



Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State

By Judith R. Walkowitz

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The state regulation of prostitution, as established under the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869, and the successful campaign for the repeal of the Acts, provide the framework for this study of alliances between prostitutes and feminists and their clashes with medical authorities and police. *Prostitution and Victorian Society* makes a major contribution to women's history, working-class history, and the social history of medicine and politics. It demonstrates how feminists and others mobilized over sexual questions, how public discourse on prostitution redefined sexuality in the late nineteenth century, and how the state helped to recast definitions of social deviance.

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Review

'Prostitution and Victorian Society represents women's history at its most ambitious and effective. Walkowitz's discerning analysis of the Ladies National Association's ideas and strategies makes her book a very useful part of the political education of feminists of our own generation.' Ellen Ross, *Signs*

'A picture of the complex mechanisms through which class, gender and sexualities are refracted and shaped. This is a major, pathbreaking achievement which will leave future historians deeply in Judith Walkowitz's debt.' Jeffrey Weeks, *History Today*

'... essential (and compelling) reading.' *British Journal of Law and Society*

'... a classic of social history, full of vivid experience bound together by a profound understanding of the social ideology and moral myth of Victorian England ... A work of impeccable scholarship; a parable for today; yes, both of these. But let the reviewer not founder in her own morality. This is also a book full of lusty life and exceptional characters.' Elizabeth Janeway, *Los Angeles Times*

'Walkowitz reveals the complexity of the social, economic, moral, religious and political (including feminist) issues that were entwined in the CD controversy through a virtuoso analysis. Walkowitz exposes the void that still exists in the historical explanation of changes in ideas and policies on sexual and social relations of the sexes that have transpired since late Victorian times. The exposure is a worthy challenge to a social historian who can match Walkowitz's gifts in research and analysis.' *The American Historical Review*

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