



Governing Pleasures: Pornography and Social Change in England, 1815-1914

Lisa Z. Sigel

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This work is a historical account of the production, distribution, and consumption of pornography in Great Britain from the early 19th century to the turn of the 20th century. It examines how pornography changed over time as a cultural and symbolic object in British society, and asks: What was considered pornographic? Who looked at pornography and read it? What sorts of messages did this medium transmit to both men and women? What was its thematic content, who controlled it, and how did these messages affect sexual and social dynamics? In contrast to recent ahistorical feminist assertions that pornography necessarily teaches men how to oppress women, this work views the use of pornography through the lens of historical and social change. In a careful analysis, it shows the cultural complexities of the medium and links Victorian pornography to other areas such as language, science, consumerism, and politics.

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