, October 13, 1876, BM2 42, APP.

⁴⁵ [“surpris que la police ne surveille pas l'entrée du bois de Boulogne aux abords du pavillon d'Armenonville. Il n'y a pas moins de 40 femmes publiques et au moins autant de souteneurs.”] B. Rousseau to Commissaire de Police, August 29, 1892, 1, BM2 42, APP.

notice of the commissar's lack of progress regarding the problem, before asking "where is our money going, if we are ourselves reduced to playing police?"⁴⁶ He concludes by accusing the police of placing agents where they were not needed, making it necessary to "carry a dagger in one's belt and a revolver in one's fist."⁴⁷ Rousseau bases his complaint on the responsibilities of the state to its citizens. We, Rousseau argued, pay to have a functioning police force; they therefore must respond to our concerns. By writing directly to the police, Rousseau asserts his prerogative to direct the mechanisms of the state "from below." His status as a citizen of the Republic justified his claims on the authorities.

We know that this otherwise "private" discourse represented at least one segment of a "public" opinion because these terms circulated in the daily press as well. About a decade before Rousseau took up his pen, for example, a pseudonymous writer gave public voice to the complaints in an article for the *Nouveau Journal*. The author, calling himself "Populus" contrasted "brilliant, gay, playful Paris" with the "adjacent streets, black and smoky," where "the same indignities are glimpsed, where the same wickedness is perpetrated: revolting vice bases itself there in all its hideousness."⁴⁸ Populus writes not to satisfy the base curiosity of his readers, but rather to "insist...[on the] question of morality and public cleanliness" in the name of "a considerable crowd of honest people whose letters I hold in my hands."⁴⁹ Populus, as "the people," speaks for those who shared his conviction but lacked the means with which to address the wider public. He gives voice to public opinion in demanding that the police execute their duties and clean

⁴⁶ ["Mais où passe donc notre argent si nous en sommes encore réduits à faire la police nous-mêmes."]
Ibid., 1-2.

⁴⁷ ["il faudra mettre le poignard à la ceinture et le revolver au poing."]
Ibid., 3.

⁴⁸ ["Paris brillant, gai, folâtre...des rues adjacentes, noires et enfumées...Les mêmes indignités y sont aperçues, les mêmes scélératesses y sont perpétrées; le vice immonde s'y étale dans toute sa bideur."]
Populus, "Coup de balai," *Nouveau journal*, July 29, 1880.

⁴⁹ ["insister...question de la moralité, de la salubrité publiques [sic]...une foule considérable d'honnêtes gens don't j'ai les lettres dans les mains."]
Ibid.

the city streets. Clean *their* city streets, it should be emphasized: “we are today in a Republic, and the sovereign people do not accept that the agents that it pays should be employed in anything else but to protect them.”⁵⁰ Because the Republic was founded on “the sovereign people,” they had a right to demand that the agents of the state take concerted action. The people, insofar as they were coextensive with the government, owned the streets and employed the police. The article attempted to represent a supposedly silent majority, a segment of the population calling for the police to exercise their duty and clean the city streets.

It is difficult to say with any certainty what proportion of the population shared this opinion. The letters themselves come from all corners of Paris, but did individual moral activists or representatives of a broad public write them? Their discourse emerged from their absolute belief in the danger posed by instances of public sex; it thus participated in a long-standing rhetoric of moral concern that attributed very real dangers to prostitution and pederasty. In that sense, it is possible that the complaints formed part of a wide, but not very thick, segment of the population, one that remained relevant insofar as it reflected and shaped the expert discourses on which the regulation of public sexuality were based. Those who wrote to the police tried to deepen the image of their public by following the rhetoric of someone like Populus and declared that their ultimate concern lay, not in their particular needs, but in the public interest. Liberal political theory depends on a rather strict separation of private from public interest; indeed, one’s ability to “rise above, or set aside, one’s private interests” signifies a person’s ability to

⁵⁰ [“nous sommes aujourd’hui en République, et le peuple souverain ne comprendrait pas que les agents qu’il paie fussent employés à autre chose qu’à le protéger.”] Ibid.

rationally act in the public sphere.⁵¹ To call on the state thus depended on separating one's personal involvement from the general good. Writers, therefore, rarely wrote anonymous letters, a practice closely associated with blackmail and pederasty, choosing instead to reveal their names in order to prove that their encounters with illicit sexuality did not mean they had anything to fear from the police.⁵²

Letter writers signed their names because they were secure in the belief that they were performing a public service, not pursuing a private interest. In addition, many writers couched their complaints in a larger context in order to illustrate the relevance of their particular concerns to the entire city. A frequent rhetorical move was to incorporate the protection of children. To cite one example, a group of mothers wrote that they could not “go out with our poor small children” because of the frequent presence of prostitutes in a hotel on the boulevard de la Villette.⁵³ These women asserted a dual public role. First, by writing to the police they declared themselves competent to address the state. Lacking full citizenship in the Third Republic, these women still invested themselves in the idea that the authorities would and should respond to their needs. Second, they demanded the right to act in public and move about the boulevards despite their gender. Or rather, they did so because their gender involved the particular responsibilities of motherhood. These obligations, ultimately, justified their other public role; they could

⁵¹ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 40.

⁵² François Carlier, for instance, declared that “The anonymous letter is the most exact expression of their [pederasts'] courage, they turn to it in every circumstance [La lettre anonyme est l'expression la plus exacte de leur courage, ils y ont recours en toutes circonstances]” Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 287. This is not to say that some people did not complain of female prostitution anonymously. One late nineteenth-century letter does so, the writer claims, because his position as a *père de famille* demanded it. Most other fathers held no such compunction. Anonymous to Préfet de Police, November 22, 1897, BM2 37, APP.

⁵³ Un groupe de Mères de Famille to Préfet de Police, August 2, 1898, BM2 58, APP. For other examples of using children as an excuse for writing a letter see for example Auguste Achille Meissonnié to Commissaire de Police, October 15, 1882, BM2 16, APP; Louis Borelli to Préfet de Police, August 4, 1899, BM2 32, APP.

write to the police because they wrote in the interest of their children – and thus France’s future itself – rather than their own.⁵⁴ These letters – many others wrote in similar terms – spoke in the name of innocent youth in order to construct a public oriented towards the preservation threats to the social fabric, rather than one that revolved around the defense of the particular interests of individual writers.⁵⁵ Those who wrote to the police attempted to represent themselves as a public that spoke for a broad swathe of the population. The police, having shown that they cared to maintain a certain public image, had to listen.

The Sexual Threats to Elite Control

Throughout the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, the emergence of new forms of consumption and political participation required people to adjust to an urban culture that required free circulation of people, even as they continued to apparently desire authoritative control. Reconciling these two trends encouraged increasingly powerful discourses that attempted to establish a clear relation between public and private lives. For instance, as the marketplace came to dominate public activity during the Third Republic, bringing along with it fears of uncontrollable desire set loose by unscrupulous advertisers and businessmen, the control of one’s intimate space came to signify virtue in the face of temptation.⁵⁶ In other words, it is no coincidence that between about 1850 and 1880 interior spaces came to signify an

⁵⁴ On the importance of motherhood to perceptions of social order in nineteenth-century France see Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 14.

⁵⁵ B. Lecrivain to Préfet de Police, November 24, 1873, DA 230, doc. 366, APP; L Préter to Préfet de Police, October 30, 1876, BM2 51, APP; R. Clement to Préfet de Police, May 13, 1878, BM2 32, APP; Anonymous to Préfet de Police, October 21, 1891.

⁵⁶ Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-De-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 185–189.

inviolable domesticity, a sanctuary from the increasingly frenetic public world.⁵⁷ Put another way, just as working-class homes became increasingly vulnerable to infiltration by privileged social observers, the bourgeoisie imagined theirs as impervious to any comparable violation.⁵⁸ Implicit within this narrative resides the notion that so long as the domestic interior remained safe, then the public exterior could remain chaotic, because the bourgeois person was protected from such chaos by virtue of a stability signified by his domestic space.

Ultimately, however, this distinction proved inefficacious at securing the place of elites within the modern city. Private virtue may have effectively justified one's ability to speak for a greater public – evidenced by the existence of the letters themselves – but it did not guarantee one's freedom to move about the city without interference from marginal social actors. Those who wrote to the police complaining of prostitutes and occasionally pederasts on the streets of Paris called out the police's unwillingness to use their power to secure city space for their interests. This segment of the middle class declared that the public presence of prostitutes on the streets of Paris threatened their ability to control their own experience of urban life. This occurred in two primary ways. First, prostitutes managed to disrupt those who sought to enjoy public space by drawing urban walkers' attention towards them and away from proper pursuits. Second, they threatened the sanctity of the home itself by revealing their presence outside and around its walls. The middle-classes in part signified their class position through practices of

⁵⁷ Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 138–139.

⁵⁸ The emphasis on the inviolability of certain spaces occurred just as all spaces, following the logic of discipline, actually become more transparent. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 146; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 76–79.

public display that required showing their ability to move about the urban environment unhindered. Prostitutes managed to disrupt that ability by highlighting people's inability to control the sensory experiences of modern urban life.

The letters reveal a popular investment in the idea of an urban space purged of inconsistencies. An implicit goal of the transformation of Paris during the Second Empire and early Third Republic involved the management of the senses. A person trying to make their way around early nineteenth-century Paris would have found him or herself immersed in an uncontrolled *mélange* of both pleasant and unpleasant sensory experiences.⁵⁹ The sound of coaches kicked up the smell of sewage running down the street, while narrow traffic lanes blocked views of now-familiar vistas as travelers rubbed shoulders with local passer-by. To Haussmann's critics, these encounters entered a realm of nostalgia that emphasized their centrality to early nineteenth-century Parisian life.⁶⁰ However, by the time of the major transformations of the Second Empire both experts and ordinary people were emphasizing the need to bring the varied sensory experience of modern urban life under control. We have already seen, for instance, the central role played by the *flâneur*, a figure that represented a power-relationship expressed through the gaze, in understandings of modern life. The gaze of the *flâneur* stood in for the ability of privileged Parisians to manage their experience of the city by becoming observers of, rather than participants in, the crowd. The control of visual experience, in other words, became a way of asserting a person's individuality while out and about in the city. Just as Haussmann attempted to control the ways in which people saw the city by creating enforced perspectives along his broad boulevards, the *flâneur* illustrated how

⁵⁹ Colin Jones, *Paris: Biography of a City* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 294.

⁶⁰ T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 43.

the enforcement of the visual rendered people into objects of a gaze accessible only to the privileged. The control of visual experience, the emergence of a “spectacle of modern life,” was a process that was supposed to endow people with a way of experiencing the city without giving them a way of creating that experience themselves.⁶¹

The management of smell also played an important part of this process. Alain Corbin has influentially described the process of “deodorization” that took place through the course of the nineteenth century. Administrators built new sewers, removed cemeteries, provided fresh water, and constructed public urinals in order to render public space free of unwanted odors. This project entailed, not the eventual elimination of smell, but rather the clearing away of odors that signified disorder in favor of those that signified order. Rather than the smell of the sewer, individual Parisians would be able to express their privileged individuality through the careful management of their own lightly perfumed “atmosphere.”⁶² Urban elites thus tried to separate themselves from the urban crowd, even as they moved about the city.⁶³ The process of deodorization was as much a way of emphasizing the control of the city by a certain class of people as it was an exercise in public hygiene. The use of the senses, what one saw, smelled, touched, and heard, signified one’s place within urban culture. Elites thus depended on the accomplishment of a project that purified urban space of uncontrollable sights, sounds, and textures for their own enjoyment of the city.

⁶¹ Ibid., 36; Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market*, 96.

⁶² Alain Corbin, *Le miasme et la jonquille: L’odorat et l’imaginaire social aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Flammarion, 1986), 168. Mark Jenner has, in a recent essay exploring recent historiography on smell, emphasized the need to recognize that projects of deodorization were often actually projects of emphasizing and deemphasizing particular smells. See Mark S. R. Jenner, “Follow Your Nose? Smell, Smelling, and Their Histories,” *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 340–341.

⁶³ In this sense, one could argue that the *flâneur* of the latter part of the nineteenth-century depended as much on the management of smell as on the control of the gaze. The ability to control one’s own atmosphere signified the ability to enjoy the urban crowd without becoming a part of it.

The complaints sent to the police emphasized the ways in which prostitutes shattered this image of control through vivid descriptions of the sights, sounds, and textures of public sex.⁶⁴ The letters underscore the primacy of visual solicitation as a way of seeking sexual encounters during the second half of the nineteenth century. They reveal at the same time, however, that the female prostitute had not simply become another “*femme-spectacle*” to be consumed by the male bourgeois.⁶⁵ Instead, her embodiment of sexual pleasure served as a major challenge to the notion that visual experience could be effectively controlled. Her ability to attract the gaze – sometimes despite itself – underscores the importance of sex in how people conceived of modern urban life. Although privileged walkers gazed on objects, the letters reveal that objects frequently attracted an unwilling gaze. For instance, one writer complained that while taking a walk with his children, an inebriated prostitute “showed her nakedness” to them.⁶⁶ Another claimed that prostitutes were exhibiting themselves to honest women in the bois de Boulogne.⁶⁷ In yet another instance, a small group came upon a prostitute engaging in “the most obscene acts” with a client in the same park.⁶⁸ Such complaints do

⁶⁴ It is interesting and important to note that although expert discourse refers to the smells of illicit sexuality, the letters that I have seen do not. For instance, in an 1856 commentary Paul Auguez described the “robust young girls, lively and fresh, sporty and pink, exhaling love from all the pores of their alabaster bodies.” Similarly, Ambroise Tardieu declared the following year that pederasts’ bodies “exhaled the most penetrating perfumes.” Paul Auguez, *Les marchandes de plaisir* (Paris: Dentu, 1856), 17; Ambroise Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 3rd ed. (Paris: J.B. Baillière, 1859), 138. It is possible that other forms of encounter simply entered people’s memory more forcefully, that prostitutes and pederasts didn’t actually smell, that the odor of the city overrode anything emanating from those one met on the streets. Following Corbin, it is possible that the need to stress the security of one’s own atmosphere precluded admitting that one could smell the evidence of public sex. To have done so would have revealed that the management of one’s own smell had become threatened by entering a space of illicit possibilities. On the need to secure one’s own atmosphere in the face of the crowd see Corbin, *Le miasme et la jonquille*, 164–169.

⁶⁵ Corbin uses this term to underscore the importance of visual solicitation in an “extroverted” city. See Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 301–303.

⁶⁶ Anonymous to Préfet de Police, May 21, 1882, BM2 28, APP.

⁶⁷ Anonymous to Directeur de la Surêté publique, March 1, 1879, BM2 48, APP.

⁶⁸ F. Rousseau to Prefecture of Police, September 14, 1892, BM2 42, APP.

not necessarily reflect a growing public awareness of the medical category of exhibitionism, but should be placed in its context. Unlike the case of someone such as Emile Louis Drot who, after being accused of repeatedly exhibiting himself to young girls and, finally, a young boy in a public urinal, was arrested and subjected to medical examination in 1892, the cases of exhibitionism in the letters reflect a sense that the perpetrators committed the act out of pique, in order to disrupt the sensibilities of those on the street.⁶⁹ Likewise, the letters disavow any possible pleasure on their side of the encounter. Prostitutes effectively used their physical presence to draw the gaze and thus highlighted the ways in which they could wrest control of the eye away from the person to whom it belonged.

These visual affronts disrupted writers' faith in their ability to move about the city and maintain their control of the experience. Men who entered public space tried to assert their dominance by managing gender relations. Prostitutes' ability to direct the male gaze showcased their ability to temporarily invert gendered power. Unwanted touching accomplished the same feat to an even greater degree. If properly directing one's gaze reveals a person's ability to dominate urban life, touch serves the basis of social relationships, establishing firm connections and/or boundaries between individuals.⁷⁰ For instance, men who frequented *brasseries à femmes* – drinking establishments featuring serving girls – expected to flirt with, drink alongside, and touch

⁶⁹ On the Drot case, see the dossier contained in Archives de Paris D2U6 95. Other instances of what could be properly termed “exhibitionism” are present in the archives. In one instance a man's wife and daughter were followed by someone who then masturbated in front of them in the bois de Boulogne. In another a young woman was arrested for walking in public with her skirt up and without pants and was dutifully declared an hysterical prostitute. See E. Cacheux to Préfet de Police, May 25, 1887, BM2 42, APP; Legros, “fle Lenjeallé, Lea, 20 ans, modiste, rue du Four, No 24. Outrage public à la pudeur.”, September 21, 1894, D2U6 104, AP.

⁷⁰ Elizabeth D. Harvey, “The Portal of Touch,” *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 2 (April 2011): 386.

the servers. These activities alone rarely justified police closure of an establishment because a man touching a workingwoman did not disrupt social and gender hierarchy.⁷¹ Men went to the café in order to find these experiences; the police did not intervene because touching in a café supposedly reinforced, rather than subverted, the accepted relationship between male customers and working women. I will complicate that relationship in the context of the café in chapter four, but for now it is worth noting that the letters reveal how touch, once out of the control of the man, no longer seemed so innocuous. By touching or inviting the touch of men in public, prostitutes defied social convention and revealed their power to shape the male walker's experience of public space. One writer complained that "an honest man can no longer walk peacefully on the *cours la reine* [near the Champs-Élysées] between 9 and 11 at night without being accosted by women who commit revolting touches on him."⁷² Another, in addition, wrote of his shock when asked by a prostitute to put his hands under her skirt.⁷³ Men relied on their ability to control their encounters in public space, but prostitutes who touched them disrupted that confidence.

The prostitute's touch and her visuality remained linked to her physical body. If one managed to avoid the presence of a prostitute, a person could also safely avoid being drawn to her by sight or by touch. The safest course of action, hard as that may have been, was to studiously refuse to go near a prostitute. However, the sounds of

⁷¹ It should be noted that the police were perfectly willing to arrest men who crossed an undefined line when touching others in public. In 1878, for instance, a tourist was arrested for improperly touching a woman at the Folies-Bergère. Men who touched other men found themselves in trouble as well. In 1848, one man wrote to the police in order to explain himself after being accused of touching another man while exiting a theatre. "Procès Verbal. Outrage public à la pudeur. Folies Bergère.", September 9, 1878, BM2 7, APP; Jacques Bourcart to Préfet de Police, October 3, 1848, DA 230, doc. 176, APP.

⁷² ["Un honnête homme ne peut plus se promener tranquillement au cours la reine entre 9 et 11h du soir sans être accosté par des femmes qui en se livrant sur lui à des attouchements révoltants."] G.D. to Préfet de Police, August 20, 1872, BM2 60, APP.

⁷³ Charles Maniget de Ponté to Préfet de Police, September 27, 1900, BM2 42, APP.

prostitution subverted even that strategy. Sound's disembodiment made it perhaps the most threatening way in which the prostitute managed to puncture the bourgeoisie's confidence in its ability to manage the sensory experience of modern life. Although I agree with Corbin that visual solicitation became more important as the city transformed, such solicitation was often expressed in terms of noise.⁷⁴ C.J. Lecour, for instance declared in 1870 that the clandestine prostitute "displays herself loudly and attracts attention by her allures, her *toilettes*, her words and her scandals."⁷⁵ Lecour's mixed metaphor highlights the importance of the aural to anxieties over the presence of prostitutes in public space. To Lecour, the display of sex could only be expressed in terms of volume. Not only does he return to the aural by evoking her "words" and "scandals," but her display itself is "loud." The prostitute's offense thus escapes her body. No longer localized on her clothing or her manner, her presence expresses itself in a way that carries it through the city. One she appeared in public, the danger the prostitute represented was no longer restricted to her specific location.

Cities have become louder, rather than quieter. One person's noise pollution was another's sign of progress. Urban noise thus possessed variants of meaning, depending on its perceived effects. An 1892 letter complained that a group of prostitutes were in the habit of stationing themselves at the corner of boulevard Barbès and rue Labat, a rather busy intersection of no particular importance in the north of Paris at the base of Montmartre. During the day, the letter explained, "the animation of the boulevard and the noise of the carriages deaden the scandalous noises of these... Women [ellipses in the original]." Later, however, "[t]owards midnight, when a relative silence reigns, the

⁷⁴ Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 302–303.

⁷⁵ ["s'affiche-t-elle bruyamment et attire-t-elle l'attention par ses allures, se toilettes, ses paroles et ses scandales."] Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789-1870*, 18–19.

situation becomes intolerable” because one can hear them and their *souteneurs* from “the other side of the boulevard [emphasis in original].”⁷⁶ The noise of the boulevards – its “animation” – served a positive benefit in “deadening” the prostitutes’ “scandals.” The relative value of two types of noise connotes the necessity of properly managing the sensory experience of modern city. The animation of the boulevards, a proper noise, hid the sounds of public sex, an improper noise. At night, as the city quiets, only the improper remained, able to overwhelm the writer’s experience of city life.⁷⁷

The quiet of the night was supposed to guarantee the ability of people to work during the day. By disrupting people’s sleep, prostitutes managed to intrude themselves on people’s most private moments. The break of repose signified the ways in which sex threatened to invade the interior spaces of well-behaved citizens.⁷⁸ In 1888, for instance, J. Collet twice wrote to the police to complain that the room next to his family’s apartment “was rented out several times by day and by night.”⁷⁹ Unable to sleep before three or four o’clock each morning, they could “hear everything that happened there without counting the hideous and shameful dealings [*marchés*] that we hear.”⁸⁰ After complaining to the proprietress, asking her to find someone “tranquil” for the room, “she responded that it was a *chambre de passe* [a furnished room let out for prostitution] that brought in money and that the people, once inside, were free to make a ruckus which

⁷⁶ [“l’animation du boulevard et la bruit des voitures amortissent un par les bruits scandaleux de ces... Dames!... Vers minuit, quand un silence relatif s’est produit, la situation devient intolerable... de l’autre côté du boulevard!”] Antoni Frapasnik to Préfet de Police, June 23, 1892, BM2 15, APP.

⁷⁷ This is not to say that people did not sometimes complain about noise that would otherwise be considered “normal” in nineteenth-century Paris. In 1881, for instance, a math teacher complained of the “nightly racket” caused by a brasserie in the neighborhood. B. Niewenglonork, December 21, 1881, BM2 16, APP.

⁷⁸ In 1889, for instance, Achille Auguste Meissonnié wrote to complain that he and his neighbors could not sleep “following the singing, cries, and disputes from the women on the rue de Buci.” Meissonnié to Commissaire de Police, October 15, 1882.

⁷⁹ [“se loue plusieurs fois par jour et par nuit.”] J. Collet to Préfet de Police, April 7, 1888, BM2 45, APP.

⁸⁰ [“nous entendons tout ce qui s’y passe sans compter les marchés affreux et honteux que nous entendons.”] Ibid.

pleased them.”⁸¹ If modern bourgeois society depended on the interior as a scene of familial reproduction – Collet specifically mentions the presence of his young children – to signify one’s membership a privileged elite with the right to call upon the state, then the violation of that interior space by the sounds of illicit sexual pleasure – decoupled from the familial drive – deeply troubled the ability of those affected to confidently claim the attention of the authorities.⁸² In other words, the sounds of sex discomfited bourgeois identity, and thus threatened one’s ability to take upon a public persona in the first place. The act of writing the letter to the police signifies Collet’s attempt to assert his right to call upon the state in the face of a threat to his ability to adequately protect his home. The fact that he had to “renew” his entreaties to the police highlights his ultimate weakness, a weakness represented best by the fact that he lived next to a *chambre de passe*.

Prostitutes’ willingness to verbalize sexual pleasure also punctured the security middle class walkers were supposed to feel while wandering the streets of Paris. The privileged gaze of *flânerie* remained privileged only insofar as the experience remained under the control of those who sought out those pleasures. By verbally addressing those not seeking sexual gratification, prostitutes undermined that control. For instance, in 1900 Charles Maniget de Ponté wrote to the Prefect of Police and complained that “every walker who finds himself...passing by the avenue [du Bois de Boulogne] is accosted by women who offer them certain things [*affaires*] not necessary to describe.” Though he did anyway: “Come here, honey,” a woman once invited de Ponté, “come make love a

⁸¹ [“tranquille...elle m’a répondu que c’était une chambre de passe qui lui rapportait et que les gens une fois dedans étaient libres de faire le tapage que leur plaisaient.”] Ibid.

⁸² For a characteristically readable and enjoyable summary of the relevance of the private sphere and intimacy to membership in the public social world see Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 39–43, 194.

little. You [*tu*] aren't coming to spend a few moments next to me[? W]e would have fun together.”⁸³ The prostitute's use of the informal second person in addressing de Ponté – whose use of the particle “*de*” signifies, if not aristocratic blood, at least aristocratic pretension – underscores her verbal inversion of social order. “Hey you!” the prostitute yells out, grabbing her social superior's attention, ruining his studied detachment from the hubbub of modern urban life. Indeed, this particular prostitute seemed to relish her ability to discombobulate de Ponté; refusing his entreaties to be quiet, “she began insulting me, and every day she called me a name.”⁸⁴ Why de Ponté did not simply find another place to walk remains unsaid, but his underlying faith that urban space belonged to his experience and not hers was reflected in his continuing conviction these encounters remained out of the ordinary, unexpected, and ultimately aberrant. Indeed, unable to effectively shut her up, de Ponté grabbed hold of the visual, and in doing so asserted his ability to objectify her through his gaze.⁸⁵ The letter ends, therefore, with a curt description:

Brown hair.
 Figure, a little wrinkled.
 Aged in the 40s. 45 years old.
 Medium height, rather tall.
 Fairly correctly dressed.
 Always wearing a white boa.

⁸³ [“Chaque promeneur se rendant soit dans Paris ou ailleurs passent par l'avenue sont accostés par des femmes qui leur offrent certaines affaires qu'il est inutile de décrire... Viens ici mon chéri, viens faire un peu l'amour. Tu ne viens pas passer quelques instants a côté de moi nous nous amuserons bien.”] Maniget de Ponté to Préfet de Police, September 27, 1900.

⁸⁴ [“Je la priai de se taire que je ne la connaissais pas et elle commença à m'injurier et chaque jour elle me surnommait d'un nom.”] Ibid.

⁸⁵ Maxime du Camp, for his part, attempted to take away prostitute's power of voice by discursively removing their ability to add content to their sounds: “these creatures in love with evil...literally do not know how to speak, not that they cannot articulate the sounds, but because they do not possess the number of words necessary to form an idea [ces créatures amoureuses du mal...ne savent littéralement pas parler, non pas qu'elles ne puissent articuler des sons, mais parce qu'elles n'ont point à leur service le nombre de mots nécessaires pour exprimer une idée.] Maxime Du Camp, *Paris: Ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la second moitié du XIXe siècle*, vol. 3, 5th ed. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1875), 336.

De Ponté thus asserts his ultimate superiority by reducing this woman to a list of measurements. And yet, he also reveals his final insecurity, not only in his inability to pinpoint her age or height, but also in his focus on her “fairly correct” accoutrements. Although this woman revealed herself verbally as a prostitute, visually she could have been respectable. She thus maintained final control of the situation, revealing her profession by conscious choice, rather than passive signification.

The depth of bourgeois concern over their loss of control becomes clear through the language they used to express it. The encounters became episodes of violence against their person that threatened to upend honest walkers’ sense of their place in urban society. The letters reveal a fear that sexual deviants possessed the ability to take advantage of those who encountered them through acts of robbery, violence, or sexual solicitation. Prostitutes were adept at taking advantage of men’s desires. As one commentator wrote, prostitutes stopped men “*en pleine rue*” in order to “torment, excite and lead them to debauchery.”⁸⁶ Thus the danger of prostitution extended beyond access to public space. The torment of solicitation threatened to dissolve the innocent walker’s self-control that itself signified his ability to safely move about the modern city. Discourses that associated illicit sexual activity with physical violence reflected this insecurity. Prostitutes, the story went, were adept at taking advantage of an inebriated client in order to rob him.⁸⁷ By encouraging men to drink and lose their self-control, prostitutes enabled more material violations.

In more striking terms, the act of sexual solicitation itself became a violent act: “It is truly scandalous,” wrote one Parisian, “to see oneself assaulted and almost

⁸⁶ [“les tourmentent, les excitent, les entraînent à la débauche!”] A. Granveau, *La prostitution: Situation des mœurs à Paris*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie Martinon, 1872), 4–5.

⁸⁷ Anonymous to Préfet de Police, June 14, 1887, BM2 50, APP.

violated/sexually assaulted [*violenté*] by several prostitutes who prevail upon you the most filthy remarks.”⁸⁸ Other letters speak to more literal acts of violence directed at bourgeois walkers, but this particular remark remains significant in its implicit recognition – indeed its overestimation – of the power prostitutes held over ordinary people’s experience of urban space.⁸⁹ Their ability to disrupt assumed hierarchies of gender and class lay not in any physical inversion of power, but rather in their willingness to sharply draw the attention of those who wished to studiously avoid them. In grasping control of the urban gaze, these women committed violence on those who assumed power over the urban experience. Thus, the ordinary walker’s dominance over public space, signified by both his self-control and his power over others who moved about, came under direct attack by evidence of public sex. Prostitutes not only followed people who walk “straight ahead without preoccupying themselves with them,” but also “insist with a voice sufficiently loud” that a victim go to an individual’s room “even if a few steps away from an honest family.”⁹⁰ In doing so, the prostitute revealed the control that men supposedly held over public space to be pyrrhic at best. The city may have been built for them, but by entering public space bourgeois men risked revealing the weakness of their control over the city because of their inability to manage their encounters with prostitutes.

The fear of prostitutes actually endowed them with more power than they otherwise would have possessed. The very presence of prostitutes in a neighborhood revealed that space as corrupt and infected. Simply by broadcasting their presence in

⁸⁸ [“Il est vraiment scandaleux...de se voir assailli et presque violenté par plusieurs prostituées, qui vous tiennent les propos les plus immondes.”] G. Feuille to Préfet de Police, March 14, 1880, BM2 20, APP.

⁸⁹ For examples of letters referencing literal violence see for example Anonymous to Juge de paix du 10em Arrondissement, March 19, 1886, BM2 25, APP; Machet to Préfet de Police, August 19, 1888, BM2 32, APP; [Illegible] to Préfet de Police, April 16, 1899, BM2 37, APP.

⁹⁰ [“va droit son chemin sans se préoccuper d’elles... quand même à quelques pas de là il y aurait une honnête famille...elles insistent à voix suffisamment haute.”] Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d’une question sociale*, 207.

public space, in other words, prostitutes managed to symbolically wrest control of the city away from a segment of the middle classes. Business owners, for instance, argued that the presence of prostitution in a particular neighborhood disrupted their ability to run their enterprises. In other words, the presence of prostitutes on the streets near their business prevented other, honest Parisians from becoming customers for fear of interacting with undesirables. As one businessman wrote, “I’m losing clients who no longer want to come, even during the day, to a neighborhood as degraded as ours due to these women.”⁹¹ So powerful was the public presence of prostitutes in a neighborhood that it affected those invested in the booming housing market. In 1878 a proprietor complained that the presence of prostitutes walking back and forth on the sidewalk not only harmed his boutiques, but also prevented him from renting out any apartments.⁹² Even large institutions felt it necessary to complain to the prefecture. In 1885, for instance, the Banque Parisienne filed complaints that the prostitutes who wandered the neighborhood streets foreclosed the possibility of finding tenants for empty apartments.⁹³ The perceived ability of prostitutes to infect entire areas of the city reveals an anxiety that the city actually belonged to them. In Maupassant’s *Bel-Ami*, the protagonist Georges Duroy “loved...the spaces where *filles publiques* milled about, their dancehalls, their cafés, their streets.”⁹⁴ The very act of “milling about” in other words was enough to make the dancehalls, cafés, and streets “theirs.”

⁹¹ [“je perds des clients qui ne veulent plus venir, même dans la journée, dans un quartier aussi avili que le nôtre à cause de ces femmes.”] Borelli to Préfet de Police, August 4, 1899.

⁹² Anonymous to Préfet de Police, February 15, 1878, BM2 32, APP. For a similar example see H. Latruffe to Préfet de Police, March 17, 1882, BM2 32, APP.

⁹³ L. Cayard and [Illegible] to Préfet de Police, August 28, 1885, BM2 32, APP.

⁹⁴ [“Il aimait cependant les lieux où grouillent les filles publiques, leurs bals, leurs cafés, leurs rues.”] Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-Ami* (Pocket, 2006), 17. My emphasis.

The freedom to move about the city led directly to conflicts over how that freedom could and should be used. The segment of the middle classes who wrote to the police envisioned a public space free of the threats an expert discourse encouraged them to fear. The failure to remove prostitutes and pederasts from the streets of Paris signified the authorities' inability to render the city safe and secure for bourgeois use. Faced with evidence of public immorality, some people turned to their homes for protection. But in doing so those spaces threatened to become self-imposed cages. As one concerned Parisian wrote in 1881,

You are not unaware, monsieur le Préfet, that this area [around the Louvre] is a place of promenade for many people who seek there a little fresh air and tranquility after their work is finished. And yet, for some time it has become almost impossible to go there without being accosted by the creatures you doggedly pursue.⁹⁵

We are good, hard-working people, the writer claims, dedicated to making a living, but also to enjoying the leisure time and space guaranteed us by nineteenth-century urbanism and bourgeois ideology. The failure to effectively manage the problem – dogged though the police may be – made it “impossible” to take advantage of these developments. In response, one had no choice but to stay inside: one 1869 police report claimed that those living across the street from a dive hotel “do not dare open their windows” due to the noise caused by prostitutes who live there.⁹⁶ Three years later, a number of Parisians signed a petition claiming that the prostitutes who encumbered their street was so great that they could not exit their homes without being accosted by them and their wives and children could not leave home without being taken for prostitutes by men who came

⁹⁵ [“Vous n’ignorez pas, monsieur le Préfet, que cet endroit est un lieu de promenade pour beaucoup de personnes qui vont chercher là un peu d’air pûr et de tranquillité quand leur travail est fini. Or, depuis quelque temps, il est devenu presque impossibly de s’y rendre sans être accosté par les créatures que vous poursuivez avec tant d’acharnement.”] C. Pacier to Préfet de Police, August 22, 1881, BM2 60, APP.

⁹⁶ S. Carry, “Rapport. Etablissement du Sr. Dallé”, July 29, 1869, BM2 14, APP.

looking for sex.⁹⁷ The failure to adequately manage the sensory experience of the city thus foreclosed people's ability to enjoy it. The constant and threatening presence of prostitutes on the streets largely lay in the imaginations of those who wrote. Prostitutes were not actually everywhere, nor did they use violence to threaten people's ability to exit their homes. Those who wrote to the police, however, were invested in an image of the city, enunciated by the authorities as well, that emphasized the dangers of public sex to social stability. These writers simply extended that discourse to its logical conclusion: the presence of public sex on the streets directly threatened their own ability to appear on them.

Defending Public Space

People who wrote to the police proposed two solutions to the problem. First, the police had to do more to regulate the activities of prostitutes in public. Second, they had to show a willingness to intervene into the private and personal lives of suspect individuals. Both proposals were problematic for a city that depended on people's freedom to circulate publicly, as well as a bourgeois culture predicated on the division between private and public lives. When the police did attempt to follow the will of those who wrote them, they almost inevitably ran into conflict. In the first place, some people did not want the police to bother women who appeared in public and stood up in their defense. Others took matters into their own hands, chasing out prostitutes and their protectors in a declaration of their independence from the police as well. In the second

⁹⁷ "Petition to Préfet de Police", February 15, 1872, BM2 37, APP. Complaints that certain areas of Paris were basically off-limits to honest individuals abounded. See [Illegible] to Commissaire de Police, n.d., BM2 32, APP; G.D. to Préfet de Police, August 20, 1872; P. Dasse to Marie du Louvre, September 22, 1879, BM2 60, APP; Joseph Lyon to Préfet de Police, December 30, 1886, BM2 32, APP.

place, the invitation for the police to violate the divide between public and private threatened the very basis that gave individuals the right to make claims on the state in the first place. The writers relied on an implicit conviction that such violation would never threaten themselves, but in the end, they risked rendering their own homes and spaces of business just as vulnerable as an ordinary brothel.

Not everyone wanted the police to exercise greater control over women who appeared in public. By the end of the Second Empire, one sees signs that middle class men began asserting a new kind of control over women in public space. These men sought to secure the availability of public activity for women of their own class by confronting the police's authority over women who appeared in public. In other words, some men intervened against the police in order to ensure that bourgeois women were not harassed as they entered public space. One day in mid-March 1869, August Baudoin, returning home near the passage du Commerce in the center of the Paris, not far from the central markets of Les Halles, "heard cries for help, *à l'assassin*, and saw at the same time a woman in the hands of an individual who wanted to take her by force and who she was energetically resisting."⁹⁸ Baudoin, along with another passer-by, intervened and allowed the woman to flee, while the assailant cried after her, calling her a thief and claiming that she had stolen his wallet. The woman was intercepted by a *sergent de ville* and was taken to the police station along with her two rescuers. She was subsequently revealed to be a prostitute wanted by the police for violating regulations. Baudoin, seeing a woman in public did not simply assume she was a prostitute, but rather someone in

⁹⁸ ["il entend les cris au secours, à l'assassin et aperçoit en même temps une femme aux prises avec un individu qui voulait l'entraîner de force, et auquel elle résistait énergiquement."] L'Inspecteur des ventes en gros [Illegible], "Halle aux beurres, oeufs et fromages. Renseignements.", March 15, 1869, DA 222, doc. 4, APP.

need of assistance. His intervention implied, in other words, his belief in her right to enter public space free from harassment.

A similar incident occurred in June 1870. After arresting some prostitutes near the boulevards St. Denis and Bonne Nouvelle, the police faced a crowd of about one hundred fifty people who were attracted by the sound of one of the arrested women yelling for help.⁹⁹ A twenty-four year-old military musician approached the officer and “asked by what right I [the police officer] was shoving [*bousculais*] a woman.”¹⁰⁰ The officer explained the situation to the young soldier who, “turned toward the crowd and cried, ‘Messieurs, he’s an informant[*mouchard*,] he will not take her.’”¹⁰¹ At this declaration, one of the soldier’s friends attacked the officer and others joined in. Gradually, the officer made his way to the police station and, after calling for help, was relieved by his colleagues. The main aggressors, all soldiers from the same regiment, were stopped as they attempted to escape in a carriage and were interrogated by the police. As an excuse for their actions, they claimed that they did not realize that the plainclothes police officer was actually a police officer. In fact, however, the accusation that the officer was “spying” betokens a much more fundamental opposition between the soldier and the police officer. The soldiers effectively challenged the basis of the police officer’s authority by eroding his legitimacy, not by questioning his identity.

Maxime du Camp explained these incidents as evidence of French chivalry. “Thus are Parisians made and they voluntarily fight for women without worrying at all if the infirmary of Saint-Lazare [a hospital where prostitutes who failed their medical exam are

⁹⁹ [Illegible], “Rapport”, June 6, 1870, 1–2, DA 225, doc. 374, APP.

¹⁰⁰ [“il m’a demandé de quel droit je bousculais une femme.”] Ibid., 2.

¹⁰¹ [“il s’est tourné vers la foule et a crié ‘Messieurs c’est un mouchard il ne l’emmènera pas.’”] Ibid.

sent] is not reclaiming them,” he wrote.¹⁰² In both these examples, the “victim” of police action was, in fact, a prostitute, who properly fell under their authority. By following the commands of those who wrote to them, the police found themselves in conflict with other constituencies. The police had to choose which vision of public space they would enforce: one where women could safely move about without being accused of prostitution or one that guaranteed, to the greatest extent possible, the purging of public sex from the streets.¹⁰³

In the face of police reticence to act, some people decided to take matters into their own hands. One writer complained to the chief of the gare Saint-Lazare that a prostitute would enter a train just before departure in order to harass his son. He explained that “[w]ithout the presence of my wife, I would have insulted this woman, and I would have forced her to get off but happily I contained my indignation.”¹⁰⁴ Although the writer’s private role as a *père de famille* prevented him from adequately exercising his authority over public space, his apparent belief in the worth of crossing a boundary of propriety signifies both his faith in his own power over urban space and over the woman in question. Whereas those who intervened in favor of arrested women indicated their conviction that women possessed at least some rights when entering public space, this writer emphasized their continued availability to his own power, at least in the absence of the police. Others asserted their obligation to regulate public space in the absence of

¹⁰² [“Les Parisiens sont ainsi faits et combattent volontiers pour les dames, sans s’inquiéter d’abord si l’infirmier de Saint-Lazare ne les réclame pas.”] Du Camp, *Paris*, 3:360.

¹⁰³ In course of arresting prostitutes, the police also sometimes found themselves in physical conflict with their protectors. For incidents of prostitutes being freed by their pimps, expressed in similar terms as these examples, see for example Herlot, “Rapport. Filles publiques arrêtées. Renseignements.”, September 20, 1853, DA 224, doc. 111, APP; Prefecture of Police to Ministre Secrétaire d’Etat au Département de la Seine, November 12, 1853, DA 224, doc. 112, APP.

¹⁰⁴ [“Sans la présence de ma femme, j’aurais à prié cette femme, et je l’aurais forcé à descendre, mais, heureusement j’ai pu contenir mon indignation.”] Un abonné to Chef de Gare, March 16, 1876, 1–2, BM2 60, APP.

police intervention more directly and in doing so declared certain spaces as their own, rather than the state's. In October of 1880 a group of students apparently decided that the *souteneurs* of the boulevard St. Michel no longer belonged in their hangouts, most notably the bal Bullier. On October 11, the students "hounded" a group of pimps from the dancehall and then went to a café called la Carmargo, which was reputed to be a hangout for the pimps and the prostitutes. The proprietor of the café, however, wishing to avoid any confrontation between the two groups, had already stopped receiving the pimps and prostitutes.¹⁰⁵ On October 17, a police report noted that the group of pimps who frequented la Carmargo intended to reenter the bal Bullier, but were, according to a report from the next day, promptly evicted by the students.¹⁰⁶ The students declared their independence, not only from the presence of prostitutes and pimps, but from the police as well. This constituency, in other words, had no need of the authorities; they could manage their hangouts just fine on their own. The presence of the police, indeed, may have only served to cause more conflict.

The students' actions illustrate the ways in which people were able to make particular claims on public space, rendering it into something their own. Had the police followed the admonishments of the bourgeoisie who wrote to them, those spaces would not have truly belonged to the students. Indeed, that was precisely the result sought by those who wrote to the authorities. The letter writers sought to make all of Paris amenable to state surveillance and control. Essentially they expressed a desire to extend regulationist control over everyone. Recall that the regulationist system made female prostitutes accessible to authorities with the brothel serving at once as a space of

¹⁰⁵ M. Dhers, "Agissements d'étudiants", October 14, 1880, DB 415, APP.

¹⁰⁶ A. Jarrige, October 17, 1880, DB 415, APP; Touny, October 18, 1880, DB 415, APP.

containment and observation. But the institution's essential accessibility to the police for the purposes of control rendered it into a space ultimately open to anyone and for almost any purpose.

A series of mid-century assaults within brothels illustrates well the nature of these establishments. In 1850, for instance, a prostitute accused a group of soldiers of attempting to strangle her in the course of an arrest.¹⁰⁷ The soldiers themselves denied the accusation – indeed they denied the arrest – and their superiors took them at their word. In 1853, two soldiers were accused of attempting to force a prostitute into committing “acts against nature” in a brothel.¹⁰⁸ Her refusal led one of the soldiers to brandish his weapon, while her cries brought about the intervention of the male attendant who received a kick to the genitals for his trouble. In addition, a number of reports from 1864 show that soldiers frequently misbehaved within the brothels. By refusing the ability of brothel keepers to designate who could and could not enter their establishments, these soldiers revealed the susceptibility of interior spaces to the forces not only of regulation, but of anyone. Although the soldiers represented the state, they did not represent the regulationist system.¹⁰⁹ Regulationism, in other words, necessarily rendered interior spaces into public spaces. By ensuring that the police had access to prostitutes for medical exams, regulationists also ensured that those women were always vulnerable to violence as well.

¹⁰⁷ G Duvac to Préfet de Police, August 1, 1850, DA 225, doc. 141, APP.

¹⁰⁸ L'Officier de paix [Illegible] and L'Inspecteur Linonin, “Rapport. Scène dans une tolérance.”, June 22, 1853, DA 225, doc. 155, APP.

¹⁰⁹ For examples of disruptions within the brothels see L'Officier de paix [illegible], “Rapport. Renseignements au sujet du scandale causé par des soldats du Bon de Tirailleurs indigènes dans 2 tolérances.”, January 16, 1864, DA 225, doc. 340, APP; Général de division commandant la [Illegible] de Paris et la 1re Subdivision to Préfet de Police, February 18, 1864, DA 225, doc. 342, APP. For instances of soldiers demanding entry to the brothels see L'Officier de paix [Illegible], “Rapport”, December 7, 1864, DA 225, doc. 179, APP.

Ordinary people actually asked the police to render the city into a series of brothels by inviting the police to violate the privacy they supposedly required for public business. In other words, the logic of the brothel was extended to the entire city in an effort to root out evidence of public sex. In 1879, during one of the early abolitionist debates, a municipal councilor of Paris asked the Prefect of Police whether he had the authority to arrest all women during a raid. The question emerged out of the increasing concern that the police risked arresting an innocent woman taken for a prostitute. In response, the Prefect admitted that “some regrettable and involuntary errors are committed” during a raid, but also pointed out that “[t]he administration is asked from time to time to make a special surveillance of areas which serve as a gathering place for many clandestine prostitutes.” In her influential analysis of the vulnerability of working-class women to police authority, Jill Harsin has argued that this moment reveals that the police lacked any great concern over the possibility of making a false arrest. Certainly, as Harsin argues, the prefect’s response “was reassuring” to those concerned about “unsubstantiated arrest,” but it also reveals how ordinary people remained complicit in such activity. The “administration *is asked*,” the prefect claimed, to complete such incursions.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the prefect was not lying. In 1891, the Société du Passage Jouffroy – essentially a group of proprietors located in the famous arcade not far from the Folies Bergère and the *grands boulevards* – wrote to the police complaining of the “excess of prostitution in the neighborhood” and explaining that they had hired two guards to keep the prostitutes out of the arcade and “forbid access to those who are

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 4–5.

personally known to them and expel those whose looks leave no doubt to them.”¹¹¹ Such removal elicited noisy responses from the women affected, drawing a crowd and sometimes their *souteneurs* as well, who would injure the guards. There is no sense here that the supposedly public space of the arcade, the haunt of *flâneurs* and other walkers, should be open to anyone.¹¹² In any case, the problems that the private guards encountered were such that the *Société* decided to ask the police to conduct periodic raids of the arcade in order to secure the space for “honorable clientele.”¹¹³ By opening their places of business to the police, these men had essentially made their own spaces no more private than the brothel. They had, in other words, placed themselves, not just the women they so despised, at the mercy of the police by eliminating their own right to privacy.

Those who issued these invitations may have only meant to capture those disrupting bourgeois control of urban space, but they ultimately threatened the very divides that seemed to define that control in the first place. In other words, these writers asked the police to disrupt the public/private divide for others, but once begun, the process could not help but affect the writers as well. The cheap hotel or *garni* provides a case in point. The retreat of both surreptitious lovers and prostitutes with their clients, these hotels were frequently the site of police raids seeking “people *sans aveu* [literally meaning “people without profession,” but referring to the perpetually unemployed and

¹¹¹ [“excès de la prostitution...ils doivent en interdire l’accès à celles qui leur sont personnellement connues et expulser celles dont les allures ne leur laissent aucun doute.”] A Brénard to Préfet de Police, April 28, 1891, 1, BM2 65, APP.

¹¹² Interestingly, among the “reasons for the decline of the arcades” enunciated by Walter Benjamin was a “ban on prostitution.” The others were “widened sidewalks, electric lights...culture of the open air.” See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 88.

¹¹³ [“clientèle honorable.”] Brénard to Préfet de Police, April 28, 1891, 2.

indigent] or in a state of vagabondage, *filles de débauche*, etc.”¹¹⁴ These raids sought to separate prostitutes from lovers:

A private act of debauchery not being sufficient for authorizing an arrest, it is necessary, in order to confirm habitual acts of public debauchery, to engage in the most fastidious research in order to verify if the resident... is the one sought. This is why a woman, found in a *garni* with a man, does not court an arrest, if she is in a habitual relation with he who accompanies her.¹¹⁵

The author of this text, one in a series of books largely replicating information published elsewhere on a variety of sexual crimes and activities aimed at a popular audience, attempted to soothe reader concerns that they could ever find themselves under the gun of the police in a *garni*. And yet, this very effort at reinforcing the care the police took – namely their fastidious research – only served to highlight the need to break everyone’s privacy within the hotel. How else, in other words, could one confirm habitual debauchery but via habitual and constant surveillance? The hotel had become a brothel, not only because of its use by prostitutes, but also its invasion by the authorities.

Moral commentator Jules Davray once declared of *garnis*, “At each keyhole an ear listens, eyes watch, and all their [otherwise innocent lovers] beautiful love speeches, their caresses sighing languorously, are the prey of attentive servants.”¹¹⁶ One hotel proprietor even wrote to the police in 1890 in order to complain that the constant police

¹¹⁴ [“*gens sans aveu* ou en état de vagabondage, filles de débauche, etc, et de réclamer contre le logeur les contraventions à les ordonnances de police.”] Gustave Percha, September 15, 1881, BM2 34, APP.

¹¹⁵ [“un fait de débauche privée n’étant pas suffisant pour autoriser l’arrestation de celle qui s’y livre, il est nécessaire, pour constater les faits habituels de débauche publique, de se livrer aux recherches les plus minutieuses pour vérifier si la demeure, d’une fille venant d’être arrêtée, est bien exactement celle indiquée. C’est pourquoi une femme, trouvée dans un garni avec un homme, n’encourt point une arrestation, si elle est en relation habituelle avec celui qui l’accompagne.”] Caufeynon, *La Prostitution. La Débauche -- Son Histoire -- Corruption -- Législation*, vol. 16, Bibliothèque populaire des connaissances médicales (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Médicale, 1902), 40.

¹¹⁶ [“A chaque serrure une oreille écoute, des yeux regardent, et tous leurs beaux serments d’amour, leurs caresses soupirées langoureusement sont la proie des larbins attentifs.”] Jules Davray, *L’amour à Paris* (Paris: J.B. Ferreyrol, 1890), 20.

surveillance of his establishment was effectively driving away his clients.¹¹⁷ The request for surveillance rendered the city constantly under watch. Such practices served the men who wrote to the police so long as they escaped the logical repercussions. And yet, the availability of their own pleasures to surveillance by the authorities rendered them just as vulnerable. In other words, although these men felt confident of their ability to preserve a boundary of privacy even in the panoptic city, the practices of administrative enforcement and surveillance that they encouraged always threatened to dissolve it. The availability of privacy depended on rendering everyone simultaneously – and perpetually – public.

Conclusion

The people who wrote to the police in order to complain about public sexual activity believed that the state felt a responsibility to respond to their concerns. This faith relied on the emergence of a bourgeois public capable of speaking in its own interests. Members of this public relied on the sanctity of their private lives to justify their public roles. Any failure to purify public space, however, not only threatened their ability to move about the streets and utilize spaces of leisure, but also threatened the life of the interior. In response, writers encouraged the police to actively and aggressively police public space even if that response required the invasion of the private. In so doing, the letters enunciate an essentially classed and gendered version of public space, where their prerogatives were preserved at the expense of primarily working-class women. This vision contrasted with that of other ordinary Parisians who believed that women had the right to act in public space free from interference by the police. In the end, the

¹¹⁷ Simonin to Préfet de Police, June 8, 1890, BM2 34, APP.

abolitionist movement would circulate a discourse of liberty abstracted from gender identity, but that vision floundered in the face of neoregulationism, which united medical concerns over the venereal peril with traditional forms of police authority over female sexuality in public.¹¹⁸ Public support for police activity buttressed the emergence of this continuing regulation of illicit sex. Regulationism did not persist despite Third Republic discourses of liberty, but rather because such discourses seemed to require delimiting who could and could not utilize public space.

In chapter one, I showed how expert discourse linked illicit sexuality to the disorder of the modern urban environment. I argued in chapter two that public sexuality became a key aspect of urban life, despite its apparent dangers. The attempt to manage urban pleasures did not simply enable illicit ones, but actually muddied the boundary between the licit and illicit. If chapter two showcased the weakness of expert discourse to separate out the innocent from the dissident on the streets of modern Paris, this chapter shows how that failure also threatened the intimate life that signified one's right to "being at home" in the city.¹¹⁹ The centrality of a blending of illicit and licit pleasure to the life of the city threatened bourgeois stability by showing that Paris would not conform to their unrealistic expectations. Those who wrote to the police believed that their security depended on the total elimination of evidence of public sex. And yet, the continued ability of prostitutes to threaten bourgeois privilege highlighted the letter writers' status as strangers in their own city. In the end, those who wrote to the police advocated solutions that only threatened their place in the city more deeply because they put themselves at the mercy of the police as well. By asking the police to more vigorously

¹¹⁸ Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 375–376.

¹¹⁹ Judith R Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 16.

enforce their rules, to risk arresting innocent women and raiding private space, they rendered the entire city a symbolic brothel. In the name of their right to freely circulate about Paris, the writers called on the police to curtail that right to others. There could be no true privacy in the modern city because that would only lead to the freedom to use and enjoy it. These men had such little faith in their own secure identities that they could not risk allowing anyone and everyone to freely move about alongside them.

Chapter 4

“Le plus drôle de mélange qui soit dans Paris:” Sex, Commerce and Spaces of Sociability

Introduction

Even as parks and streets remained central avenues of modern urban culture in nineteenth-century Paris, interior – but no less public – spaces emerged as equally significant scenes of sociability. While the boulevards enabled the spectacle of modern life to flourish through forms of visual display and address, spaces such as cafés, dancehalls and even bathhouses brought people together for more intimate forms of social interaction that involved drinking, conversation, and physical contact. As commercial enterprises, they were also bound up in the emerging consumer culture that was so important to the political, economic, and social life of nineteenth-century Paris. However, the increasing importance of these sites to the everyday life of the city also made them the targets of a great deal of anxiety from the police, moral commentators, and the citizenry. Just as commentators during the late nineteenth century worried that novel forms of advertising could have an adverse effect on the ability of virtuous citizens to exercise rational judgment while making consumer decisions, for instance, the essential role alcohol played in the pleasures of the café led some to wonder whether

drinking establishments weakened French society.¹ Spaces of sociability, just like the department store, may have arisen through and by virtue of conscious moves towards a more liberal order, but they rapidly came to be conceived as double-edged swords.² Even as they remained central sites of public sociability, drinking establishments and other spaces of public entertainment stood as loci for fears that the modernization of the city weakened, rather than strengthened, the stability of the social order.³ The cafés served an integral part of urban life, but they also symbolized its ultimate dysfunction.⁴

Commentators often expressed their anxieties over the spread of drinking establishments in a language of immorality and respectability tinged by class concerns. In part, debates over the regulation of cafés in the middle of the century revolved around the perceived morality of the working class. Such discussion used the rhetoric of morality as a screen on which to project larger concerns over the ramifications of the emergence of consumer culture. When people spoke of immorality, sex, or uncontrolled desires they were actually critiquing a consumer culture that required people to mingle in unexpected ways while indulging their relatively fleeting desires.⁵ The “democratization” of

¹ On concerns regarding advertising between about 1880 and 1914 see Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-De-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 29–32; H. Hazel Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian Modernity: Culture and Consumption in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 181. On alcohol and café culture see W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), chap. 4.

² Michael Miller has described the department store as the central theater of bourgeois culture, representing both its social and economic values. See Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

³ Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 64.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ See, for example, how Emile Zola mixes the confusion of the crowd with the intensity of desire as he describes women’s reaction to a sale at his fictional department store *Au bonheur des dames*: “These ladies, carried forward by the current, were by now unable to turn back. Just as a river draws towards it all the wandering streams in a valley, so it seemed that the flow of customers, pouring through the hallway, was swallowing up the passers-by in the street, drawing people in from the four corners of Paris. They moved forward only slowly, pressed so close that they could hardly draw breath, supported by shoulders and bellies which felt soft and war; and their satisfied desire was gratified by this tedious approach which stimulated their curiosity [Ces dames, saisies par le courant, ne pouvaient plus reculer. Comme les fleuves

consumption threatened to dissolve the signs of class while encouraging people to pursue momentary pleasure. In these terms, discussions of public sexual activity only signified “real” concerns surrounding the stability of class hierarchy, gender relations, and social order. Despite itself, however, this talk also revealed the ways in which people used commercial culture and spaces of sociability to find pleasure with their fellow citizens. Spaces of consumption came to be used as an excuse and a mask for sexual activity as well. Just as sex sold, selling enabled sex. Although it is true that immoral behavior became a way to speak of the social problems that came with commercialization, it is just as true that commercialization enabled people to enjoy immoral behavior. Sex was not just a way to speak of consumption; public sex also became a pleasure that consumption enabled.

Following a discussion of the moral and class concerns that animated the regulation of drinking establishments during the second half of the nineteenth century, this chapter presents three examples of the ways in which spaces of sociability enabled public sexual encounters under the guise of consumption. First, I examine the hiring of serving girls by café proprietors as sexual enticements for male customers. Second, I turn to the use of “ordinary” cafés and bathhouses by men who sought sex with other men. Third, I look at dance and music halls as the stage for sexual and gender play in the open.

The sexual subordination of women to men in public – the discursive equation of public women with prostitution – provided the grounds for using serving girls as

tirent à eux les eaux errantes d’une vallée, il semblait que le flot des clients, coolant à pleine vestibule, buvait les passants de la rue, aspirait la population des quatre coins de Paris. Elles n’avançaient que très lentement, serrées à perdre haleine, tenues debout par des épaules et des ventres, don’t ells sentaient la molle chaleur; et leur désir satisfait jouissait de cette approche pénible, qui fouettait davantage leur curiosité.]” Emile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 618. Translation is from Emile Zola, *Au bonheur des Dames (The Ladies’ Delight)*, trans. Robin Buss (London: Penguin, 1981), 237.

enticements for men to drink in the *brasserie à femmes*. Proprietors hired serving girls to act as sexual objects, always potentially, but not necessarily, also for sale. And yet, these women's active interaction with their customers also shows the ways in which women were able to play with the system to their own advantage as well. Plying men with alcohol and carefully managing their interaction with customers, these women shaped a situation in which men lost control of their desires.

The willingness of the police to allow these sexual interactions to continue stands as a prime example of the authorities' relative tolerance for public indecency. Men who sought sex with other men tried to use this ambivalence to their own advantage. Relying on their privilege as men, they sought to use spaces such as cafés and bathhouses to interact with each other and meet sexual partners in public view. However, unlike the *brasserie à femmes*, their spaces actually did threaten established gender and sexual hierarchies. Men's privilege to act in public space free of administrative control only extended so far; as Henning Bech once explained, "the minute the homosexual gets out into town and wants to realize himself, he runs up against the police."⁶ Men who sought sex with other men developed strategies that would facilitate the enactment of their desires even while under this surveillance. Ultimately, however, their inversion of gender and sexual norms rendered them more vulnerable to police authority than other men. Their sexual activity threatened to turn from simple indecency to threats to public order. Second Empire economic liberty and Third Republic political liberty were predicated on men's rational use of public space; granted those freedoms, some men abused the privilege by engaging in activities that subverted the social order, which brought the police down on spaces that should have been safe havens.

⁶ Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997), 99.

These two uses of public space for sexual play and encounter highlight the centrality of sex to modern sociability. Dance and music halls stood as the most overt example of this connection. The frenetic social mixing of the dance and music halls depended not only on men's ability to find sexual pleasures there, nor only with women's manipulation of their sexual availability, but in both men and women's desire to totally lose themselves within the gaiety. These spaces became places in which one could flaunt the instability of the social categories of class and gender, where the constant effort to produce coherent identities fell apart in the face of the pleasures of crossing social boundaries. Even more, these venues served as unique spaces in which one could imagine that those boundaries did not exist in the first place.

The importance of sexual activity to the entertainments of nineteenth-century Paris shows how spaces of sociability were not simply places that saw the emergence of working-class consciousness or the enunciation of bourgeois identity, nor were they simply the venues of urban spectacle that removed the city from the control of those who used it while reinforcing already-accepted hierarchies of class and gender. Rather, they were also messy sites in which such easy categorizations were purposefully disrupted in the name of urban pleasure. Put in these terms, this chapter reveals the importance of yet another public on the streets of nineteenth-century Paris. This public was comprised of members of the same class as those who complained to the police, but actively sought to join the pleasures of public sexuality. This public of pleasure seekers crossed and overlapped with the public sexual culture that I depicted in chapter two. Its members' recognition of the signs of venal sexuality rendered them willing members of a public sexual culture, but they remained able to reenter the moral center of an emerging mass

public as well. An amalgam, in other words, of the moral bourgeois public and a public sexual culture, this group represented the pleasures made possible by modernity. This public sought out sexual pleasure in order to temporarily immerse itself in a culture wherein the particularities of identity no longer served as the foundation of a secure sense of self, but rather a barrier to urban pleasure. If it is difficult to pinpoint what, exactly, moral commentators so feared as they condemned urban practices of pleasure and the spaces in which they took place, it was because of this development: the supposed underside of modernity – its uncontrollability, its disorder, and its useless pleasures – defined urban life just as much as its overt possibilities.

The Moral Imperatives of Regulation

Until 1851, drinking establishments belonged to the broad category of “public places in which tranquility had to be maintained” and were regulated by a Revolutionary law granting municipal authorities the power to regulate all spaces where people came together.⁷ The conservative turn of the Second Republic following the June Days encouraged legislators to reconsider the relative freedom granted institutions associated with working-class sociability. Just before Napoleon III’s *coup d’état*, legislators debated a law that would require permission from the local government – in the case of Paris, the prefect of police – to open a café. While some of the details remained at the discretion of local administrators, the law forbade *a priori* permission to any person convicted once of a crime or twice of an infraction against morals and required a background check for all potential proprietors. It also forbade café owners from, among other things, receiving “*femmes de débauche*” in their establishments. Repeated

⁷ Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 15.

violations were punished with the closure of the establishment.⁸ Promulgated less than a month after Louis-Napoleon's *coup*, the law homogenized French café regulation while ensuring that social gatherings maintained at least a superficial sense of proper public decorum.

Drinking establishments were associated with clandestine prostitution throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, the problem received sustained attention by Parent-Duchâtelet himself during the July Monarchy.⁹ In light of his status as the theoretician of regulationism, it was unsurprising that Parent saw drinking establishments that hosted prostitutes as much worse than tolerated brothels.¹⁰ One of the few letters dating from Second Empire contained in the police archives also mentions the problem: in 1854, a Parisian wrote to the police in order to complain about the prostitutes soliciting at night in his neighborhood and to ask the prefect to close all the *marchands de vins* who allowed prostitutes to solicit in front of their shops.¹¹ The same concern arose again during the early Third Republic. During the summer, according to the former police officer C.J. Lecour in 1870, "solicitation takes place by the installation before a café, the flirtation with customers, either directly or by an intermediary of some mendicant flower seller," a practice still regularly occurring at the Café de l'Horloge in the Champs-Élysées almost

⁸ Marc-Thomas Eugène de Goulard, "Rapport fait Au nom de la 17e Commission d'initiative, sur la proposition de MM. Symphor Vaudoré et Pidoux, relative à la police des cafés, cabarets et autres débits de boissons à consommer sur place," in *Assemblée nationale législative. Impressions. Projets de Lois, Propositions, Rapports, etc.*, vol. 25 (Paris: Imprimerie de l'assemblée nationale, 1851), No 1711; Symphor Vaudoré and Pidoux, "Proposition Rectifiée. Concernant la police des cafés, cabarets et autres débits de boissons à consommer sur place," in *Assemblée nationale législative. Impressions. Projets de Lois, Propositions, Rapports, etc.*, vol. 25 (Paris: Imprimerie de l'assemblée nationale, 1851), No. 1702. For the final text of the law see "No 3481. -- Décret sur les Cafés, Cabarets et Débits de boissons," in *Bulletin des lois de la République française*, vol. 8.410-476, 10 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1852), 1266–1267, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32726274t/date>.

⁹ A. -J.-B Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris, considérée sous le rapport de l'hygiène publique, de la morale et de l'administration*, 3rd ed. (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1857), 510–519.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 511–512.

¹¹ Auguste to Préfet de Police, October 17, 1854, DA 222, APP.

two decades later.¹² The archives proliferate with examples of prostitutes hanging out at cafés, often for the purpose of solicitation, though sometimes also in order to find shelter from the police.¹³ In some cases, the prostitutes and their protectors basically had free run of the café, as was once described in a police report of 1890, where the “the pimps and their mistresses seek to quarrel with the other customers...under the benevolent eye of sieur Courbelaise [the proprietor].”¹⁴ According to the moral commentator Léo Taxil, the prostitutes who operated out of the cafés were very expensive because customers had to buy them drinks. Indeed, he claimed that those who frequented the more high-class establishments “have no price...because these girls worry more about inundating themselves with champagne than obtaining the approval of the gentleman.”¹⁵ In these cases, the prostitutes of the café were simply excessive customers, willing to be paid in drink. They were still bought and sold, but for their own pleasure and to the benefit of the proprietor.

It should therefore come as no surprise that café owners sometimes encouraged prostitutes to come to their establishments, ply their trade, and, of course, encourage other customers to drink.¹⁶ According to the doctor Louis Martineau, *marchands de vins*

¹² [“L’été, le racolage se fait par l’installation devant (146) un café, le marivaudage avec les consommateurs, soit directement, soit par l’intermédiaire de quelque mendicante marchande de bouquets.”] C. J. Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789-1870* (Paris: P. Asselin, 1870), 145–146; Le Commissaire Prinicpal [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillances aux abords des cafés de l’Horloge et de la Seine, aux Champs-Élysées”, July 24, 1889, BM2 60, APP.

¹³ See for example “Au sujet de la brasserie du Château d’eau”, May 20, 1874, BM2 17, APP; Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport au sujet de la rue de Provence”, March 2, 1880, BM2 32, APP; Le Commissaire de Police [Illegible], “Rapport: Au sujet des débits de vin signalés comme servant de refuge aux souteneurs et aux filles de débauche”, May 4, 1886, BM2 32, APP.

¹⁴ [“les souteneurs et leurs maîtresses cherchent querelle aux autres consommateurs...sous l’oeil bienveillant du sieur Coubelaise.”] Commissaire de Police du 12e arrondissement, “Rapport au sujet du débit de boissons et de l’hôtel garni tiens par le sieur Courbelaise”, August 20, 1890, BM2 34, APP.

¹⁵ [“elles n’ont pas de prix...car ces filles se soucient plus de s’inonder de champagne que de procurer de l’agrément au monsieur.”] Léo Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d’une question sociale* (Paris: Libraire populaire, 1884), 213.

¹⁶ Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la prostitution*, 511–512.

and prostitutes existed in a symbiotic relationship, “One pushes consumption, the other closes his eyes to the traffic in flesh which goes on around him, sometimes encouraging and profiting from it.”¹⁷ The proprietors, in other words, sometimes functioned as pimps themselves and occasionally even used serving boys as go-betweens.¹⁸ The proprietors thus benefited from clandestine prostitution and not only provided them with free food and drink, but also actively protected them from the police by warning them of the authorities’ approach.¹⁹ It is important to note that although commentators tended to subsume all cafés as spaces of illicit sexual activity, not all proprietors welcomed clandestine prostitutes in their establishments. In 1887, the proprietor of a café/hotel complained of the prostitutes on the street who were bothering his customers.²⁰ In the eyes of moral commentators and the police, however, such honest proprietors were few and far between; all cafés were also potentially sites of prostitution.²¹

The reputation of drinking establishments did not benefit from the fact that some cafés were specifically designed to provide space for sexual activity, which eradicated the difference between a brothel and a drinking establishment. This tradition went back to the beginning of the century; according to Parent-Duchâtelet, cafés with *cabinets particuliers* – private rooms or sections of a café or restaurant – existed all over Paris. He

¹⁷ [“L’une pousse à la consommation, l’autre ferme les yeux sur le trafic de chair qui se fait autour de lui, quelquefois le favorise et en profite.”] Louis Martineau, *La prostitution clandestine* (Paris: A. Delahaye et É. Lecrosnier, 1885), 75.

¹⁸ This particular claim was repeated throughout the early Third Republic. See Flévy d’Urville, *Les ordures de Paris* (Paris: Sartorius, 1874), 34–35; Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d’une question sociale*, 213; Gustave Macé, *Mes Lundis en prison* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889), 149; Jules Davray, *L’amour à Paris* (Paris: J.B. Ferreyrol, 1890), 108–110.

¹⁹ Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789-1870*, 145; Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport au sujet de la rue de Provence,” 2.

²⁰ Baudain to Préfet de Police, June 24, 1887, BM2 10, APP.

²¹ The ease of the transition can be seen, for instance, in an 1875 instance where the “honest” proprietor retired, leaving his two sons, reputed to be souteneurs, in possession of the *débit*, which they quickly turned into a *lieu de débauche*. See Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Au sujet du Sr Pouget”, June 25, 1875, BM2 45, APP.

recommended closing them because they so easily and so often served as spaces of prostitution.²² According to François Carlier, many also had *cabinets noirs* – secret back rooms – that sometimes included a bed or couch. Although the 1851 decree regulating cafés motivated many proprietors to close their *cabinets* for fear of a violating the new law, evidence remains of their continued use for sexual activity within the drinking establishments of the nineteenth century.²³ For example, in 1869 the police caught a prostitute servicing a client in the *cabinet particulier* of a café whose proprietor claimed total ignorance, despite the women’s regular presence in his establishment.²⁴ In addition, in 1876 someone denounced the *cabinets* attached to a *marchand de vins* on the rue St. Martin.²⁵ Despite Parent’s advice to close all the *cabinets*, the police sometimes attempted to distinguish those used for illicit purposes from those used for licit ones. For instance, in 1887, the police reported on a brasserie whose proprietor “would not tolerate *filles de débauche* prostituting themselves in these *cabinets*.”²⁶ The private rooms of the café, restaurant, or brasserie, ostensibly created for the private refreshment by respectable couples or groups, were easily turned to explicitly sexual purposes. Although some proprietors attempted to convince the police that their intentions were honorable, it remains clear that the ease with which one could engage in sexual activity in the *cabinets* was also part of their draw.

²² Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la prostitution*, 510–514. For a later description of the *cabinet particulier* – and the activities that took place therein – see Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d’une question sociale*, 217–218.

²³ Carlier claimed that although they still existed by the time of his writing – which he specified as 1870 – they were not as “ostensible or scandalous as it was before [n’est plus ni ostensible, ni scandaleuse, comme elle l’était autrefois].” François Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions: 1860-1870* (E. Dentu, 1887), 95–96.

²⁴ “Réception de filles de débauche: Procès Verbal: Haemmere, Henri”, April 27, 1869, BM2 14, APP.

²⁵ Ann-Joséphine Petit to Préfet de Police, January 1876, BM2 60, APP.

²⁶ [“ne tolérerait pas que des filles de débauche se prostituassent dans ces cabinets.”] “Rapport: Au sujet de la brasserie rue Fontaine, 6”, December 7, 1887, BM2 33, APP.

Of course, not all proprietors were willing to risk drawing the police by encouraging prostitution within their own establishments. Instead, many worked with local cheap hotels or *garnis*. This strategy spread the risk around the neighborhood and allowed solicitation to take place more discretely.²⁷ Even more interesting stood the cafés that were also hotels at the same time. In these cases, the café was seen as little more than another kind of brothel. One *brasserie à femmes* in 1887 included “two rooms furnished with beds, which could serve should the need arise to turn tricks.”²⁸ Even more complete, an 1893 letter denounced a “hotel dancehall and concert-ball” on the Faubourg du Temple, which was a “house of prostitution, [and] it’s the rendezvous of *filles publiques* and pimps.”²⁹ These establishments took the logic of the *cabinet particulier* and expanded it, either to a full room or to an entire building. There was, after all, little reason why the café on the ground floor should not encourage patrons to use the rooms above it. According to Carlier, in order to escape regulation, some proprietors “would turn their *débites* into hotels or unite the two industries into the same building... The furnished hotel and wine-sellers are, in sum, the two most useful auxiliaries to the development of clandestine prostitution.”³⁰ Indeed, an 1890 report noted the various incidents of prostitution and violence that occurred in the *débit de boissons* kept by someone who also ran a hotel at the same address.³¹ Similarly, in 1897 the police

²⁷ Martineau, *La prostitution clandestine*, 79–80.

²⁸ [“deux chambres meublées de lits, qui serviraient le créchéant à faire des passes.”] Le Commissaire de Police [Illegible], “Rapport: Renseignements au sujet de la brasserie de la Rue de la Fidélité No 3”, November 14, 1887, BM2 33, APP.

²⁹ [“une maison de prostitution, c’est le rendez-vous des filles publiques et des souteneurs.”] Simon to Préfet de Police, November 26, 1893, BM2 65, APP.

³⁰ [“convertissaient leurs débits en maisons meublées, ou réunissaient les deux industries dans la même maison ... L’hôtel garni et les débits de vin sont en résumé les deux auxiliaires les plus utiles au développement de la prostitution clandestine.”] Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 266.

³¹ Commissaire de Police du 12e arrondissement, “Rapport au sujet du débit de boissons et de l’hôtel garni tiens par le sieur Courbelaïsse.”

reported on some prostitutes who frequented a bar and would take their clients to a hotel that “depend on” the bar.³² It is not a coincidence that furnished hotels were so frequently mentioned alongside the problematic cafés of a neighborhood because they enabled the café to become just another type of brothel.

These associations pervaded administrative and moralist thought throughout the century, and endowed administrators with sufficient reason to take regulatory measures in order to bring cafés into line. The 1851 law that required permission to open an establishment stood as an exercise in class management under the guise of moral concern. For instance, during the debates, one legislator suggested conducting a nationwide statistical analysis of the owners of drinking establishments in order to see how many did not fit the prescribed requirements, so as to “place the number of these establishments into harmony with that of the population” and “[g]radually only allow these same establishments to be kept by honorable men incapable of preaching fatal doctrines and providing a bad example to the numerous citizens with whom their industry comes into contact.”³³ The fear of working-class radicalism was barely concealed underneath anxieties over the spread of “fatal doctrines” and “bad examples.” Indeed, the moral imperative of ensuring the honorable management of France’s drinking establishments throughout the country served as a reason to reduce their number. Ostensibly seeking to

³² Le Commissaire de Police [Illegible], “Rapport: Au sujet de l’établissement de la fe Rabuteau”, June 27, 1898, BM2 10, APP.

³³ [“Chercher à mettre le chiffre de ces établissements en harmonie avec celui des populations; / Arriver graduellement à ne laisser tenir ces même établissements que par des hommes honorables, et, dès lors, incapables de prêcher de funestes doctrines, et de donner de nuisibles exemples aux nombreux citoyens avec lesquels leur industrie les met en contact.”] Jules Migeon, “Proposition. Relative à la police des cafés, cabarets et autres débits de boissons à consommer sur place.” in *Assemblée nationale législative. Impressions. Projets de Lois, Propositions, Rapports, etc.*, vol. 25 (Paris: Imprimerie de l’assemblée nationale, 1851), No. 1779.

preserve the respectability of those who sought to congregate in public establishments, the legislator actually sought to reduce people's practical ability to do so.

The moderate left saw the proposed restrictions as an attack on the ability of their working-class base to organize effectively, but did not challenge the relationship between café sociability and immorality.³⁴ However, if the right accused cafés of being the cause of public immorality, the left saw drinking establishments as a symptom of private immorality. In March before the promulgation of the law, the representative from Creuse, Martin Nadaud, rose and delivered a speech that critiqued the assumptions embedded in the debate.³⁵ By arguing, essentially, that public morality was but an effect of private morality, Nadaud shifted blame from the public gatherings of the working-class to their abject social position. “Ensure that the children of the poor receive the same education as yours [his fellow legislators],” Nadaud argued, “and there will no longer be a need for the *police des cabarets* nor new *agents de répression*. Immoral spaces will close by themselves, because one will take as much care to avoid them as one [now] seems to rush to find them out.”³⁶ Rendering the working classes moral in their private lives would make their public behavior just as proper. Nadaud's attempt to thread the needle by agreeing that cafés served as sites of immorality without condemning those

³⁴ I use the term “moderate left” here to distinguish between those who spoke in the legislature on the eve of Napoleon's *coup* from those who fought on the barricades during the June Days; this split between social democrats who advocated work within the system and radical socialists who favored revolution has, of course, become a familiar feature of leftist politics. On the relationship between the *démoc-socs* and their more radical compatriots see Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852*, trans. Loyd, Janet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 92–94.. For the sake of brevity, they will from now on be referred to simply as “the left.”

³⁵ Nadaud was a self-made stone mason from Creuse. For his biography see Gillian Tindall, *The Journey of Martin Nadaud: A Life and Turbulent Times* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999).

³⁶ [“Faites que les enfants du pauvre reçoivent la même éducation que les vôtres, et il n'y aura plus besoin de police des cabarets ni de nouveaux agents de répression. Les mauvais lieux se fermeront d'eux-mêmes, car on mettra autant de soin à les fuir qu'on semble mettre d'empressement à les rechercher. Nadaud, “Assemblée nationale législative. Session de 1851. Discours prononcé par M. Nadaud...dans la discussion relative à la police des cafés, cabarets et autres débits de Boissons.” in *Assemblée législative. Détails.*, 1851.

who frequented them, however, failed to escape an essentially patronizing view whereby the honest bourgeois remained the purveyor of proper morality: “bad examples,” Nadaud exclaims, “come from higher-up than the *cabarets* [taverns].”³⁷ In the end, then, Nadaud shared all the base assumptions of his political opponents; he simply proposed a different solution to the problem.

Both left and right connected “morality” to the preservation of existing class hierarchies. In other words, they spoke of vice-ridden dens of iniquity not because such immorality necessarily repulsed them personally, but because these spaces served as signs that administrative and moral control of urban space remained incomplete. The 1852 law they promulgated endowed administrators with the ultimate ability to control the opening and closing of cafés; it remained in effect throughout the Second Empire and during the Moral Order of the early Third Republic. When the question was revisited almost thirty years later, the associations of the drinking establishment with immorality remained just as strong, but the politics of the question had drastically changed. This time, liberal Republicans gave way to the inexorable growth of drinking establishments throughout the country as well as to the appearance of new types of establishments like the café-concert. Despite authorities’ apparent power over drinking establishments, the early Third Republic found itself incapable of stopping the explosive growth of drinking establishments. In 1876, Prefect of Police wrote to the Minister of the Beaux Arts in order to address the latter’s concern regarding the opening of yet another café-concert, despite the government’s desire to slow their growth. In response, the Prefect described all the conditions under which a request to open a new establishment could be denied, but explained that barring those conditions, the police found it difficult to stop the spread of

³⁷ [“Les mauvais exemples viennent de plus haut que les cabarets.”] Ibid., 11.

café-concerts. The Prefect did, however, commit to increasing the attention given to each request as well as to their surveillance.³⁸

Just as the police essentially determined its own processes regulating prostitution and same-sex sexual activity, so too did they recognize certain limitations in preventing the spread of drinking establishments even though commentators saw the management of spaces of sociability as an essential aspect of controlling the city.³⁹ In 1872 the bal Bruckner asked permission to move a few blocks from its location on Rue Cambonne to a new site near the Ecole Militaire on the Boulevard de Grenelle. The officer who investigated the request recommended denying it, however, because the new address was too close to other establishments such as “brasseries frequented by soldiers, *filles de joie* and pimps,” and on the other side, “great houses inhabited by around a hundred households.”⁴⁰ Thus the police did continue to exercise their authority to regulate the placement of cafés and other spaces of sociability. However, the authorities took care to not deny a request just because they could. For example, a director of a *lycée* [high school] wrote to the police in September 1871 in order to protest the opening of a dancehall next to his establishment. In response, the police reported that the walls separating the buildings were thick and noted that the night courses that took place in the school took place in a space further away from their next-door neighbors than those during the day. The police, in other words, confirmed that dancing would not disturb the students. So long as there was no dancing during the day, the police argued, there was no

³⁸ Préfet de Police [Illegible] to Minister de l’Instruction publique et Beaux Arts, June 17, 1876, F21 1338, AN.

³⁹ The tension between “regulation and constraint” by the police is the focus of Scott Haine’s first chapter on nineteenth-century Paris’s working-class cafés. See Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, chap. 1.

⁴⁰ [“brasseries fréquentées par les militaires, les filles de joie et les souteneurs... grandes maisons habitées par des centaines de ménages.”] Commissaire de Police [Illegible], “Rapport. Avis sur l’Etablissement d’un bal à exploiter par un seieur Bruckner, Bd de Grenelle 78.”, May 24, 1872, DA 138, doc. 18, APP.

reason to forbid the opening of the establishment.⁴¹ The “fact” of immorality alone failed to provide sufficient cause for blocking the spread of these establishments throughout the city. Despite a dominant discourse that associated cafés with immorality and an explicit legal apparatus designed to manage their growth and use, their popularity did not wane. To the contrary, it exploded: there were about 4,500 cafés in Paris at the end of the July Monarchy, 22,000 in 1870, and 40,000 in the 1880s, a high that would then drop to around 30,000 cafés in the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁴² Perhaps, then, people were attracted to the cafés because, rather than despite, their associations with immorality.

In any case, by 1880, the association of drinking establishments with public disorder remained, but it no longer justified the continuation of the 1852 law. During the debate over the Second Empire regulation, Nadaud had rhetorically asked why, if drinking establishments were a vital industry, they were not regulated as any other.⁴³ The Republicans of 1880 heeded Nadaud’s implicit suggestion and reversed the regulatory emphasis by allowing anyone to open a drinking establishment upon simple declaration of the intent to do so. The new freedom brought forth a surge of entrepreneurial fervor. According to Alfred-Jean-Marie Pierrot’s 1895 study of the effect of the law on alcoholism and prostitution, the Paris police received an average of 5,000 declarations a year between 1880 and 1884 and an average of 6,000 after 1884, a trend that only

⁴¹ Officier de Paix [Illegible], “Rapport. Louichon et André. Bal.”, September 26, 1871, DA 138, doc. 9, APP.

⁴² These statistics come from Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 28–30.

⁴³ Nadaud, “Assemblée nationale législative. Session de 1851. Discours prononcé par M. Nadaud...dans la discussion relative à la police des cafés, cabarets et autres débits de Boissons.” 9.

continued accelerating during the Belle Epoque.⁴⁴ Although the police retained the ability to regulate the placement of drinking establishments near schools, churches, and the like, as well as the power to close establishments considered “badly kept” critics saw the new regulation as an abrogation of the administration’s duty to regulate urban life. As the doctor Auguste Corlieu wrote in 1887, “[s]ince *cabarets* are opened with a simple declaration, the administration no longer has rights over these establishments: it cannot withdraw an authorization which it had granted.”⁴⁵ Critics blamed the law for encouraging public debauchery: “the law of 1880 constitutes, not only an encouragement to debauchery and drunkenness for those who frequent cabarets, but even more often is an incentive to laziness for those who keep them.”⁴⁶ The men who opened a drinking establishment no longer had to present themselves as “honorable” citizens. The proliferation of cafés, critics feared, encouraged the fall from grace of both those who owned them and those who entered them.

For Parisians who shared these anxieties, frequenting spaces of sociability became a desired, but also relatively dangerous, pleasure. People who sought to maintain their personal “respectability,” but still enjoy the pleasures of modern life had to strike a delicate balance. The experience of the dancehall provides a case in point. The first *bal public*, the Bal de l’Opéra, opened in 1716 and public dancing remained an important

⁴⁴ Alfred-Jean-Marie Pierrot, *Essai d’étude sur l’atténuation de l’alcoolisme et de la prostitution par la modification de la loi du 17 juillet 1880 sur les cafés, cabarets et débits de boissons* (Montmédy: impr. de P. Pierrot, 1895), 17.

⁴⁵ [“Depuis que les cabarets s’ouvrent sur une simple déclaration, l’administration n’a plus de droits sur ces établissements: elle ne peut retirer une autorisation qu’elle n’a pas donnée.”] Auguste Corlieu, *La Prostitution à Paris* (Paris: Baillière, 1887), 18.

⁴⁶ [“a loi de 1880 constitue non seulement un encouragement à la débauche et à l’ivrognerie pour ceux qui fréquentaient les cabarets, mais encore bien souvent une prime à la paresse pour ceux qui les détiennent.”] Pierrot, *Essai d’étude sur l’atténuation de l’alcoolisme et de la prostitution par la modification de la loi du 17 juillet 1880 sur les cafés, cabarets et débits de boissons*, 19. This connection was not entirely imaginary. See Alain Corbin, *Les filles de noce: Misère sexuelle et prostitution (19e siècle)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), 216–219; Régis Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris: 1870-1918* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 50.

aspect of Parisian sociability for both the upper and lower classes for the next two centuries.⁴⁷ During the second half of the nineteenth-century institutions such as the Opéra, Mabilles, and Bullier offered Parisians the implicitly sexual excitement of mixed-sex sociability through public dancing. A small book released in 1846 on the *bals publics*, for instance, referred to the experience of dancing at the Mabilles as “making love” and the enjoyment of fantasy “before a pretty woman.”⁴⁸ It is no coincidence, then, that during the early 1830s the *sergents de ville* were instructed to arrest indecent dancers under article 330 of the penal code and that people continued to be kicked out of dancehalls for indecent dancing into the Third Republic.⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, women had to act especially carefully when frequenting the public dances of the nineteenth century. An 1860 guide, “To mothers, their girls, and young women of the world,” instructed women on how to navigate the world of modern and public dancing. So long as women did not cross the line into “coquetterie,” dancing could be beneficial, the guide claimed, while emphasizing that modern dancing was not by definition vice-ridden. It did, however, carry great risk for young women tempted to succumb to the sensuality of modern life.⁵⁰ Dances, the guide explained, were not the places to find a husband, but could still serve as a place to enjoy oneself so long as one did not become addicted to the pleasures of the world.⁵¹ The dancehall was a space of proper enjoyment where even

⁴⁷ For a history of *bals publics* in Paris see François Gasnault, *Guinguettes et lorettes: bals publics et danse sociale à Paris entre 1830 et 1870* (Aubier, 1986).

⁴⁸ M.R**** and J.N****, *Les petits mystères des bals, jardins publics et cafés de Paris* (Paris: B. Renault, 1846), 51–52.

⁴⁹ Gasnault, *Guinguettes et lorettes*, 47–48. In 1873, for instance, a woman was kicked out of the bal du Casino for dancing indecently. A. Jarrique, “Rapport. Bal du Casino,” February 23, 1873, DA 27, doc. 31, APP.

⁵⁰ *Aux mères, à leurs filles et aux jeunes femmes du monde. Appréciations des danses et des bals d’aujourd’hui au point de vue moral et chrétien.* (Paris: A. Josse, 1860), 5–6, 13–17, 26–31, 42–43.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 92–94, 172–173.

young women could enter the public world and experience urban culture, so long as they remained in control of their desires.

For men who frequented the cafés, resisting the temptations of drink became its own challenge. Parent-Duchâtelet himself emphasized the connection between prostitution and alcohol when he declared that “drunkenness, which exists as it were permanently in these kinds of gatherings, encourages one to indulge there [in taverns] in disorders that would never be tolerated in ordinary houses of prostitution.”⁵² The connection between prostitution and drinking was a well-established trope in nineteenth-century moral commentary and social science. Maxime du Camp declared in 1875 that prostitutes were given to drinking, especially of absinthe and Pierrot later declared prostitution and alcoholism to be “twin vices.”⁵³ Alcohol was particularly dangerous because it lowered men’s sexual defenses. Thus, the serving girls who, as part of their job, encouraged customers to drink were almost inevitably associated with the sexual liaisons that would supposedly take place after closing time.⁵⁴ The presence of one vice

⁵² [“L’ivresse, qui existe pour ainsi dire en permanence dans ces sortes de réunions, fait qu’on s’y livre à des désordres qu’on ne supporterait jamais dans des maisons de prostitution ordinaires.”] Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la prostitution*, 512.

⁵³ Maxime Du Camp, *Paris: Ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle*, vol. 3, 5th ed. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1875), 346; Pierrot, *Essai d’étude sur l’atténuation de l’alcoolisme et de la prostitution par la modification de la loi du 17 juillet 1880 sur les cafés, cabarets et débits de boissons*, 1. See also Davray, *L’amour à Paris*, 100–102. Not everyone shared this opinion, however. Barthélemy and Devillez, for instance, argued that the girls drank because it was their job and nothing more, even as they feigned surprise that although drinking was rarer in men than in women, syphilis continued to be linked to the vice. See Barthélemy and Devillez, “Syphilis et alcool. Les inviteuses,” *France médicale* 29, no. 25-27 (1882): 313–314. Even Coffignon admitted that some girls knew how to avoid the requirement to drink by using colored water instead, thus implicitly admitting that not all serving girls were given to alcoholism. Ali Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris* (Paris: Librairie Illustrée, 1888), 98–100.

⁵⁴ Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 140–142. The police occasionally noted serving girls encouraging their customers to spend money and drink. See, for example, Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Au sujet de la brasserie sur la Gaîté Rue de la Harpe”, July 21, 1880, 3, BM2 16, APP; Le Commissaire de Police, Chef du Service de Sûreté [Illegible], “Rapport: Au sujet de la Brasserie sise 2 Bd St. Martin”, July 2, 1897, 2, BM2 65, APP. The use of alcohol to lower one’s sexual defenses, of course, had more violent outcomes in the nineteenth-century, as it does today. In one case, a man was accused, tried and acquitted for plying two young girls – apparently child prostitutes -- with drink before making sexual advances on

in the cafés and dancehalls led to the other. Just to emphasize the point, one article that linked alcoholism to syphilis claimed that almost all of the *femmes de brasserie* were infected with venereal disease.⁵⁵ Drinking was not a forbidden pleasure, but its enjoyment led quickly to illicit activity and physical disease. Commentators demanded a great deal of self-control amongst those wishing to enjoy modern urban culture.

These moralists ultimately feared that those who frequented spaces of sociability would fall victim to their pleasures by, quite simply, enjoying them too much. The pleasures of dance and drink proved seductive and difficult to resist. If these institutions were truly so dangerous, in other words, the police would have actually enforced their own regulations and people would have hesitated to frequent them. Overtly, commentators assumed that people found pleasure in drinking establishments and dancehalls despite their reputations for vice. Implicitly, they recognized that people went to them because of their association with vice. Ultimately these establishments served as safe spaces in which to indulge in otherwise illicit activities while in full public view. The proper dance or the controlled drink, respectable courtship, and friendly conversation all served as a respectable veil over the illicit but true pleasures of the nineteenth-century drinking establishment. The display of self-control thus became a hindrance to the enjoyment of modern spaces of sociability.

them. In another, a man attempting to seduce one of his young neighbors took her to a cabaret, among other sites in the city. See the dossier on Goussard, Joseph in AP D2U8 41 and on Denis, Louis Auguste in AP D2U8 132.

⁵⁵ Barthélemy and Devillez, “Syphilis et alcool. Les inviteuses.” 317–318. There is some evidence that the association between venereal disease and women in the cafés was shared popularly. A letter from a mother reports that her son contracted one after meeting a woman – it is unclear if she was a customer or serving girl – at a café. A later anonymous writer reported that he had contracted a venereal disease after a tryst with a woman who plied him and his friends with drink at a café. Another 1899 note denounced the serving girls of a café as being infected with venereal disease. See Richemond to Préfet de Police, December 12, 1895, BM2 33, APP; Anonymous to Préfet de Police, February 21, 1901, BM2 17, APP; Anonymous and Préfet de Police, October 29, 1899, BM2 8, APP.

Sexual Play in the Cafés and Bars of Paris

Although women had been frequenting certain types of cafés since at least the July Monarchy and some working-class men took their entire families to the local bar, male commentators continued to imagine these spaces as a male preserve that depended on the sexual subservience of women to men.⁵⁶ The moral commentator and general expert of Parisian culture Alfred Delvau, for instance, portrayed the café as an essential aspect of urban male youth culture, despite its reputation for urban vice. “The first recommendation of a father to his son, while sending him to the big city in order to do his life apprenticeship, is to not haunt cabarets and cafés, which are ‘*lieux de perdition*,’” he wrote before continuing to remind his readers “that they had been young once, that they had traversed, like everyone, cabarets and cafés without losing anything else but time and money.”⁵⁷ In Delvau’s opinion, the vices of the café were not only harmless, but actually served an essential role in urban culture, as spaces for young men to grow into adulthood. As spaces imagined as male, these pleasures were either unavailable or threatening to women. And yet, some cafés offered another form of pleasure that featured a constant give and take between the male customers and female servers. These women were essential to the pleasures of the café. They showed how the rise of consumer culture not only placed everything and everyone potentially for sale, but also how those developments also facilitated new kinds of pleasure decoupled from conjugal, intimate, and private love.

⁵⁶ Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian modernity*, 53; Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, chap. 2.

⁵⁷ [“Le première recommandation d’un père à son fils, lorsqu’il l’envoie dans la grande ville pour y faire son apprentissage de la vie, c’est de ne pas hanter les cabarets et les cafés, qui sont ‘lieux de perdition’... qu’ils ont été jeunes, qu’ils ont traversé, comme tout le monde, les cabarets et les cafés, sans y perdre autre chose que du temps et de l’argent.”] Alfred Delvau, *Les plaisirs de Paris: Guide pratique et illustré* (Paris: A. Fauré, 1867), 63.

For moral commentators who associated women's public display with prostitution, the cafés and café-concerts remained problematic throughout the century.⁵⁸ In 1860, for example, the historian Jules Michelet declared that an innocent single woman "will not dare enter a restaurant. She would constitute an event; she would be a spectacle."⁵⁹ Five years later, a newspaper article described the café-concert as "literally encumbered by the public in skirts who come as well to claim their share of distraction."⁶⁰ Women, the author claimed, have "too often forgotten at the moment that decency is their most beautiful attribute" and they participate in the "traffic in flesh" not by explicit prostitution, but by showing themselves to the café public.⁶¹ One senses a shift by the 1890s when single women in public became an increasingly common sight on the streets of Paris. Proprietors who found it reasonable to argue to the police that women found in a café and whom the authorities had accused of prostitution were simply ordinary customers underlined this normalcy. "I pay in order to have the right to sell," one letter argued, "I cannot refuse the sale of my drinks while everything is happening in good order."⁶² Although women's presence in cafés was becoming increasingly commonplace, the very need to write the letter underscores the continued association of women in public with prostitution.

⁵⁸ As Griselda Pollock has noted, "For bourgeois women, going into town mingling with crowds of mixed social composition was...morally dangerous" because "maintain[ing] one's respectability, closely identified with femininity, meant *not* exposing oneself in public." Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 69.

⁵⁹ ["elle n'osera entrer chez un restaurateur. Elle y ferait événement, elle y serait un spectacle."] Jules Michelet, *La femme* (Paris: L. Hachette et cie., 1860), xxxiv. The translation is from Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, 69.

⁶⁰ ["les portes de l'établissement littéralement encombrées par le public en jupons qui vient, lui aussi, revendiquer sa part de distraction."] Joseph Lassouquère, *Cafés-concerts, moralité. Extrait du "Courrier du Gers" des 2 et 3 août 1865*, 1865, 4.

⁶¹ ["oublie trop en ce moment que la décence est son plus bel attribut."] *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶² ["je paie pour avoir le droit de vendre je ne puis refuser le débit de mes boissons du moment que tous se passe dans le bon ordre."] Desbrosses to Préfet de Police, September 15, 1892, BM2 65, APP. For similar examples see Cosset to Préfet de Police, February 9, 1896, BM2 23, APP; Torcy to Lépine, February 21, 1896, BM2 37, APP; Cayron to Préfet de Police, July 24, 1903, BM2 47, APP.

By the end of the century, men had deigned to carve out a public role for ordinary women, but continued to strictly delimit their ability to freely move about. It is partly from this discourse that modern attention to the gendering of the urban “gaze” has emerged: one of the spectacles of late nineteenth-century Parisian life involved a visual give-and-take between men and women that rendered all women subordinate to men. “Of all the pleasures of a people,” writer André Chardourne declared in 1889, “the most important is the spectacle. All that combines the charms of meeting, of noise, of light, of music, of ambiance, and others no less powerful.”⁶³ This spectacle, as many others have pointed out, remained highly gendered. “You came to Paris in order to see it, certainly, but also, almost above all – in order to see that beautiful ornament of Paris, -- the Parisienne, -- that one cannot find anywhere else,” as one guidebook put it.⁶⁴ She was an “ornament,” a thing one bought to beautify something else. She complemented Paris, but remained somewhat apart from its essential nature. But as an ornament she remained the attraction, as she did in the café-concert where, according to one late Second Empire commentator, women served as “the principal attraction – I should have said: bait.” He continued, describing how the “[c]hubby shoulders, appetizing throats, plump forms, in a word, *jolies choses* of these women, have a large part in the charm.”⁶⁵ The *chanteuse* not

⁶³ [“De tous les plaisirs d'un peuple, comme le prouve l'histoire depuis les temps les plus reculés, le plus important est le spectacle. A cela concourent les charmes de la réunion, du bruit, de la lumière, de la musique, des décors, et d'autres non moins puissants.”] André Chadourne, *Les cafés-concerts* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1889), 1.

⁶⁴ [“Vous êtes venu à Paris pour le voir, certes, mais aussi, mais surtout presque, -- pour voir ce bel ornement de Paris, -- la Parisienne, -- qu'on ne trouve nulle part ailleurs.”] *Guide complet des plaisirs mondains et des plaisirs secrets à Paris* (Paris: André Hall, s.d.), 143–144. The positioning of women as a feast for the eyes should not be taken to imply that they were solely the objects of the gaze, without their own ability to affect the meaning of encounters with men. The same guidebook, for instance, warns men to be wary of women who use their public presence to fleece strangers in the city. See *Ibid.*, 31–32, 144–146.

⁶⁵ [“La plus belle moitié du genre humain est, au concert, le principal attrait -- je devrais dire: appât. / Les épaules potelées, les gorges appétissantes, les formes dodues, en un mot les *jolies choses* de ces dames, ont une large part dans le charme.”] Albéric Menetiere, *Les Binettes du café-concert* (Paris: Librairie Centrale, 1869), 17–18.

only became a “feast” for the eyes, she was also presented as part of the meal. She was thus totally subsumed as a product for sale at the café. Women were not equal customers; rather, they were part of what one bought.⁶⁶

Clever proprietors took up this discourse and attempted to turn it to their economic advantage by using women as servers in the so-called *brasseries à femmes*. These institutions, according to contemporaries, first appeared in the 1860s and became extremely popular during the 1867 Universal Exposition.⁶⁷ Commentators almost immediately associated their appearance with a new opportunity for clandestine prostitution, yet little was done to stem their increasing popularity. By the 1880s they served as one of the key focuses of moral anxiety surrounding public sociability and prostitution.⁶⁸ The serving girl, according to moral commentator Jules Davray, came “from everywhere and elsewhere – leaving the kitchen, the workshop, the model table, the skirts of their mothers, the arms of a lover in order to come sit on a bench, lean on a marble table, serve beer, empty them and the clients.”⁶⁹ By taking upon a public role, in other words, the serving girl had abandoned her role as daughter, wife, and mother. Her employment became just another form of prostitution, in which she emptied not only beer glasses but also client’s wallets. Davray failed to offer a solution, noting that regulation

⁶⁶ David Harvey has nicely described how women, invited to participate in consumer culture, became as well a part of the spectacle. See David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 217.

⁶⁷ Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 91–93. For a concise description of the emergence of *brasseries à femmes* see Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 133–134.

⁶⁸ Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 250; Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 236–237.

⁶⁹ Davray, *L’amour à Paris*, 100–101.

would simply lead the servers “to become ordinary customers and we do not think that one could easily edict an ordinance forbidding single women from entering cafés!”⁷⁰

Writers assumed serving girls almost always prostituted themselves because their presence in public and their interactions with customers labeled them as sexually available.⁷¹ To many commentators, serving drinks seemed just a pretext for their real profession. “All the women there,” claimed one 1888 report, “indulge in prostitution and escape, by virtue of their profession of *brasserie* servers, all regulation.”⁷² Ali Coffignon, was even more explicit, dividing all serving girls into two groups, “prostitutes and *débauchées*.” The former were prostitutes by profession seeking a safer occupation. By the latter, he “does not intend to establish a class of *femmes de brasserie* not indulging in prostitution, [he] wants to indicate solely that until now they have not openly exercised prostitution.”⁷³ In other words, one group came to deprofessionalize their status as prostitutes, while the other worked in the *brasseries à femmes* in order to become prostitutes. No space remained for the innocent serving girl in this physiognomy.⁷⁴ It is no surprise, then, that Coffignon also declared there to be basically no difference between

⁷⁰ [“pour devenir des *consommateurs* ordinaires et nous ne pensons pas qu'on puisse facilement édicter une ordonnance interdisant aux femmes seules de pénétrer dans les cafés!”] *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷¹ Charles Bernheimer notes that the sheer volume of attention to venal activity in late nineteenth-century Paris must have tinged nearly all “encounters between bourgeois men and working-class women in fin-de-siècle Paris” with “the possibility of sexual exchange.” See Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 165–166.

⁷² [“les femmes s’y livrant toutes à la prostitution et échappant, grâce à leur profession de servantes de brasserie, à toute réglementation.”] Le Commissaire de Police [Illegible], “Rapport”, March 3, 1888, BM2 33, APP. The sentiment was echoed in very similar terms about a different establishment a decade later. See “Rapport: Au sujet du débit de vins rue de Bercy 225”, February 28, 1899, BM2 19, APP.

⁷³ [“Par *débauchées*, je n’entends pas établir une classe de femmes de brasseries ne se livrant pas à la prostitution, je veux indiquer seulement que jusqu’alors elles n’ont pas exercé ouvertement la prostitution.”] Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 312.

⁷⁴ According to Hollis Clayson, the iconography of women in cafés during the nineteenth century left no room for the innocent woman either. She describes three types of iconography depicting women in cafés: 1) single women who were likely prostitutes, 2) groups of prostitutes, and 3) “respectable women [who] would be ogled by men and might flirt back.” See Clayson, *Painted Love*, 103.

the dives attached to certain brothels and these brasseries.⁷⁵ Such dismal prospects for the serving girl were, of course lamented, but they were hardly contested.⁷⁶ Even a bill-posting that called on serving girls to unionize under the auspices of the *Ligue de l'affranchissement des dames* declared that they were hired “in order to attract men” and that they were participating in “disgusting traffic in which woman is the merchandise.”⁷⁷ Rather than argue that serving girls could act professionally, this early feminist call actually agreed that they could only be prostitutes. In serving her body both metaphorically and physically, the *femme à brasserie* could not escape the stigma of prostitution. In this respect, the customers, whether they actually managed to solicit a serving girl for sex or not, were always buying them, even if a beer remained their only refreshment.

The police did not attempt to shut down all *brasseries à femmes* accused of employing clandestine prostitutes because the attempt lay well outside their capabilities. An 1889 report described the familiar flirtatious activities by the serving girls, claimed that they lived by prostitution, but still concluded that “[t]his house does not appear to be worse kept than most analogous establishments and in these conditions, it would seem useless, we believe, to conduct visits there.”⁷⁸ Sometimes it was actually the clientele that would bring the authorities down on certain establishments. The large brasserie du Château d’Eau, for instance, attracted attention for its clientele of prostitutes, pimps and

⁷⁵ Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 98.

⁷⁶ Coffignon explained that the serving girl was quickly lost “morally and physically” and that some are even lesbians. *Ibid.*, 100–101, 312.

⁷⁷ [“pour attirer les hommes... l'immonde trafic dont la femme est la marchandise!”] Judith Tavaría and Astié de Valsayre, “Aux Dames employées dans les brasseries” (F. Harry, 1892), BNF.

⁷⁸ Le Commissaire de Police, Chef du Service de Sûreté [Illegible], “Rapport: Au sujet de la brasserie sise Bd St. Martin, 2”, August 13, 1889, BM2 65, APP. The police came to the same conclusion, in almost the exact same terms, three years later as well. See Le Commissaire de Police, Chef du Service de Sûreté [Illegible], “Rapport: Au sujet de la brasserie sise Bd St. Martin, 2”, April 8, 1892, BM2 65, APP.

young men, in addition to the serving girls who had attracted the police in the first place. An 1874 report notes that although the proprietor had begun taking greater care in monitoring his clientele after finding himself in trouble in 1873, “this brasserie has never been worse kept.” The report goes on to note all the problems caused by the clientele: workers mixed with students, a pimp fought with a young man, and a group of students sang bawdy songs.⁷⁹ The police subsequently closed the bar and the proprietor went bankrupt. Two years later, the manager who took over the establishment wrote to the police asking for permission to reopen, claiming that “it will be easy to change the clientele of the establishment and to attract there honorable people of the neighborhood, in order to make an establishment that will rival the best and most honorable.”⁸⁰ The fact of serving girls’ presence did not alone make an establishment disreputable. Rather, the fine line that divided harmless establishments from dangerous ones depended directly on the types of activities taking place within. At the same time, the serving girls often remained the catalyst for disruption. A brasserie accused of being “habitually the theater of scandalous scenes” in 1888, for example, was banned from hiring women as servers and was given three days in which to find new help.⁸¹ The serving girls encouraged a culture of pleasure within the establishment that was not explicitly about sex. Rather, their presence suggested the presence of forms of pleasure associated with disorder. So long as the proprietor maintained a steady hand over his business, he had little to fear from the police.

⁷⁹ “Au sujet de la brasserie du Château d’eau,” 2–4.

⁸⁰ [“sera facile de changer la clientèle de l’établissement et d’y attirer toutes les personnes honorables du quartier, de manière à en faire un établissement rival des meilleurs et des plus honorables.”] Alexandre Eugène Cailleaux to Préfet de Police, July 22, 1876, BM2 17, Archives de la préfecture de police de Paris.

⁸¹ Préfet de Police, “Untitled”, March 1888, BM2 33, APP.

Proprietors hired serving girls because they believed that women could be used as sexual enticement for male customers. According to the police in 1880, for instance, the manager of a café in the Latin Quarter “sent away the serving boys and replaced them with *filles de salle*, hoping that their presence would attract clients and that his takings would be higher.”⁸² Several *brasseries* used serving girls in their advertising, explicitly linking them to the ordinary sociability and drinking that took place in their establishments. Towards the very end of the century, for instance, a small advertisement for the Brasserie de la Marine on the Boulevard Diderot explicitly noted that “Service [was] done by costumed women,” while another proclaimed that their “Service [was] done by foreign women, cycling outfits, latest fashion.”⁸³ It is important to highlight how these ads added a touch of the exotic to their serving girls. The costuming of serving girls began not long after the *brasseries à femmes* began attracting the attention of moral commentators. According to the police, in 1879, the Brasserie de la Cigarette required its serving girls to purchase “oriental costumes,” in violation of a police ordinance of September 19, 1861 which, among other things, banned serving girls from “making themselves noticed neither by their outfit, by the inconvenience of their attitude, by shocking familiarities nor by provocations directed at passer-by or customers.”⁸⁴ These serving girls’ costumes attracted the “public and all the children of the neighborhood who

⁸² [“a renvoyé les garçons et les a remplacés par des filles de salle, espérant que leur présence attirent les clients et que des recettes seraient plus élevées.”] Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport. Au sujet du café situé Boulevard St. Germain, 166.”, November 22, 1880, BM2 16, APP.

⁸³ [“Service fait par des Dames costumées.”] “Advertisement for ‘Brasserie de la Marine’”, n.d., BM2 8, APP. [“Service fait par des dames étrangères / Costumes Vélos, dernier Chic.”] “Advertisement for ‘Café Brasserie du Caprice’”, n.d., BM2 26, APP.

⁸⁴ “Rapport: Au sujet de la Brasserie de la Cigarette, rue Racine No 3.”, June 24, 1879, BM2 24, APP. [“ne se fassent remarquer ni par leur costume, ni par l’inconvenance de leur attitude, ni par des familiarités choquantes ou des provocations à l’égard des passants ou des consommateurs, ni en partageant les libations de ces derniers.”] For the full text of the ordinance, see Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 92–93.

stop before the boutique in order to watch these costumed women through the window.”⁸⁵ Dress was essential to drawing men’s attention and proprietors explicitly placed serving girls as sexual objects of the gaze. One report, for instance, describes the dress of three serving girls in the Brasserie du Chat Blanc. While one, Bertha, was “dressed in a pink linen bodice whose chest is half, and a short cream skirt. Her arms are flesh colors; her arms are naked,” another wore a “tender blue uniform with a bodice and a skirt covered in lace.”⁸⁶ When a proprietor wished to avoid police attention, he tended to dress his serving girls “modestly,” as one proprietor did after reopening his brasserie following its temporary closure by the police.⁸⁷ By dressing their female employees according to the supposed taste of their customers, proprietors attempted to reinforce the relationship between male spectator and female subject, a relationship actually served as their business model.

A successful serving girl exceeded these limitations. In order to keep customers buying drinks, serving girls employed a set of techniques that emphasized their sexual availability, while maintaining control over the situation. The girls would sit, drink with, and flirt with the customers.⁸⁸ An 1879 description of the eight serving girls at the café de la Cigarette, written slightly after that referenced above, was typical: “The service is done by eight women who are decently and regularly kept, but who, as in all

⁸⁵ [“public et tous les enfants du quartier s’arrêtent devant la boutique pour regarder à travers les carreaux ces femmes costumées.”] “Rapport: Au sujet de la Brasserie de la Cigarette, rue Racine No 3.”

⁸⁶ [“Bertha, est vêtue d’un corsage en laine rose duquel la poitrine sort à moitié, et d’un court jupon crème. Les bras sont de couleur chair; les bras sont nus... Un autre a un costume bleu tendre composé d’un corsage et d’un jupon recouverts de dentelles.”] Le Contrôleur Général [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance à la brasserie dite ‘du Chat Blanc’”, January 16, 1886, 1, BM2 10, APP.

⁸⁷ “Rapport: Au sujet de la brasserie du Bas Rhin”, October 28, 1880, BM2 60, APP.

⁸⁸ Alain Corbin provides a nice description of this activity, but is perhaps too quick to assume that all serving girls were actually available to sexual advances, rather than just assumed to be by most commentators. Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 251. Unfortunately, since all the extant evidence emerges from this expert discourse, it is difficult to definitively determine how many serving girls were also actually prostitutes.

establishments of this type, sit with the clients, *tutoient* them [address them informally], encourage them to spend and have course and crude conversations.”⁸⁹ The clientele, of course, relished these interactions and was noted by the police as well.⁹⁰ The customers at the Concert de l’Harmonie, a café-concert served by women that also featured *filles publiques* as customers, “took a very great license with” the serving girls.⁹¹ The servers attempted to always remain in control of these interactions by employing techniques such as pretending “a small glass of cherry-stem tea” was alcohol when drinking with the clientele.⁹² Their active participation while maintaining relative control of these interactions reflects how the *brasserie à femmes* actually served as a space of sexual play, rather than sexual subservience. While the serving girl apparently served as a sexual object for the men who entered the bar, her ability to manage these interactions shows how they acted as a subject themselves. They illustrate, in the words of Sharon Marcus following Roland Barthes, the “play of the system” whereby their practice bent, but did not break, the cultural expectations that shaped their ability to act.⁹³

Serving girls’ power emerged through their ability to manage male desire. In other words, they were able to undercut men’s ability to act in public themselves. Serving girls proffered an image of idealized sexual encounter; their activities realized the

⁸⁹ “Rapport. Au sujet du café de la Cigarette”, December 12, 1879, BM2 24, APP.

⁹⁰ These notes show as well another way in which men found themselves caught in the police apparatus. See the previous chapter.

⁹¹ [“avaient une très grande licence avec ces femmes.”] Tabaraud, “Rapport au sujet du Concert de l’Harmonie” (Police Municipale, 10th Arrondissement, May 29, 1872), DA 28, doc. 33, APP.

⁹² Barthélemy, “Exposé des mesures en vigueur en France, et d’un projet de réorganisation de la surveillance de la prostitution” (Typographie Gaston Née, 1889), 314–315, DB 407, Archives de la préfecture de police de paris.

⁹³ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 26–27.

possibility that men would confuse love with the fantasy offered by the prostitute.⁹⁴ They made men forget that all they offered was a fantasy. Coffignon, for example, related an article from *Le Temps* that told the story of a man who committed suicide in the bois de Boulogne after falling in love with a *femme de brasserie*.⁹⁵ In another instance, a man was arrested for *détournement de mineure* after eloping with a serving girl whose parents had forbade the relation.⁹⁶ A short 1887 newspaper article noted a fight that broke out between serving girls' lovers and the customers of a bar one early morning.⁹⁷ According to Louis Martineau, the relationship between customer and serving girl may take on "the appearance of young and crazy love which gives the exchange a naïveté and makes him voluntarily believe in a driving force, when there is only calculation."⁹⁸ Such indeed was the moral of a story recounted by Pierre Véron in 1862 in which four men all became infatuated with a single serving girl. At the end of the evening, her patron admonishes her: "If I am not mistaken, you smiled an extra time at number 2. My house does not tolerate these immoral preferences. Would you please henceforth smile equally, otherwise..." A warning to which the serving girl, Pénélope, responds, "I don't give a damn about your house. Albert promised to find me a different place closer to his store!" The waitress thus revealed her success at manipulating poor Albert with just one extra

⁹⁴ Scott Haine has contextualized this confusion in terms of people actually falling in love in the café. This seems to overemphasize the illusion of love at the expense of the illusion of sexual availability. Hollis Clayson's essential ambiguity of "was she or wasn't she," a prostitute appears much more appropriate to the situation in the *brasserie à femme*. Men did not go to the spaces of clandestine prostitution in order to play at love, but rather to play at sex. That said, Clayson couches the question in terms of male painter's attempt to render these women into controllable objects. As I have argued, the question was also a way for women themselves to manage male desire. See Clayson, *Painted Love*, 153; Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 191–192.

⁹⁵ Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 106.

⁹⁶ See the dossier on Pellegrino, Jacques in AP D2U8 163.

⁹⁷ "Les brasseries de femmes," *Parti National*, October 20, 1887.

⁹⁸ ["quelque apparence de jeunesse et de folie amoureuse qui donne le change au naïf et lui fait volontiers croire à un entraînement, là où il n'y a qu'un calcul."] Martineau, *La prostitution clandestine*, 78.

smile; he would do her favors in exchange for her implying that she would do him in turn.⁹⁹

Serving girls played upon illusion. They created the impression of their sexual availability in order to render men incapable of coherent thought. Although serving girls were hired in order to perpetuate the pleasures of a power dynamic predicated on male dominance, these women effectively turned those expectations to their advantage. Rather than seeing the café as a site wherein prostitutes responded to changes in male desire, as Alain Corbin has so influentially argued, we should see the interactions between serving girls and their customers as a complex give and take. These women gradually developed strategies – ones that effectively utilized new city spaces, such as the café – with which to assert their own small amount of control that required manipulating and encouraging the sexual desires that Corbin sees as transforming the entire business of prostitution. Perhaps, in other words, the business of prostitution shaped male desire to its own advantage. Insofar as the serving girl revealed men’s susceptibility to desire, they served as evidence for the more general criticisms of consumer culture, namely, that the reliance on desire as a motivation for consumption was dangerous to social order.¹⁰⁰ That men continued to flaunt the risk, enjoyed losing money in these establishments, and indulged in the fantasy, only goes to show the ultimate attraction of this new society that was emerging. The café was not a site of pleasure despite its dangers, but because of them;

⁹⁹ [“Si je ne m’abuse, vous avez souri une fois de plus au 2. Ma maison ne tolère pas ces préférences immorales. Veuillez dorénavant sourire également, sinon... / Pénélope, à part. -- J m’en moque bien de sa maison. Albert m’a promis de me trouver une autre place plus près de son magasin!”] Pierre Véron, *Paris s’amuse* (E. Dentu, 1862), 151–152.

¹⁰⁰ For Corbin’s argument, see Corbin, *Les filles de noce*, 275. Sima Godfrey also nicely summarizes the assertion and draws out the particular cause and affect Corbin describes: “sometime around the 1860s, changes in male patterns of desire and demand related to *embourgeoisement* brought about fundamental changes in the nature of prostitution, with the passage from state-regulated “maisons de tolérance” to seductive “maisons de rendez-vous” for discriminating taste.” See Sima Godfrey, “Alain Corbin: Making Sense of French History,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 2 (2002): 384.

women's conditional power was not an aberration, but an essential aspect of the experience.

Men Enjoying Men

Drinking establishments remained associated with vice, but entering an establishment did not challenge men's respectability because those associations actually reinforced normative gender hierarchies. The process by which serving girls managed to turn male desire to their advantage illustrates, however, the ways in which drinking establishments enabled some flexibility within hierarchies of gender, even though they did not countenance their complete inversion. A dominant discourse that associated drinking establishments with vice reinforced rather than challenged class and gender hierarchies because it emphasized men's access to workingwomen. At the same time, however, that system tolerated manipulation at the margins as women came to direct those interactions themselves. Men who sought sex with other men engaged a similar strategy by using their privilege as men to interact sexually in public. They did so by developing strategies of action that involved patronizing social institutions and openly using them as intended with the knowledge of always possibly being watched. However, their gender privilege failed to totally protect them; their inversion of sexual norms proved threatening enough for the police to intervene in their public spaces. Although those who interacted with serving girls participated in "vice," they maintained established hierarchies of gender and heterosexual relations; the pederasts' gender, on the other hand, could only partially gloss over their sexual threat. And yet, at the same time, the police still failed to provide clear evidence that they vigorously enforced their own

recommendations for raiding the spaces of sociability associated with men interested in sex with men. Ultimately, they have left historians with an irresolvable problem: while the police were more than willing to advertise their ability and willingness to observe pederasts, they leave less direct evidence that they wished to directly interfere with their activities by arresting them.

The association of drinking establishments with immorality was not limited to images of female prostitution; a less pronounced discourse related cafés to same-sex sexual activity as well. The *brasserie à femmes* was but one sign of a larger problem. According to Davray, the *brasseries à femmes* encouraged the development of “antiphysical love” and that *brasseries à hommes* were also found at the center of Parisian prostitution.¹⁰¹ In addition, Carlier once argued that pederasts shared a predilection for music, thus explaining their ever-presence at café-concerts and theatres.¹⁰² By the end of the century, the police recognized the complementary importance of public bathhouses as well. These institutions provided a completely interior space for men to seek sex with other men. The danger the use of public spaces for sexual encounters between men posed to society and its ultimate difference from that posed by *brasseries à femmes* was underlined by Dr. Cox-Algit who, in his near hysterical exposé on male prostitution, described the dangers a young serving boy faced in the big city: “Fresh and pink like a girl, he [X, a serving boy] had attracted by his grace, his elegance, his agreeable manner a number of clients,” an old man who, one day invited him for a carriage ride, took him to the bois de Boulogne, then to his finely

¹⁰¹ Davray, *L'amour à Paris*, 108–109.

¹⁰² Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 310–311. Perhaps this “predilection” is what drew two men caught *en flagrant delicto* outside the concert Besselièvre near the Champs-Élysées in 1883. At the very least, it does underscore that such liaisons were made at the café-concerts. Mariot, September 3, 1883, D2U6 65, Archives de Paris.

furnished apartment where he had sex with him, giving him a sexually transmitted disease.¹⁰³ Cox-Algit may have rendered the serving boy into a girl in order to explain the attraction, but while the serving girl was often portrayed as reveling in her profession, this story ends with the boy renouncing his “première faute.” The serving boy was not supposed to stand in a position of sexual enticement; his fall into the hands of a pederast could only therefore be portrayed as aberrant. While the serving girl represented a form of vice, she failed to truly threaten the social order because she fit into commentators’ existing schemas. The serving boy’s fall, on the other hand, could only be a perversion; he renounced his fall to vice in order to reenter the social order. If he had not, his continued enjoyment of same-sex sexual activity would have represented a true inversion, rather than a simple play of the system.

Men who sought sex with other men attempted to disguise their public activities by veiling them under the guise of acceptable forms of sociability. An anonymous 1874 letter, for instance, noted that the police had recently closed some cafés in the Latin Quarter, but then informed them of just how bad the problem was: “This part of Paris is nothing but a vast market for male prostitution.”¹⁰⁴ When walking the streets and entering spaces of sociability, one is accosted; “in all the cafés, all the men play cards, cry out, shout, pretend to laugh, to entertain themselves,” etc.¹⁰⁵ The card-play was key to these men’s disguise; the police follow-up to the letter notes that the card playing was

¹⁰³ [“Frais et rose comme une fille, il avait attiré par sa grâce, son élégance, ses manières agréables, nombre de clients.”] Dr. Cox-Algit, *Anthropophilie, ou Étude sur la prostitution masculine à notre époque* (Nantes: Morel, Libraire-Editeur, 1881), 9–10.

¹⁰⁴ [“Toute cette partie de Paris n'est qu'une vaste marché de prostitution masculine.”] Anonymous to Préfet de Police, July 6, 1874, 1, DA 230, doc. 370, APP.

¹⁰⁵ [“Dans tous les cafés, tous les hommes ceci jouent aux cartes, crient, vocifèrent, font semblent de rire, de s'amuser.”] *Ibid.*, 2.

intended to hide their search for sex.¹⁰⁶ In other words, these pederasts believed that so long as they presented an image of calmly participating in accepted urban pleasures, they would be let alone. In another instance, a letter accused a café near the Hôtel de Ville of hiding itself under the guise of being an ordinary *brasserie à femme*.¹⁰⁷ The less threatening vice served to veil the truly dangerous one. In both cases, the men relied on their privilege as men to freely utilize public space. In the first case, groups of men could socialize together in the hope that they would not attract comment. In the second, men could play at established sexual hierarchies. Men who sought sex with other men presented themselves as fellow travelers in the enjoyment of public space.¹⁰⁸

This strategy was only partially successful. In 1892 and 1893, police attention was repeatedly drawn to the café pretending to be a *brasserie à femme*. The police conducted surveillance over the course of several days during the first half of 1892 that apparently ended in July 1892 after an undercover visit failed to confirm reports of pederasty or any other infraction.¹⁰⁹ Clearly, the men who frequented the café knew how to hide in plain sight. In late October of 1893, however, the police received the denunciation that accused the café of hiding its true face under the guise of being a *brasserie à femme*. The police issued a number of reports the following November and one that immediately followed the October denunciation described in detail the activities

¹⁰⁶ A police report that followed up on the note backed up the claim that pederasts were playing cards in the cafés in order to hide their true trade of prostitution. Le Chef de la 1re Division [Illegible], “Note pour M. le Chef de la Police Municipale: Au sujet de pédérastes fréquentant les Cafés du quartier Latin”, July 10, 1874, DA 230, doc. 331, APP.

¹⁰⁷ Anonymous, October 26, 1893, BM2 15, APP.

¹⁰⁸ Of course, the fact that these two examples appear in the police archives shows how this strategy failed, a failure we will explore below. However, that there are not more examples of this sort could indicate that men who sought sex with other men were indeed relatively able to pursue sex in relative freedom.

¹⁰⁹ This failure underscores my argument in chapter three that the police took care to ensure that they followed their own regulations and did not exercise totally arbitrary authority on those suspected of engaging in illicit public sexuality. They required direct, first-hand evidence of a public offense against decency. Durantony, “Rapport: Débit quai de l’Hôtel de Ville, 16 (Bar mal famé)”, July 26, 1892, BM2 15, APP.

of those who frequented the café. The men “only indulge in some touching and provocation towards some young men of their sort, but with great reserve, always fearing being watched,” but their obscene songs, the presence of prostitutes and pimps, and a general understanding that the men in the café “had passions against nature” sufficed to recommend raiding the establishment the following Saturday.¹¹⁰ The police were willing to violate men’s right to sociability because they had sufficient evidence that they were violating expectations of sexual propriety, not because those violations had erupted into any sort of general disorder. However, a caveat is necessary. Although the following two reports advocate raids as well, I have found no documentation that one was actually carried out. The only arrests the records report occurred after two men who entered had a confrontation with the proprietor. Perhaps, then, the officers assigned to watch this particular venue showed more aggressiveness in their discourse than their superiors were willing to do in practice. It remains certainly possible, however, that the documentation of the actual raids were simply lost.

In any case, the police seemed willing to violate the assumed privileges men exercised if they sought sex with other men by rendering them into objects of the state’s gaze. The experience of a bathhouse located at 30 rue Penthièvre stands as a case in point. Following a denunciation, the bathhouse came to the police attention in 1889 and surveillance began. A report of that year describes a milieu of pederasts who knew one another and frequented the bathhouse regularly; the bathhouse “offered all the possible

¹¹⁰ [“ces individus se livrent seulement à quelques attouchements et à des provocations envers quelques jeunes gens de leur genre, mais avec beaucoup de réserve craignant toujours d’être surveillés.”] Chef du Service de Sûreté [Illegible], “Rapport. Au sujet du débit de vin sit, 16, quai de l’Hôtel de Ville”, November 3, 1893, 3, BM2 15, APP.

facilities for indulging their tastes against nature.”¹¹¹ When an apparently honest bather complained to an attendant that someone had touched his genitals, the boy responded that “he could not do anything, adding that he did not have the time to always be near the clients.”¹¹² The attendant’s blasé response indicates that he was quite aware of who his institution served; indeed, a report from the following year not only claimed that the clients “*tutoyaient* [are familiar with] one another and the *garçons* who knew them all,” but also that the attendants “were aware of the clients activities and promoted them.”¹¹³ The bathers came to the Penthievre apparently secure in their faith that they had found an interior – if not totally private – space in which to find sexual partners and camaraderie. They imagined that the commercial rights of the proprietor and their rights as men protected them. Their faith was soon to be broken, however, by a raid that definitely took place in 1891.¹¹⁴

Unfortunately, the police records provide little information regarding the precise motivation for the 1891 raid. Documents dating from later in the decade do provide some insight into their thought process at the end of the decade, however. As a private business open to the public, the acts taking place within the bathhouse remained vulnerable to the category of offense against public decency. The enclosed nature of the bathhouse did not protect the men from the accusation of acting in public. Thus, the police acted in moderate tension with itself. While the police observed men interested in sex with other men in exterior spaces, they did not arrest them if they lacked visual

¹¹¹ [“offre toutes les facilités possibles pour s’adonner à leurs goûts contre nature.”] “Rapport: Au sujet de l’établissement de bains situé rue de Penthievre, 30”, May 14, 1889, BM2 65, APP.

¹¹² [“il ne pouvait rien y faire, ajoutant n’avoir pas le temps d’être tjours auprès des clients.”] Ibid.

¹¹³ [“ils se tutoyaient et tutoyaient également les garçons qui les connaissassent tous...Les garçons sont bien au courant des agissements des clients et les favorisent.”] “Rapport: Au sujet de l’établissement de bains de vapeur situé, 30, rue de Penthievre”, November 11, 1890, BM2 16, APP.

¹¹⁴ Leslie Choquette, “Homosexuals in the City: Representations of Lesbian and Gay Space in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3/4 (2001): 158–159.

evidence of an actual public offense against decency, but they did arrest men for committing an offense in wholly interior spaces. In 1898 a police officer entered the bathhouse once again, and noted similar themes from eight years previously: that the clientele seemed familiar with one another and the attendants and “[t]hat it is morally certain that one indulges in this establishment in acts of pederasty,” a fact revealed by the demeanor of the clientele.¹¹⁵ However, during this particular visit, the officer claimed that “[a]s soon as an unknown person enters into the *salles de débit*, all those found there already quiet themselves, the laughs and jokes stop, and the stranger is slowly stared at.”¹¹⁶ In the end, he argued that “a raid would have no result, because all the parts having access to the communication corridors are empty and before one could arrive in the steam rooms one would have been signaled by people who are constantly on the lookout.”¹¹⁷ Because the police would not be able to catch them in the act, there was no use conducting a raid; the men were protected by virtue of their actions, rather than their gender.

Perhaps the officer who conducted the 1898 surveillance was so obviously not interested in sex that he scared off all the clients in his search for evidence that would justify a raid. Two years later, another police officer entered and found more than enough evidence to justify a raid of the bathhouse. On August 1, 1900, the officer filed a detailed report narrating his experience in the bathhouse. He apparently gave no impression of disinterest, as he almost immediately found himself under the eyes of two

¹¹⁵ [“Il est moralement certain qu’on se livre dans cet établissement à des actes de pédérastie.”] “Rapport”, December 18, 1898, 3, BM2 65, APP.

¹¹⁶ [“Lorsqu’un inconnu entre dans les salles de débit, tous ceux qui s’y trouvent déjà se taisent, les rires et les plaisanteries cessent, et l’étranger est longuement dévisagé.”] Ibid.

¹¹⁷ [“une descente de police ne pourrait donner aucun résultat, car toutes les portes ayant accès aux couloirs de communication sont vitrées, et avant que l’on n’ait pu arriver dans les salles de vapeur, on aurait été signalé par des personnes qui sont constamment aux aguets.”] Ibid., 3–4.

of the clients. The first, “around 35 years old, very well built, brown hair, appearing to belong to the elegant world,” presented himself to the undercover officer, “completely naked, he planted himself before me and taking in his hands his penis which was erect, he stayed several seconds before me, then letting out a long sigh (still staring at me)...”¹¹⁸ One wonders how the officer knew that the completely naked, vigorously masturbating man came from the “elegant world,” but the officer had already moved into the *salle des douches* where a young man beckoned him to follow “by smacking his lips as if he were giving a kiss.”¹¹⁹ The officer closed by noting that the clientele of the establishment appear to come from the “well-to-do class,” which perhaps explains why the following police reports evince an unwillingness to conduct a raid of the establishment.¹²⁰ On August 17, the Chief of the Sûreté drafted a report to the Prefect of Police that noted that a past raid – he does not provide a date – led to the arrest of seven pederasts, but that in 1898 they decided against holding another one, probably for the reasons enumerated in the report of that year.¹²¹ However, following this most recent report he requested permission to hold a raid, which in the end was not granted because a follow-up investigation did not confirm the bathhouse as a locale of pederasty.¹²²

The documents are incomplete and it is difficult to see when a raid actually occurred. We are left, however, with an impression of the relative care the police took when it came to spaces in which men interacted with other men. While the police were perfectly willing, and even desirous, of watching, they remained cautious when the

¹¹⁸ [“ un individu âgé d’environ 35 ans, fortement musclé, brun, paraissant appartenir au monde élégant. . . Complètement nu, il se plante devant moi et tenant dans une de ses mains sa verge qui était en erection, il resta quelques secondes devant moi puis poussant un fort soupir (toujours me fixant)...”] Moity, “Rapport”, August 1, 1900, 2–3, BM2 65, APP.

¹¹⁹ [“en faisant claquer ses lèvres comme s’il donnait un baiser.”] Ibid., 3.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹²¹ “Rapport: Au sujet d’un établissement de bains, Rue de Penthièvre”, August 17, 1900, BM2 65, APP.

¹²² “Rapport”, August 31, 1900, BM2 16, APP.

question of actually physically intervening arose. Certainly, they most likely wished to avoid the publicity of a raid of well-to-do young men engaging in acts against nature in public.¹²³ The police revealed, in the end, the fraught nature of managing spaces of sociability. Men were assumed to have the right to access public space; even when they violated certain expectations of propriety, as they did in the *brasseries à femmes*, they were mostly left alone. Problems arose, however, when they overtly violated hierarchies of gender and sexuality. Such violations clearly required careful monitoring, but even such acts only occasionally brought down the police. Men who sought sex with other men used their gender to carve out a space for themselves in public that was, granted, occasionally violated. But considering the strident discourse of the day, such reticence on the part of the police must have been considered a small victory amongst those who sought out same-sex sexual pleasure in nineteenth-century Paris.

Losing Oneself in the Dance and Music Halls

Serving girls may have participated in the sexual play of the café, but they remained at the mercy of the generosity of their clients. Men who sought sex with other men found pleasure together, but only did so by carving out all-male spaces that aped cultural expectations. Thus, the pleasures of *brasseries à femmes*, cafés, and other spaces of sociability relied on bending gender expectations, but ultimately reinforced men's dominance of urban space. Dance and music halls comprised something different. These spaces facilitated pleasures that depended on losing the grounding that held these other entertainments together. I treat both music halls and dance halls together – focusing especially on the *Folies-Bergère* (often classified as a large café-concert rather than a

¹²³ The 1891 raid became a scandal. See Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines À Paris*, 96.

music hall, which underlines the thin line between the two) and the *Bal de l'Opéra* – because their common emphasis on public interaction, despite the show, make them two examples of the same type of interaction.¹²⁴ The height of the public dance had arguably already passed by the middle of the century, but it remained popular until the late nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the music hall would reach its peak by the turn of the century before it was overtaken in popularity by the cinema.¹²⁵ Both institutions remained centers of Parisian culture. The draw was rarely the act of dancing or of watching the show. Rather, at the most overt level these institutions enabled interaction between high-class men and women of the *demimonde*. Even more significantly, they enabled members of the middle and high classes to imagine themselves as members of the *demimonde* themselves.

Public dances were not always associated with vice, but by the Second Empire the connection had become increasingly common.¹²⁶ In 1861, for instance, a short treatise on public dancing asked “What harm would there be if these *bals publics*, instead of being reputed as the rendezvous of bad company, became schools of decency and centers of respectable company?”¹²⁷ Such a transformation seemed impossible. An 1860 etiquette guide, for instance, declared that while “simply costumed dances, so long as the costumes are not contrary to decency,” could be attended by proper Christian women, the “masked

¹²⁴ Gasnault, *Guinguettes et lorettes*, 2.

¹²⁵ Gasnault argues that the “apogee” of the public dance was during the second half of the July Monarchy. *Ibid.*, 115.

¹²⁶ For a discussion of the beginning of this shift see *Ibid.*, 233–243.

¹²⁷ [“Quel dommage y aurait-il à ce que les bals publics, au lieu d'être réputés des rendez-vous de mauvaise compagnie, devinssent des écoles de bienséance et des centres de relations avouables?...”] Antonio Watrison, *Paris qui danse: Études, types et moeurs: Bal des Folies-Robert (boulevard Rochechouart) contenant les mémoires de Gilles Robert* (Paris, 1861), 7.

balls given in public places, in *salles de spectacle*, in *concerts*” remained forbidden.¹²⁸ Many of those writing in the Second Empire and early Third Republic imagined *bals publics* as dens of iniquity whose entertainments only existed as a cover for prostitution and degeneracy. Even someone such as Alfred Delvau, who at times seemed sympathetic to developing forms of urban entertainment, denounced the *bal public* for destroying the modest *grisette*, those Parisian shop girls who would innocently flirt with Parisian men: “The *grisette* was a girl who was adorable and fresh, spiritual and modest.”¹²⁹ With the rise of the *bal public*, however, men’s taste began to change, forcing the *grisette* to live as a common prostitute, falling under the sway of a pimp.¹³⁰ Others were more brutal in their denunciation. Carlier believed that young prostitutes often entered the profession at the dances at the *bals de barrières* – institutions on the outskirts of Paris – and, after having her first lover there, would then move into the interior of Paris.¹³¹ *Bals publics*, Carlier declared, “instead of being a space of distraction, a salutary exercise for the health, a relaxation from life’s preoccupations, these dances are the school of the corruption of youth, bazaars of prostitutes, a nursery for pimps.”¹³² Rejecting all the justifications for the pleasures of Paris, Carlier argued that these establishments were blights on society, corrupting its youth when it was most vulnerable. The police often agreed: in 1883, they declared, for instance, that the Bal Bruckner attracted the worst

¹²⁸ [“Les bals simplement costumé, lorsque les costumes ne sont pas contraires à la décence... Les bals masqués qui se donnent dans des lieux publics, dans des salles de spectacle, de concerts.”] *Aux mères, à leurs filles et aux jeunes femmes du monde. Appréciations des danses et des bals d’aujourd’hui au point de vue moral et chrétien.*, 4.

¹²⁹ [“La grisette était une fille adorable et fraîche, spirituelle et modeste.”] Delvau, *Les Plaisirs De Paris*, 263.

¹³⁰ Alfred Delvau, *Grandeur et décadence des grisettes* (Paris: A. Desloges, 1848), 38–39, 82–91.

¹³¹ Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 23.

¹³² [“Au lieu d’être une distraction, un exercice salutaire à la santé, un délassement des préoccupations de la vie, ces bals sont des écoles de corruption de la jeunesse, des bazars de prostituées, une pépinière pour les proxénètes.”] *Ibid.*, 269.

people in the neighborhood.¹³³ Ordinary people too sometimes shared this assessment: one wrote in 1893 that the Bal Wagram was infested with prostitutes infected with venereal disease.¹³⁴ The truth lay, as it so often did, between the two extremes. The public dances – and the music halls that provided similar entertainments – were places of both distraction and illicit sexuality. The former did not simply act as a cover for the latter; these institutions became popular because of the two possibilities’ mutual interdependence.

This connection emerged especially clearly in the masked balls of Paris and in particular that of the Bal de l’Opéra. Several other historians have discussed the importance of the Opera Ball as a space for interaction between proper gentlemen and courtesans or prostitutes. Charles Bernheimer, for instance, has described it as a “carnival event, where classes and sexes mixed in a mad transgressive medley, [it] was notorious as a stage for the alluring exhibition of bodies actually or potentially for sale (uncertainty was part of the intrigue).”¹³⁵ Similarly, Linda Nochlin, in her discussion of Manet’s depiction of the Opera Ball (figure 4.1), has argued that “the women, in their provocative anonymity, are the point of the picture—or rather, the point is in some sense the nascent act of physical intimacy growing up everywhere among the hidden but patently attractive women and the (theoretically) identifiable men of the world who surround them.”¹³⁶ Both scholars have emphasized the masked ball as a space where gentlemen came to sexually interact with women of other classes, just as those class

¹³³ “Rapport: Au sujet du Bal Bruckner sis Rue Cambronne, 4”, March 17, 1883, DA 138, Archives de la préfecture de police de Paris.

¹³⁴ L. Trouin to Directeur du Bureau des Moeurs, May 4, 1893, BM2 32, APP.

¹³⁵ Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 40.

¹³⁶ Linda Nochlin, “A Thoroughly Modern Masked Ball,” *Art History* 6 (1983): 96.

identifications were ultimately obscured by the mask.¹³⁷ The pleasures of the Opera Ball lay, in these readings, in heterosexual enticement through the piecemeal revelation of women's identities.¹³⁸



Figure 4.1: Edouard Manet, *Bal masqué à l'Opéra* (1873). Oil on Canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (From Wikimedia Commons http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edouard_Manet_093.jpg)

Women's masking, however, could not alone differentiate this space from that of, say, the Folies-Bergère, since women's availability for sex was always somewhat in

¹³⁷ It is important to remember that masked balls were forbidden to virtuous ladies. See *Aux mères, à leurs filles et aux jeunes femmes du monde. Appréciations des danses et des bals d'aujourd'hui au point de vue moral et chrétien.*, 111–114.

¹³⁸ The always present potential – but not guarantee – of sex makes these interactions similar in some ways to those of the *brasseries à femmes*. Those women were always assumed to be low-class, common prostitutes, however, while the women at the Opera Ball could also be high class courtesans.

doubt in public spaces insofar as their entry into spaces of sociability could be interpreted as the violation of norms of propriety. The Opera Ball deserves attention as a space where heterosexual men could confront, as well, stark examples of gender transgression.¹³⁹ It served as a space of gender-masking and sexual play as well as class disguise and transgression. Thus, while Nochlin is correct to point out that Manet's depiction featured no masked "man," she does not address the possibility that at least one of the masked "women" was not a woman at all. Perhaps one of the "women" in Manet's painting was in fact a man. For instance, the veiled woman in the foreground, whose face we cannot distinguish, leans in to talk to another masked lady even as an interested suitor appraises her charms. Is that the excitement the man sought? Not the titillation of deciding whether a particular female body was for sale or not, but whether a particular female body was, in fact, a female body? Perhaps the conscious turn of her head away from the man was a way of ensuring his look always hit from the side, continuing the façade. Interestingly, drawing one's eyes down the length of the three figures reveals them to all bleed into one another, the man's legs lost amidst the two women's dominos. The three, one woman, one man, one probable woman, perhaps man, becoming one mixed gender figure at the Opera Ball, the *femme-homme* come to life.

This reading of Manet's painting rests on very real associations of gender indeterminacy with the crowds of the Opera Ball. On December 28, 1854, for instance, a young man was "accosted by a woman who invited [him] to dance."¹⁴⁰ She insisted that

¹³⁹ Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 360–361.

¹⁴⁰ Ordinarily, one would doubt this type of denunciation as an attempt to damage an acquaintance. However, the fact that the writer signed his name and address leaves me more willing to believe the story contained, at least to an extent, some truth. It is possible that the cross-dressed man believed that it was clear to the writer what he was. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing for sure. ["été occosté par une femme qui m'a invite a [sic] danser."] O. Doulay to Préfet de Police, December 29, 1854, DA 230, doc. 252, APP.

they leave, and that he sleep at her place. “Having arrived at her/his domicile,” he later wrote to the police, “I discovered that this woman was nothing other than one of those men who the police seek so actively.”¹⁴¹ The newly revealed man attempted to force the writer to stay with him, but he managed to escape. This particular young man, seeking the more overt sexual titillation of a public liaison, found himself embroiled in another type entirely. Indeed, the sexual excitement lay with the deceiver who risked his safety and reputation in order to trick young men into having sex with him. Perhaps, indeed, the dancer knew that the likelihood of consummating such a relationship was not high – though probably far from impossible – but that the pleasure in the deception outweighed both the risk and the lack of sexual consummation. Moreover, the writer’s willingness to sign his name and address attests to two convictions: first, that he would be believed, and second, that there was no shame in admitting falling for the deception. That lack of shame betokens a general awareness of the possibility of these encounters. Perhaps it is not too much to also suggest that for some, they stood as the draw.

At least one commentator took the ability of pederasts to pass themselves off as women in the masked ball very seriously. In his *Paris-vivant*, Ali Coffignon related how he came to realize the skill with which pederasts could hide themselves as women at the Bal de l’Opéra. Seeing a striking women enter the hall, Coffignon approached a *fonctionnaire* whom he noticed also looking at the woman, and asked who she was.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Note that it is difficult to determine when exactly the writer fully begins referring to the cross-dresser as a man. In English the “son domicile” could be rendered as either “his” or “her.” He does switch from referring to the dancer as “elle” to “il” once she/he is revealed as a biological male. [“arrive [sic] a son domicile rue Poissonnière No 31 au 5er étage j’ai decouvert que cette femme n’était autre chose que un de ces homes que la police recherche si activement.”] Ibid.

¹⁴² Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 338–339.

The *fonctionnaire* responded by inviting him to visit his office the next afternoon, where he showed Coffignon a photograph that:

represented a young woman leaning her elbows on a window, her head covered by a mantilla [a silk scarf] and resting on her nervous and sharpened hands, her eyebrows well-arched, her nose fine and her lips smiling in order to allow us to see her superbly aligned teeth.¹⁴³

Coffignon maintained his evident appreciation of the woman's beauty, even though he already knew her to not be as she appeared when he wrote his account. The ambivalence of his attraction perhaps explains his description of her hands as nervous, the one thing that possibly gives the subject of the photograph away as ultimately fake. In any case, Coffignon was then given another photograph by "the future prefect" and was "struck" by the resemblance: "Brother and sister?" he asked. "I learned then that the young women who attracted with so much coquetterie the attention of all the corridors of the Opéra was nothing other than a celebrity of pederasty," he explained and then concluded that "The Opéra, during the nights of the masked balls, is perhaps the only area where pederasty holds court openly for the initiated, invisible for everyone else."¹⁴⁴ The Opera Ball served as a unique space where the play was not only that of money and sex, but of gender and sex as well. It is interesting that Coffignon's story does not reveal much repugnance at his own deception, but rather mild amusement, even as he laments that these men continued to practice their trade at the Opera. His attraction to the woman remains, even as he stood surprised by his inability to tell the difference between man and

¹⁴³ ["La photographie représentait une jeune femme accoudée à une fenêtre, la tête couverte d'une mantille et appuyée sur des mains nerveuses et effilées, les sourcils bien arqués, le nez fin et les lèvres souriant pour laisser voir des dents superbement alignées."] Ibid., 340.

¹⁴⁴ ["Le frère et la soeur?... J'appris alors que la jeune femme qui attirait avec tant de coquetterie l'attention dans les couloirs de l'Opéra n'était autre chose qu'une célébrité de la pédérastie... L'Opéra, pendant les nuits de bals masqués, est peut-être le seul endroit où la pédérastie tient ses assises, ouvertement pour les initiés, invisiblement pour tous les autres invidus."] Ibid., 341.

woman. The gender play at the Opera was less threatening than it was part of the show.¹⁴⁵

The Opera may have been somewhat of a special case, but other dancehalls were the also scenes of plays of gender and sexuality. In the course of their surveillance of the *bals publics*, the police often noted if any dancers had dressed in the clothes of the opposite sex, and if so, how many. Although most cases I have found revolve around men dressing as women, one 1880 report on the bal de la Reine Blanche did note “some women wearing masculine costume.”¹⁴⁶ The Salle Valentino – directed by a supposed pederast – appeared relatively frequently during the late Second Republic and early Second Empire.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the police received a denunciation in 1852 claiming that he met one of “the men exciting young men to the most horrible debauchery and attracting them to their homes in order to corrupt them” at the Valentino.¹⁴⁸ They also arrested several men whose “looks [*allures*] indicated that they were pederasts” at the Valentino in 1876.¹⁴⁹ The police also noted that pederasts haunted the bal Favié and the bal de la porte Saint Martin during the Second Empire.¹⁵⁰ This list complement’s that found in Régis Revenin’s study of Third Republic establishments. It highlights the fact that although the bal de l’Opéra provides the most interesting case, men who sought sex with

¹⁴⁵ I make this argument even though I am aware that most overt commentary on cross-dressing from the period was anything but positive. A defender of the Cafés-Concert, for instance, declared performances done *en travestie* as “fatally ugly.” Menetiere, *Les Binettes du café-concert*, 41–42.

¹⁴⁶ Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance exercée au bal de la Reine Blanche”, February 11, 1880, DA 138, doc 53, APP.

¹⁴⁷ “Pédés”, n.d., 113, BB 4, APP.

¹⁴⁸ [“les hommes excitant les jeunes gens à la débauche la plus horrible et les attirant chez eux pour les corrompre.”] Anonymous to Préfet de Police, February 28, 1852, DA 230, doc. 220, APP.

¹⁴⁹ [“les allures indiquaient qu’ils étaient des pédérasts”] Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Au sujet des pédérastes qui fréquentent le bal Valentino”, March 24, 1876.

¹⁵⁰ “Pédés,” 2–3; Le Chef de la 1re Division [Illegible], “Note pour M. le Chef de la Police Municipale: Sodomite à surveiller”, 1858, DA 230, doc. 232, APP.

other men could be seen and sought out throughout the *bals publics* of the second half of the nineteenth-century.¹⁵¹ And people continued to go to these sites despite that fact.

One of the most popular venues for these sorts of entertainments was the Folies-Bergère. The institution opened in 1869 and in the beginning served “a ‘true public’ of husbands and wives, provincials and Parisians from skilled worker to aristocrat.”¹⁵²

Although the music hall clientele would become more exclusive after 1900, during the nineteenth-century spaces such as the Folies-Bergère were one of the few in which a mixed crowd interacted with the public sexual culture.¹⁵³ A series of police reports from the 1870s reveal the culture of the establishment at its inception.¹⁵⁴ The Folies-Bèrgere was a music hall that presented a multitude of spectacles all at once, wonderfully evoked by Rearick and impossible to adequately paraphrase:

Under an ochre and gold ceiling of ruffled and tasseled fabric, amid allegorical statuary and rattan divans, customers could watch a trapeze duo, ballet dances, a juggler, a snake charmer, wrestlers, clowns, and such novelty acts as a kangaroo boxing a man...or an array of other spectators throughout the well-lighted hall. No matter where one sat or stood, one's ears were filled with a medley of waltzes and polkas and finale chords blaring over the cries of program hawkers and shoe shiners, audience chatter and applause. Everywhere the air was laden with perfume scents and the acrid odors of cigar smoke, beer, and dusty rugs. The miscellany of sensations mixed together as promiscuously as the prostitutes, *mondaines*, and their admirers in the famous *promenoir* (gallery-lounge) with its elegant bar that Manet's painting has immortalized.¹⁵⁵

The experience almost overwhelmed the visitor. At each new turn lay a different sight and sound to be experienced. A person entered and was drawn, almost torn, in multiple directions. The experience centered not on what occurred on stage, but on the various

¹⁵¹ Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines À Paris*, 58–60.

¹⁵² Charles Rearick, *Pleasures of the Belle Époque: Entertainment and Festivity in Turn-of-the-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 84.

¹⁵³ The working poor, of course, remained largely excluded. *Ibid.*, 94–95.

¹⁵⁴ A dossier on the Folies-Bergère can be viewed in APP BM2 7.

¹⁵⁵ Rearick, *Pleasures of the Belle Époque*, 84.

interactions within the “audience,” which the police sometimes described as too large for the space.¹⁵⁶ Those who paid attention to the stage had missed the point. As Forestier exclaimed in Maupassant’s *Bel-Ami*: “Take a look at the orchestra: nothing but solid citizens with their wives and children, well-meaning nitwits who’ve come to watch the show.”¹⁵⁷ The show was only one part of the overall experience, which revolved, in the end, around the intermingling of people who otherwise would not have encountered one another.

At the center of such interactions stood the prostitutes who, alongside the pederasts who frequented the establishment, made the Folies-Bergère into a particularly important space of Parisian pleasure.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the police recognized that the director of the Folies-Bergère *wanted* the prostitutes there; in 1878, seeing many of his regular *filles de joie* leaving the establishment for elsewhere, he gave out free entries in order to draw them back – a successful bid, according to the police. The importance of people versed in public sexuality at the Folies-Bergère led some to declare the space a brothel or “meat market,” where women could solicit as they would on the street, but the experience was something far more than simple prostitution.¹⁵⁹ Rather, the Folies-Bergère was a place in

¹⁵⁶ As one 1876 report noted, “the program of the representation is insignificant [Le programme de la représentation est insignifiant.]” Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance exercée aux Folies-Bergère”, September 16, 1877, BM2 7, APP. See also Rearick, *Pleasures of the Belle Époque*, 153. One 1876 report claimed that it was so crowded in the Folies Bergère that “circulation was almost impossible on the ground floor.” See Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance aux Folies-Bergère”, October 29, 1876, BM2 7, APP.

¹⁵⁷ Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-ami* (Paris: Victor-Havard, 1885), 17. Translation is from Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-Ami*, trans. Margaret Mauldon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

¹⁵⁸ Three reports from the 1870s mention both prostitutes and pederasts at the Folies-Bergère. Le Chef de la Ire Division [Illegible], “Note pour M. le Chef de la Police Municipale: Au sujet du théâtre des Folies-Bergère”, February 24, 1873, BM2 7, APP; Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance aux Folies-Bergère”, November 11, 1873, BM2 7, APP; Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance exercée aux Folies-Bergère.”

¹⁵⁹ An 1876 police report claimed that the regulars called the Folies Bergère a “bordel,” while Charles Virmaître called it a “*halle à la viande*.” Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance aux Folies-Bergère”; Charles Virmaître, *Trottoirs et lupanars* (Paris: Libraire Jouffroy, 1897). Lastly, an 1875 police

which everyone could freely express his or her sexuality.¹⁶⁰ The establishment even provided a divan with room for forty people, where men and women would “embrace in the most obscene manner.”¹⁶¹ In 1876, the police noted a seated man who drew a woman onto his knees and proceeded to kiss and caress her in full view of several spectators.¹⁶² The type of activity normally disdained or refused by proper gentleman was not only freely exercised at the Folies-Bergère, but also appreciated by other pleasure seekers. In addition, not only could men indulge in same-sex sexual flirtation at the Folies-Bergère, but so could women: another police report from the same period noted the site of two drunken prostitutes embracing and “flaunting with the greatest cynicism their passions against nature.”¹⁶³ Same sex-sexuality mingled with heterosexual desire to form a *mélange* of pleasure that exceeded the boundaries of life outside the establishment. Those who wished to appreciate the full implications of public pleasure in nineteenth-century Paris came to the Folies-Bergère. And they did so, not to escape the implication of public sex that surrounded life on the street and in cafés, but to immerse themselves even more deeply within it. These were no accidental participants, but were rather those who saw the potential for pleasure in modern life and reveled in it.

report argued that most of the women who go to the Folies Bergère “absolutely solicit as if they were on the street.” See Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance exercée au Folies Bergères”, October 28, 1875, BM2 7, APP.

¹⁶⁰ To an extent at least. There were instances of men crossing an invisible line in their interactions with the women of the establishment leading to their eviction or even trouble with the police. See Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance aux Folies-Bergère”, October 4, 1877, BM2 7, APP; “Procès Verbal. Outrage public à la pudeur. Folies Bergère.”, September 9, 1878, BM2 7, APP; Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport. Surveillance exercée aux Folies-Bergère”, September 14, 1878, BM2 07, APP.

¹⁶¹ Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance exercée aux Folies-Bergère.”

¹⁶² Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance exercée aux Folies-Bergères”, November 4, 1876, BM2 7, APP.

¹⁶³ [“affichant ainsi avec le plus grand cynisme leurs passions hors nature.”] Le Chef du Service [Illegible], “Rapport: Surveillance aux Folies-Bergère”, November 8, 1876, BM2 7, APP.

Conclusion

These cafés, music halls, dance halls, and bars were not the only sites where men and occasionally women could seek out a culture of public sex in nineteenth-century Paris, but they were the most prominent.¹⁶⁴ The spaces may have been different, but the goal was the same: to express and experience sexual pleasure in public alongside one's compatriots and neighbors. Ironically, although the consummation of such activity often took place through obfuscation, the fact that one really desired was sex rather than, say, a beer or a show, was not so hidden. In other words, the serving girls who plied their bodies as well as drinks may have used their employment as a cover for sexual solicitation, but that cover was a thin veil. All of this is to say that public sex did cause anxiety amongst experts and certain segments of the population, but it also served as a source of the pleasures of the city for a different part of the citizenry. The complaints members of the middle-classes sent to the police, then, were only one aspect of the story. Many otherwise upstanding Parisians may have complained to their neighbors in order to present a good face, but would never have written to the police for fear of ruining their nightly fun. A public sexual culture of nineteenth-century Paris was populated not only by prostitutes and pederasts, but also by supposedly "ordinary" Parisians.

Ultimately, the volume of discourse that surrounded these phenomena underscores their importance to larger discussions of consumer culture. The concern over women in the cafés was one way to articulate anxieties regarding women's role in

¹⁶⁴ Boutiques, creameries, and gambling houses were all occasionally mentioned as sites of debauchery or pleasure, depending on your point of view. On boutiques see Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d'une question sociale*, 214; Coffignon, *Paris-vivant: La corruption à Paris*, 86. For an 1876 case of a gloveshop accused of actually being a *maison de passe* see the dossier on Elise Bruyere and Anna Philibert Montré in AP D2U6 0379. For an example of a creamerie Le Chef du Service [Illegible], "Rapport: Au sujet du passage Raguinot, 8", April 19, 1880, BM2 14, APP. Finally, a mention of gambling houses occurs in Taxil, *La prostitution contemporaine: Étude d'une question sociale*, 214.

modern consumer culture. While people like Emile Zola described the effects of the department store on women's desires in *Au bonheur des dames*, commentators on prostitution described the dangerous implications of women's incitement of male desire within the café. To speak of illicit public sexuality became, then, a way of speaking of larger trends in nineteenth-century urban culture. Anxieties about sexual deviancy in these terms were actually anxieties about consumption. But the reverse is also true. People's enjoyment of consumer culture was also a screen to justify their enjoyment of public sex. Some Parisians, in other words, saw the full potential of urban modernization, and rather than worrying about it, decided to enjoy it. Indeed, they did so through tactile modes of experience that exceeded the controlled sensory pleasures supposedly available to everyone. Late nineteenth-century Paris was not just a spectacle to be consumed by the eye. It was also a spectacle that was physically imbibed.

Chapter 5

Creating Spaces of Pleasure: Public Urinals and Same-Sex Sexual Activity¹

Introduction

On December 6, 1876, police arrested Count Eugène de Germiny for committing a public offense against decency in one of Paris's public urinals. Officers caught Germiny, a right wing and Catholic member of the municipal council of Paris, soliciting sex from a young working-class man, Edmond-Pierre Chouard. While the popular press created a scandal out of Germiny's misadventure, portraying male same-sex desire as "a vice of the aristocracy, which was intent upon the corruption of youths from the working classes," it largely ignored the particular public facilities in which it took place.²

Germiny himself, however, linked his predicament directly to the urinals by arguing that his duties to the municipal council led him to "conduct a sort of inquiry in regards to the activities of certain habitués of these areas, of which the indecency revolts the residents of the neighborhood."³ In other words, he claimed he was slumming, attempting to observe first-hand the depraved social conditions of the lower classes in order to

¹ A version of this chapter was published as Andrew Ross, "Dirty Desire: The Uses and Misuses of Public Urinals in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 53 (2009): 62-88. Versions of this chapter were also presented at the New Frontiers in Graduate History Conference at York University, Toronto, ON in February 2008 and at "Penser le charnel," Journée d'étude, Paris, France in June 2009.

² William A Peniston, "A Public Offense Against Decency: The Trial of the Count of Germiny and the 'Moral Order' of the Third Republic," *Disorder in the Court: Trials and Sexual Conflict at the Turn of the Century* (1999): 15. See also Michael L. Wilson, "Drames d'amour des pédérastes: Male Same-Sex Sexuality in Belle Epoque Print Culture," *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3/4 (2001): 193-194.

³ William A Peniston, *Pederasts and Others: Urban Culture and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth Century Paris* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004), 154.

eventually ameliorate them.⁴ Germiny's defense, that he entered the urinal as a disinterested observer only gained credibility insofar as he touched on a shared awareness of a continuing social problem at Paris's public urinals.⁵ The public urinals of nineteenth-century Paris posed a public problem.

As the nineteenth-century wore on, these public urinals became an ubiquitous Parisian site. The July Monarchy constructed several hundred facilities, while thousands more were built during the Second Empire and early Third Republic. These facilities of public hygiene served an important role in the emergence of a modern city. The emergence of public urinals under the aegis of an all-encompassing urban transformation directed towards the development of modern capitalism was not coincidental. As Barbey d'Aurevilly once exclaimed, "factories and latrines, here is what the civilization of the nineteenth century arrogantly plants on its rivers!"⁶ On the one hand, the manufacture of goods that evoke industrialization; on the other hand, facilities designed to safeguard public health while perpetuating emerging norms of bodily hygiene and display. Public urinals, put simply, contributed to the management of the city by safeguarding the health and safety of the populace while encouraging hygienic social practices amongst the citizenry.

⁴ On slumming see Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁵ It is clear that this excuse was seen as broadly plausible. Another public official arrested earlier the same year in a public urinal, claimed that he entered the urinals because he gave in to a "unhealthy curiosity." This official, then, also premised his defense on the common knowledge that illicit acts were taking place in Paris's public urinals. See "Notes tenues par le Greffier soussigné, en exécution des Articles 155 et 189 du Code d'Instruction criminelle. Pour M. le Procureur de la République Contre Duval Henri Joseph, 47 ans, Propriétaire et Maire de la Commune de Chanteloup", June 15, 1876, D2U6 37, AP.

⁶ ["Des usines et des latrines, voilà ce que la civilisation du xix^e siècle plante orgueilleusement sur les fleuves!"] Barbey d'Aurevilly, "Troisième memorandum," in *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 12 (Paris: Bemouard, 1927), 36.

During the nineteenth century, and especially in the wake of the cholera outbreak of 1832, these new norms took on a greater importance to public officials and commentators. Personal behavior and activity became a public concern. As commentators debated whether and to what extent the state had the prerogative and duty to interfere in the private lives of its subjects and citizens in the name of social welfare, authorities began enunciating measures intended to encourage a certain level of bodily hygiene in public.⁷ Although scholars have rightly emphasized official interventions into the “insalubrious” living conditions and dwellings of the working classes, it is important to emphasize the importance of public space and behavior to the safety and health of modern urban life. Thus, the administration began drawing plans for a new sewer system, greater and better lighting, and numerous public fountains, while also banning public urination and building public urinals.

Barbey’s factories enabled the emergence of class difference and attempts by elites to discipline workers into a reliable labor force. His latrines contributed to the process of social discipline outside the factories. By “social discipline,” I mean to imply the wide range of discourses, practices and institutions that emerged and grew through the course of the nineteenth century and intervened in the social life of the city so to mold individual citizens into a proper or “docile,” in the words of Michel Foucault, relationship with existing nodes of power.⁸ The process of social discipline entailed the creation of normative expectations while effacing their artificiality. Norbert Elias has argued that the

⁷ David S Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 173; Andrew Robert Aisenberg, *Contagion: Disease, Government, and the “Social Question” in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), chap. 2; Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 113–116.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 135–140.

exigencies of developing state power demanded new forms of self-control amongst elites that eventually developed into a fully developed mode of being; by the eighteenth-century, modern manners were no longer consciously undertaken, but rather an unconscious *habitus*, at least amongst a certain segment of the population. These manners became more than a way of acting; in the end, they also became a way of being.⁹ Foucault, meanwhile, has argued that nineteenth-century experts' supposedly objective exploration of scientific, moral, and social truth actually served to construct "truths" that confirmed already existing relationships of power.¹⁰ The assertion that, for instance, heterosexual, conjugal love constituted a healthy social and medical norm justified the exclusion of other possible sexual practices from the social world. The public urinal facilitated the exercise of new bodily norms, but confounded the imposition of social typologies of male same-sex sexuality by enabling men who sought sex with other men to freely mingle with men who sought to relieve themselves.¹¹ Urinals, like the streets, dancehalls, and cafés discussed above, brought together both ordinary people and men who sought sex with other men. Unlike those spaces, however, the urinal was not built for pleasure of any kind. While Paris's sites of proper pleasure tolerated to an extent the mixing of licit and illicit activity, experts could not do so with the coming together of necessary hygiene and illicit pleasure in the urinals. The appropriation of urinals did not represent a play of the system, but rather its inversion and breaking. It thus became absolutely necessary to sort out the confusion. The mixing of the normal and the

⁹ See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978).

¹⁰ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹¹ On "the bathroom...as a space of 'discipline,'" see Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner, "Introduction: The Private Life of Public Conveniences," in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*, ed. Olga Gershenson and Penner, Barbara (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 9.

pathological and of authority and criminality put the established “order of things” to the test, but the sexologists and legal commentators who claimed to have the power to distinguish between the normal and the pathological users of the facilities ultimately could not escape their own contradictions. They were unable to tell the difference between the two groups of men who entered the urinals. The appropriation of public urinals by men seeking sex with other men shows that the process of social discipline was not only always in process, but was also always incomplete.

The development of the public urinal needs to be placed in the context of a society developing ways of classifying and ordering itself in the face of a massive restructuring of the social environment, but also failing to wholly accomplish the task. In describing how Paris became divided between the foul poor and the fragrant rich, Alain Corbin has discussed how “a person’s atmosphere and his behavior toward smells revealed his individuality” and how “[t]he subtle interplay of individual, familial, and social atmospheres helped to order relationships, governed repulsions and affinities, sanctioned seduction, arranged lovers’ pleasures, and at the same time facilitated the new demarcation of social space.”¹² In other words, the proper management of waste that allowed the skillful perception of odor enabled the maintenance of a coherent sense of self even when faced with the social masses. Thus, the management of odor not only facilitated administration of bodies, but also of stable subjectivities because it served to demarcate oneself from the filthy crowd. Just as domestic spaces came to require enough space for each individual to maintain their own “atmosphere,” public space needed public urinals to hide away the smells of others in order for elites to safely frequent the city.

¹² Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986), 140–141.

Insofar as they contained society's odorous waste, public urinals, possessed very particular significations: not only of dirt and filth, but also of the threats of the crowd and of psychosis. Their placement throughout the streets of nineteenth-century Paris represented the safe administration of such threats and the continuing effort to safely manage the threat of losing oneself in the public masses.¹³ If the public urinal, then, enabled the opening of the city to a new form of public urban culture, it also presented nodes of danger – or opportunity depending upon one's point of view – through the city.

The possibility of encountering men who sought sex with other men in a public urinal represented one particular crystallization of this danger in the everyday life of the city. Built in order to facilitate the circulation of people in Paris while enabling the exercise of new bodily norms of hygiene and propriety, they became an ideal rendezvous for men seeking sex with other men.¹⁴ This appropriation was not a coincidence, but rather occurred because the very principles of good public urinals – they were to be plentiful, but also discrete – made them attractive to those wishing to engage in dissident practices in public. Commentators, however, failed to recognize their own complicity in this reappropriation. Indeed, the mingling of men seeking sex and men relieving bodily needs caused commentators to fall back on their claims to “see everything, to know everything” in order to distinguish between the normal and the pathological while also

¹³ As Robin Lydenberg has explained, “The public toilet...was perceived from its inception in the nineteenth century as a threat to systems of definition, segregation, and social control. This general epistemological destabilization produced a collective anxiety that found concerted expression in moral and sanitary objections to these perceived havens for homosexual activity.” She omits, however, that they were always also at the same time facilities meant to reinforce “systems of definition, segregation, and social control.” The two possibilities – that of stabilization and destabilization – were not mutually exclusive. See Robin Lydenberg, “Marcel Duchamp's Legacy: Aesthetics, Gender, and National Identity in the Toilet,” in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*, ed. Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 155.

¹⁴ Brett Beemyn has also noted how reformers facilitated men's search for sex with other men by advocating for more “washrooms” in the United States. See Brett Beemyn, “A Queer Capital: Race, Class, Gender, and the Changing Social Landscape of Washington's Gay Communities, 1840-1955,” in *Creating a Place for Ourselves*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Routledge, 1997), 199.

revealing the shaky foundations underlying the claim.¹⁵ In other words, the appropriation of spaces of hygiene for sexual purposes reveal the lie beneath the totalizing discourses of the nineteenth century and force historians to reconsider the functioning of a disciplinary society. By forbidding one practice – public urination – in order to reshape norms of bodily hygiene, urbanists, public hygienists, and police officers enabled another – male same-sex sexuality.¹⁶ Commentators failed to recognize this possibility because the techniques used to ban the one practice were founded on totalizing truth-claims that failed to accept the undecipherable. In other words, knowledge-makers' commentary led to activities that their typologies could not adequately account for because their truths were founded on a fundamental misreading of the complexities of urban life. These truth claims, moreover, were enunciated in reaction to the unexpected practices of the populace as much were attempts to explain them. The process of discipline and accommodation, therefore, must not be conceived as one of repression and resistance. Rather, the case of the public urinals ultimately shows that the meaning of modern urban life emerged in a constantly shifting dialogue between those who conceived and built the city and those who ultimately used it. The tendency of the built environment to exceed the control of those who imagined it, therefore, is a distinguishing feature of modern urban life.

The Public Urinal and the Making of Modern Paris

Modern public urinals first emerged in Paris under the July Monarchy. In 1840, Paris featured around five hundred facilities, but by 1893 the boulevards, parks, and train

¹⁵ Ambroise Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 3rd ed. (Paris: J.B. Baillière, 1859), 3.

¹⁶ Matt Houllbrook has also captured this dynamic in the case of the urinals of late nineteenth-century London. Matt Houllbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 49.

stations possessed more than 3,500 urinals.¹⁷ This massive increase in facilities emerged as a cohort of public hygienists increasingly demanded public urinals for men and pressured the police to create and enforce new prohibitions on public urination for the sake of the health of the populace.¹⁸ The foremost proponent of increasing the number of public urinals in Paris, Adolph Chevallier, argued that the lack of facilities was making “walls lacking openings, boards that surround construction, demolished buildings, pavement of bridges, angles of certain streets, public monuments, and up to the slightest crevices...public urinals and disgusting cloacae.”¹⁹ The entire city threatened to turn into

¹⁷ Conseil Municipal de Paris, *Année 1872 Procès-Verbaux* (Paris: Typographie Lahure, 1873), 167; Régis Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris: 1870-1918* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 36.

¹⁸ Public urinals were initially only built for men because experts believed that men and women possessed different needs within modern urban life. Indeed, the hygienist J. B. Fonsagrives makes this point quite explicit. Countering those who refuse to see the need for public urinals in large cities by invoking the urban women who do not seem to need them, declares that “One invokes in vain, as proof of the possibility to go without them, the example of the other sex; there is in this respect no parity to establish between the secluded and sedentary life of the gynaeceum and the exigencies of the exterior life, bustling and moving, that guides men in large cities [En vain allègue-t-on, comme prévue de la possibilité de s’en passer, l’exemple de l’autre sexe; il n’y a sous ce rapport aucune parité à établir entre la vie retirée et sédentaire du gynécée et les exigencies de la vie extérieure, agitée et en mouvement, que mènent les homes dans les grandes villes.]” Jean Baptiste Fonsagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1874), 163–164. Public urinals for women began to appear in Paris by the 1880s and 1890s. If the boulevard has been traditionally defined as “male,” then the nearly contemporary rise of the department store could be seen as the “female” equivalent. On gender and the department store see Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), esp. chap. 1; Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-De-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), esp. chap. 1. On the department store more generally see Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). Public urinals for women began to appear more frequently towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the “public life of the boulevard” was beginning to be defined as both male and female. I make this point to emphasize that the vision of circulation and hygiene expounded by the public hygienists I am examining remained a narrow in its gendering of publicness as a male preserve. For examinations of the various ways this vision was challenged see Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough, eds., *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-century Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). On the emergence of public urinals for women in a different case, but one actually influenced by the example of Paris, see Andrew Brown-May and Peg Fraser, “Gender, Respectability, and Public Convenience in Melbourne, Australia, 1859-1902,” in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*, ed. Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ [“certaines parties de murs dépourvus d’ouvertures, les planches qui entourent les constructions, les maisons en démolition, les trottoirs des ponts, les angles de certaines rues, des monuments publics et jusqu’aux moindres anfractuosités...des urinoirs publics et des cloaques infects.”] Chevallier, M. A., “Sur la nécessité de multiplier et d’améliorer les urinoirs publics,” *Annales d’hygiène publique et médecine légale*, no. 36 (1871): 286.

a urinal if administrators failed to build their own. Indeed, Chevallier's focus on the fluctuating materiality of the city – those spaces most at risk, barriers blocking access to construction projects, demolished buildings, all related to construction and reconstruction – reveals a certain anxiety at the possibility of losing control as the city erupted under the guiding hand of government administrators and urbanists. The public urinal, in the eyes of this public hygienist, could reestablish order in a city always threatening to escape firm control.

The urinal stood as a tool for encouraging proper behavior amongst the city's residents. The police banned public urination in an 1850 ordinance promulgated in response to “frequent and well-founded complaints.”²⁰ The ordinance noted that the government had an obligation to maintain the cleanliness of the city and that the “municipal administration had established a very large number of urinals, which were principally distributed in the central and high circulation quarters, on the quays, on the boulevards, and in the areas surrounding various monuments” for this purpose. The ordinance then enjoined Parisians to “sacrifice their bad habits that they may have contracted.”²¹ In other words, while the government recognized an obligation to maintain public hygiene, it also saw a requisite obligation amongst the citizenry to use the new facilities. The police banned public urination anywhere but in a urinal, where such a facility was available. If a urinal had not yet been placed, Parisians could no longer “urinate on the pavement, against public monuments and against boutiques’

²⁰ [des plaintes fréquentes et fondées.] “Salubrité publique - ordinance,” *Annales d'hygiène publique et médecine légale* 44 (1850): 470.

²¹ [“l'administraive municipale a fait établir un grand nombre d'urinoirs, principalement répartis dans les quartiers du centre et de grande circulation, sur les quais, sur les boulevards et aux abords de divers monuments...les habitants...doivent faire le sacrifice de mauvaises habitudes qu'ils ont pu contracter.”] Ibid., 470.

storefronts.”²² By listing the places where one could not urinate, the ordinance revealed an implicit understanding that public urination would not and could not immediately cease. The decree still asserted, however, that the administration had a public interest in enforcing the practices of public hygiene and that urinating in public was no longer a norm, but instead a “bad habit.”

Although some public hygienists saw adherence to this norm as woefully incomplete, trends seemed to favor those who saw the problem as a lack of facilities in which to practice it. The hygienist and member of the Faculté de Montpellier, J.B. Fonssagrives, for instance, accused urban dwellers of seeing public urinals as a “superfluous luxury” and castigated the police for not applying already existing laws. Effective enforcement, Fonssagrives believed, would put a stop to the “everyday practice” of the “summary creation of manure in the streets.”²³ Adrien Proust, Marcel Proust’s father, agreed, cited Fonssagrives and declared that “a severe police is absolutely essential...because, without it, all the precaution that can suggest hygiene will remain absolutely superfluous.”²⁴ However, Chevallier, while also accusing the police of gradually slackening the enforcement of their own rules, ultimately laid the blame, not on the Prefecture of Police, but on the lack of facilities themselves.²⁵ The relative emphases on policing urination versus building urinals reveal two different conceptions of the same problem. On the one hand, if the police had to force Parisians to change their habits, then the social norms represented by a heightened sensitivity to public hygiene could not be a

²² [“d’uriner sur les trottoirs, contre les monuments publics et contre les devantures des boutiques.”] Ibid., 471.

²³ [“la création sommaire de fumiers dans les rues est une pratique journalière.”] Fonssagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes*, 162.

²⁴ [“une police sévère est absolument indispensable...car, sans elle, toutes les précautions que peut suggérer l’hygiène resteront absolument superflues.”] Adrien Proust, *Traité d’hygiène*, 2nd ed. (Paris: G. Masson, 1881), 640.

²⁵ Chevallier, M. A., “Sur la nécessité de multiplier et d’améliorer les urinoirs publics,” 285–286.

“natural” state. If, on the other hand, providing space for the exercise of new hygienic practices solved the problem of public urination, then norms of propriety were universal and only needed the means to fulfill them. Although some Parisians did find themselves in trouble with the law after urinating in public, the trend seems to have favored those who sought to build more facilities.²⁶ The underlying assumption that bodily functions belonged behind closed doors thus justified building facilities that enabled the practice of this norm in the first place.

This new emphasis on public hygiene, ideally perpetuated by each individual Parisian, was linked to the desire to facilitate proper circulation – in all senses of the word – in nineteenth-century Paris. Hence, for instance, Baron Haussmann’s pride in creating a vast modern sewer system and the later triumph of the *tout-à-l’égout* [everything into the sewer] system that connected all buildings to the same underlying waste disposal system.²⁷ The cleaner streets resulting from the underground circulation of the sewer enabled the functioning of life on the street. The constant movement on the streets and underground stood in as well for the necessity of ensuring bodily circulation as well. As Alain Corbin has argued, “[t]he phantasm of loss...the desire to ensure the smooth running of the social physiology of excretion, the concern to keep a record of men and goods and to ensure their circulation, were all part of the same process.”²⁸ The processing of normal bodily functions here serves as a metaphor for the larger desire for

²⁶ William Peniston, for example, has documented two men arrested for public urination in 1877. See Peniston, *Pederasts and Others*, 141.

²⁷ On Haussmann’s sewer works see David H Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), chap. 6; David P Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 267–; David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 249–251. On *tout-à-l’égout* see David S Barnes, *The Great Stink of Paris and the Nineteenth-century Struggle Against Filth and Germs* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 52–58.

²⁸ Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*, 116.

smooth circulation in Paris itself. Indeed, Chevallier twice emphasized the dangers of literally “holding it in” by relating the tragedy of Doctor Juge, a member of the conseil de salubrité, who died because he could not find a public urinal.²⁹ Just as the wide boulevards protected Second Empire Paris from insurrection, so did the public urinal protect individual bodies. The health of the street and society thus ensured the health of the physical body. Public urinals ensured the smooth functioning of individual persons by enabling the circulation of fluids within the human body.

Urinals, in other words, assisted Parisians’ participation in modernity and in modern conceptions of urban life and hygiene by enabling them to move about their city without discomfort, neither having to stop their promenades early nor break the law by disobeying new strictures regarding bodily hygiene and urban sanitation. Indeed, a good urinal emplacement, according to the expert Chevallier, would be able to serve enough persons so to “not expose the public to too long a wait.”³⁰ Fonsagrives, moreover, called for advertising the number of urinals at “each street entrance” on a plaque.³¹ Doing so would allow the public, on their promenades, to know whether they would be able to quickly stop to relieve themselves without being forced to take a detour. The desire to construct urinals in order to facilitate smooth movement seems to have been shared by the architects who built them. One urinal in the Champs-Élysées, for instance, smoothly blended into the path, creating an optional u-turn while the promenade’s greenery served as an effective screen (Figure 5.1). By simply turning into the urinal, one could stop,

²⁹ A. Chevallier, “Notice historique sur la conservation, la désinfection et l’utilisation des urines,” *Journal de chimie médicale, de pharmacie et de toxicologie et revue des nouvelles scientifiques nationales et étrangères* 2 (1856): 382; Chevallier, M. A., “Sur la nécessité de multiplier et d’améliorer les urinoirs publics,” 290.

³⁰ “[ne pas exposer le public à trop long longue attente.”] Chevallier, M. A., “Sur la nécessité de multiplier et d’améliorer les urinoirs publics,” 285.

³¹ Fonsagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes*, 165.

answer nature's call, and then continue on one's stroll in the same direction. The need to urinate, then, did not interrupt the promenade; instead, it created a small turn in the path, a detour rather than break. The "public life of the boulevard," largely defined at the time as male, functioned through the constant circulation of people facilitated by the public urinals.



Figure 5.1 Charles Marville, “Urinal of 8 stalls, cast iron and slate, with screen of shrubbery, jardin des Champs-Élysées, around 1870. Paris (8th arrondissement) [Urinoir à 8 stalles, fonte et ardoise, avec écran d'arbustes, jardin des Champs-Élysées, vers 1870. Paris (VIII^{ème} arr.).” Paris, musée Carnavalet. © Charles Marville / Musée Carnavalet / Roger-Viollet (From *Paris en images*: <http://www.parisenimages.fr/fr/popup-photo.html?photo=26215-1>)

By 1874, the streets of Paris featured four general types of urinals.³² The oldest type of urinal was “[r]eserved for very large paths and boulevards.”³³ These *colonnes creuses*, also called *colonnes Rambuteau* in “honor” of the prefect who began building them, disguised their function by placing the *pissoir* in a decorated column that “suitably fulfills its task,” but also left the user partially exposed to the street (Figure 5.2).³⁴ By the end of the century, these older columns began to be replaced by *urinoirs lumineux*, lighted urinals that, in one design at least, featured a large column in the center of two or three fully hidden *pissoirs* (Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.2 Charles Marville, “Urinal, iron and masonry, with one stall, rue du Faubourg Saint-Martin. Paris (10th arrondissement), around 1870 [Urinoir, fonte et maçonnerie, à une stalle, rue du Faubourg Saint-Martin. Paris (X^{ème} arr.), vers 1870].” Paris, musée Carnavalet. © Charles Marville / Musée Carnavalet / Roger-Viollet. (From *Paris en images*: <http://www.parisenimages.fr/fr/popup-photo.html?photo=26218-1>)

³² My descriptions of the urinals rely on those made by Fonsagrives – the fullest available – and a number of photographs by Charles Marville.

³³ [“réservés pour les voies très-larges et les boulevards.”] Fonsagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes*, 167.

³⁴ *Ibid.* On the term *colonne Rambuteau*, see Lucien Rigaud, *Dictionnaire d’argot moderne* (Paris: P. Ollendorff, 1881); Colin Jones, *Paris: Biography of a City* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 398.

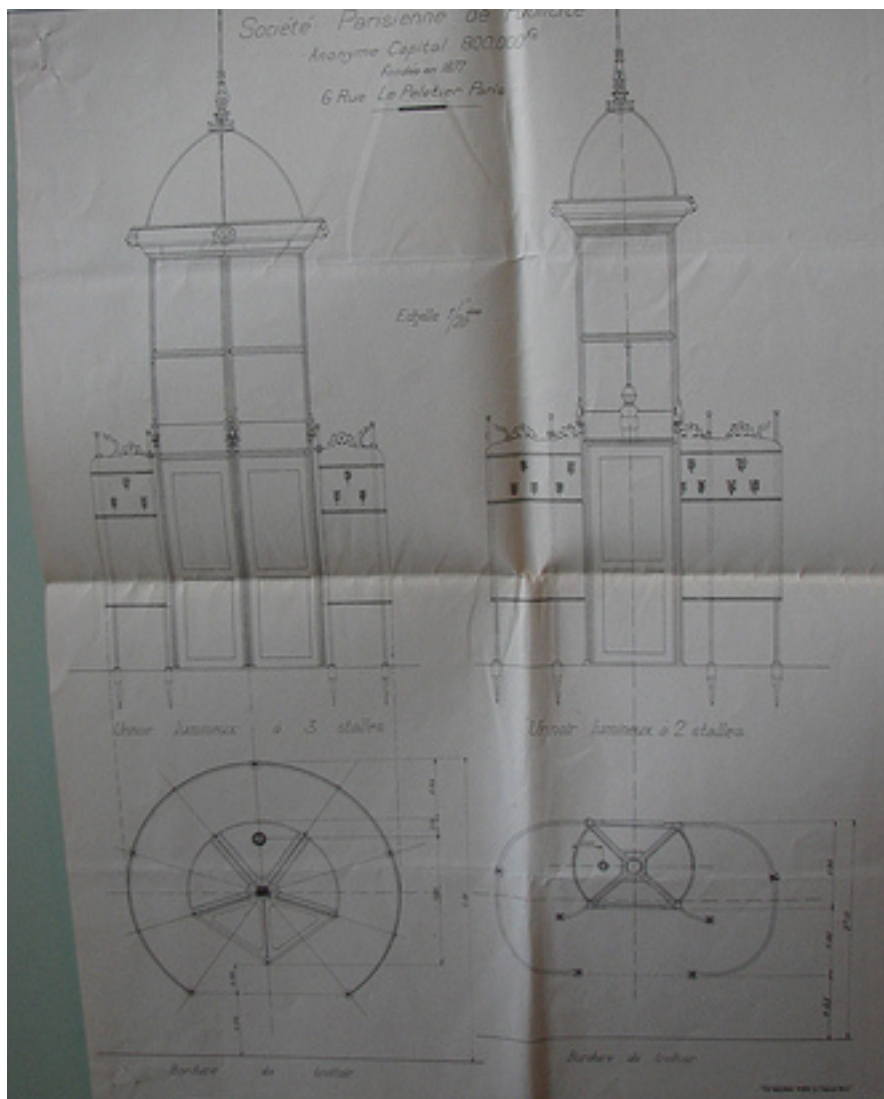


Figure 5.3: Société Parisienne de Publicité. Plan for Lighted Public Urinals, 1897. Archives de Paris, VO3 419. (Personal photograph)

The most basic type, *urinoirs d'angle*, were comprised of two walls that pointed out from a building toward one another and created a vague triangular space in which one or two *pissoirs* – the receptacle itself – would be placed. The frequent lack of water to flush out

these urinals completely – urine was supposed to drain underneath the pavement – caused an unpleasant odor and degraded the enamel.³⁵ Moreover, passer-by could easily view



Figure 5.4 Charles Marville, “Urinal of 6 stalls in slate, rue Rambuteau, at the corner of rue Baltard. Paris (1st arrondissement, 1876). [Urinoir à 6 stalles en ardoise, rue Rambuteau, à l’angle de la rue Baltard. Paris (1er arr.), 1876.]” Paris, musée Carnavalet. © Charles Marville / Musée Carnavalet / Roger-Viollet (*Paris en images*: <http://www.parisenimages.fr/fr/popup-photo.html?photo=26212-1>)

those using the facilities.³⁶ The third type of public urinal, the *urinoirs de face*, featured multiple stalls with a surrounding wall that isolated people from the street; it also featured a trough underneath each *pissoir* that collected the urine and prevented it from reaching

³⁵ It is unlikely that this type of urinal remained in production towards the end of the nineteenth century; Chevallier does not even count them when providing statistical counts of how many urinals Paris possessed in 1871. Chevallier, M. A., “Sur la nécessité de multiplier et d’améliorer les urinoirs publics,” 289.

³⁶ Fonsagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes*, 165–166; “Rapport de l’Ingénieur ordinaire” (Service municipal des travaux publics, May 29, 1874), 1, VO3 419, Archives de Paris.

the street surface (Figure 5.4).³⁷ Finally, the *urinoirs publics en kiosque* came in a variety of forms in high traffic areas, notably the Palais-Royal (Figure 5.5).³⁸ These fully enclosed pavilions featured multiple isolated stalls and total isolation from the street. Each urinal presented different modes of providing semi-private space for urination.



Figure 5.5: Charles Marville, “Dorion water-closet, avenue des Champs-Élysées. Paris (8th arrondissement), around 1870. [Cabinet water-closet Dorion, avenue des Champs-Élysées. Paris (VIII^{ème} arr.), vers 1870].” Paris, musée Carnavalet. © Charles Marville / Musée Carnavalet / Roger-Viollet (From *Paris en images*: <http://www.parisenimages.fr/fr/popup-photo.html?photo=26214-1>)

³⁷ This is the type of urinal one most likely imagines when thinking of Paris’s famous *pissotières* or *vespasiennes* that one could see in Paris until the 1970s. See Jones, *Paris*, 398–400. The last of these can still be seen on boulevard Arago, in front of Santé Prison, near the Denfert-Rochereau metro station.

³⁸ Fonsagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes*, 167.

In evaluating the effectiveness of each type of urinal, public hygienists considered both its utility as an instrument of public hygiene and its capacity for facilitating men's circulation towards other destinations. First, they determined that the urinal should hide what occurred inside it, both bodily functions and waste products, from public view. Fonsagrives recommended curling the outer extremities of the shielding wall of *urinoirs de face* in order to increase the urinal's isolation from the street. Similarly, another public hygienist, V. Ch. Joly, recommended curling *urinoirs d'angle* in order to protect feminine eyes from male urination (Figure 5.6).³⁹ Furthermore, men were enjoined to

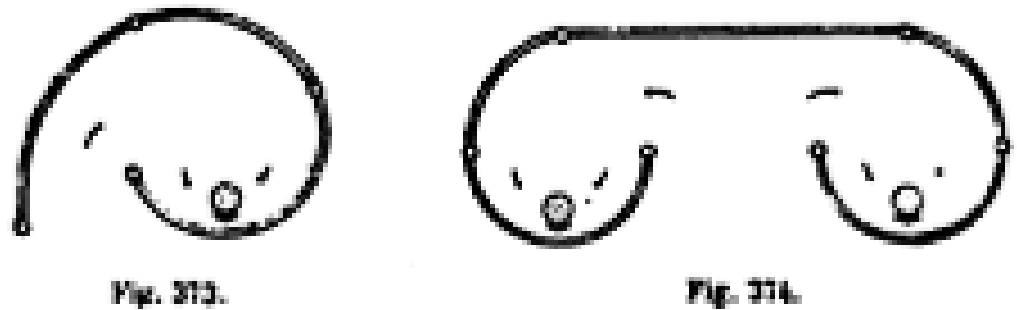


Figure 5.6: V. Ch. Joly, *Traité pratique du chauffage, de la ventilation et de la distribution des eaux dans les habitations particulières à l'usage des architectes, des entrepreneurs, et des propriétaires* (Paris: Librairie Polytechnique, 1873), 392.

hide evidence that they were using urinal, with Joly calling for signs, such as the English had, that read “Please adjust your dress before leaving.”⁴⁰ Victor Hugo, in *Les Misérables*, provided perhaps the most eloquent understanding of this particular injunction:

But the traitors under Napoleon now came out of hiding. Men who had gone over to the enemy on the eve of battle cynically paraded their

³⁹ Ibid., 166; Victor-Charles Joly, *Traité pratique du chauffage, de la ventilation et de la distribution des eaux dans les* (J. Baudry, 1873), 391. Joly never specifically calls the urinals he speaks of *urinoirs d'angle*, but he leaves little doubt that those are what he was referring to.

⁴⁰ Joly, *Traité pratique du chauffage, de la ventilation et de la distribution des eaux dans les*, 391.

rewards and dignities; the deserters of Ligny and Quatre-Bas flaunted their monarchist allegiance with a brazenness that disregarded the injunction to be read on the walls of English public lavatories – ‘Please adjust your dress before leaving.’⁴¹

In other words, hide that which you have reason to be ashamed of. In Hugo’s case, treachery; in the world of public hygiene, urination. Public urinals were just as essential to propriety as they were to hygiene.

Since the passers-by were not to be reminded of the purposes of these facilities, commentators also emphasized the need to eliminate the foul smell of the urinal. Many descriptions of public urinals discussed the best method for deodorizing them, usually through regular flushing, chemical sanitation, or some combination of the two.⁴² In fact, a police ordinance of 1853 required anyone building a urinal on a public thoroughfare to maintain and clean them in order to ensure they did not emit a foul odor. Public hygienists also regularly called for proper surveillance of the urinal so that they did not “turn into cloacae.”⁴³ Neither the eyes nor the nose was to be drawn to a public urinal unless their possessor needed to use one; other passer-by would hardly notice they existed.

In this vein, the facilities were also designed to contribute to the aesthetics of the city or, at the very least, to not detract from them. Indeed, both Chevallier and Fonssagrives emphasized the importance of designing urinals in relation to their environments, with Fonssagrives stressing the “elegant...[and] very agreeable

⁴¹ Victor Hugo, *Les misérables*, trans. Norman Denny (Penguin Classics, 1982), 122.

⁴² See for example A. Chevallier, “De la désinfection des urinoirs publics à l’aide du goudron,” *Journal de chimie médicale, de pharmacie et de toxicologie et revue des nouvelles scientifiques nationales et étrangères* 5, no. 11 (1859): 690-691; Chevallier, M. A., “Sur la nécessité de multiplier et d’améliorer les urinoirs publics,” 286–288; Fonssagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes*, 168.

⁴³ The French term *cloaque* signified both the literal receptacles for waste products and the figurative evocation of the smells of garbage and waste. See the ARTFL database’s *Dictionnaires d’autrefois* (<http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dico1look.pl?strippedhw=cloaque>), especially the entry from Émile Littré’s, *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1872-1877).

architecture” of the *colonnes creuses* and the “very agreeable ornamental effect” of the candelabras of the *urinoirs publics en kiosque*.⁴⁴ This emphasis on aesthetics became a requirement for those seeking permission to build certain public urinals; the list of obligations for a concession to build four Chalets de Nécessité – for both men and women by this point in the century – in the bois de Boulogne during the 1890s stipulated that “they should strongly present a decorative appearance, in harmony with their placement.”⁴⁵ Some public hygienists, however, viewed the very presence of urinals on the streets with disgust. In 1893, Louis Masson, *Inspecteur de l’Assainissement de Paris*, wrote that

[t]hanks to the progress of sanitary science, we have, in certain cities, come to render these urinals acceptable from the point of view of smell, but their presence on public thoroughfares is no less shocking, and all the elegance provided to the construction of kiosks [*édicules*] which shelter them, cannot completely conceal their purpose [*destination*].⁴⁶

In Masson’s opinion, no matter how aesthetically pleasing one tried to make the public urinal, it would always remind passers-by of its filthy purpose, a state of affairs destined to “only give incomplete satisfaction to the public.”⁴⁷ Comparing Parisian public urinals to those found in London, Masson concluded that building them underground, completely out of sight, where, one supposes, such filth belonged was the best solution. Following the work of Donald Reid, one can draw the comparison between the proposed relegation of urination to the underground and the image of the sewer – intimately connected as the

⁴⁴ Fonssagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes*, 167; Chevallier, M. A., “Sur la nécessité de multiplier et d’améliorer les urinoirs publics,” 285.

⁴⁵ Société des Chalets de Nécessité, “Adjudication du droit d’exploitation de quatre Chalets de Nécessité à installer dans le Bois de Boulogne”, December 23, 1893, 3, Perotin/10653 39, Archives de Paris.

⁴⁶ [“Grâce aux progrès de la science sanitaire, on est arrivé, dans certaines villes, à rendre ces urinoirs acceptables au point de vue de l’odeur, mais leur présence sur la voie publique n’en reste pas moins choquante, et toute l’élégance apportée à la construction des édicules qui les abritent, ne saurait dissimuler complètement leur destination.”] Louis Masson, “*Les Conveniences*” à Londres (Paris: Imprimerie Ch. Schlaeber, 1893), 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

two facilities are – made famous by Victor Hugo, as the container of society’s literal and figurative waste and, it must be emphasized, its fears; “the sewer is the conscience of the city,” Hugo wrote.⁴⁸ Banishing formerly public bodily functions to a realm not recognized as belonging to the social order at all would protect the populace from the threats represented by bodily waste.⁴⁹ The threat the filth contained by the urinals posed would finally be eliminated.

Although French administrators did begin to follow Masson’s lead and build urinals underground in the London fashion, Parisian facilities were never entirely moved and the tension between the visibility of the facilities’ facades and the attempted invisibility of the services they provided remained. Indeed, building urinals underground would eliminate one of the facilities’ other contributions to modern urban life: advertising. Throughout the nineteenth century, a number of ventures used urinals for street publicity. In the 1840s, Drouart and Co. underwrote the construction and maintenance of many of the first of the *colonne* type of urinals in exchange for exclusive advertising rights.⁵⁰ By the 1860s, the company was advertising its exclusive three hundred franc service of ten billpostings on the urinals of Paris: six along “the entire length of the boulevards,” one on the boulevard Sebastopol, and three on the quais, both the left and the right bank.⁵¹ This use continued to be promoted through the 1890s, when a M. Doriot received the right to build four free Chalets de Necessité for women in high traffic areas in Paris. The company’s proposed plan for these chalets expressly included

⁴⁸ Donald Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), 20.

⁴⁹ Matt Houlbrook also sees public urinals as somewhat outside the social order, arguing that they were “[n]either fully public nor fully private, the urinal occupied a twilight zone in a wider system of urban space divided between the two,” but which had “the potential to be *made* private.” Houlbrook, Matt, “The Private World of Public Urinals: London 1918-57,” *London Journal* (2000): 53.

⁵⁰ Conseil Municipal de Paris, *Année 1872 Procès-Verbaux*, 167–168.

⁵¹ “Advertisement for Drouart and Co.,” n.d., F21 1046, Archives nationales de France.

space to sell lighted advertising (Figure 5.7).⁵² In addition, in response to the desires of the municipal council, in 1897 the *Société Parisienne de Publicité* offered to replace its column urinals – which were “no longer in harmony with new installations and no longer responsive to hygienic needs and modern propriety” – with new illuminated urinals in exchange for an extension of their concession.⁵³ This advertising company clearly saw



Figure 5.7: Système Doriot, Plan for urinals for women, 1894. Archives de Paris, VO3 425 (Personal photograph)

⁵² Félix Grelot to Préfet de la Seine, “Chalets de nécessité Doriot et baron: Urinoirs gratuits pour dames. Concession à titre d’essai de cinq emplacements à M. Doriot”, January 10, 1894, VO3 425, Archives de Paris; Masson, “Rapport de l’Inspecteur: Urinoirs gratuits pour dames. Concession Doriot. Modifications à apporter aux édifices”, October 29, 1894, VO3 425, Archives de Paris.

⁵³ Ch. Durand to Menant, September 10, 1897, 1, VO3 419, Archives de Paris.

great potential in public urinals. New consumption patterns nicely complemented public hygiene facilities.. In fact, advertising could help disguise the water closet itself, turning it almost into any other kiosk that could be seen on the streets of Paris.⁵⁴ In one Marville photograph, the sign designating the building as a water closet blends into the other advertising for children's shoes and flowers.⁵⁵ Advertising served as an ornamental measure itself and in moving consumer desires also distracted passer-by from the activities taking place inside the facilities.

The Failure of the Parisian Public Urinals

Spaces such as the public urinal facilitated the enactment of desire elsewhere. Certain spaces, such as boulevards, parks, and cafés, contributed to the functioning of the social system by enabling Parisians to safely indulge their desires, while other spaces, such as public urinals, facilitated that enactment, but were not sites of desire themselves. However, the requirements set down by public hygienists made them particularly attractive to men seeking sex with other men. While the urinals had to be recognizable and plentiful, the efforts to render them and the activities they facilitated innocuous opened the urinal as a space for male same-sex sexual encounters; the outer visibility of the urinal made it a recognizable rendezvous point, but an obscure inside effectively blinded other passer-by from seeing the activities enacted therein. The use of public urinals by men seeking sex with other men disrupted their purpose and forced commentators to wrestle with their inability to control and understand the city.

⁵⁴ French commentators frequently used the English term “water-closet” to refer to public urinals.

⁵⁵ Charles Marville, *Paris* (Paris: Hazan, 1994).

Public urinals were the most important rendezvous for men seeking sex with other men in nineteenth-century Paris. Indeed, over one third of William Peniston's sample of 328 pederasts were arrested at the urinals, primarily those "near the Bourse in the First Arrondissement and along the Champs Élysées in the Eighth Arrondissement."⁵⁶ Régis Revenin has also noted the importance of these locations, while also pointing to a number of public urinals in train stations, such as gare de l'Est and gare de Strasbourg in the tenth arrondissement, the gare de Vincennes in the twelfth arrondissement, and the gare Saint-Lazare in the eighth arrondissement.⁵⁷ In addition, police records underline the importance of the urinals in and along the Tuileries and near Les Halles, both in the First Arrondissement.⁵⁸ In all, Peniston's and Revenin's research together shows that men utilized urinals in almost half of Paris's twenty *arrondissements* to seek sexual encounters with other men. Undoubtedly these lists remain incomplete because not all pederasts were caught, nor are the police records complete. Nineteenth-century Paris found itself dotted with queer space in the guise of the public urinal.

This subversion ultimately had both material and discursive effects. For instance, during the winter of 1889 and 1890, André Cassard, a builder specializing in flooring and woodworking, corresponded with the Prefecture of the Seine in an attempt to negotiate a contract to build new public urinals along the Seine. After paying his respects to the Prefect, reminding him of past correspondence on the subject, and describing his terms and needs for the contract, Cassard made a curious claim. Although the approximately forty urinals along the banks of the Seine were kept in "as great a state of cleanliness as

⁵⁶ Peniston, *Pederasts and Others*, 140.

⁵⁷ Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris*, 39.

⁵⁸ Records describing these spaces are spread through a number of different series and cartons in the Archives de la Préfecture de Police, but refer especially to BM2 60 on the Tuileries and DA 230 on Les Halles.

possible,” they remained not “open to everyone” due to a general “repugnance of which the cause is not unknown by the *Service de l’assainissement*.” Cassard then linked this repugnance to “the dregs of the population who meet there and...the shameful acts which are committed there.”⁵⁹ Presumably, Cassard means to imply men who sought sex with other men. These “dregs of society” had turned public facilities into their own semi-private space. In other words, illicit sexual activity had so contaminated these facilities of public hygiene that respectable citizens could no longer use them.

Cassard, attempting to justify his contract, did not recommend increased surveillance by the police like some of his public hygienist and law enforcement contemporaries. Instead, in order to justify his plans, Cassard emphasized placement and design.⁶⁰ In particular, he recommended destroying the urinals on the banks of the river and building new facilities on the quays, in alignment with the parapets (Figure 5.8). Presumably, though Cassard remains vague, raising the urinals to street level would bring them more fully into the public purview, preventing their takeover by the “dregs” of society. In other words, Cassard proposed a material reaction to antisocial behaviors. The beginning of a cycle can be discerned in this reaction. The municipal government built a series of public urinals that were then claimed by sexual dissidents who, through their actions, rendered the facilities so symbolic of their presence as to prevent others

⁵⁹ [“Les latrines et les édicules en fer qui sont établis de chaque coté du fleuve (il y en a une quarantaine) bien qu’entretenus dans le plus grand état de propreté possible, ne sont pas accessibles à tout le monde. Cette répugnance dont les véritables motifs ne sont pas ignorés par le Service de l’assainissement, vient surtout de ce que ces sortes de cabinets d’aissance ne sont fréquentés que par la lie de la population qui s’y donne rendez-vous, et par les actes honteux qui s’y commettent.”] André Cassard to Préfet de la Seine, September 24, 1889, 2, VO3 425, Archives de Paris.

⁶⁰ Fonsagrives, for instance, called for constant surveillance of public urinals not only for sanitary reasons, but to prevent “weak wills” from “turning them away” from their “exclusive purpose.” Fonsagrives, *Hygiène et assainissement des villes*, 168. Cassard does echo some administrators who emphasized the need for better lighting at public urinals along the Seine to prevent their use by pederasts almost twenty-five years earlier Officier de Paix [Illegible], “Rapport”, May 19, 1865, DA 230, doc 343, Archives de la préfecture de police de Paris.

from utilizing them. In response, a builder proposed, not to attack the people who created the problem, but to build new urinals that would prevent the social practices that caused the problem in the first place.

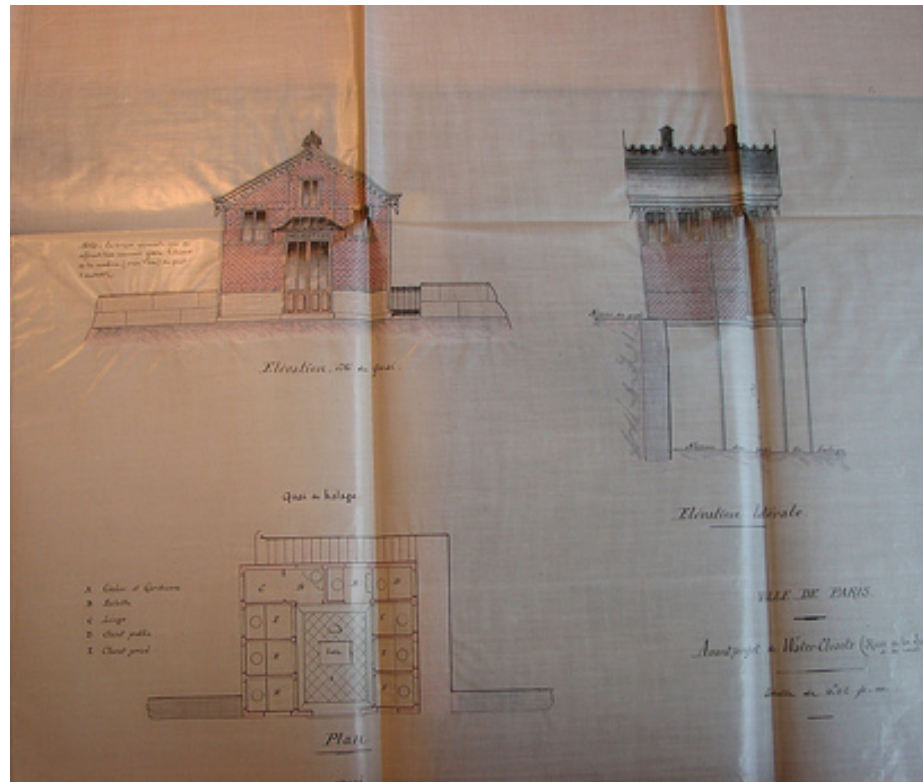


Figure 5.8: André Cassard, Plan for public urinals, 1889. Archives de Paris, VO3 425 (Personal photograph)

A subset of Parisian citizens endowed the facilities with new meaning understood by the entire city. This new meaning engendered a reaction amongst the populace – avoidance – that in turn brought about a material response. Pederasts’ activities potentially influenced the city’s form. While Cassard utilized pederasts’ “shameful acts” as a ploy to gain support for his venture into public hygiene, others were much less sanguine or openly self-interested. Police authorities struggled to prevent urinals’ appropriation as sites of desire. In his treatise *Les Deux Prostitutions*, François Carlier

focused on the urinals in les Halles, where “the administration, with the goal of frightening off those that a sort of erotic madness brings each night to the same area, to the great scandal of passerby, gives them the greatest possible publicity.”⁶¹ In their effort at cleaning the streets, in other words, the police had rendered them more obviously dirty. While claiming that in less than a month the police made over two hundred arrests for offenses against public decency there, Carlier described continuing problems with enforcement. He explained that the police began arresting people at the urinals around nine o’clock and then departed at midnight. The pederasts, however, were as numerous at midnight as at nine o’clock.⁶² This constant give and take underlines the precise nature of the public urinals as a new space of pleasure created by men who sought sex with other men themselves. Both the police and men seeking sex with other men knew precisely where and when to travel in order to either disrupt or indulge in illicit pleasures. This apparent routine signifies a key point: nineteenth-century pederasts transformed facilities intended to facilitate movement towards “real” destinations into a destination themselves.

Carlier, flabbergasted, continued by discussing why and how this transformation could have occurred. “This eagerness to choose water-closets as a meeting place appears incredible,” Carlier exclaimed, “if we would not immediately mention that the odor that exhales from these sorts of places is one of the conditions sought out by a very numerous category of pederasts, for whose pleasures it is indispensable.”⁶³ In addition, Carlier

⁶¹ [“l’administration, dans le but d’effrayer ceux qu’une espèce de folie érotique ramenait chaque soir au même endroit, au grand scandale des passants, leur donnait la plus grande publicité possible.”] François Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions: 1860-1870* (E. Dentu, 1887), 32.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 301–302.

⁶³ [“Cet acharnement à choisir des water-closets comme point de rendez-vous paraîtrait incroyable, si nous ne disions tout de suite que l’odeur qu’exhalent ces sortes d’endroits est une des conditions recherchées par une catégorie fort nombreuse de pédérasts, aux plaisirs desquels elle est indispensable”], *Ibid.*, 305.

claimed that the dirtiest urinals “serve[d] specially as meeting places.”⁶⁴ Carlier’s assumption illustrates well the normative value of smell Corbin brilliantly addressed in *The Foul and the Fragrant* (1986). Just as strong odors were attached to the unwashed masses, the mélange of bodily waste attached itself to same-sex desire. If normal, “heterosexual” Parisians were repulsed by the smell, then abnormal, “homosexual” Parisians must have been attracted to them. In making this rhetorical move, however, Carlier also naturalizes the use of urinals for the enactment of sexual desires between men. Urinals were built so that men could relieve their bodily functions on their way elsewhere. The excretions then turned the urinal into an attraction for pederasts who transformed the facilities into a rendezvous in their own right for sexual encounters. The original and condoned purpose of the urinals caused the problem that aroused so much anxiety. Thus, Carlier has wrapped himself in a rhetorical bind whereby the urinals inevitably served its subversive purpose. No wonder Carlier advocated simply closing urinals known as rendezvous for men who sought sex with other men.

Other commentators also found themselves unable to reconcile the hygienic intention of public urinals with their other uses. First, the intermingling of men using public urinals as they were intended and those seeking sex with other men challenged the representational authority of the medical profession. Until the turn of the century, medical commentary on same-sex sexual activity remained heavily indebted to the work of Ambroise Tardieu, who emphasized doctors’ ability to discern evidence of pederasty from the deciphering of physical signs.⁶⁵ For instance, Maurice Laugier attempted to

⁶⁴ [“servent spécialement de lieux de rendez-vous.”] Ibid.

⁶⁵ Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 136–137. On Tardieu see Vernon A Rosario, “Pointy Penises, Fashion Crimes, and Hysterical Mollies: The Pederasts’ Inversions,” in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996),

apply Tardieu's principles to real-world legal situations. Laugier recognized the potential difficulties in regulating offenses against public decency in spaces built to enable activities that could, given the right context, also appear indecent. Laugier, remember, defined the offense as "including gestures, touches, exhibition of sexual organs in, not only a public space, but in a place accessible to public view, [performed] with either an obscene intention or simple negligence on the part of the accused."⁶⁶ Laugier waved away those who committed a crime against public decency out of negligence, such as drunkenness, but worried over those arrested for actions that may have appeared obscene at first glance, but in fact were necessary to the health of the accused. He thus addressed himself directly to the problem of deducing intent from only viewing an accused man make an obscene gesture. He focused on those who exhibited no outward signs – presumably effeminacy – of being a pederast and who had no previous judicial record, but were nevertheless arrested in a compromising situation. A simple denial led directly to the examination advocated by Tardieu, but Laugier spent most of his discussion on those who attempted to excuse their behavior by claiming to suffer from a medical problem. For instance, one of Laugier's six examples featured a man who attracted police attention due to his "very prolonged stay in a urinal and the maneuvers that he was exercising on his penis." The accused requested an examination, claiming that he

149–152. On the longevity of the importance of physical signs to French sexology see Robert A Nye, "The History of Sexuality in Context: National Sexological Traditions," *Science in Context* 4, no. 2 (1991): 398–399.

⁶⁶ ["tel que gestes, attouchements, exhibition des organes sexuels, a lieu, non-seulement dans un endroit public, mais dans un lieu accessible à la vue du public, qu'il y ait de la part de l'inculpé intention obscène ou simplement négligence."] Maurice Laugier, "Du rôle de l'expertise médico-légale dans certains cas d'outrage public a la pudeur," *Annales d'hygiène publique et médecine légale* 50 (July 1878): 165, <http://web2.bium.univ-paris5.fr/livanc/?dico=perio&cote=90141&chapitre=public%20pudeur&p=4&do=page>.

suffered from a “urinary tract infection.”⁶⁷ The examination undertaken, Laugier determined that the accused did indeed suffer from difficulty urinating, a problem ameliorated by his masturbation-like activity and his lengthy stays in the public urinals. The intent of the accused man’s gestures, in other words, justified his otherwise “offensive” act, distinguishing him from the pederasts who also frequented the urinals.

Laugier saw doctors as a corrective to a police force relying, by necessity, on shaky evidence. He advised men to take care to avoid the attention of the police while using the public urinals, but remained confident that a proper medical exam, requested by a conscientious magistrate, could save “the honor of an entire family” in the event of police error.⁶⁸ Laugier, however, studiously avoided addressing the fact that while he claimed urinary problems as exculpatory evidence, other doctors saw urinary problems as evidence of pederasty. For instance, another doctor, A. Becquerel, also following Tardieu, claimed that both active and passive pederasty could have an adverse affect on urinary and fecal movement. The active pederast possessed a “singular deformation of the penis,” which amongst those with a “voluminous penis” could be seen in an “urinary meatus ... [that exited] to the side,” while the passive pederast suffered from “incontinence of fecal mater.”⁶⁹ In addition, to take one particular example, Becquerel includes hemorrhoids in his list of positive signs of passive pederasty, while Laugier’s fourth example features a man whose large hemorrhoid served as a legitimate medical reason not only for his excessive stay in a public urinal but also for the gestures he was

⁶⁷ [“ne station très-prolongée dans un urinoir et les manoeuvres qu’il exerçait sur sa verge.”] Ibid., 170.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 173.

⁶⁹ Louis Alfred Becquerel, *Traité élémentaire d’hygiène privée et publique*, 6th ed. (Paris: Asselin, 1877), 845.

making on his anus.⁷⁰ Perhaps it was awareness of this contradiction that made Tardieu, writing in 1857 wary of attributing too much explanatory power to hemorrhoids.⁷¹ Nevertheless, while Laugier claimed urinary disease could exonerate a person accused of pederasty at a urinal, Becquerel argued that pederasty potentially caused urinary conditions. Certainly, if one could ask the doctors themselves to explain the apparent contradiction, they would defer to their expertise as doctors and their consequent ability to tell the difference between exculpatory and inculpatory evidence. In any case, the written record implies that the signs of pederasty could exculpate a pederast.

The inability of even self-proclaimed experts to distinguish between the normal and pathological users of the urinal reveals why this particular space became a locus of fears of criminality as well. In particular, medical and legal commentators identified the susceptibility of men who sought sex with other men to blackmail as a threat to social peace. Threatening to reveal that an individual was a pederast, whether true or not, relied on the indeterminacy of sexual deviance. It thus played upon a dual anxiety: the difficulty in avoiding being taken for a pederast and the difficulty in identifying those who actually were. Blackmail became an almost omnipresent danger, enabling commentators to indulge their storytelling while emphasizing that the dangers posed by the spaces of male same-sex sexual desire were very real indeed.⁷² For instance, in his memoir, the police inspector Gustave Macé provided an explicit account of blackmail in

⁷⁰ Ibid.; Laugier, “Du rôle de l’expertise médico-légale dans certains cas d’outrage public à la pudeur,” 170–171.

⁷¹ Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux mœurs*, 147–148.

⁷² Louis Canler, *Memoires de Canler, ancien chef du Service de Sûreté*, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1862), 270–295; Becquerel, *Traité élémentaire d’hygiène privée et publique*, 859; Auguste Lutaud, *Manuel de médecine légale et de jurisprudence médicale* (Lauwereyns, 1877), 31–32; Gustave Macé, *Mes Lundis en prison* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889), 157; Carlier, *Les deux prostitutions*, 375–412. Angus McLaren’s *Sexual Blackmail*, provides a useful account of this phenomenon in America and England during the same time period. See Angus McLaren, *Sexual Blackmail: A Modern History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), esp. chap. 1 and 5.

the Parisian public urinals. Working in a pair, one blackmailer entered a public urinal at Les Halles and propositioned someone. Upon exiting the urinal with the victim in tow, the accomplice approached and addressed the first blackmailer, “I know him [the victim]...I am an *inspecteur des moeurs*, we have observed him for a long time, and we will conduct him to the police station.”⁷³ The false agent then interrogated the victim about his familial situation, implying his potential disgrace if the incident became known, while the bait encouraged the victim to pay off the officer. Unlike the commentators who described them, blackmailers recognized that the truth of the individual’s actual sexual desires mattered little inside a space already associated with the stigma of filth and same-sex desire. That commentators could exploit the fear of the blackmailer, while avoiding the implications of the means by which he functioned, only serves to illustrate their investment in the illusion of a positivist truth of sexual desire. What they could not admit, and what the blackmailer exploited, was that a space such as the public urinal, where men who desired women and men who desired men mingled, was one where the accepted bases for determining the truth of an individual broke down.

Just as the urinal provided a space for activities that threatened the divisions between desire and repulsion and the normal and the pathological, so too did it question the proper relationship between authority and the governed. Count Germiny was arrested in December of 1876 by undercover agents of the vice squad whom Germiny attempted to fight off until a uniformed officer arrived at the scene. He excused his conduct by claiming that “he feared that he had been set up by criminals.”⁷⁴ In the context of the blackmail narrative establishing criminal’s use of the symbols of authority at the public

⁷³ [“Je le connais, répondit le complice, je suis inspecteur des moeurs, on le surveille depuis longtemps, et nous allons le conduire au commissariat de police.”] Macé, *Mes Lundis en prison*, 158.

⁷⁴ Peniston, “A public offense against decency,” 20.

urinal, it is almost understandable that Germiny would fight off his arrestors; inside the urinal, the symbol of authority, the police, dissolved. Indeed, Yves Guyot, member of the municipal council of Paris and strong critic of the *police des moeurs*, explicitly pointed out the problem in his critique of police practices, *The Police* (1884). He wrote that

[s]ome men, knowing that an individual should never resist a police agent for fear of capture and of condemnation for outrages against agents, pretend to be employees of the Prefecture... Sometimes they address themselves to men that they accuse of pederasty, because they entered a urinal. It is necessary to distrust the urinals, they are ambushes of the honorable Rabasse's [a inspector with the moral police] band.⁷⁵

The blackmailer, according to Guyot, needed no further evidence than the act of entering the public urinal in order to find a target; “because they entered a urinal,” a person could believably be “accuse[d] of pederasty.” The intermingling of men, the arbitrary means by which the police arrested people, and the inability of examiners to unravel their own contradictions, rendered the space susceptible to the specific tactics used by blackmailers. In other words, the police techniques that were supposedly founded upon a positivist science, led to the arbitrary actions that rendered their authority susceptible to believable usurpation by blackmailers in the first place. The constant attempt to enforce the difference between the normal and the pathological in the end led to the unraveling of the authority on which such attempts were based. The police themselves became suspect; no one could be sure who was and was not a proper representative of authority. While Guyot begins his passage by warning against those who could so easily disguise

⁷⁵ [“Des gens, sachant qu'un individu ne doit jamais résister à un agent de police par crainte de ligotage et de condamnation pour outrages aux agents; se font passer pour des employés de la Préfecture... Quelquefois ils s'adressent à des hommes qu'ils accusent de pédérastie, parce qu'ils ont entrés dans un urinoir. Il faut se méfier des urinoirs, ce sont des guets-apens pour l'honorable bande Rabasse.”] Yves Guyot, *La police* (Paris: G. Charpentier et Cie, 1884), 273.

themselves as police officers, he ends by warning against the police itself. The danger of the urinal had transformed from the pederast to the police officer.

Conclusion

The public urinal was an integral piece in the creation of a modern Paris that revolved around the circulation of goods, capital and people throughout the city. The urinal facilitated this circulation by allowing bodily needs to be hygienically and privately relieved in the course of the promenade. As such, they contributed to the spread of emerging norms of bodily propriety and hygiene by providing private spaces in public that would prevent dangerous filth and odors from infecting the city. Public urinals, therefore, attempted to strike a balance between the visibility of their facades – meant to be aesthetically pleasing, when not explicitly engaged in advertising that encouraged the passer-by to continue on his way towards a store – and the obscurity of the inside. Striking this balance, however, made public urinals particularly susceptible to appropriation by men seeking sex with other men. This take over, in turn, transformed the urinal into a destination and challenged the categories around which the police, public hygienists, and urbanists conceptualized the uses of the modern city. The attempt, and failure, by commentators to account for the use of public urinals by men seeking sex with other men and blackmailers – real or imagined – shows that everyday social practices could effectively produce new meanings within urban space outside the purview of those tasked with constructing a disciplinary city. Just as the Paris Commune put the lie to Haussmann's attempts to control the revolutionary impulse, public urinals facilitated the evasion of bodily discipline.

This administrative failure, represented by commentators and regulators' inability to not only prevent the appropriation of urinals by men seeking sex with other men, but also to discursively control the meanings of those takeovers, must therefore complicate our understanding of the development of a disciplinary society. In particular, the failure not only to understand, but to create a coherent explanatory system shows a fundamental inconsistency in the development of modern administrative techniques and knowledge systems. These doctors and commentators were unable to relegate the use of public urinals by men seeking sex with other men to emerging medical categories, just when those categories were beginning to have explanatory force. Perhaps this inability should not be a surprise. If, as Alain Corbin has effectively argued, the effective management of odors was linked to the effective management of social hierarchy, then how could a public urinal, containing the smells of untold numbers of Parisians, maintain any semblance of order?⁷⁶ The mixing of smells, the inability of any one person to distinguish his own odor from that of other, represents the mixing of pederasts and straight men and of the police and blackmailers.

The urinal was a blind spot in the vision of the urbanist-voyeur, the ultimate bureaucrat who tried to comprehend the totality of the city, how to manage it, and change its structure to facilitate the perpetuation of social norms. The example of the public urinal thus supports Michel de Certeau's cautionary critique of urban discourses that claim to understand the totality of the city, as well as his admonition to scholars, by way of a critique of Foucault, to be wary of attributing too much power to disciplinary

⁷⁶ Alain Corbin, *Le miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Flammarion, 1986), 164–169.

practices and panoptic discourses.⁷⁷ In this case, the attempt to discipline one bodily practice – public urination – enabled the perpetuation of another – pederasty. More generally, then, attempts to control certain “practices of everyday life” could lead to other, unpredictable repercussions. Thus, when André Cassard attempted to utilize the scrambled meanings of the public urinals to his own advantage by seeking a contract to build urinals that would prevent their use by the “dregs of society,” we should understand his new facilities would lead to other, unexpected and unpredictable practices. The rhetoric and practices of the interlocking fields of urbanism and public hygiene reveal themselves to exist within an a Möbius strip wherein new prohibitions, figurative and material structures, and discourses lead to new shared modes of behavior that then beget other structures, forcing scholars to face their own inability to pinpoint either a beginning or an end to the process.

Such processes, embedded within apparent contradictions and unexpected ramifications, can only be glimpsed by looking at both the failures and successes of administrative discourses and practices. In his important essay, “Tearooms and Sympathy,” Lee Edelman argues that the public men’s room in 1960s America, supposedly a site of stable gender definition, separating the “Ladies” from the “Gentlemen,” was also a site of disruption, wherein homosexuality is simultaneously seen and disavowed. The surveillance of public restrooms by state authorities betokened not just a “‘need’ to see homosexuality” for the supposed safety of Cold War America, but also revealed an implicit acknowledgement of the instability of normative sexual identity. Insofar as this contradiction could not be resolved, homosexuality came to

⁷⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 45–49.

signify a space in which the notion of normative masculinity itself failed, and by extension threatened the future of society as a whole.⁷⁸ Although Edelman's analysis rests on a psychoanalytic reading that relies on a type of restroom – gender segregated, designed for all bodily excretions rather than just urinary – that does not apply to all the types of public urinals that existed in nineteenth-century Paris, he efficiently shows how certain institutions raise anxieties that can not be resolved through surveillance and discipline. Whether the urinals of twentieth-century America or nineteenth-century France, their use by men seeking sex with other men both betokened and caused the partial failure in the narrative of social discipline.

While Edelman focuses on the psychoanalytic and cultural significations of anxiety over an inability to completely see homosexuality in the modern West, I wish to underline the importance of a failure to see an urban space under transformation. While historians and other scholars correctly emphasize the increasing attempts at regulating and administrating public life during the nineteenth century, we would be remiss to ignore the blind spots, mistakes, and general failures of vision that are always involved in such projects as well. The project of modernity, never fully grasped even by those constructing it, will always provide some opportunities for social activity outside the purview of the normal, the acceptable, and the productive. Edelman concludes his essay by describing the inability of the police to view the actual activities that occurred in a public restroom because their view was blocked by a man's back and claims that this "blockage betokens a larger blind spot in the patriarchal vision of homosexuality." He

⁷⁸ Lee Edelman, "Tearooms and Sympathy, or, The Epistemology of the Water Closet," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 568–569.

thus refuses to name it either.⁷⁹ I follow him by concluding, not by unraveling the various contradictions in the uses and discourses of public urinals in Paris during the second half of the nineteenth-century, but rather allowing them to remain confused spaces in which new and unexpected possibilities for pleasure in the modern city opened. As spaces under watch, they were untangled by those who built and observed them, but were then tangled up all over again by the people who used them.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 569.

Conclusion

In 1911, the writer André Gide began privately circulating parts of his “defense” of homosexuality, *Corydon* (1924).¹ *Corydon* consists of four dialogues between the title character and an unnamed friend who confronts Corydon about rumors of his homosexuality. The book stands as an almost too-perfect example of a “reverse discourse.” It took up the language of naturalist science and objective history to argue that pederasty – and Gide did mean pederasty in its more classical sense – signified cultural efflorescence, martial values, and social health, rather than cultural degradation, effeminacy, and degeneration.² Gide’s emphasis on precisely those values prized by traditional moralists and natalist supporters of family assistance during the period that surrounded the first World War underscores the emergence of a new conception of same-sex sexual desire that began to emerge in early twentieth century France. His friend Marcel Proust had once said, “you can tell anything, but on the condition that you never say ‘I,’” but with Gide, homosexuality had begun to speak for itself. At the same time, however, Gide did so in terms that sought to separate his own sexual practices from those condemned by others as deviant and pathological. He thus presaged a strategy of what would become known as gay rights that emphasized the “normalcy” and the

¹ André Gide, *Corydon* (New York: Noonday Press, 1950).

² Foucault argued that discourses possessed “tactical polyvalence.” They could be deployed for a variety of purposes, either against or with power. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 100–102.

complementary of same-sex sexual activity with an idealized and partly imaginary, set of bourgeois values.³

Gide's move contributed to a climate of cultural reaction in early twentieth-century France that emphasized traditional gender roles, condemned so-called individualist sexual practices, and subjected female prostitutes to continued police oppression.⁴ The early discourse of gay rights partially fractured the union of prostitutes and pederasts elaborated by expert discourse and everyday social practice during the nineteenth century. Prostitutes indeed faced a resurgent moralist discourse that favored greater regulation; the fear of disease and the rise of natalism combined to reinvigorate regulationist ideas. At the same time, however, a new discourse of female independence took shape in the guise the "new women" and then the "modern woman."⁵ Both figures represented new forms of female independence in public culture; although both figures were, at first, unsurprisingly also associated with prostitution, they also revealed how women could begin to inhabit the public sphere without engaging the types of sexual play I described above. These women's ability to play with normative assumptions of gender

³ The founder of the homophile group *Arcadie* of the post-World War II era, André Baudry, "believed that the best way to win the integration of homosexuality into society was to demonstrate its normality and respectability. The key word was 'dignity.' Homosexuality had to be separated in the public mind from prostitution, pederasty, effeminacy and so on. *Arcadie* had no nostalgia for the travestite balls of the inter-war years, and lamented the image of homosexuality that they popularized. As much of Baudry's energy went into denouncing homosexuals for their frivolity as in denouncing society's persecution of them." Julian Jackson, "Sex, Politics and Morality in France, 1954–1982," *History Workshop Journal* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 90. This debate was certainly not limited to France. Indeed, it rages today in America. See, for example Andrew Sullivan, *Virtually Normal* (New York: Vintage, 1996); Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

⁴ On these themes see especially Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France After 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), chap. 8; Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (University of Chicago Press, 1994); Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁵ Mary Louise Roberts has presented the best discussions of both these figures. See Roberts, *Civilization without sexes*, 17–87; Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (University of Chicago Press, 2002).

and sexuality depended far more on their self-presentation than their interaction with men. Slowly but surely, prostitution was becoming decoupled from the *fille publique*. Female prostitutes remained, in other words, totally isolated from respectable urban culture. If anything that isolation deepened as those who once may have frequented a prostitute now and then found that such activity labeled them as well social pariahs, while even women who utilized public space were increasingly able to escape the label. They thus asserted their right to enter public space not by manipulating men, but by showing their ability to exist without them.

The isolation of public sexual practices thus occurred on a dual plane. First, bourgeois men interested in sex with other men began to disavow certain activities in the hope of domesticating their own identities. Second, this move contributed to an increasing isolation of female prostitutes within the urban milieu. The early twentieth century has normally been seen as a period of efflorescence of madcap urban pleasures; the roaring twenties were the *années folles* for a reason. Gilles Barbedette and Michel Carassou, for instance, contrasted the “diversity” of the 1920s with the “uncertain embryo of the ‘underground’ of the Belle Epoque... The *Années folles* contributed moreover to the birth of a climate, an ambiance, without equal to the first audacities of the beginning of the century.”⁶ Rather than seeing the early twentieth century, and especially the interwar period, as a moment where sexual practices suddenly became more flexible and more apparent in public, I speculate that they actually became more restricted to certain aspects of the population. Public sex became a danger everyone had to avoid, rather than a pleasure anyone could possibly enjoy. Prostitutes remained outcasts because they, by definition, practiced acts of public sex. Privileged homosexuals, on the other hand, began

⁶ Gilles Barbedette and Michel Carassou, *Paris Gay 1925* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1981), 15.

to divorce their sexual identity from the pursuit of sex in public. More and more, the pursuit of pleasure in public required actively avoiding evidence of public sexuality for both those who otherwise sought out illicit pleasure and those who never would have done so.

And yet, it remains the case that people used the city in the pursuit of pleasure in ways that sometimes contrasted with its prescribed uses. Men continued to seek sex with other men in public, even if their former compatriots began heaping opprobrium on them. Prostitutes continued to act as a central feature of the urban sexual economy, reaching a new height as participants in “Europe’s brothel” during the Second World War.⁷ While I would certainly argue that new technologies and spaces radically transformed the ways in which people enjoyed the city, they also provided new opportunities for subverting those uses as well. The Metro, first appearing in 1900, radically compressed distance, lessened the importance of the street, and rendered “local” the entirety of Paris, but also entailed new underground spaces of encounter.⁸ The cinema encouraged audiences to watch a screen, rather than each other, but also brought about new ways of visualizing sexuality in public. I have argued throughout that marginal social individuals played a central role

⁷ On Parisian prostitution during World War II see, for example, Mary Louise Roberts, “The Silver Foxhole: The GIs and Prostitution in Paris, 1944-1945,” *French Historical Studies* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 99-128.

⁸ Marcel Proust, for instance, described “Some of these Pompeians upon whom the fire of Heaven was already pouring, descended into the Métro passages which were dark as catacombs. They knew, of course, that they would not be alone there. And the darkness which bathes everything as in a new element had the effect, an irresistibly tempting one for certain people, of eliminating the first phase of lust and enabling them to enter, without further ado the domain of caresses which as a rule demands preliminaries [Quelques-uns meme de ces Pompéiens sur qui pleuvait déjà le feu du ciel descendirent dans les couloirs du metro, noirs comme des catacombes. Ils savaient en effet n’y être pas seuls. Or l’obscurité qui baigne toute chose comme un element nouveau a pour effet, irrésistiblement tentateur pour certaines personnes, de supprimer le premier stade du plaisir et de nous faire entrer de plain-pied dans un domain de caresses où l’on n’accède d’habitude qu’après quelque temps.”] Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, vol. 4 (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 413. Translation is from Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C. K. Moncrieff, vol. 2 (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), 1122. See also Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992), 100–101.

in defining the modern urban environment because their sexual activities affected everyone who inhabited the city. Sexuality stood as an important locus of social control. The effective management of sexual activity signified the stability of the urban order. However, such stability never actually codified because authorities found themselves incapable of effectively regulating the public spaces they built and encouraged. This difficulty rendered it exceedingly hard to separate the proper from the improper pleasures of the city. The use of spaces built for proper pleasure for illicit sexuality rendered all those who entered complicit in the latter. No one could escape the possibility of becoming a member of a public sexual culture predicated on addressing both those who sought it out and those who did not. The very nature of the modern city, by encouraging interaction between strangers in sites of pleasure, rendered this mixing inevitable.

Faced with this result, Parisians found themselves with two possibilities. First, they could react negatively and encourage authorities to ensure the city remained the purified, regularized environment they had been promised. These Parisians found themselves unable to escape, even in their supposedly private home, evidence of public sex. This failure deeply threatened elite faith in their own place within urban culture. They thus encouraged the authorities to clean the city, but in doing so also invited them to violate the sacred division between private and public, thus revealing how arbitrary that line actually was. Second, some Parisians could find ways of enjoying the mixing of the proper and the improper. Whether in a *brasserie à femme*, in a bathhouse, or in a dance hall, men might utilize their privilege as men to fully enjoy the sexual possibilities of modern Paris, while women took advantage of their desires for their own ends. This pursuit of pleasure, however, also revealed the limitations of their gender, whether

because they fell under the sway of a wily serving girl or found themselves at the mercy of the police. At its most extreme, however, these men avoided the problem by disregarding both the privileges and limitations of gender in the first place. The dance hall and the music hall presented men and sometimes women with the opportunity to forget the modes of propriety that secured their ability to use the city.

Spaces of pleasure and entertainment were diverted into more illicit uses, but any public space was potentially vulnerable. The appropriation of urinals by men seeking sex with other men challenged experts to reconceptualize the possibilities of the city. By using facilities of public hygiene for sexual pleasure, pederasts forced commentators to confront their ability to differentiate between the normal and the pathological.

Ultimately, their failure to separate the proper from the improper users of public urinals showcased the most powerful affect of the use of the city for public sex. Public sex disrupted received wisdom, forced reactions amongst those who believed they already understood the urban environment, and ultimately affected the meaning of the city for all who inhabited it.

Public sexual activity has been almost entirely removed from public view. Whether the “disneyfication” of Times Square or the closure of the Parisian public urinals, new urban developments have been far more successful than their forbearers at eliminating illicit sexuality from public view.⁹ A key part of this success, however, remains the active collaboration of certain segments of sexual activists who, in an effort at securing the rights to enter bourgeois society, have abandoned the most radical possibilities of their own activism. This abandonment has certainly not remained

⁹ For important analyses of this phenomenon see Samuel R Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*, chap. 4.

uncontested, but it is difficult to dispute the relative success of those who seek to hide sex from public view. The urban culture of the nineteenth century was a moment where the appropriate pleasures of urban life slid easily into the inappropriate pleasures of illicit sex. Through the course of the twentieth century, that moment came to a close. But the movement between the proper and the improper, the licit and the illicit remains a powerful example of the ability of everyday life, ordinary activity, to powerfully affect the environment in which it takes place.

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