

**Series:
“Sex: A Modern History”**

Monogamy (17 March 2002)

Abstinence (12 May 2022)



“Sex Work”

Joanna Bourke, Gresham Professor of Rhetoric & Professor of History at Birkbeck

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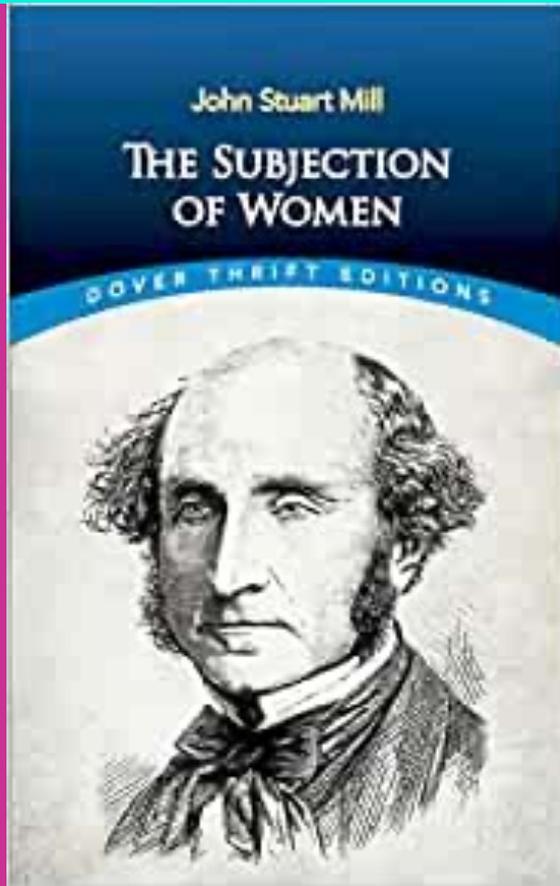
**To whom
does a woman's body belong?**



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Association for Promoting the Extension of
The Contagious Diseases Act, 1866,
To the Civil Population of the United Kingdom.

REPORT
ON THE
EXTENT OF VENEREAL DISEASE;
ON THE
OPERATION OF THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACT,
AND THE MEANS
OF CHECKING CONTAGION.

WITH APPENDIX.

London:
PUBLISHED FOR THE ASSOCIATION,
BY H. BAILLIÈRE 219, REGENT STREET.
1868.

Price One Shilling.



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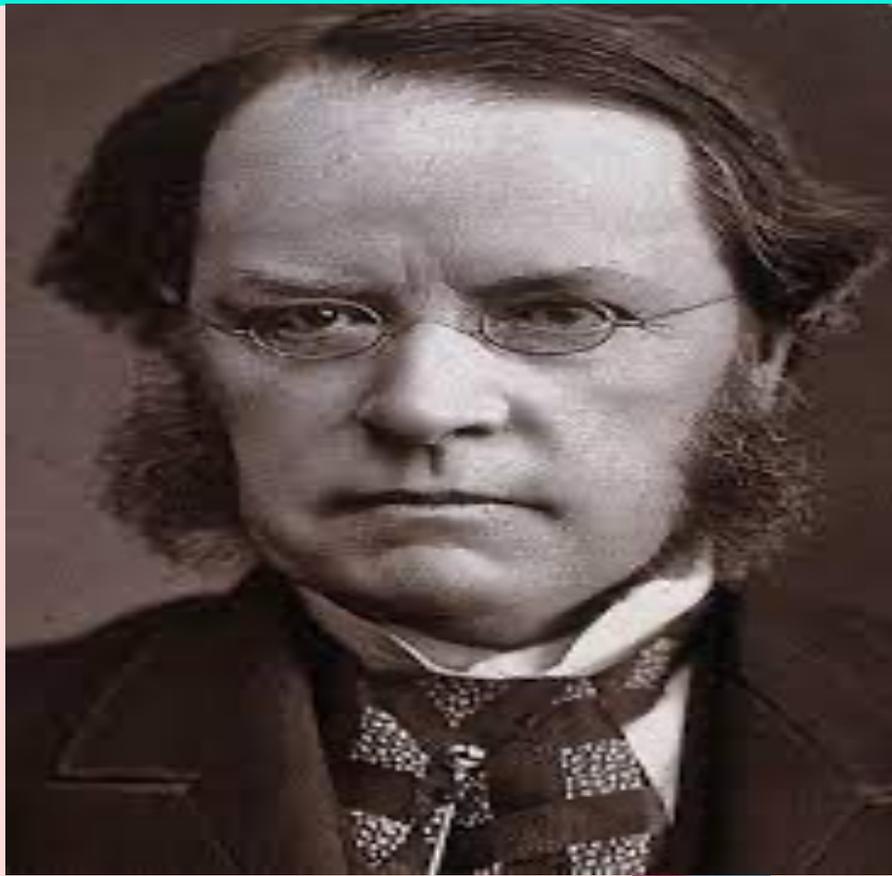
**Classic example of the
double standard of sexual morality,
which ruthlessly punished women
who *performed* sex work
rather than the men who *procured*
their services.**



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**Lyon Playfair
(Liberal MP)**

**Prostitutes have
the “habits of
beasts**

**They need to be
“redeemed
from savagery
to civilization”**

**Need the
“humanizing
influences”
of punitive
legislation**

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“Carceral humanitarianism”:

**- that is, a feminism that turns to
policing and prison as the ‘solution’
to the ‘problem’ of sex work**



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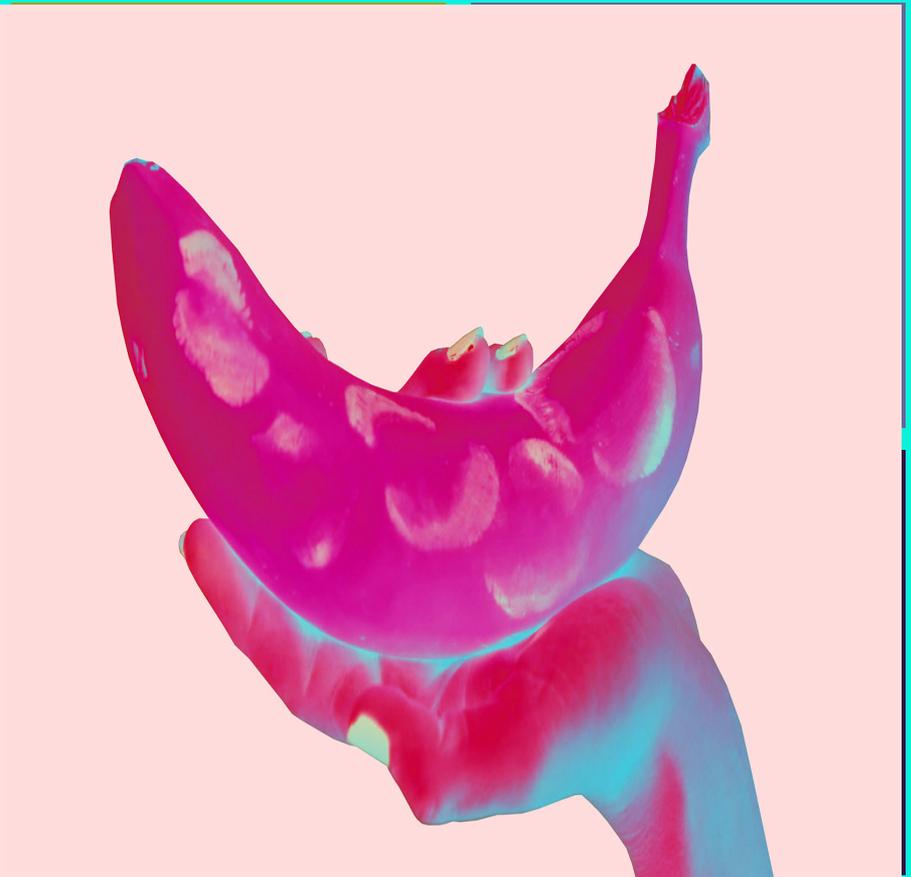
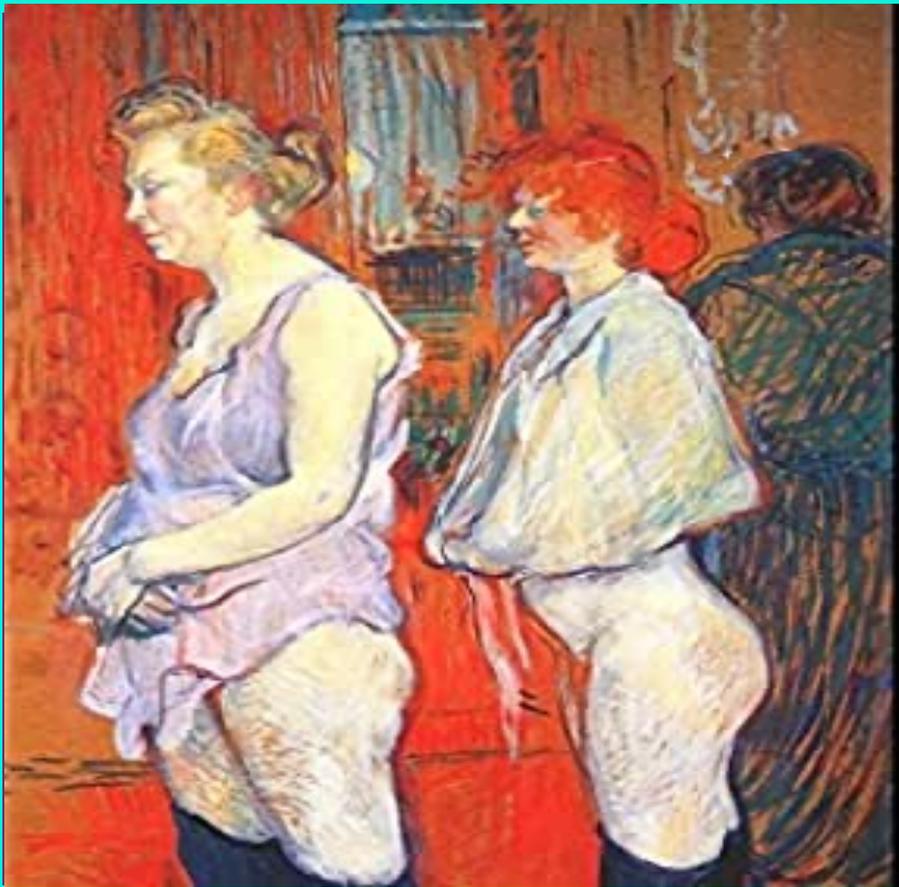
**To whom
does a woman's body belong?**



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upon me almost fiercely, and one said, ' I should have thought you'd have known better nor that. Ain't one in the way of natur', and the other ain't natur' at all. Ain't it a different thing what a woman's obliged to do for a living because she has to keep body and soul together, and going up there to be pulled about by a man as if you was cattle and hadn't no feelins, and to have an instrument pushed up you, not to make you well (because you ain't ill), but just that men may come to you and use you to please theirsels. I call it right down beastly altogether. Don't you think if I was

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Third Series. Vol. II. No. 4 August-September, 1919

The Shield

A Review of
Moral and Social Hygiene

Edited by J. B. H. H. H.

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PUBLISHED BY
THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORAL AND SOCIAL HYGIENE
10 FIFTH AVENUE
LONDON, W. 1

Price 1/- Net



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Josephine Butler: “The poor creature, cannot tell”



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**Working-class, young women were
'dumb beasts',
ripe for 'rescue';**

**middle-class, older women-
reformers had a voice
& were the humanity
to which these working-class girls
and women should aspire.**



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the examination, and they both exclaimed against it as a 'beastly affair,' and one said, 'She didn't know what England was coming to, for a woman to be dragged up through the streets in the middle of the day, just in the working hours, with men hollering after you, and you got to show your private parts to a drunken old beast in the

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Josephine Butler:

“Sentimentalist naturalists neglect to furnish her [dog] with any material in place of her own coat; and she, poor creature, cannot tell him ‘If I do not tear off my own fur, my offspring will perish’. She can only inarticulately fret and rage against the restraint put upon her, and her young *do* perish.”



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The age at which a girl could legally consent to having sex was only 12 years.



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**Select Committee
of the House of Lords
to Inquire into State of Law
Relating to Protection
of Young Girls from Artifices
to Induce Them
to Lead Corrupt Life (1881)**



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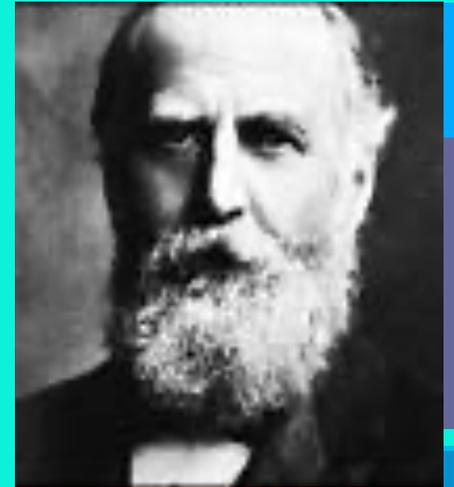
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William Stead

in 1885



**Girls drugged,
raped,
trafficked**

“White slavery”

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Gothic fiction

**Victorian
pornography**

**Titillate and
evade the
censor**

**Sensationalist
journalism**

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**Lord Oranmore and Browne in the
House of Lords (1884):**

“He believed that there were very few of their Lordships who had not, when young men, been guilty of immorality. He hoped they would pause before passing a clause within the range of which their sons might come.”



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Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885



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Judith Walkowitz:

“The 1885 Act drove a wedge between prostitutes and the poor working-class community. It effectively destroyed the brothel as a family industry and centre of a specific female subculture; further undermined the social and economic autonomy of prostitutes; and increasingly rendered them social outcasts.”



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**Formulaic gothic,
sexualized plot**



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Teresa Billington-Greig



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**Carceral
and other punitive
responses
to prostitution**



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**Progressive feminists had
forged alliances with
political conservatives and
moralists.**



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“White slavery”



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The Most Important Paper in the World (London: G. S. Bennett)

Horrors of the White Slave Trade

The Mighty League to Free the Fairies of the World

THE MIGHTY LEAGUE TO FREE THE FAIRIES OF THE WORLD
HAS THE HONOR TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT HAS THE PLEASURE TO
PUBLISH THE FOLLOWING WORK

THE MIGHTY LEAGUE TO FREE THE FAIRIES OF THE WORLD
HAS THE HONOR TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT HAS THE PLEASURE TO
PUBLISH THE FOLLOWING WORK

By MISS CLIFFORD G. BOE

The Knowledge of the Fairies of the World and the
Mighty League to Free the Fairies of the World

AND A HISTORY OF THE MIGHTY LEAGUE TO FREE THE FAIRIES OF THE WORLD

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**Imperialism
masquerading
as “rescue”**

**The enlightened
“West”**

**“White
guardians” of
Indian
prostitutes**

**Indian women
not agents in
own lives**

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**Eleanor Marx &
Emma Goldman**

**Married and
unmarried
prostitution**

**Not only white
women**

**The “merciless
Moloch of
capitalism that
fattens on
unpaid labour”**

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***All* forms of commercial sex were examples of patriarchal violence.**

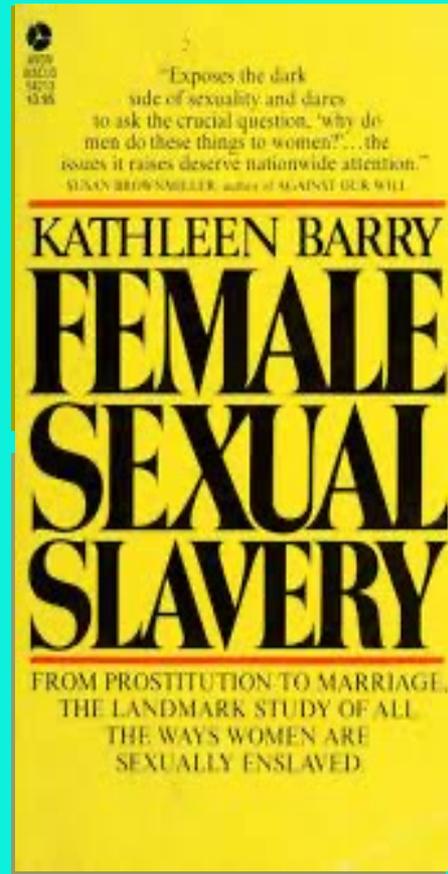
Questions of ‘consent’ to sex work were irrelevant.



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**“Governance
Feminism”:**

**Politics moves
“off the street and
into the state”**

**All sex work is
sex trafficking**

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**Erasure of
socio-economic contexts,
complex intersectional
identities,
& vastly different working
conditions**



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**An expansive carceral
state & militarized
nationalism
that polices borders,
disproportionally harms
people without cultural or
financial capital.**



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“Good/bad”

“Deserving/undeserving”



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“Deserving of rescue”:

Coerced and abhorrent

Easily distinguishable from “economic migrants”

Prepared to accept much lower paid work

Eager to help police

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**Carol Leigh,
a member of COYOTE (or
Call Off Your Old Tired
Ethics):**

“Sex work”



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**Sex workers
throughout the world
have been active in forging
communities where they
can access medical and
legal advice. And be
proud.**



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They insisted that they were political subjects with social rights.



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**“We are grateful &
thank you for your
concern,
but please don’t rescue
us”.**



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