On March 28, 1874, the minister of public works of the young French Third Republic (1870–1940) wrote a short note to the prefect of police of Paris, alerting him to a problem at the Palais-Royal in the center of the French capital. Onetime residence of the Orléans branch of the French royal family, the Palais-Royal was by then a well-established arena of public sociability, with a garden, arcades, and small shops. It was also a long-standing haunt of women who sold sex and men who sought sex with other men. As the letter explained, “The tenants of the Galerie d’Orléans [an arcade situated between the palace itself and the garden] of the Palais-Royal complain that this gallery serves every day, particularly in the evening, as the rendezvous of individuals of both sexes with depraved morals, whose presence keeps away honest people and which causes real harm to commerce.” About a month and a half later, the police responded to the minister’s concern by affirming that this area remained under near-constant surveillance, which resulted in the “daily arrest of prostitutes and pederasts,” as men who sought


sex with other men were commonly called in the nineteenth century. At the same time, the police noted their concern that this surveillance in such a busy part of the city might also “keep away those taking a promenade without producing the desired results and that it could bring, to the contrary, grave harm to the commerce of the arcade.”

These letters place sexual solicitation as a central administrative issue and underscore its significance to wandering the Palais-Royal, especially in the evening. Though brief, the exchange reveals themes that were central to discussions of the security, safety, health, and morality of Paris among the police, moral commentators, and other administrators during the nineteenth century. The call for the police to manage who could and could not access public space, often in the name of commerce, and in light of an apparent distinction between “honest” and “dishonest” Parisians, threaded their way through attempts to manage the life of a city undergoing rapid and large-scale change. And yet the police’s fear that their own intervention would only exacerbate the problem highlights a simple fact: sex could not so easily be hidden from public view, nor could the distinction between the proper and improper users of urban space be easily sustained. Indeed, the very attempt to control those seeking sex in public may have only perpetuated the problem.

This book traces the struggle between those who tried to control evidence of sex in public and those who provided it, sought it out, and otherwise encountered it in transforming urban spaces. In doing so, it posits the central importance of women who sold sex and men who sought sex with other men to what we now consider characteristically “modern” forms of urban culture. Through the course of the century, Paris provided the setting for the development of new models of urban renewal that remade the capital into the city of broad boulevards, department stores, cafés, restaurants, and dance halls that we know today. State administrators, expert moralists, police authorities, and

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5. On the difference between the Palais-Royal during the day and at night, see Simone Delattre, Les douze heures noires: La nuit à Paris au XIXe siècle (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003), 222–227.

private entrepreneurs struggled to redesign, redevelop, and redeploy city space in ways that opened Paris to new modes of social control, circulation, and consumption. The destruction of slums and other crowded spaces to make room for new apartment buildings and streets encouraged upwardly mobile Parisians to use the public spaces of the city, which in turn propelled the growth of a mature consumer culture. At the same time, the apparent embourgeoisement of the city during the second half of the nineteenth century entailed greater efforts on the part of the authorities to manage its working-class and poor populations. Housing segregation complemented continuing police efforts to monitor working-class establishments and the streets of the city. These efforts to keep distinct the “respectable” and “disreputable” populations of the city, however, had paradoxical effects: attempts to prevent certain kinds of social interactions actually created novel opportunities for them to thrive. The provision of avenues for public enjoyment—pleasure—also provided opportunities for locating public sex.

Although the idea of Paris as a “capital of pleasure” already rose to the level of cliché in the nineteenth century, sex has often stood at the margins of histories of the city. This book reinscribes sex at the center of the history of nineteenth-century Parisian culture by arguing that the very effort to

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police the city created new opportunities for women who sold sex and men who sought sex with other men. These opportunities became clear to passing Parisians by way of ephemeral signs: an older woman standing at the door of a brothel, a discreet glance between two men outside a public urinal, a shout across a street between a woman and a passer-by. The ability to locate sex in public, made more possible by urban renovations and new police practices, implicated anyone who became aware of it. Therefore, the appropriation of the city by women who sold sex and men who sought sex with other men not only entailed the growth of two discrete sexual subcultures but also highlights the appearance of a much more diffuse sexual culture to which anyone could—temporarily, perhaps—belong. The story told here, therefore, does not revolve around the emergence of particular sexual identities as women and men sought sexual pleasure outside the family. Rather, it shows how the uses of public space encouraged various kinds of relationships between strangers that gave rise to desires that may or may not have been linked to a particular kind of identity, whether homosexual or heterosexual. The city, in this sense, incited sexual desire among the populace in an effort at controlling its effects, but sex ultimately exceeded the control of those who designed, observed, and policed it.

*Histories of Paris, Histories of Sex*

Stretching from the late Restoration (1815–1830) through successive regimes of the July Monarchy (1830–1848), Second Republic (1848–1851), Second Empire (1852–1870), Commune (1871), and first decades of the Third Republic, the story told here does not always align with major political changes. Slower and less related to singular events, the ongoing development of the city and the emergence of sexual publics relied on discourses, institutions, and practices that crossed political boundaries.¹⁰ That said, the basic periodization of the story told here follows trends laid out by other historians of sexuality, urban culture, and Parisian governance.

Recent histories of Paris have revised once-common temporal boundaries by emphasizing the significance of early nineteenth-century innovations in urban design and policing. Drawing on then-novel notions of urban development that reconceptualized the city on a grand scale in order to harmonize its constituent parts, urbanists and urban thinkers envisioned an

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urban plan that “would elevate the moral and physical condition of all its inhabitants” in order to manage a rapidly growing population, especially of the working class.11 Intervention into the city’s infrastructure was fairly limited until the Second Empire, but urbanist discourse complemented studies that linked housing conditions to disease and emphasized the risk posed by urban slums, even as local urban works foreshadowed the grand projects of Georges-Eugène Haussmann and a form of advertising laid the groundwork for the consumer culture of the latter period.12

Public City/Public Sex brings this story into dialogue with the history of sexuality by showcasing how early nineteenth-century attempts to manage the city complemented and were shaped by police efforts to control public sex. Historians of prostitution have shown that the early decades of the century were essential to the emergence of comprehensive attempts to manage and police female prostitution.13 Historians of male homosexuality, meanwhile, have emphasized the public evidence of men who sought sex with other men in the same period.14 These developments complemented emerging hygienic discourse and practice.15 The construction of a “regulated” system to control female prostitution entailed the use of physical spaces—maisons de tolérance (tolerated brothels)—to facilitate the provision of “seminal drains” for a growing working-class population in order to ensure public health and safety.16 At the same time, the city began constructing public urinals that quickly served

16. Louis Fiaux, La police des mœurs devant la Commission Extrarapportaire du Régime des Mœurs (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907), 1:212. See also Corbin, Les filles de noce, 84.
men seeking sex with other men in public. These “drains”—physical and metaphorical, hygienic and sexual—linked early Paris urbanism directly to the management of public sex.

The coincidence of new urbanist ideas and forms, novel police practices around female prostitution, and increasing public visibility of men who sought sex with other men was no accident. Rather, these elements were brought together by broader changes in urban governance, as state officials, expert commentators, and builders began to bring environment and society into “a common frame.” The groundwork laid during the first half of the century coalesced during the process known as Haussmannization, which has dominated discussion of French urban history generally and Parisian history in particular. Haussmann drew on an existing urbanism that emphasized the need to see the city “as a whole” and strove to ensure that its interlocking parts—its sewers and water systems, streets and public transport, train lines and train stations—worked together in order to facilitate the circulation of people, goods, and capital.

Haussmann’s feats have, by now, been well rehearsed: the demolition of slums, the building of new boulevards, the creation of new sewer lines displaced hundreds of thousands in an effort to open the “medieval” city to circulation. “Boulevards,” as T. J. Clark put it, “were the heart of the matter.”


21. Haussmann himself claimed to have displaced about 350,000 people (or 117,552 families). Shapiro, *Housing the Poor of Paris*, 34–35.

The emphasis on movement further cemented public space as the central axis around which the city revolved as public display took on greater importance in an emerging society of consumption. As those who once characterized the public life of the city—the working class and poor—were supposedly pushed to the side (though not, as we shall see, totally removed), a rising middle and upper-middle class increasingly emphasized their own public life. The streets became, by some lights, a place to display one’s life rather than actually live.

Haussmannization, then, contributed to the development of new forms of consumption that drew on preexisting associations of certain areas of the city with the pursuit of “pleasure.” However, although some historians have acknowledged the use of sex to sell goods, few have integrated sex qua sex into their definitions of pleasure. Public sex, it seems, was one of those objects...
The introduction to a recent volume bringing together essays on Parisian modernity, for instance, describes “the image of Paris as a world headquarters of beauty and pleasure” and references the various entertainments and spectacles that so enamored its residents and visitors during the second half of the nineteenth century—cafés, the Eiffel Tower, even its sewers—but fails to mention sex as one of the pleasures on offer. Studies of the transformation of Paris before, during, and after the process of Haussmannization have similarly had relatively little to say about sex and sexuality. Making sex available—both for sale and not—however, provided one avenue for working-class and other marginalized individuals to continue to participate in the shaping of urban life.

Sex stood as a major focus of debates around the changing city for politicians, the police, and Parisians. The attempt to manage the ways that prostitutes, pederasts, and other Parisians sought out sexual pleasure formed an important component in broader efforts to police the city while also providing the grounds on which urban space could and would be appropriated by supposedly marginal individuals. Indeed, sex forms but one avenue for witnessing the significance of the socially marginalized to the emergence of modern Paris more broadly. Understanding the relationship between the city and its citizens necessitates attention to the dynamic relationship between police attempts to manage sex and those who practiced sexual solicitation in public spaces, because this relationship implicated not only those two groups but also all Parisians and visitors to Paris. Whether addressing the commercialization of sex and the creation of sex districts for prostitution, the emergence of commercial venues for men and women to meet, or the development of gay and lesbian subcultures, scholars of sexuality have long recognized that the transformation of urban space shaped the sexual economies of the city.

27. Hollis Clayson and André Dombrowski, “Introduction,” in Is Paris Still the Capital?, 1–2. This is all the more surprising considering that one of the editors of the volume once declared, “The existence of prostitution on a scale so widespread and obvious that it alarmed contemporaries was a distinctive and distinguishing feature of nineteenth-century Parisian culture.” Clayson, Painted Love, 1. This claim closely echoes one made in Richard J. Evans, “Prostitution, State, and Society in Imperial Germany,” Past and Present no. 70 (1976): 106.

28. Although Colin Jones’s Paris: Biography of a City, for instance, does occasionally mention prostitution; it references homosexuality only twice and does not address sex or sexual behavior more broadly. See Jones, Paris: Biography of a City.

INTRODUCTION

Historians of sexuality in Paris have taken up these themes, showing how urban transformation, the emergence of public spaces such as urinals and parks, and the development of commercial entertainments reshaped the business of prostitution while also providing new opportunities for men to meet other men and women to meet other women. In general, however, these insights have not been addressed by historians in their efforts to understand the transformation of Paris more broadly.

This lacuna remains despite important recent work that has shifted our attention away from the timing and extent of an urban development that emerged from the top down to interpretations that emphasize a more multi-layered process involving administrators, workers, residents, financiers, and entrepreneurs acting against and alongside one another in diverse ways to reconstruct the city. One exception is Richard Hopkins’s recent Planning the Greenspaces of Nineteenth-Century Paris, which explores the relationship between the design and the actual use of parks and gardens. Hopkins traces the conflicts and debates that shaped urban space as Parisians took up the built environment to their own ends. In an all-too-brief discussion, Hopkins

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argues that this interaction also involved marginalized groups within the population, including female prostitutes and men who sought sex with other men, both of whom participated in the creation of communities based on the common use of public space.32

In this study I explore the dynamic relationship between those who built and those who used the city, but I argue that the sexual uses of space were more significant than has generally been recognized.33 In order to do so, I deemphasize the relative weight historians have placed on the “marginalization” or “enclosed world” of prostitution and the development of subcultures among men who sought sex with other men.34 In both instances, historians have emphasized a certain separateness of both groups from the broader social and cultural milieu of which they were also a part, even as some have acknowledged their sheer visibility.35 Indeed, the very insistence on writing a “history of prostitution” or a “history of homosexuality” orients the project around specific identities that may or may not have even operated at the time. In contrast, my approach refuses to take “identity” as my analytical center. Instead of tracing the ways specific individuals, defined in large measure by modern sexual categories, responded to repressive police forces intent on maintaining strict distinctions between “honest” Parisians and “indecent” women and “depraved” men, therefore, I question these categories.

If “respectable” heterosexual complementarity seems missing here, it is because it was always simultaneously assumed and implicated in these other forms of public sexual activity. Just as Laure Murat has troubled gender difference in nineteenth-century France through her analysis of the “third sex,” I trouble


33. In this sense, I share with recent work in the history of prostitution a concern to capture how individuals and groups who were marginalized because of their sexual behavior shaped the systems of regulation and management that sought to constrain them as they participated in the broader community. See, for instance, Nina Kushner, Erotic Exchanges: The World of Elite Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century France (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013), 6-10; Keely Stauter-Halsted, The Devil’s Chain: Prostitution and Social Control in Partitioned Poland (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015), esp. chap. 3.

34. Corbin, Les filles de noce, pt. 1, chap. 2; Harsin, Policing Prostitution, 206; Peniston, Pederasts and Others, 67–69. Scholars in the fields of literary criticism, queer studies, and social theory have been more apt to highlight the centrality of these figures—even if often only as symbols—to modern urban life. See, for instance, Susan Buck-Morss, “The Flâneur, the Sandwichman, and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering,” New German Critique 39 (1986): 104; Rita Felski, The Gender of Modernity (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 19–20; Bech, When Men Meet, 154; Julie Abraham, Metropolitan Lovers: The Homosexuality of Cities (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 30.

the too often assumed distinction between “normal” and “abnormal” sexuality. In doing so, I question whether it is true, as she argues, that during the long nineteenth century “the ‘third sex’ will always be the other, the stranger, the incongruous, and, between 1835 and 1939, no matter their sexuality, the ‘feminine’ man and the ‘masculine’ woman remain ‘displaced’ figures, provoking more often malaise than enthusiasm.”36 By opening up the categories of the prostitute and the homosexual and refusing to project contemporary categories backward into the past, I show that neither person remained fixed by virtue of their sexual behavior.37 The archival traces of female prostitution and same-sex sexual attraction and their relation to other kinds of urban subjectivities emerge instead as a key analytic question. By taking “public sex,” rather than “the female prostitute” or “the homosexual,” as the frame of reference, I show how the story of Paris and Parisians remains incomplete without the story of sex as well.

**The Logic of Regulationism**

*Public City/Public Sex* integrates histories of sexuality with histories of Paris by emphasizing the mutually constitutive nature of space, sex, and identity. In this regard, I remain indebted to Michel Foucault’s interpretation of the history of sexuality. Rejecting what he termed the “repressive hypothesis,” Foucault claimed that the eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries witnessed an “apparatus for producing an ever greater quantity of discourse about sex, capable of functioning and taking effect in its very economy.”38 The constitution of a particular relationship between desire, pleasure, the body, and the self emerged out of various practices that demanded new ways of speaking of sex. As sex became a key avenue through which populations would be managed and the body regimented, new sexualities themselves emerged. If I avoid here Foucault’s famous declaration that this process turned the ho-


mosexual, for example, into a “species,” it is because I am more interested in the multiplicities and indeterminacies implied by his argument. As Andrew Clark-Huckstep has argued in light of Foucault’s claims, following Laura Doan, “identity should be a contingent space, one held open enough to allow for ambiguity, disidentification and perhaps the lack of sexual identity to be found in historical sources.” I therefore follow Foucault’s recommendation to “reverse the direction of our analysis: rather than assuming a generally acknowledged repression[,] . . . we must begin with these positive mechanisms, insofar as they produce knowledge, multiply discourse, induce pleasure, and generate power.” This approach assumes that discourses, institutions, and practices that struggled to control people, their desires, and their activities actually made new kinds of social relationships, identities, and desires that may or may not be familiar to those we live with today. Processes of urban management were thus always at one and the same time processes of urban creation as well.

In particular, I reorient Foucault’s description of the “incitement to discourse” in The History of Sexuality around the questions of space that he addressed more fully elsewhere. For Foucault, modern society “incites” people to speak of their sex and sexuality as a way of producing it as an object of examination, regulation, and subjecthood. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault also addresses the ways that space “disciplines” the body by enforcing particular relations between individuals. While this feat often came in the guise of enclosure—placing people in prisons, asylums, even schools—it also necessitated particular bodily arrangements: “Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up.” According to Foucault, the arrangement of space simultaneously enforces and primes specific responses within the body. The attempt to regulate space does not repress certain kinds of experiences; rather, it creates them.

Public City/Public Sex takes up these ideas at the level of the city, arguing that sexual desire was produced through a logic of regulationism that captured various forms of sexual behavior, created common understandings

39. Ibid., 43.
41. Foucault, History of Sexuality, 73.
43. Foucault, History of Sexuality, 17–35.
44. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 202.
of the relationship between such behavior and urban sexual management, and thus became integral to the everyday life of nineteenth-century Paris. “Regulationism” in this context usually refers to state efforts to manage the business of female prostitution through a combination of medical and legal efforts to monitor women who sold sex. First put into practice in France, but then used throughout nineteenth-century Europe, regulationism involved police registration of prostitutes and licensing of brothels in order to track and enclose women who sold sex, combined with regular medical examinations to prevent the spread of venereal disease. Regulationism was premised on a specific understanding of male sexual desire. Understood as an almost uncontrollable force, male desire required suitable outlets. Especially directed at the city’s growing working-class population, regulation was a “necessary” and “inevitable” evil that would ensure the moral and physical health of the city’s residents by hiding away and monitoring prostitutes.45

Regulationism therefore refers to the state control over working-class women’s bodies in the service of male heterosexual desire. But it also foregrounds a broader spatial politics—a logic of regulation—that united a wider range of relationships between space, desire, and publicity in the modern metropolis.46 Premised on the provision of spaces for the fulfillment of male sexual urges, the logic of regulationism promoted a spatial organization that simultaneously acknowledged the sexual connotations of urban space and attempted to hide them away. In this sense, the entire city was designed to facilitate male heterosexual sexual pleasure. The logic of regulation organized space in ways that strove to control how sex appeared and to ensure that people—medical and state authorities, to be sure, but also residents and tourists—could recognize the city’s sexual possibilities. This awareness and disavowal characterized an urban politics that revolved around managing the use of public space for seeking out sex and for eliciting sexual desire that


46. The phrase “logic of regulation” is not original to my work, but it usually refers to regulationism more strictly defined. See, for example, Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), ix; Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 357–367. Others have noted how the regulation of prostitution revolved around much more than just the seclusion of suspect women but was also wrapped up in an entire economy of moral and medical regulation. See, for instance, Aisenberg, *Contagion*, 59–60.
involved more than managing brothels. Rather, it implicated entire neighborhoods as people navigated a city increasingly devoted to managing public sex.

I draw on work by historians and geographers of sexuality to argue that regulationist thought implicated a wider range of hygienist and moralist thought and administrative and police practice than the management of female prostitution. Rather, the discourses and practices that undergirded tolerated sex work created broadly shared modes of understanding and using sexualized public spaces. As administrators, moral commentators, and public hygienists sought to encourage and direct heterosexual desire, they provided new avenues for all Parisians, whether prostitutes, pederasts, their clients and partners, or passers-by, to encounter one another in city spaces implicitly and explicitly associated with sexual desire. Those encounters, in turn, produced a sexualized city that often escaped the limits laid out by the authorities in the first place.

By centering everyday encounters in its analysis, Public City/Public Sex asserts that those who used public space played an important role in defining the city and urban culture. In doing so, it follows Michel de Certeau’s claim that spatial meaning emerges out of a dialogue between those who envision urban space as a source of social control and those who use it. Specifically, the very premise of regulationism—that men’s sexual energies required outlets—necessitated the provision of sexual spaces and signifiers in public space that could never be completely under the control of those who described and built them. Once these spaces and signs were put into place, women who sold sex and men who sought sex with other men were able to rely on them and


deploy them to their own ends, muddying their disciplining effects at least for a time. In doing so, they actively participated in shaping the meaning of modern Paris by forcing all Parisians to reckon with the sexual uses of space.

I approach my archive of police records, letters from Parisians, and published work of police memoir, sociology, and early sexology through a lens indebted to queer histories that have decoupled the history of sexuality from that of identity. Laura Doan has recently argued that “history making framed by ‘identity knowledge’ constrains even as it illuminates, because it is mobilized by the epistemological and social structures of modern sexuality.” \(^{49}\) Doan emphasizes the essential difference between even the recent sexual past and today, arguing that we should engage with a kind of “unknowingness about the past to discover what is now ‘unheard of.’” \(^{50}\) Complementing the work of other historians, such as John Howard, Sharon Marcus, and Colin Johnson, these ideas encourage scholars to approach the recent past cautiously, without categorizing forms of sexual behavior along familiar or modern lines. \(^{51}\) Therefore, I trace how certain categories—the female prostitute, the male homosexual, the “normal” Parisian—remained rather murky when approached through an analysis of space. Indeed, I argue that urban space brought the three groups together without necessarily defining them as different from one another. Sexual identity thus fails to capture the significance of their encounters. Indeed, even as individuals negotiated often constraining social hierarchies as they interacted with others, their shared participation in an urban sexual culture ultimately also highlights the rather blurry lines between supposedly distinct, class, gender, and sexual identities.

My approach therefore recognizes that individuals experienced their sexual desires differently on the basis of their biological sex, their gender identity, and their class position, but it rejects the assumption that those distinctions necessarily created, constituted, or denoted new identity categories. Instead, I follow the archives themselves, which put into dialogue a wide range of sexual behaviors with that of female prostitution, the main focus of the nineteenth-century police. \(^{52}\) This association challenges the idea that the late eighteenth century witnessed a clear fracturing of categories of moral disorder along identitarian

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50. Ibid., 4.
and regulatory lines. Indeed, the authorities maintained a broader interest in managing what I call public sex, meaning any act that occurred in view of some group of strangers—a public—that referenced the possibility of sexual desire, relationship, or enticement. The recognition of the signs of sex, then, created a public sexual culture premised on the incitement to sexual desire. This public sexual culture was defined by the momentary inclusion of people, acting in public, as they recognized the possibility of sexual encounter. Here I abide by Michael Warner’s “notion of a public [that] enables a reflexivity in the circulation of texts among strangers who become, by virtue of their reflexively circulating discourse, a social entity.” Warner understands a public—as opposed to the public—as a formation that emerges through the mutual recognition and understanding of a particular discourse. Broadening out the meaning of “text,” I describe a process of sexual public making that involved the creation of a common understanding of the signs of sex, the incitement of (usually, though not exclusively, male) sexual desire, and the momentary recognition of such an encounter between two or more people through letters, gestures, touch, and conversation.

Warner differentiates between “publics” and “counterpublics.” The latter emerges through forms of address that are directed at particular strangers and “maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status.” “Counter,” however, is not the same thing as “sub.” To speak of publics and counterpublics is not to likewise speak of majorities and minorities, of culture and subculture, but to speak of particular modes of address: “Counterpublics are ‘counter’ to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining stranger sociability and its reflexivity; as publics, they remain oriented to stranger circulation in a way that is not just strategic but constitutive of membership and its affects.” The formation of a counterpublic is thus predicated on the possibility of producing forms of interaction that only some people may recognize and that run askew from “dominant” social expecta-

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55. Ibid., 11–12.


57. Warner, Publics and Counterpublics, 119.

58. Ibid., 121–122.
tions, but they nevertheless remain by definition directed at everyone and thus accessible to anyone “in the know.” This combination of an awareness of difference predicated on universal address is what makes this approach to sexual solicitation so powerful. Even as it recognizes the existence of public sex as oppositional to certain social expectations, it also acknowledges the power of public sexual activity to constitute forms of belonging that coexist and shape how anyone could understand their own location in the city.

These ideas have reoriented my interpretation of regulationism around a broader range of public interactions between Parisians. While regulationism as strictly defined focused on the problem of female prostitution, its foundational assumption that male heterosexual desire could be managed through the proper administration of people and spaces expanded the reach of administrators and moralists concerned with public sex more broadly. Specifically, by the mid-nineteenth century, as the police struggled to address sexual assault, exhibitionism, and voyeurism, the authorities and other experts became especially drawn to public sexual activity between men.59 Ostensibly freed of state interference by the decriminalization of sodomy during the French Revolution, male same-sex sexual activity was nonetheless actively policed, often under the rubric of “public offenses against decency.”60 Despite exercising wide latitude over men who sought sex with other men, the police lamented sodomy or pederasty’s absence from the law code, even as they essentially applied a regulationist logic to managing the “problem.” A public

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offense against decency was, after all, not simply a moral category defined by the improper appearance of sex, sexual behavior, or genitals but also a spatial one, establishing publicity as key to an offense. While the police never licensed brothels for men who sought sex with other men, they did recognize that they could not completely eradicate same-sex sexual activity from the city. Asserting that male same-sex sexual activity was evidence of sickness and moral deformity, they attempted to manage evidence of its existence much as they did female prostitution. Trying to control the public signs of sex, the police united their concern over female prostitution and men who sought sex with other men into a common problematic of urban governance. In this way they helped produce a shared sexual culture that implicated anyone who felt sexual arousal or disgust on the street.

The logic of regulation shaped how the police, prostitutes, pederasts, and other Parisians encountered one another, recognized the sexual possibilities of the city, and ultimately forged a modern urban culture in dialogue with one another through the course of the nineteenth century. The logic of regulation required that the police put into practice a form of urban regulation that largely revolved around providing for men’s sexual appetites. In the wake of working-class population growth during the early part of the century, the police began building an administrative structure through which they attempted to regulate and manage all sorts of sexual behavior in public until the end of the century. Because regulationism asserted the central importance of recognizing and misrecognizing the indications and availability of public sex, these efforts laid the groundwork for the mid-century emergence of a public sexual culture that depended on ensuring that Parisians recognized the signs of sex. In response, even as the logic of regulation still shaped administrative approaches to sex and the city, by the end of the century it was also put into play by Parisians themselves. Indeed, the police found themselves torn between a Republican citizenry who demanded a purified urban space and Parisians and visitors who sought out sexual pleasure in new commercial establishments that found great profit in selling the pleasures of a public sexual culture.

61. Maurice Laugier, “Du rôle de l’expertise médico-légale dans certains cas d’outrage public à la pudeur,” Annales d’hygiène publique et médecine légale 2, no. 50 (1878): 165. See also Chapter 2 herein.