

Mrs. Berkley's Salon:

Pleasure, Perversion & the Technologies of Sexual Life in pre-Victorian London

David Rosen

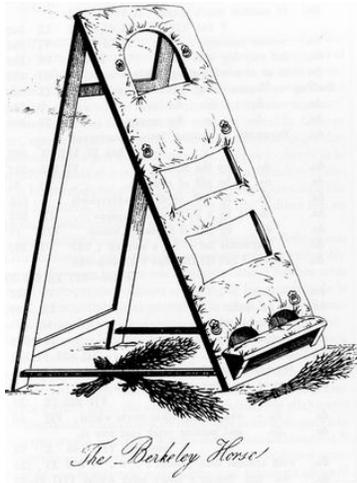
*The metaphysical meaning of sadism
is the hope that the revolt of man
will take on such intensity as to summon nature to change its laws.*

Walter Benjamin¹

The pleasure of pain

One of the most celebrated houses of ill repute in London during the pre-Victorian era was the flagellation parlor owned and operated by Mrs. Theresa Berkley at 28 Charlotte Street. According to Mary Wilson, a fellow brothel owner and author of the 1860 memoir, *Venus Schoolmistress*, Mrs. Berkley "possessed the first grand requisite of a courtesan, viz., lewdness."^{*}

The half-century between 1780s and the start of the Victoria's reign in 1837 is considered by some the "heyday" of English flagellation.² According to Iwan (Ivan) Bloch, the "dean" of scholarly students of perversion, "it is possible to maintain that England was at one time the classic of flagellation. ... " Writing in *Sexual Life in England, Past & Present*, a singular history of British mores and manners, Bloch notes: "In no other country has the passion for the rod been so systematically practiced and developed."³ The historian Lawrence Stone confirms this assessment, reporting that "'Le vice Anglais' was



well established by the eighteenth century, apparently by both sexes."⁴

Besides Mrs. Berkley's salon, there were quite a number of other "flagellant brothels" operating in London during this tumultuous period of English history. Among them were ones run by Miss Wilson, who one author has been described as "the Gourdan* of the nineteenth century, one of the 'queens' of prostitution' ... who made use of every modern device and refinement."⁵

Over the course of the fifteen years of her public service, from 1815 to 1830, she operated brothels on Old Bond Street, Tonbridge Place, New Road, St. Pancras and Hall Place, St. John's Wood. Another contemporary was Mrs. Sarah Potter (alias Stewart) who, when arrested, was in possession of a little book that detailed her business practices. According to one source, at Mrs. Potter's establishment,

* Madame Gourdan ran a series of celebrated "first class" brothels on Boulevard de Sebastopol and Rue des Deux Portes in Paris during the late 18th century, serving the heterosexual and homosexual inclinations of male and female socialities. [see Bassermann/204-05; Benjamin and Masters/289]

* Image: FemDom Magazine

The girls were flogged in many different ways. Often they were bound to the ladder, at other times whipped around the room or laid on the bed. Any idea or innovation which the perverted fancy could imagine was made use of to vary the orgies ...⁶

One of the other renowned "governesses," as these women were endearingly called, operating a flagellant brothel during this period was Mrs. Collet at Travistock Court, Covent Garden. She was celebrated because the Prince of Wales, the future George IV, is reported to have been a regular visitor to her very fashionable establishment. Still others included Marie Aubrey, whose salon was on Seymour Place, Bryanston Square; Mrs. Mitchell, with operations at 22 Waterloo Road and at St. Mary's Square, Kennington; Mrs. James, at 7 Carlisle Street, Soho; Ms. Emma Lee (Richardson) who ran a brothel at 50 Margaret Street (off Regent Street); and Mrs. Phillips, with a facility at 11 Upper Belgrave Street, Pimlico.⁷ Mrs. Berkley, however, was the most notorious.

According to Bloch, Mrs. Berkley "could be jovial and amusing; and used to find out every inclination, every whim, every mood, every wish of her clients, and satisfy them, as soon as ever she was suitably paid." Further, he stressed that "[h]er arsenal of instruments were vastly more complete than that of any other governess."⁸ Ms. Wilson described the tools of Mrs. Berkley's establishment with acute rigor:

"Her supply of birch was extensive, and kept in water so that it was always green and pliant: she had a shaft with a dozen whip thongs on each of them; a dozen different sizes of cat-o-nine tails, some with needle points worked into them; various kinds of thin bending canes; leather straps like coach traces; battledores made of thick sole-leather, with inch nails run through to docket, and

currycomb tough hides rendered callous by years flagellation. Holly brushes, furze brushes; a prickly evergreen, called butchers brush; and during summer, glass and China vases filled with a constant supply of green nettles, with which she often restored the dead to life."

The full array of indulgences afforded a visitor were considerable, as Ms. Wilson notes: "Thus, at her shop, whoever went with plenty of money, could be birched, whipped, fustigated, scourged, needle-pricked, half-hung, holly-brushed, furze-brushed, butcher-brushed, stinging nettled, curry-combed, phlebotomized, and tortured till he had a belly full."⁹

The first of London's formal flagellant clubs appears to have opened around the middle of the 18th century. According to Lujo Bassermann, "In London, the rod became standard equipment for whores between 1750 and 1760."¹⁰ Bloch reports that the earliest of these establishments was operated by "a Mrs. Jenkins [who] won great renown as a flagellant."

Charlotte Hayes was perhaps the most innovative madam of this formative period. She operated a series of what were known as "new brothels" or "nunneries" on, first, Great Marlborough Street, followed by another on King's Place off Pall Mall. Her modern approach was evident in such innovative practices as conducting medical examinations of her "girls" and providing condoms to each couple. Her clientele consisted mostly of elderly gentlemen of means or rich widows. According to one historian, she paired "the gentlemen mainly with very young girls ..., for whom they had to pay from five to twenty guineas, and the ladies with experienced young bachelors, who might cost anything up to fifty." Mrs. Hayes, like many of her sister entrepreneurs, quickly adapted new, innovative technologies to fulfill perhaps the deepest human drive --

sexual passion. She had special elastic beds constructed that gave "the finest movements in the most ecstatic moments without trouble or the least fatigue to agent or passive."¹¹

At Mrs. Hayes' establishment, the centerpiece of each evening's entertainment was an artistically staged sex show. The most celebrated of these was the "South Sea Revels," highlighted by the "Dances from Otahiti," which were so scandalous that, according to Bassermann, they "would not be permitted so openly, before a large group of eminent spectators, anywhere in Europe [in the 1960s]."¹² According to another scholar, these performances featured "young men and woman [who] copied the postures in Aretino prints."¹³

The star of these – as well as many other -- 18th century and early-19th century sex shows was the "posture girl" or, far less frequently, the posture boy. Forgotten today, the posture girl was a celebrated mid-18th century performance artist. The appeal of such female performers was vividly depicted in the 1749 publication, *The History of the Human Heart*:

... a Bumper the Ladies was ordered to prepare. They immediately stripped stark naked, and mounted themselves on the middle of the Table. ... They were clean limbed, fresh complexioned, and had Skins as white as the driven Snow, which was heightened by jet-black Color of their Hair. ... The Throne of Love was thickly covered with Jet-black hair, a least a Quarter of a Yard long, which she carefully spread apart, to display the entrance into the Magic Grotto.

The performance involved more than passive display or posturing, demonstrating an eroticism that invokes religious sacrament:

They each filled a Glass of Wine, and laying themselves in an extended Posture placed their Glasses on the Mount of Venus, every

Man in Company drinking of the Bumper, as it stood on that tempting Protuberance.... They then went thro' the several Postures and Tricks made use to raise debilitated Lust ...¹⁴

During such a performance, young women "stripped naked and mounted a table to demonstrate their posterior attractions."¹⁵ A performance by one such artist in 1766 has been described in some detail in London's *Midnight Spy*:

A beautiful woman lies stretched on the floor and offers to the view just those parts of her body that, were she not without all shame, she would most zealously seek to conceal. As she is given to drink, she arrives usually half drunk, and after two or three glasses of Madeira exposes herself to men in this unseemly manner. Look, she is on all four now, like an animal. She is ridiculed, and men gloat over such prostitution of incomparable beauty.¹⁶

Mixing the art of performance with the perhaps more compelling attractions of degradation and humiliation, the posture girl served as a powerful erotic stimulant to male (and occasionally female) patrons. Nevertheless, as an historian reminds us, "Those who were willing to display their sexual parts in public show had probably gone the furthest into unconventionality."¹⁷

Block states with emphatic certainty that "[t]he most notorious female flagellant of the 18th century was Elizabeth Brownrigg, an obvious sadist, who was executed at Tyburn on 14th September 1767" for the savagery she is reported to have inflicted on her children, servants and others. Her practices have been reported as follows:

... it was a common practice for her to lay down upon the kitchen floor a couple of chairs so that one supported the other, and then, aided by her husband, she fastened her victim, previously stripped naked, upon the backs of these chairs, and whipped her from the shoulders to the buttocks until,

from sheer exhaustion, she [Mrs. Brownrigg] was compelled to desist. On other occasions, Brownrigg fastened the [victim] girl's hands together, attached a rope to them which she slung over a strong hook in the ceiling, and then hoisted her victim, naked as the day of her birth, so that she swung at the end of the rope. In this position, sometimes with a horsewhip, sometimes with a cane, sometimes with a broom, she lashed or beat at the naked body until the blood gushed from the wounds.¹⁸

Her husband and accomplice, James, received only a jail sentence for his part in the crimes.¹⁹

Still other more traditional flagellation clubs of the late 18th century included the "White House," "Mother Cumins" and the "Elysium" in Brydges Street. Nevertheless, the appeal to flagellation appears to have been not limited to men, nor to activities conducted exclusively in commercial sex clubs. One example may help illustrate both elements. A report in the December 1792 issue of London's *Bon Ton Magazine* describes a female flagellant's club. It is reported to have met every Thursday night at a private facility on Jermyn Street. The sexual practices engaged in by these – mostly married -- women was described in the following detail:

These female members are mainly married women, who, tired of marriage in its usual form, and the cold indifference which is wont to accompany it; determined by a novel method to reawaken the ecstasy which they knew at the beginning of their married life. ... The honourable society or club to which we refer never has fewer than twelve members. At each meeting six are chastised by the other six. They draw lots for the order of procedure: then, either a written speech is read or an extempore one delivered, on the effects of flagellation as it has been practiced from the earliest age to the present day; ... after which the six patients take their places, and the six flagellants begin the practical demonstration. The president of the club hands to each a stout rod, and begins the

chastisement herself, with any variations she likes, while the others watch.

The report concludes, appealing to a higher literary standard, that "Sometimes, by order of the president, the whipping starts on the calves and goes up to the posterior, until the whole region, as Shakespeare says, from milk-white 'become one red'."²⁰

Whether an accurate report or a mere pornographic fantasy, the story – as historian Emma Donoghue warns -- "should be taken with a large pinch of salt."²¹ Nevertheless, as she further notes, it "is based on rumours of a real club of the time." The tale reflects many male heterosexual conventions, the most obvious being the unstated assumption that sex between women is but a substitute for – not a true alternative to -- the desire for the male partner. Nevertheless, it does suggest the existence of not only female flagellants, but of clubs – not to mention pubs frequented by lesbians as well as lesbian brothels -- dedicated to fulfilling exclusive female sexual pleasures.^{*22}

The making of modern sexuality

The "modern" character of Anglo-American male and female sexuality began to develop its current shape during the 18th century. According to Lawrence Stone, during the two-and-one-half centuries between 1570 to 1810, England underwent repeated

* Bloch notes a 1711 report in the "Spectator," a London magazine, of a "club of female wrestlers" and adds: "Once a week the club assembled at quarters which they hired for the year. Once there they threw off the restraint and decency and flew at each other in a free for all scramble and tussle. From ten in the evening until four the next morning they tumbled about wildly, pummeling and scratching each other and destroying both the property and clothes of each other." [Bloch, *Sex Extreme*-214-15]

waves of evolving sexual life, which – collectively – form the bedrock of what is now accepted as heterosexuality. "English society thus passed through several phases," notes Stone, providing the following useful schema from the end of the 16th century to the early 19th century:

A phase of moderate toleration lasting until the end of the 16th century; a phase of repression that ran from 1570 to 1670; and a phase of permissiveness, even license, that ran over a century from 1670 to 1810. This was followed by a new wave of repression that began in 1770, was spreading fast by 1810, and reached its apogee in the mid-Victorian period.²³

Accepting Stone's four-phased model suggests not only a wave-like ebb and flow of permissiveness followed by repression (with much overlap or undertow within each phase), but one in which the boundary between permissible and illicit or perverse sexual behavior keeps being redefined as a component or feature of the larger social forces transforming society.

During the pre-Victorian era, the dominant Western or "modern" forms of heterosexual pleasure and male self-identification were institutionalized – becoming, in tern, defining features of romantic love and the nuclear family system. In particular, the first half of the 18th century saw the establishment of the formal structure of male and, to a lesser extent, female heterosexuality. During the latter half of the century, this structure took on the unique particularities of expression -- especially in their excesses -- that came to define much of the popular sexual culture of North America and part of Western Europe up until the traumatic decades of "sexual revolution" of the 1960s-1970s.

Randolph Trumbach notes in his definitive history of the period, *Sex and the Gender Revolution*:

Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London: "Seventeenth-century society had ... presumed that although there were three kinds of bodies (men, women, and hermaphrodites), there were only two kinds of gender (male and female)." Going further, he adds:

After 1700 this system was replaced by another for men but not for women. For males, there were now two kinds of bodies (male and female) but three genders (man, woman, and sodomite) -- since the sodomite was supposed to experience his desires and play his role as a result of a corrupted education and not because of a bodily condition. For women, the old system of three bodies [i.e., male, female and hermaphrodite] and two genders could still be presumed.^{*24}

It is now almost forgotten that during the preceding centuries people lived a different social model of sexuality, particularly male sexuality. As Trumbach reminds us, "In European society before 1700 probably most males felt desire for both males and females. ... the actual sexual behavior of men had changed little from what it has been in ancient pagan Mediterranean world."²⁵ Such a sexual culture did not presume that every man was pan- or bi-sexual, nor actively pursuing sexual relations with every female and/or male he met. As B. R. Burg points out,

The preponderant majority of [young males] -- apprentices, servants, or agricultural laborers -- lived and worked in a heterosexual milieu. Relations between persons of opposite sexes dominated their observations on every hand and served as the basis for the development of their social and sexual orientation.²⁶

* A distinct homo-eroticism among women, often referred to as "sapphists" (for Sappho), "tribades" (a 16th century term for a woman who rubbed herself or for having an extended clitoris or "female member") or "Tommy" did not emerge in England until the 1770s. [Trumbach, p. 65; see also Donoghue, p. 4-5, 27.]

This was a social culture that sometimes did not consider consensual male-only sexual engagement (let alone desire) among the apparent minority of men* so involved as "abnormal". Homoerotic attraction, while formally despised by church and state alike, seems to have been socially tolerated as long as it did not violate the particular conventions of age and gender roles. Sexual attraction between men, between men and male youths and among "lads" had for centuries been formally subject to church and civil punishment (sometimes even resulting in death*). As a new urban culture emerged, a moment of social tolerance also emerged, transforming sexuality.

Homoerotic attraction in the 17th century -- and to a lesser extent in the 18th century -- Britain was not understood as an unacceptable dimension of masculinity. As Burg advises, "Whether wealthy or poor, confirming Anglican or religious dissenter, royalist or parliament man, sodomy was simply another crime, another work of the devil with little inherent capacity to evoke passionate

* Two exceptions during the 17th and 18th centuries where homosexuality may have been a predominant practice was among British seafarers and the "vagabond brotherhoods," the all-male gangs that wandered the countryside; see Burg/43-68.

* Homosexual offenses, and their respective punishment, differed for men and women. For men, the crime involved genital-anal penetration and the transmission of seminal emissions, with punishments ranging from a fine, standing in a public pillory, imprisonment, flogging to being hanged. [Burg/25, 35; Spencer/186-93; Trumbach/7-8; see especially Block/SexExtr-132-34] For women, prosecution involved sodomy in which a dildo or other instrument was used as a substitute penis; punishment for such offenses ranged as widely as that for men. [Donoghue/59]

detestation." Nevertheless, as Burg warns, "This is not to imply that sodomy was an acceptable style of conduct."²⁷ Even when there were violations of the dominant conventions, such actions for the most part seem to be perceived as inappropriate rather than abnormal. For males, the changes in self-hood that accommodated the imposition of an exclusive heterosexual self-identity brought with it the establishment of a social category that would formally become known as homosexuality.**

The sexual polarities of the "sodomite" and the "libertine" represented the extremes of not only sexual identity for males, but of heterosexuality itself. In their own way, each represented a challenge to the dominant paradigm of self-restrained, monogamous heterosexual culture. Each served as a form of contestation with the rising social demand to control passion and to express this focused passion through the prescribed psycho-physical-sexual practices of a new type of marriage – one limited to genital-vaginal intercourse that served the needs of both procreation and pleasure. Trumbach's research found that

The sodomites ... inverted the rituals of marriage, spoke of intercourse as marriage and the room with the beds as the chapel, and gave birth to wooden dolls. But these rituals were only incidentally religious: they were primarily in protest against the exclusion of sodomites from marriage and from all legitimate sexuality. The libertines, however, seemed to have aimed at a more elaborate reconstruction of their culture.²⁸

While the sodomite sought acceptance within terms of the dominant values of the conventional Christianity of the

** Homosexuality as a formal psycho-sexual social category would not be formally established until the 1890s. [Spencer/10]

day; the libertine activity sought to subvert these values. According to Colin Spencer, "The libertine [was] bisexual and makes no value judgment on his sexual partner, he appears indifferent to the idea of a preference to either."²⁹ Adding more confusion to this classification schema, male effeminacy – often expressed in the extravagant dress of the libertine "fops, rakes and beaux" – was considered a sign of the sodomite.³⁰ Ironically, as Stone astutely observes, "Protestant theology began the slow separation of sexual pleasure from procreation that ended in the last 17th-century spread of both contraception and libertinism."³¹

The libertine challenged the dominant model that equated personal virtue with sexual commitment to a single spouse and that linked pleasure with procreation. As Trumbach notes, libertines "used their sexual experience to construct a moral alternative to Christianity's view of sexual pleasure."³² While the sodomite would -- after much political struggle -- be reconstituted into today's homosexual, the libertine has all but died out as the landed gentry and early bourgeoisie were superseded

* * The libertine is distinct from the "dandy" of the late-18th and early-19th century. Dandies like George Bryan (Beau) Brummell and Lord Alvanley symbolized a peculiar type of self-expression of the Regency period. They were noted for their dress, the "Macaroni uniform, " that "entailed squeezing the figure into a very tight, very long-tailed coat with pastel-coloured breeches, a suffocating stock, wigs a yard high and high-heeled shoes, preferably studded with jewels." [Murray/45] Nevertheless, as Venetia Murray has noted, "Regency London dandyism was a revolt against ... tradition, an expression of distaste for the extravagance and ostentation of the previous generation, and of sympathy with the new mood of democracy." [Murray/35; see also Bloch/SexExtreme-92, 96.]

by the contradictions of "modern," middle-class Victorian and post-Victorian society. Nevertheless, the impulse or desire for a more passionate, hedonistic and, sometimes, perverse experience of pleasure, has persisted, serving as a powerful (if marginal) force of subversion during the subsequent two centuries. This subversive passion would be shared -- as an extreme expression of desire -- by some heterosexuals and homosexuals alike.

Trumbach distinguishes three unintended consequences of this new sexuality -- consequences that continue to significantly effect social sexuality to this day. First, male sexual passion became heterosexual -- exclusive, mandatory and absolute; female passion was altogether denied -- due to the then-current "blindness" of the dominant patriarchy. Ironically, this resulted in significantly less state and church condemnation of relations between women. As Donoghue observes, "the legal silence on sex between women seems to have been uniquely British."³³

Second, self-identified heterosexual men were required to maintain and demonstrate a fierce anti-homosexuality. This homophobia was directed both outwardly (against individual attraction to other men or youths) and inwardly (against auto-eroticism – this being most explicitly expressed as the oft-repeated prohibitions against masturbation.)³⁴ Such phobia toward self and other's maleness – physicality -- were symptoms of the greater battle capitalist industrialization was waging to control nature – this time targeted at disciplining sexual passion. Male, if not human, "second nature" was being

* Masturbation by males was then called "onenism" or self-pollution and "nymphomania" for women. [Trumbach, 63, 65]

transformed into a socially-prescribed desire – one that responded only to exclusive heterosexual object choices while forcefully repressing a set of very different types of physical, erotic passions having to do with auto- and homo-erotic pleasure.

Finally, men sought new physical outlets for their disciplined heterosexual desires -- and did so within a context increasingly defined by an expanding market economy, an economy that saw sexual relations as a form of commodity exchange. This disciplining was but one dimension of the larger social processes that, collectively, would create the "modern" West. Other dimensions of this vast society-wide process included: the rapid destruction of traditional rural society through the enclosure of the commons; the concomitant urbanization, with its tumultuous population increases; expansion of the factory system of industrialization; the rise of the bourgeois state; and the hegemony of capitalist social relations, i.e., monetary exchange as the principle determinate of social and personal values.

On a personal level, outlets for the expression of this new male heterosexuality were often found outside the confines of monogamous marriage, sometimes at the extremes where genuine libidinous desire and repressed rage crossed. In themselves, these outlets were both the personally painful and the socially disruptive consequences of the imposition of this new sexual order.

The wages of sin

The foremost physical outlet for this new form of male heterosexual passion was female prostitution. This age-old institution of male-female social relationship was fully remade during this era. While men continued to go to prostitutes for sexual

"release" if not pleasure, the new requirements of enforced heterosexuality added greater demands to this encounter.³⁵

The prostitute played many roles for her male customer. These included:

She was seductress and boon companion. But she was also a trickster and a thief. She was the monogamous wife of her good husband, and she was also one among many of her harem. She was dominated and abused, spat at and anally penetrated. Her private parts were the delight to a man's eye – a great unknown darkness through which he moved with a candle; but he was also contemptuous of her making them public. He beat her to make her good and then submitted to her as his stern but loving mother.³⁵

And she was a lot more. As Trumbach notes, "[t]he most practical way therefore for a man to prove his heterosexuality was to go to a prostitute."³⁶ She served as a social safety valve used to lessen the personal-social tension that developed as the interval between the age of sexual maturity and the mean age of marriage steadily expanded. By the 18th century, the interval had reached ten years or more, thus – and this became an acute issue within the less formally supervised urban context of industrializing London, Manchester and other cities – introducing new pressures for sexual fulfillment.³⁷ Finally, married men used prostitutes to set limits to the intimacy they were now expected to share with their wives.³⁸

The remaking of prostitution occurred on both a quantitative and qualitative level*. The women engaged in it were called many things, "battered bun," "buttock," "squirrel" "mackerel," "cat,"

* For a thorough discussion of prostitution in England between the late-17th through the early-19th centuries (see Trumbach, pp. 69-195).

"moll," "froe" and "vrow" as well as among the poorer classes "bunter," "smut," "trumpery," "crack" and "mawkes."³⁹ First, there was an enormous increase in the number of women engaged in this, the oldest profession. According to an unofficial estimate, in London alone at the turn of the 18th century there were upward of 50,000 "harlots" serving all classes and all sexual appetites.⁴⁰ So widespread was prostitution that "[i]t is likely that most men who lived in London at some point went to a prostitute."⁴¹ The formal integration of prostitution into "respectable" society achieved its clearest expression in the series of "court brothels" reportedly sanctioned by George III to serve the sexual needs of his favored gentry.⁴²

Second, this occupation -- if not profession -- of female wage labor was transformed from a marginal business into a truly significant enterprise. Quantitative expansion gave way to qualitative reformation as prostitution grew from a relatively isolated activity into one assuming an historically unprecedented scale. It was marked by the particular cultural characteristics of an increasingly class-defined society. As Burg notes,

... although the city of London contained sufficient number of prostitutes to service a substantial number of apprentices and a large segment of the [male] population as well, those women were professionals, vendors of sexual favors to those who could pay.

However, as he pointedly adds, "For apprentices [and others] in lower

* E. P. Thompson, citing a contemporary source, adds with his ever-perceptive class consciousness that these "prostitutes turn out to be 'lewd and immoral women,' including 'the prodigious number among the lower classes who cohabit together without marriage' (and this was a time when divorce for the poor was an absolute impossibility.)"

classes engaged in the learning of menial trades, sex for hire was not easily obtained."⁴³ The question remains as to how they got their sexual needs met.

Two features of this unique form of economic exchange can help illuminate the new condition -- first, the venues in which the sexual exchange occurred and, second, the sexual practices engaged in by the female sex-workers servicing their male customers. The formal structure of prostitution appears to have mirrored the dominant hierarchical order of the English society of the day. The greatest number of female prostitutes tended to be streetwalkers, plying their trade on some of the most crowded thoroughfares and back-alleys of the growing metropolises of England. However, moving up the social order, prostitution took place in taverns and private rooms, innumerable bawdy houses, more pleasurable bagnios and bordellos, and culminated in an assortment of fashionable upper-class brothels and specialized sex salons.

Streetwalking -- or "nightwalking," as this pursuit has been called⁴⁴ -- appears to have emerged in the last-quarter of the 17th century. This was the same time that the first public oil-burning street lamps were introduced in London.⁴⁵ Streetwalkers either operated as independents or were attached to a tavern or lodging house.⁴⁶ For the poor, illiterate and often violently debauched young women who took up the trade, the sexual encounter with the male customer appears to have often involved a publicly-consummated deed hurriedly executed either standing upright against a wall or doorway or lying on the ground. These encounters appear to have involved little foreplay or aesthetic eroticism, but did produce a certain type of release if not pleasure or fulfillment on the part of the customer -- what it provided the

woman, except money if she was lucky or syphilis if not, can only be imagined.

A second tier of prostitution appears to have taken place in the numerous bawdy houses that spread throughout London during the 17th century, especially within the districts populated by the poor. According to Trumbach,

Women who worked out of houses experienced more favorable conditions than those who solicited on the streets. ... They provided apparel. They might provide some restraint upon the practices of defloration, sado-masochism and sexual assaults on young girls. They provided contraceptive information and means of abortion.

Often referred to as "cavaulting schools," "academies," "nanny houses," "nunneries" or "public houses of assignation," like the Three Tuns on Russell Street, they were often raided by the Society for the Reformation of Manners and other such groups.^{*47} The bagnio was even more fashionable. As Trumbach observes, "It actually did have a hot bath and a cold one. But it also had rooms where for an additional fee one could spend the night with a woman one had brought in or sent out for."⁴⁸ Over the century, an increasing number of these establishments were owned or managed by women or married couples like Mrs. Harris and Ann Sarsfield, Elizabeth and James Robinson, and Ann and William Dyas, among many others.⁴⁹

Placed above the bawdy houses and taverns near the top of the "perverse" sex pyramid, were the assortment of

* This group is reported to have been responsible for prosecution of no less than 101,683 persons in the London area for such offenses as sabbath-breaking, swearing, drunkenness, lewdness, brothel-keeping and sodomy. [Fryer/103]

public cabarets, sex clubs, high-class brothels and flagellation salons that catered to the needs of middle- and upper-class men (and some women). Some establishments employed only black women while others, like those operated by Mrs. Hayes and Mrs. Berkley, provided for the specific sexual indulgences of their clientele.⁵⁰

The courtesan or fashionable prostitute represented not simply the highest level of the new class of female wage labor, but the inherent contradictions of capitalist social development. These women could work in a fashionable brothel or serve as a kept mistress. Among the former, service at establishments run by Mrs. Hayes and Mrs. Berkley represented the pinnacle of success. Still other well-known madams who ran fashionable brothels that employed such women were ones run by Elizabeth Wisebourn (from 1690-1720), by Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Burton (1710s-1720s) and Mrs. Goadby (1770s).⁵¹ Among the most well-known mistresses were Ann Sheldon (later Mrs. Archer) and Emily Lyon (later Lady Hamilton).⁵² However, as a social class, these women reflected a unique aspect of capitalist development. As Stone notes,

The economic uncertainties of professional and mercantile life, the improvement in the education of bourgeois daughters, and the lack of career opportunities for girls suddenly reduced from genteel affluence to poverty meant that there was a reasonable supply of attractive and well-bred girls to form suitable companions and mistresses for men of means.⁵³

More popular venues were pleasure gardens, popular private parks devoted to "flirtation and seduction." The oldest of these appears to be Spring Gardens which one Tom Brown reports, in 1700, to be a place "where both sexes meet and mutually serve one another as guides to lose their way." Still another popular garden of

the period was the Bartholomew Fair. Paying customers (mostly male) could be witness to a new type of sexual female performance described as follows in the London Spy in 1704:

a couple of Plump-Buttock-Lasses, who, to show their Affection to the Breeches, wore 'em under their Petticoats; which, for decency sake, they first Danc'd in: But to show the Spectator how forward a Woman once warm'd is to lay aside Modesty, they doft their Petticoats after a gentle Breathing, and fell to Capering and Firking as if Old Nick has been in 'em.⁵⁴

However, the pleasure garden found its fullest articulation during the latter-half of the century at Vauxhall. It was celebrated for its "Dark Walks" which were, according to one author, "haunted by ardent youths and reckless virgins."⁵⁵

Other outlets of sexual experience expressed the new male heterosexuality still more cruelly. Among the most consequential were the wide scale increase in reported rapes, the increase of sexually transmitted diseases and the rise in the number of children borne by unmarried woman. These unintended consequences were but some of the prices paid by women to realize the radical restriction of the male's sexual object choice of desire and the sanctioned forms of expression.

Perhaps the greatest price for the new sexual order was paid by the poor, unwed mothers and the flood of "bastard" children that spread through London and other growing English cities. For many peasant and working-class women, the very conditions of employment, whether as a domestic or wage-laborer, demanded that they be free of infant dependents. Whether from passion or rape, widowhood or abandonment, unmarried women either pregnant or of recent motherhood found it very difficult to secure legitimate employment.

Not surprising, after these impoverished girls and women had their child, they couldn't easily return to their rural or small-town families because of the social stigma and personal shame they suffered. Many were forced to sell all their possessions (often including their clothes) to raise money to support themselves and their children; others turned to prostitution or "streetwalking" to earn an income; still others were forced to turn over their infants to the local church parish in order to seek survival wages. But perhaps the women who suffered the greatest degradation were those who, out of desperation, committed infanticide.⁵⁶ And the surviving children, many were in turn forced into involuntary servitude, some as chimney sweeps, while others served as "virgins" in heterosexual brothels or in homosexual pederast clubs.⁵⁷ Many have paid dearly for the establishment of modern romantic heterosexuality.

A nation in crisis

Henry Spenser Ashbee was the notorious 19th century author, Pisanus Fraxi, who compiled Index Librorum Prohibitorum. First published in 1877, this three-volume work has been identified by literary historian Steven Marcus as "the first bibliography in the English language devoted to writings of a pornographic character."⁵⁸ Ashbee described Mrs. Berkley as "the queen of her profession."⁵⁹ She practiced her craft during one of England's most critical periods of social transformation, a period that not only remade English society, but established the foundation of what is now widely considered the modern age.

* According to Bassermann, the "deflowering" of virgins was an even more popular indulgence among heterosexual men than flagellation. [Bassermann/149]

This period, between the 1750s-1830s, was a tumultuous era. The American and French revolutions signaled the beginning of the end of British world hegemony. While the American colonial war lasted only seven/? years, the war with France dragged on for more than two decades. For the British (and not unlike the U.S. in Vietnam), it an enormously expensive effort to maintain imperial hegemony. In particular, the war was devastating for the propertyless poor who had to pay not only heavy taxes, but often with their bodies as forcefully conscripted soldiers and sailors. It was also an era that witnessed the industrialization of traditional handicraft work practices -- with the uprooting of long-held social relations and customs -- leading to the slow and bitter dissolution of rural life. These developments dragged on for more than a half-century of social strife (if not open revolt) and included the Wilkes agitation (1760s and 1770s), the Gordon riots (1780s), attacks on the King in London (1795 and 1820), Luddite uprisings (1811-17), the East Anglian riots (1816) and the "Captain Swing" riots of 1830 that so wracked England.⁶⁰

Laurence Stone has characterized England during the 18th and into the early-19th centuries as an "anarchy [that] lay only just below the surface."⁶¹ Social anarchy took many forms. Perhaps most disturbing to the propertied classes was the growing incidences of what they considered "crimes" -- Luddite attacks on factories or spontaneous food and other riots; practiced robberies by highwaymen and "vagabond brotherhoods"* or

* According to Burg, "The vagabond brotherhoods ... provided refuge for large numbers of runaway boys... . [T]he life of the wandering youth was passed in a predominantly male and predominantly homosexual milieu." [Burg/48]

urban petty thievery; unacceptable public conduct like alcoholism, urination, "free Mondays" and other traditional anti-work holidays; and the sexual activities conducted on public streets between a working-class prostitute and her customer.⁶² So disruptive were these perceived challenges to social conventions that, between 1760 and 1810, Parliament enacted more than sixty laws making individual crimes capitol or hanging offenses.⁶³

This anarchy, however, was expressed with its greatest severity on the rural poor. The fate of the agrarian proletariat -- those who resided on the lands owned by the class of men who may well have been regular visitors to the brothels run by Mrs. Berkley and other governesses -- is pointedly described by E.J. Hobsbawm and George Rudy:

It is difficult to find words for the degradation which the coming industrial society brought to the English country labourer They lost what little traditional right and security they had, and gained instead not even the theoretical hope which capitalism held out to the urban labourer. ... Instead, another, less human, more unequal hierarchy closed in upon them -- the farmer who talked to them like a squire, the squire who drove them out for partridge and hares, the collective conspiracy of the village rich who took their commons, and gave them instead their charity in return for their servility, and on whose whim depended their livelihood. They did not even sell the birthright for a mess of pottage. They simply lost it.⁶⁴

As they further note: "The threshing machine thus became the symbol of their misery."⁶⁵ It would not be a surprise to find that some of the same type of devices found in Mrs. Berkley's salon were used to put down these futile uprisings. More interestingly yet, the threshing machine found its sexual corollary in the thrashing machine, described in one account as

"a machine which lashed forty addicts [of flagellation] at a time." [See below.]

Perhaps the most telling word in this remarkably poignant and eloquent passage is the reference to "degradation" -- the absolute subjugation and decimation of both a class and its individual members. Clearly, this degradation transformed the rural poor, reducing them -- symbolically if not literally -- into industrial "slavery". But, in a process recalling Hegel's great dialectical saga in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, this severe social process of degradation also, inversely, transformed the symbolic "master." Degradation made the master equally less human and, on both physical and psychological levels, pursue a new desire -- the pleasure of pain, of flagellation and other perversions.

One of the most insidious aspects of the rise of the market-mediated society is the process by which ever more intimate aspects of personal, private life are reduced to a commodity existence. E.P. Thompson has pointed out that as commodity manufacturing became the acceptable model of social exchange, "need" or desire itself became a commodity ... an object, a psycho-physical property bought and sold, manufactured and manipulated like all other goods and services. As Thompson discovered, "the remodelling of 'need,'" during this period was "the greatest transformation in history." This served, as another commentator has observed, as the "effective dividing line between the traditional world and the modern."⁶⁶ Thus, whether tangible or imaginary, whether precious or ordinary, whether expensive or cheap, whether social or private, commodity desire -- the pleasures offered through the marketplace -- is but the inversion of gift giving, of mutual sexual pleasure expressed as a genuine act of

love, of mutual sharing of pleasure without a price.*

And nowhere does the market exchange of sex become absolutely transparent, sheared of all vestiges of romantic love, than with the prostitute engaged in the commerce of perversion. A perverse act -- at least as defined by then-contemporary conventional social, moral, medical and religious authority -- is the "gray market" of sexual life. It was an act at once subject to two contesting forces: the apparent freedom of unlimited exchange and the enforced restrictions of unacceptable pleasure. This is the great social legacy of pre-Victorian perversion -- where the most exaggerated forms of the market crossed with the rejection of acceptable conduct or morality, giving rise to the radical pleasures of Mrs. Berkley's salon.

The pleasures of perverse passion

The passion associated with sexual perversion -- especially flagellation -- took on a new character during the period between the 1750s-1820s. This unique sexual "aphrodisiac" has a long history in the West.⁶⁷ However, it appears to have undergone a fundamental expansion -- measured in terms of the range of what was considered "permissible" pleasure and by a greater number of people engaged in the practice -- during this socially disruptive period.

Like all social conventions, this one has a pre-history. As early as 1677 there are reports in Britain of a new sexual performance art, the strip tease. Whereas today the "art" form is renown for the disrobing by women, in its earliest manifestation a male character -- a country gentlemen in the

* For an alternative concept of exchange, see Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*.

play, *They Rover*, by Mrs. Alpha Behn – was the sexual tease. By the middle of the 18th century, female exposure became the principle form of presentation. And by this period, the strip tease had been transformed into the performances of the posture girl.

“Lewd” performance was but one of the sexual practices that transgressed the moral conventions of the day. Lewd or explicit conversation was also common. As Trumbach notes, “lewd conversations in the public streets were both a means of creating erotic excitement and of showing the degree to which [women] had left behind conventional female behavior.”⁶⁸ Among sex practices, the menage a trios, involving two female prostitutes and a male customer, was “[p]robably the least offensive transgression.”⁶⁹ Anal intercourse seemed less popular, although according to some it was a practice favored by Continental men. Fellatio “was less controversial but still not common,” whereas flagellation was far more commonly practiced and openly discussed.⁷⁰

Another feature of this period was the apparently popular practice of nude dancing. As Peter Fryer notes, as early as the end of the 17th century there were reports that “[a]t private gathering ... naked dancing by men and women together seem to have been fairly popular among people who earned their living by prostitution, robbery and begging.”⁷¹ But perhaps the most provocative element was the naked balls that often involved sexual encounter as part of the popular revelry. Called “buff-balls” and “buttock-balls,” these events were popular among the poorest social classes and have been described as follows: they were “... [dances] in which both sexes – innocent of clothing – madly join, stimulated with raw whisky and the music of fiddle and tin whistle.”⁷²

Perverse pleasurable indulgence probably found its most celebrated expression in Sir Francis Dashwood’s Hell Fire Club. This establishment was an outgrowth of the “Devil Clubs” of the 1720s at which, as Trumbach reports, “the mysteries of the Christian religion were mocked, the Devil was worshipped, and whoring was promoted.” In the 1730s, Dashwood, a libertine and a deist opposed to conventional Christianity, was one of the founding members of the Dilettanti Society, an organization dedicated to furthering knowledge of classical civilization.

Dashwood’s later literary efforts, most notably his revision and publication of the Book of Common Prayer, were supported Benjamin Franklin, who Trumbach says was “as committed as Dashwood to the principals of a virtuoso’s libertinism.”⁷³

The Hell Fire Club operated in the 1750s. While few first-hand accounts of the actual practices carried out at the club seem to have survived, it developed a reputation as a venue in which the fictional writings of the Marquis de Sade were put into erotic practice. Dashwood organized the club at the gothic abbey of the Monks of Medmenham and inscribed over the door the group’s motto, taken from Rabelais: *Fay ce que voundras*, or *Do as you wish*.⁷⁴ Block reports that “the Bona Dea (the ancient goddess of fertility) was worshipped with parodies of Christian ritual and acts of sexual intercourse.” Others report that members of the club engaged in flagellation and that other “satanic” practices took place. Charles Spencer notes that, up until recently, the club’s “orgies were always considered to have been strictly heterosexual,” but may have been witness to a wide variety of perverse libertine indulgences, including bisexual and homosexual encounters.⁷⁵

During this period, according to Stone, "The production of sexual hardware was partly the result of improved technology and greater specialization in manufacturing."⁷⁶ Dildoes first appeared in London in the 1660s. Originally called "del-doe," they were imported from Italy and continued to be imported until the early-19th century.⁷⁷ During the late-17th century, it is reported that dildoes were sold at the Sign of the Cross in St. James Street, bought and used by aristocratic ladies of the court. In the 1720s, they are reported being sold openly by women in St. James's Park. However, the saleswomen carried baskets of dolls that had, instead of legs, a "cloth-covered cylinder of about six inches long and one inch wide."⁷⁸

Condoms first appeared in London in the 1660s and, like dildoes, were imported from Italy. According to Stone, they were used for prophylactic rather contraceptive purposes -- and were openly manufactured, advertised, sold and used. "They were clumsy affairs made of sheep gut," he notes, "and were secured to the wearer at the base with a red ribbon, which was tied around the scrotum."⁷⁹ By the 1740s, they were sold by a Mrs. Lewis in a shop in St. Martin's Lane; later in the century they were sold by a Mrs. Phillips in a shop at the Green Canister in Half Moon Street, and still later at 5 Orange Court, Leicester Fields.⁸⁰

Equally important to the spread of perverse pleasure was the increased availability of a wide assortment of "pornographic" media. These included a diverse assortment of published materials that ranged from scandalous novels like John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* or the memoirs of a woman of pleasure to the writing of Defoe, Swift, Fielding and, most critically, John Wilkes, the most influential libertine of the period. In addition, the availability of a wide assortment of call-girl directories helped legitimize prostitution among

the male, middle-class literary public. The pictorial arts also helped expand the vocabulary of sexual representation through the artistic renderings of female (and to a lesser extent male) nudes. Such evolving forms of reproduction as the peepshow, prints, cards, lithographs and, by the 1830s, photographs [see Appendix] extended perverse images to a wider, non-literate audience. Finally, plays, poetry, songs and other popular forms of expression added to the popular sexual discourse.⁸¹

Many of the devices of this period were implements of a receding agrarian age -- and the further removed agrarian life slipped, the more elaborate became the hand-wrought devices of flagellation and other perversions. Equally important, the "gentlemen" who regularly visited Mrs. Berkley's and such establishments were not unfamiliar with the collection of cat-o-nine tails, bending canes, leather straps, battledores, holly brushes and other devices. Mrs. Berkley's clientele -- identified by Ms. Wilson as "innumerable old generals, admirals, colonels, and captains, as well as bishops, judges, barristers, lords, commoners and physicians"⁸² -- were likely drawn from British nobility, landed aristocracy and the emerging bourgeoisie, for they were the only men who could afford such an indulgence. In addition, many may well have been raised on farms or in the countryside and some still likely controlled large manorial estates.

In their familiarity, these devices provide the tools of expression for a new sexuality -- a sexuality of pleasure derived from the measured physical experience of pain ... sado-masochistic flagellation. More than a century before the practice was formally named by Richard Kraft-Ebing⁸³, sado-masochism appears to have achieved a level of if not social acceptance than at least tolerance,

especially among more well-to-do men. Inherited technologies of the period, especially hand-wrought agrarian tools, contributed a critical element to the experiencing of a new socio-economic relationship of pleasure, one tied – no pun intended – to physical pain and emotional humiliation ... to degradation.

Discipline and punishment

Other factors were needed for this form of sexual experience to become not only relatively widespread, but sustained as an accepted sexual practice -- even if only enjoyed by a relatively small minority of devotees. Most critical for this development was the widespread presence (and acceptance) of whipping, flogging, beating and other forms of corporal punishment throughout British society. One finds the use of the proverbial "rod" in the prison, the poor-house and the parish, in the army and navy, in schools, factories and at home, where the husband had the right -- and often exercised it -- to beat his wife and children, as they were classified as property. The social disruption precipitated by the emerging new capitalist social order of the 17th and 18th centuries -- with its accompanying crises on the farm and throughout rural society as well as urban centers -- demanded new forms of punishment to discipline the rapidly growing unstable population. No area of social life in which hierarchy had to be maintained was free from the terror of corporal discipline and punishment.

According to George Riley Scott, "there is no form of punishment older than flagellation."⁸⁴ The first official law permitting flogging, the Whipping Act, was passed in England in 1530* and was directed at the punishment of

* Whipping of women was formally suspended in England in 1820. [Abbott/127]

delinquents. As another historian has noted, "So easy was a whipping to administer, so obvious the deterrent it was thought to be, that it became the judicial panacea for most minor crimes."⁸⁵ The first public whipping post was introduced in 1597. Those subject to such punishment ranged from vagabonds and drunkards, to thieves and rioters, to heretics and dissenters and to mothers of "illegitimate" children and homosexuals. It was even inflicted on Mary Hamilton – alias William Hamilton, among other male names – for masquerading as a man and marrying numerous reportedly unsuspecting women.⁸⁶

In no other area of English social life did flogging achieve greater articulation than within the military. The Army formally adopted it as a method of punishment in 1689 with the passage of the Mutiny Act. According to Geoffrey Abbott, the range of offenses and respective punishments included: "Deserting during action brought 900 lashes, deserting when on guard duty, 1,500 lashes. Deserting a second time resulted in 900 lashes and transportation as a felon for life ..."⁸⁷ Within a Navy made up of "pressed" sailors, "brutal discipline was considered essential, and was administered almost daily." Flogging methods included "Kissing the Gunner's Daughter" (being placed over a ship's gun and whipped), "Flogging at the Grating" (being placed between iron grates which stood at right angles) and "Flogging round the Fleet" (in which the hapless victim was moved from ship to ship and flogged on each one).⁸⁸

English military genius perfected flogging into an art form with the invention of the cat-o'-nine-tails. Its elegance has been described as follows:

It consisted of a wooden handle nearly twenty inches long, with nine tails of whipcord, each about an eighth of an inch thick, thirty-three inches long, but free from knots. The ends of the cords were bound with silk thread to prevent fraying.⁸⁹

A soldier in 1832 has left the following vivid memoir of his experience bearing witness to military justice:

I felt an astounding sensation between the shoulders under my neck, which went to my toe-nails in one direction, and my finger-nails in another, and stung me to the heart, as if a knife had gone through my body. ... I felt my flesh quiver in every nerve, from the scalp of my head to my toe-nails. The time between each stroke seemed so long as to be agonizing, and yet the next came too soon. The pain in my lungs was more severe, I thought, than on my back. I felt as if I would burst in the internal parts of my body. ...⁹⁰

Flagellation at British public schools is also legendary. Whether for punishment, sport or pleasure, few middle- or upper-class youth attending such a school escaped this perverse practice. Students were flogged for ignorance, inattention and idleness as well as disobedience and lying. They were beaten by school masters as well as by fellow students, often most viciously by older classmates. A student of the late 18th-century recalls the terror of such an experience:

[the teacher] tyrant did but seldom use the rod; his favourite instrument was a long rattan cane, big enough to correct a culprit in Bridewell [prison] ... The shrieks of the boys who were writhing beneath his blows were music to his soul ... I declare to God I have seen wales on the sides, ribs and arms of boys of the bigness of my finger.⁹¹

Flagellation was also long accepted by some as a valid medical practice – if seen as quackery by many others. It was seen as a mysterious power that could rejuvenate the flesh and stimulate sexual potency. It was perceived as helping overcome impotence, especially among elderly

men. As Mrs. Wilson reports about the extensive collection of armaments of perverse pleasure at Mrs. Berkley's establishment, it "restored the dead to life." Many doctors, medical writers and others of the 17th and 18th centuries identified flagellation as an aphrodisiac. They drew inspiration from the ancient and classical traditions. From the Talmud, they were aware that being beaten over the back may be a cause for seminal ejaculation. From the Greeks, they learned that the Spartans engaged in public whippings of boys by priestesses to improve virility and bravery. And from the Romans, they were aware that at the festival of Lupercalia infertile women whipped their buttocks with goat-hide straps to increase their chances for procreation.⁹²

The appeal of the "rod," however, was not limited solely to discipline and punishment. Flagellation has long been a part of a subversive strand of Western Christianity, the ecstatic religious experience. In his famous study of radical religious movements, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, Norman Cohn provides invaluable insight into religious or ecstatic flagellation. Often forgotten within the revisionist history of the Catholic Church is the mass self-flagellation movements that swept Europe between the 13th and 17th centuries. They arose against a background of famine, plague and the widespread belief in what Cohn calls "the world-shattering, world-transforming drama of the Last Days which was now unfolding in all its terror and exaltation."⁹³ Lasting for more than four centuries, flagellants moved like a great wave through Italy, then through Germany, the Low Countries, France, Spain and other parts of Europe. Its social power is suggested by the following description of but one representative episode that took place in Italy during the early years of the 15th century:

Led usually by priests, masses of men, youths and boys marched day and night, with banners and burning candles, from town to town. And each time they came to a town they would arrange themselves in groups before the church and flog themselves for hours on end. The impact which this public penance made upon the general population was great. Criminals confessed, robbers restored their loot, usurers the interest on their loans, enemies were reconciled and feuds forgotten.⁹⁴

It was, however, as a ritualized procedure of punishment and pain that self-flagellation made a lasting contribution to the history of perversion. Cohn describes the remarkably standardized rites of flagellation as follows:

When they came to a town the flagellants would make their way to a church, form a circle in front of it, take off their clothes and shoes and put on a sort of skirt reaching from the waist to the feet....

... The men beat themselves rhythmically with leather scourges armed with iron spikes, singing hymns meanwhile in celebration of Christ's Passion and the glories of the Virgin. ... The flagellants did their work with such thoroughness that often the spikes of the scourge stuck in the flesh and had to be wrenched out. Their blood spurted on to the walls and their bodies turned to swollen masses of blue flesh.

These flagellants were considered "men of God" and held in the highest regard by the town's people they met along the way. For they were "not simply ... penitents who were atoning for their own sins but martyrs averting the plague and, indeed, the annihilation of mankind."⁹⁵

Religious or ecstatic flagellation does not appear to have been as extensively practiced in England as compared to the Continent. Block suggests that the absence of flagellation rituals among English

Protestants facilitated its spread to so many other aspects of social life, be it prisons, the military or schools. It should, therefore, not be a surprise that flagellation -- which was both so widespread and took such diverse forms of expression (be it for torture and punishment, as ecstatic passion or as a medical practice) -- became actively integrated into sexual life. At Mrs. Berkley's and many of the other sex clubs of the late-18th through the early-19th centuries, flagellation became integrated into quasi-ritualized practice and, in doing so, made explicit what had long been latent, however disguised, hidden or denied.

Technologies of pleasure

The devices found at Mrs. Berkley's salon were drawn from a receding agrarian era and did not represent the advancing industrial revolution. These newer technologies, symbolized by the steam engine, locomotive, threshing machine and, most critically, electricity, represented new forms of social power and, in turn, new relationships between humanity and nature, artificial life and the living body. The traditional agrarian implements found at Mrs. Berkley's and other flagellation parlors were hand-wrought devices often distinguished by remarkably innovative design features -- features intended to elicit different physical/sexual feelings.

Within the setting of late-18th and early-19th century urban sex clubs, these former tools took on new identities as devices for the infliction of eroticized pain. These clubs were highly specialized, ritualized settings ... environments far removed from the pastoral setting that gave birth to many of these devices. In this process, as rural tools become eroticized urban fetishes, their identity both incorporated and went beyond that of the older era, an era characterized by non-urban, non-

industrial and often non-capitalist life. These devices, anointed in their new identities, became not simple eroticized objects, but mythical symbols championing a materialist, anti-Puritanical and subversive sexuality ... hedonism.

The industrial revolution produced not only the enclosure movement, modern factory system and machine culture, but the modern forms of sexual expression and perversion. Ironically, perversion also contributed to the development of industrialization itself. While the devices identified in Mrs. Berkley's brothel are for the most part drawn from an agrarian past, probably her greatest contribution to sexual history was the invention of the "Berkley Horse" or Chevalet. This ladder-like device with protective padding [image #1] -- what Marcus has described as "a large football blocking-dummy" -- functioned with an elegant simplicity:

The client was tied to it so that his face projected through one space and his genitals through another. The "governess" stood behind and administered the whip to back or buttocks, according to taste, while a scantily dressed girl sat in front and massaged his cock and bollocks.⁹⁶

Ms. Wilson, the governess, describes a fairly representative scene in the following way: a naked man is placed in the Horse and "a woman is sitting in a chair exactly under it, with her bosom belly and bush exposed: she is 'manualizing' his 'embolon,' while Ms. Berkley is birching his posteriors. ..."⁹⁷ Marcus calls this invention "perversity's contribution to the Industrial Revolution".⁹⁸ Adding to the lore of Mrs. Berkley's technological ingenuity, her salon also featured "a compound pulley on the first floor, to which a man could be attached by his hands and flogged in this position."⁹⁹

However, still earlier technologies of perversion point more directly toward

the 20th century. Chace Price, described by one commentator as "an 18th century English bon vivant," is reported to have attempted to build "a machine which lashed forty addicts [of flagellation] at a time."¹⁰⁰ In 1830, according to Bloch, a Mr. Talbot "saw such a machine for flagellation at work in a London brothel." He adds most curiously: "Lately, Americans have taken up the idea again."¹⁰¹

By the end of the 18th century, the then-new "high technology" of electricity was being applied to devices designed to treat sexual dysfunction among women and men. Perhaps the most innovative of these sexual technologies was the electrically-powered mating swing. It was reportedly discovered by a German pornographer in 1790 and, as "an English invention," the stimulations *maschiene*, produced much sexual pleasure. The historian Margaret C. Jacob describes this mating swing as one "which was powered electrically and swung the man and woman in and out of each other, thus stimulating their new effortless flight to ecstasy." [image #2] She adds: "The [pornographer's] text assured the reader that the power of machines could compensate even for impotence."¹⁰²

This swing appears to be one of the first electrical devices used to help address the sexual problems associated with impotence and infertility. The search for a cure to this set of very complex psycho-physical conditions has driven much of the development of new forms of sexual technology introduced in the West over the last two centuries. Sometimes one could not tell whether an invention was a prosthetic device or a fetish, whether it served a medical purpose or simply provided perverse pleasure -- or both.

The "electrically driven whipping contrivance" is a case in point. Block identifies this truly unique American contribution to the history of sexual technology as having been invented by an industrial school in Denver during the late-19th century. According to one contemporary author, De Villiot, writing in Paris, the device functioned as follows:

The contrivance in question has the form of a chair which lacks the seat or cane bottom. The patient seats himself on this after having uncovered what is disrespectfully termed his posterior. This up-to-date chair is sufficiently raised to allow four beaters fixed beneath it to operate freely in a rotatory movement more or less rapid according to the wish of the operator, who has only to switch on an electric battery fixed on the chair with metal wires. ... The operator has only to press a button and the whipping chair does the rest.

Bearing more than a trace of sarcasm, De Villiot notes: "As to the feeling of the principal party -- that is to say, the pupil -- who is held in the chair by a vice gripping ankles and wrists, American papers say nothing."¹⁰³

However, a century earlier, the "Celestial Bed" represented an innovative use of the-then new power of electricity. The bed was the centerpiece of the notorious "Temple of Health" -- often referred to as the "Temple of Aeschlapius" -- run by Dr. James Graham. It operated in London between 1779 and 1784 and specialized in the treatment of sterility among men and incapacity among women.

Graham's formal training as a physician is in doubt and he has been referred by some as "Emperor of Quacks." Nevertheless, he was fascinated by the new technology of electricity and he is reported to have traveled to Pennsylvania to study Benjamin Franklin's methods.¹⁰⁴ Over time, he devised an innovative

treatment plan that had his patients sleep with their bedroom window shutters open so as to better gain access to the moonlight's beneficial rays. He was also a proponent of having couples sing romantic songs to one another. More radical still, as Peter Fryer reports, "Graham would sit naked in an earth-bath together with an equally naked young woman; their protruding heads, 'beautifully dressed and powdered,' appeared 'not unlike two fine, fully-grown cauliflowers.'"¹⁰⁵

But the "divine bed" was his greatest accomplishment. The electrically-powered device was designed to provide both sexual and medical satisfaction to those who were selected to use it. It is reported to have been built by a tinsmith named Denton and cost £12,000 -- an astounding price for the day. Graham required prospective patients to submit a written statement as to the cures they sought -- as well pre-payment of £50 -- before being selected for treatment.

It must have been a stunning piece of aesthetic and technical innovation. According to Paul Tabori, "It was beautifully carved and gilded, covered with silk damask, supported by twenty-eight glass pillars, and surmounted by a richly carved and gilded canopy, from which crimson silk curtains with fringe and tassels were suspended." As Block notes, "... the wonderful divine bed -- the 'Magneto-electric,' unique and incomparable, for nothing like it had ever been produced before." Going further, he adds:

It was located on the second story in a large and magnificent chamber to the right of the orchestra and in the front part of his attractive hermitage. In Graham's office, next door to the divine bed, there was a cylinder through which the emanations of the 'divine and all-animating fire' (electricity) were conducted into the bedchambers. Moreover, vapors of strong

medicaments and oriental incense were conveyed into the room by the glass pipes.

In addition, the room in which the Celestial Bed was located was saturated with "the melodic sounds of the harmonica, celestine, soft flutes, lovely voices and a great organ."¹⁰⁶ Pleasure -- sexual and of all the senses -- was provided on an unprecedented scale. As another commentator has noted,

Sex, overt or indirect, was the keynote of the Temple, how to retain or regain youth, beauty, fertility. Dr. Graham spared no expense; all the rooms in which people waited for a consultation, or a session in the Celestial Bed, or a sermon, were lavishly furnished, provided with soft lights and sweet music.¹⁰⁷

While the bed was the centerpiece of the Temple, the real star and principal attraction was the sixteen- or seventeen-year-old Emily Lyon, later to become renown throughout Europe as Lady Emma Hamilton, the most famous British courtesan of the late-18th century. Born in 1761 and of humble means, she gave birth to a child out of wedlock at age sixteen. Leaving the child with her mother, Emily went on to remake her life -- and that of many men as well. A woman of remarkable beauty, talent and intelligence, she became the mistress to such notables as the sea captain, John Willet Payne, Sir Henry Featherston, Sir Charles Greville and Lord William Hamilton, the British ambassador to the Court of Naples. She also served as the principal model for a number of leading British artists, the most notable being John Rowlandson. While married to Hamilton (and following his death) she had a scandalous liaison with Lord Admiral Nelson and bore him a daughter.

Renown for her striking beauty, she was one of the foremost performance artists of her day, celebrated for her

"body poetry," "plastic poses" and "living statues."^{*} No less an authority of beauty than J. W. Goethe was witness to one of her performances:

An Englishwomen of about twenty years -- very beautiful and shapely. She had a Greek costume made for her which suited her admirably. Then she loosened her hair, took a few shawls and arranged a series of attitudes, poses, gestures, so that one finally thought that one was dreaming. Standing, kneeling, sitting, lying, earnestencing, sad, droll, debauched, repentant,, threatening, terrifying, etc. ... She knew well how to choose and change the folds of her veil for each expression. ...

Speaking with the voice of lost youth, Goethe adds: "The old knight found in her all antiquity, all the beautiful peoples of the Sicilian coins and even Apollo Belevdere himself."¹⁰⁸

How the future Lady Hamilton came to be associated with Dr. Graham remains unclear, but Hamilton performed at his Temple of Hymen as Hebe Vestina, goddess of health and beauty. She is reported to have posed for an hour at a time on a dais, pretending to feed a serpent out of a cup. In her role of "Vestina the Gigantic," as Block admits, "her divine throne exposed her charms to the lascivious eyes of the multitude."¹⁰⁹

It is not known whether Lady Hamilton ever met Mrs. Berkley or visited her flagellation salon. However, in the four decades that span the public lives of these two extraordinary women, radical aspects of a very different sexual culture were taking shape. While the dominant culture was being defined by the illusions of "romantic love," a deeper sexuality was gaining expression through the reported increases in the number of prostitutes and rapes, the presence of homosexual "deviants" and the

* Lady Hamilton may have gotten her start as a "posture girl." [Lofts/15-16.]

popularity of private sex clubs catering to all manner of perverse pleasures. The relative tolerance of perversion during the reign of George III (who sanctioned court brothels) and George IV (who was a regular visitor to the bordello operated by Mrs. Collet) ended with the latter's death in 1830. After the brief reign of William IV, Victoria assumed the throne in 1837 and remained in power for the next sixty-five years. Under her forceful stewardship, as Block admits, "the whole character of society changed ... [A]n abrupt end was put to the previous period of dissipation."¹⁰

A host of complementary means were deployed to accomplish this, including the establishment of a permanent police force, the passing of tough censorship laws and anti-homosexual legislation, the official end of flogging in public schools and the military, and the closing of bawdy houses, taverns, brothels and flagellation clubs. This repression would lead to the famed double-standard morality to which Victoria's name is now intimately linked. It was a sexual culture that would take more than a century, until the sexual and counter-culture "revolutions" of the 1960s, to be finally overturned. Today, we are amidst a new era of sexual transformation, an era marked perhaps more than any other recent one by what Engels called the "progressive-regressive dialectic" of capitalist social life.

Perversion has persisted over the last two centuries, immune to the repeated threats from religious zealots, police raids and political repression. Perversion has adhered to the traditional models formulated during the 17th century, yet remained sufficiently flexible to adapt to the most innovative of contemporary artifact of each subsequent era. And in no area is this flexibility more clearly represented than in the novel

ways new technologies have been actively incorporated into both evolving sexual practice (particularly interpersonal performance) and its public presentation through each new generation of mass media.

Technology & sexual practice

The technologies of sexual pleasure can be distinguished between those of performance and those of representation. This chapter has analyzed critical elements of both technologies during the formative period of capitalism and the birth of modern sexuality. These technologies not only created the foundation of contemporary sexual culture, but established the patterns by which each subsequent generation of sexual devices and communications media has been incorporated into Western society.

The technologies of performance include devices intended to assist a person to better perform or physically experience his/her sexuality. This chapter has described an assortment of hand-wrought, mechanical and electrical fetishes and marital aids as well as a number of prophylactic contraceptives and prosthetic devices. These technologies were invented to enhance sexual pleasure and/or to increase the likelihood of procreation – or at least promised such fulfillment. Equally important, they have significantly influenced the experience of what has long been distinguished as perverse sexual practices. The fetish, in particular, holds out the promise of allowing the practitioner a direct experience of a sexualized other. It does this by simultaneously distorting and intensifying the illusion of transparency, of the subject's direct access to the object of desire through a symbolic representation. A technology of performance promises a momentary ecstasy through the merger of the desiring subject and the

object of desire: the promise of abandonment, orgasm, union with otherness.

The technologies of representation are instruments intended to capture, convey and -- in doing so -- make more immediate, if not real, a representation of the experience of sexuality. They serve as vehicles for the sensual presentation of the body, most notably that of women, as a physical terrain of adoration and conquest. These technologies consist of the evolving forms of communications: from peepshows, lithographs, books, magazines, newspapers and other printed media like playing or post cards, photographs and stereoscopes to nickelodeons, films, records, telephones, radio, television, homevideo, cable television and videogames and culminating in today's latest innovations, the Internet/Web and virtual reality "teledildonics". Collectively, the media help fashion and disseminate the language of sexuality, thus fostering a vocabulary of sexual practice and consciousness. These media both constitute a socially shared imagery and articulate the private fantasies that do much to shape an individual's experience of her/his sexuality. The technologies of sexual representation create both the material as well as the imaginative context in which sexual life is practiced.

This chapter introduced some of the earliest modern forms of sexual representation -- daguerreotype and stereoscope, cheap paper books as well as the posture girl, female prostitutes and female flagellation salon proprietors. In particular, as women were exploited by the rapidly evolving sex market economy they, in turn, exploited the most traditional form of representation, performance as a personal spectacle. In doing so, these women invoked two of the underlying forces recasting modern

sexuality. First, they were being driven to achieve complete exposure (both literally and figuratively) through the absolute explicitness of the public display of sexuality -- a phenomenon that each generation of communications media has sought to realize. Second, they were being equally driven by the ceaseless effort to reduce all human, and therefore sexual, practices to a commodity form, thus making one of the most intimate of human relations -- something that makes people human -- indistinguishable from all other objects of exchange.

During the century-and-one-half between the late-17th and early 19th centuries, the foundation was laid for the modern Western form of sexuality. This process involved the remaking of heterosexuality (and the concomitant formalization of homosexuality) by the refocusing of desire onto a specialized set of object choices -- choices that were expected to satisfy personal pleasure. This process also involved the furthering of a wide array of illicit or perverse sexual practices that came to constitute critical features of the sexual vocabulary of experiences still practiced today. Foremost among these was the apparent popularity -- among men and some women, heterosexual and homosexual, as well as those men who visited both "common" prostitutes and upper-class sex clubs -- of what had long been considered to be a perverse practice, flagellation.

Practitioners of sexual perversion have, over the last two centuries, demonstrated a remarkable resilience. This is most critically expressed in their ability to resist the countless efforts at suppression waged by civil, religious, political or medical authorities. Clearly, what is defined as perverted behavior can change over time -- as evident in the evolving standards associated with flagellation,

homosexuality or pedophilia. But perversion persists as a social category of deviance, abnormality or socio-moral transgression.

Part of this resilience is demonstrated in how, ever since the 18th century, perverse practices have embraced technological innovations as part of the effort to enhance the psycho-physical experience of personal sexual pleasure. This "embracing" of innovation has two distinct aspects. First, it was applied with equal vigor to all new forms of consumer-oriented technology – be it hand-wrought, mechanical or electrical devices (e.g., whips, dildos) as well as sensual materials or fabrics (e.g., leather, rubber). Second, this process (involving a tactile object with a distinct physical materiality) did not abandon or reject the past -- but rather occurred as part of a quasi-religious or ritualized practices that often actively incorporated older devices, techniques and procedures. Finally, the technologies of pleasure have become commodities fully integrated into an ever-more dominant class-structured market society. While perverse behavior crosses all class, race and gender boundaries, its articulation often follows strict social lines of demarcation. For example, the dominant media often accepts "perverted" practices among the rich and famous, popularizing them as "luxuries," indulgences steeped in the highly fantasized yet deeply emotionally-disturbing aura of the illicit. However, for all too many, and especially the poor, acting out perverse practices in an unsanctioned manner (e.g., with a streetwalker, at a truck stop) is often cause for jail, the insane asylum or worse.

Over the last century-and-a-half, sexual life has undergone a process by which many once-labeled perversions have been transformed into lifestyles. It is a process that has seen fetishes

recast into sex toys – and sold in adult bookstores and neighborhood pharmacies or through catalogs and Internet sites. One consequence of this development is that the very nature of what was long considered "perverse" or "illicit" has been recast. Today, they seem to have lost much of what for so long was considered their "obscene character". This is most evident in the whole new class of sexual devices, often called "material aids," which have emerged to bridge the gap between a prosthetic device and a fetish.

Practitioners of perverse sexuality have responded to technological innovation very differently than, say, the Luddites and others who are identified as social radicals "resisting" change. At particular times, both sexual perverts and proletarian workers have challenged the conventions – be they moral or economic -- of the dominant social order. For workers – especially those hand-craftsmen of the 17th and 18th century England – resistance represented a fight to retain more than long-held traditions and social relations. They also claimed a right to a socio-personal value system -- i.e., craftsmanship – as a meaningful way of life as well as a livelihood.

For these workers and their families -- and not unlike many people living in "undeveloped" countries today -- technological innovation represented by the new factory system was being imposed, literally and figuratively, upon them. This new system was characterized by machine culture and capitalist social relations, and was being imposed by the combined authority of an expanding state and a rising bourgeoisie, and a weakening crown and church. And imposition it was -- a bloody, merciless one at that. For these traditional tradesmen, innovation did not promise new or better opportunities, but signaled the

destruction of their way of life, if not their personal existence. Thus, technology was not really the determining issue but merely a tangible symbol of a new, more degrading social system.

For many of those considered perverts, and there were and are a very wide assortment of people labeled as such, appropriate innovative technologies signified a new opportunity to achieve pleasure. If, like the Luddite, the pervert is seen as being loyal to an older, unacceptable tradition, then his/her "calling" might well be to a different order of sexual experience, one more hedonistic, more polymorphic and, perhaps, even more sacred than is possible under conditions of commodity sexual exchange.

But unlike the Luddites, perverts have repeatedly over the last two centuries been willing to experiment with each new generation of innovation. Perhaps reflecting the privilege of their class, among those for whom a record survives, very little seems to have been beyond consideration in the search for sexual satisfaction. Some traditional devices, like the dildo and whip, have become staple elements of sexual fantasy – adapting to new technological conditions where appropriate, as with the battery-powered electric device. Others, like the Celestial Bed and Wilhelm Reich's orgone box, have succumb to the whims of historical evolution and disappeared from sexual practice.

In the face of the market's inexorable pull, the technologies of pleasure hold out what can only be called a distorted "utopian" promise of sexual satisfaction and personal fulfillment. This pleasure is distorted because its realization is achieved on only a private, personal (and often isolated) level, outside of the full reconstitution of the individual practitioner's life within a non-alienated society – a

society in which sexual practice would be a gift among equals. Pleasure so constituted, like all forms of acquisition or consumption within capitalist society, can never satisfy, truly fulfill.

For those who employ them, the technologies of pleasure, whether as device or image, represent a means by which the separation between flesh and consciousness, self and other, subject and object is momentarily overcome – and, for some, for this brief moment of fantasy, alienation is overcome. And overcoming alienation, the revaluation of values outside commodity exchange, is the hidden goal of not only many perversions, but most subversive acts that challenge the structure of social power and proclaim a new, truly more humane, way of life.

A new way of seeing

As historical coincidence would have it, during the period when Mrs. Berkley was operating her unique salon in London, photography was being invented across the Channel. According to Steven Lubar, curator of Engineering and Industry at the Smithsonian Institution, "the first person to take a photograph was Joseph-Nicephore Niepce, in 1824." In 1832, Louis Daguerre announced his process to the French Academy of Science and, in 1837 (after forming a partnership with Niepce), he introduced an improved process using a copper plate coated with silver iodide.¹¹¹ Marcus has noted that "shortly thereafter [1832] a lively business in photographs of a sexual nature got under way."¹¹²

"The daguerreotype process flourished in the period between 1840 and 1851," notes historian Gareth S. Jowett, "but it has several severe limitations." The daguerreotype process was, to put it kindly, a difficult procedure by which to make a

photograph. Jowett describes this early procedure as follows:

The apparatus was bulky, a lengthy exposure time was required, and the resulting prints were extremely fragile and had to be kept under glass. The pictures could be difficult to look at because of the metallic glare, and the cost was quite high for quality prints. But the major disadvantage was the picture could not be duplicated.¹¹³

Nevertheless, as Abigail Solomon-Godeau has observed, "almost as soon as there were easily produced daguerreotypes, there were pornographic ones." She notes the unique beauty of this new medium of sexual representation:

Daguerreotypes are, of course, unique images; ... Daguerreotype pornography is often exquisitely hand-colored, the models are carefully posed and lighted, and the trappings are often luxurious [These images were sometimes] concealed inside watch covers, opened by hidden springs, or lining the interior covers of snuff boxes or made into jewelry. By the early years of the [French] Second Empire, much daguerreotype pornography was stereoscopic. Possessing a compelling illusion of three-dimensionality and preternatural detail, painstakingly tinted, entirely grainless, the visual effect of the hand-colored daguerreotype stereo is the acme of verisimilitude.¹¹⁴

She reminds her readers that before its industrialization in the 1850s, "... photographic pornography appears to have been a luxury item." And, with very rare exception (apparently only in France), an indulgence available only to a certain well-to-do class of men.

Many of the early photographers borrowed from still earlier painterly and lithographic visual styles when they approached the portraiture of the nude, especially the female nude. In France, as Solomon-Godeau points out, they borrowed from "a broad spectrum of sexualized and more or less venal feminine identities -- the

grisette [working-class part-time prostitute], lorette [courtesan working near a church], lionne [lioness], biche ["bitch"], cocotte [prostitute], grande cocotte, grande horizontale [royal court prostitute] -- were initially imagined in the lithographic productions of the 1830s and 1840s...."¹¹⁵ Such imagery served to help forge the basic iconography of female (and, to a lesser extent, male) representation articulated as pornography.

Photography, during the first few decades of its introduction, established a pattern for media representation of sexual imagery that would be followed by nearly all-subsequent "new media." First and foremost, and as both an art and commerce, photography appealed to the self-interest of the upper classes and served a variety of purposes. Such purposes included economic (e.g., Muybridge studies measuring the labor process), political (e.g., police mug shots, corpses after Paris Commune), personal (e.g., self- and family-portraits) or pleasurable (e.g., pornographic) -- and often more than one at a time. Second, part of the personal enjoyment that came from photography was anchored in sexuality, especially in terms of its appeal to the perverse. Images of women (and, to a lesser extent, men) in a variety of "provocative" positions and costumes was established. Together, the object of representation within a context intended to illicit excitement, the image expressed a unique iconography of unacceptable pleasure, be it labeled immoral, obscene or perverse.

As with all "new" media, a certain degree of inventiveness defines early pornographic photography. According to Solomon-Godeau, the creative breakthrough that distinguishes the medium is the invention of the "beaver shot," the complete exposure of the female genitalia. [S-G/297] This

captivating, if not humiliating representation, often presented female subject with her face covered, be it by petticoats or veils. [see Images/xx] This shot remains not only a principal technique of photography to this day, but appears to have been adopted by all subsequent "new media" as a defining technique of female (and, to a lesser extent, male homoerotic) representation.

During the first quarter of the 19th century, when human vision was a major subject of scientific investigation, a number of optical research instruments were converted to devices for popular entertainment. Among these "scientific toys," as they were referred to, were the thaumatrope (i.e., a "wonder turner") and the phenakistoscope (i.e., "deceptive view"). They do not, however, appear to have been made use of for sexual imagery as part of their innovative techniques of representation. On the other hand, photography and the stereoscope rapidly became media for the dissemination of "pornographic" images.

Following photography, the stereoscope was the second principal medium of visual representation during the 19th century. As Jonathan Crary reminds us: "It is easily forgotten now how pervasive was the experience of the stereoscope and how for decades it defined a major mode of experiencing photographically produced images."¹¹⁶ This technology was developed by two pioneering optical-media innovators, Charles Wheatstone and Sir David Brewster. It exploited a particular physiological dis-functionality of human sight, "binocular disparity" (by which each eye sees slightly differently), in order to suggest a fundamentally different, and in many ways more powerful, experience than that offered through

the two-dimensional photography. Crary identifies this appeal as follows:

The stereoscope ... provided a form in which "vividness" of effect increased with the apparent proximity of the object to the viewer, and the impression of three-dimensional solidity became greater as the optic axes of each diverged. Thus the desired effect of the stereoscope was not simply likeness, but immediate tangibility.

He strongly cautions his readers to bear in mind a very simple but all-important fact: "We will never really know what the stereoscope looked like to a nineteenth-century viewer or recover a stance from which it could seem an equivalent for a 'natural vision'."¹¹⁷ Such a warning can be applied to all communications media.

The tension between "likeness" and "tangibility" has come to define the historical development of modern media technology. It has repeatedly manifest itself in the battles between the requirements of rendering ever-more exact reproductions and the demands for intensifying the feeling of a media experience. In other words, achieving the goals of each dictate leads to a fundamentally different outcome: for the former, it culminates in achieving an indistinguishable correspondence between the original and a copy; for the later, it culminates in the merging of the subject and the object. Within terms of today's new digital media, this disparity is evident in the face-off beginning to take shape between the new standard for High Definition Television (HDTV) and the appeal of "virtual reality" [VR] or immersive simulation programs popular among video-game players.

This tension was articulated as part of new social sexuality that was beginning to take shape during these early days of the "modern" or industrial phase of capitalist development in the West. Linda Williams has noted that "... mid- to

late-nineteenth century was a period in which a new porno-erotics of corporealized observation began."¹¹⁸ During these early decades of the emerging new medium of photography, a host of different techniques competed with one another for popular acceptance and many (if not all) were used to depict sexual imagery of female nudes. Besides the daguerreotype process and the stereoscopic photos, other techniques included stereoscope glass prints, stereoscope cards (on salt paper or viewed by transparency), large-scale prints, "carte de viste" prints (i.e., very small prints mounted on cardboard supports) and ambrotypes (i.e., prints rendered through the wet glass collodion process and sealed onto a cardboard shield).¹¹⁹

This "new porno-erotics" contributed to an historically new sensibility, as much an visual or imagic experience as a tactile one. Williams (drawing upon the work of Crary) proposes that the photography engendered not simply psychic stimulation, but actual physical stimulation as well. She sees this to be similar in development to other late-19th and early-20th century media technologies, including flip books, picture puzzles, Muybridge's zoopraxiscope, Edison's mutoscope. These media helped to heighten the erotic experience of pornographic images.¹²⁰

Photography underwent the first phase of becoming a mass-market art form as refinements in the photographic procedure were introduced (e.g., shorter exposure time, more accurate lenses, faster development processes) and the costs of cameras and other equipment decreased significantly. Perhaps no single person was more essential to this process than Fox Talbot, an Englishman sometimes credited with the invention of photography. In 1835, he developed a method of sensitizing paper for image

capture and, in 1840, pioneered the use of silver nitrate and gallic acid for development of the latent image (i.e., calotype). According to Jowett, "Talbot's process was the direct ancestor of all modern photographic techniques."¹²¹

By the early-1850s, new techniques were introduced that speed up the photographic reproduction process from the then-current several minutes to 2 to 20 seconds. This helped to significantly expand the market for photographic images. In the U.S. during this period, the costs for a commercially-produced daguerreotype photograph dropped from 50 cents to 25 cents to 12-1/2 cents. So popular had they become that it was estimated that, in 1853, three million prints were produced and that over one hundred commercial studios operated in New York City alone.¹²² It is not known how many of these images were "pornographic" or how many studios produced such representations.

George Eastman's introduction of the relatively inexpensive Kodak camera, which took advantage of the then-breakthrough nitro-cellulose roll film, in the 1880s-1890s, propelled photography into the second phase of market expansion. This effort involved not only again significantly lowering the cost of the medium, but also providing the user with greater control over the photographic and the reproduction/duplication process. This effort would culminate in the medium's third phase of development with the introduction of the self-printing Polaroid instant camera in 1946 and culminate in the late-90s with the introduction of digital photography.¹²³ As Williams notes:

... as the technologies producing these images became cheaper later in the [19th] century and erotic and pornographic images circulated widely though most often illicitly, it seems quite likely that a wider

range of classes of both sexes had an opportunity to observe such images.¹²⁴

One result, which could have been expected, was that "pornographic" photography became a major public morals issue.

Numerous early photographs were arrested and even jailed for their "art". For example, Felix Jacques-Antoine Muolin has been described "the first [French] photographer in the history of photography whose work exudes seductiveness." He was part of a unofficial group of early photographic "artists" who specialized in depicting female nudes. Besides Muolin, this group included August Belloc, Bruno Braquehais, Philippe Derussy, Louis Jules Duboscq-Soleil and Alex Gouin. According to Serge Nazarieff, Muolin ran a studio in Paris during the late-1840s and produced a series of "plate daguerreotype nudes using non-professional models from fourteen to sixteen years of age. ..."

Going further, Nazarieff notes: "In 1851 he had a little trouble with the law: a number of licentious images done by Moulin had been seized by the police at Malacrida's place." Malacrida was an optician and sold images that -

- the police report -- were "so obscene that even to pronounce the titles ... would be to commit an indecency." He was sentenced to a fine and a year in prison; "the widow Rene, manufacturer of the daguerreotype," was sentenced to a fine and two months in prison; and the artist, Moulin, was also sentenced to a fine and a month in jail.¹²⁵

But perhaps the most celebrated 19th century case of censorship of this new medium involved one Henry Hayler, an English photographer who enjoyed a European-wide reputation. Hayler was the subject of a major raid in the spring of 1874 during which the police descended on two houses in London in which he conducted his operations. While Hayler escaped to Germany, according to Ashbee, "no less than 130,248 obscene photographs, and 5,000 slides were seized and destroyed..."¹²⁶ These two incidents suggest the scale of the flourishing photographic pornography business in France and England and, one suspects, in other parts of Europe and North America during the latter-half of the century.

Notes

¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 493.

² J. K. Noyes, *The Mastery of Submission: Invention of Masochism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 85.

³ Iwan Block, *Sexual Life in England: Past and Present* (Herfordshire, England: Oracle Publishing, Ltd., 1996), p.320; see also *Sexual Extremities*

⁴ Stone/279

⁵ Block/SexEngland-134

⁶ Block/SexEngland-356

⁷ Henry Spenser Ashbee, (Pisanus Fraxi). *The Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature: Catena Librorum Tacendorum. Prohibitorum* (New York: Documentary Books, 1962), /I, xlii-xliii; Bloch/Sex England -134-37, 352, 355-56; Bloch/Sex Extreme- 217-23; Braun/170-71

⁸ Bloch/353

⁹ Ashbee/vol I, xliii-xliv

¹⁰ Noyes-Bassermann/137

¹¹ Trumbach/179

¹² Bassermanm/136

¹³ [xxx]

¹⁴ de Vries-Fryer/141

¹⁵ Block/SexExtrem-200

¹⁶ Block/SexEngland-327; see also Trumbach/107, 157-59

¹⁷ Trumbach/136

¹⁸ Scott/205-6

¹⁹ Bloch/SexEngland-350-51; Bloch/SexExtreme-216-17

²⁰ q/Partridge/141-42; see also Bloch/SexExtreme-215-16

²¹ Donoghue/215

²² Donoghue/293, n. 3

²³ Stone/339

²⁴ Trumbach/9

²⁵ Trumbach/5

²⁶ Burg/65

²⁷ Burg/40

²⁸ Trumbach/84

²⁹ Spencer/179

³⁰ Spencer/188

³¹ Stone/396

³² Trumbach/169

³³ Donoghue/18

³⁴ Stone/308, 319-20

³⁵ Trumbach/161

³⁶ Trumbach/69

³⁷ Stone/308

³⁸ Trumbach/194-95

³⁹ Trumbach/145-46

⁴⁰ Thompson/55-56

⁴¹ Trumbach/69

⁴² Brassermann/133

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- 43 Berg/66
44 Trumbach/70
45 Schivelbusch/89
46 Trumbach/147, 153
47 Fryer/103; Trumbach/146-47; Burg/36
48 Trumbach/139
49 Trumbach/120-29
50 Stone/380
51 Trumbach/175-77
52 Trumbach/179-81
53 Stone/330
54 xxxx
55 xxx
56 Trumbach/147-49
57 Bloch/SexExtreme-128
58 Marcus/35
59 Marcus/67q
60 Thompson/62; Thomis/177-86
61 Stone/151
62 Burg/49-50
63 Thompson/60
64 H&R, 32
65 H&R, 51
66 Sale/38
67 Anthony/xxx
68 Trumbach/155
69 Trumbach/156
70 Trumbach/157-59
71 Fryer/240
72 Flyer/241
73 Trumbach/86
74 Trumbach/87
75 Stone/332; Spenser/227; Trumbach/83-86
76 Stone/333
77 Block/SexExt-175-76
78 Spenser/221
79 Stone/334
80 Stone/380; Block/SexExt-175-76
81 Block/289, 294, 301-2, 310-20; Marcus/xx; Stone/310, 334-36, 394-96
82 Ashbee/xx
83 Kraft-Ebing/xx
84 Scott/188
85 Abbott/123
86 Abbott/124-25
87 Abbott/128
88 Abbott/131-32
89 Abbott/131-32
90 Innes/97q
91 Stone/281-82q
92 Block/SexExtre-193-98
93 Cohn/136
94 Cohn/128

- ⁹⁵ Cohn/133-34
- ⁹⁶ Tannahill/386
- ⁹⁷ Ashbee/xx or Bloch/SexEngland-xxx
- ⁹⁸ Marcus/67
- ⁹⁹ Bloch/xxx-354
- ¹⁰⁰ Braun/170
- ¹⁰¹ Bloch/xxx-338-39
- ¹⁰² Jacob/175
- ¹⁰³ Block/EngSex-339
- ¹⁰⁴ Stone/332
- ¹⁰⁵ Fryer/242
- ¹⁰⁶ Block/SexExtrem-59, 108-11
- ¹⁰⁷ Lofts/15-16
- ¹⁰⁸ Block/SexExtrem-63q
- ¹⁰⁹ Block/SexExtrem-113; see also Block/SexEngland-292-98; Fryer/242
- ¹¹⁰ Block/SexEngland-289
- ¹¹¹ Luber/51*
- ¹¹² [Marcus/66-67]
- ¹¹³ Jowett/188-89
- ¹¹⁴ S-G/296].
- ¹¹⁵ S-G/301]
- ¹¹⁶ Crary/117-18]
- ¹¹⁷ Crary/123-24]
- ¹¹⁸ Williams/34]
- ¹¹⁹ Nazarieff/10-11]
- ¹²⁰ Williams/17]
- ¹²¹ Jowett/188]
- ¹²² Jowett/190]
- ¹²³ Lubar/63]
- ¹²⁴ Williams/25]
- ¹²⁵ Nazarieff/110-11]
- ¹²⁶ Ashbee/q-Marcus/67n]