



Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society

By Nickie Roberts

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Blending social history and sexual politics, this book aims to retrieve prostitution from the hands of male writers who have defined the "oldest profession" from their own point of view as the client sex. The author challenges orthodox views on prostitutes and, in this narrative account, proclaims herself on the side of the unrepentant whore, the most maligned woman in history. From the high-ranking temple whores of Egypt and the courtesans of Greece and Rome, she tells the story of the prostitute with liberal quotations from contemporary sources and anecdotes of bawdy-house and brothel life. She shows how, in the Middle Ages, the Church exploited the sex industry to build churches out of the proceeds; she describes French brothels Italian and the Victorian denial of female sexuality and the double standards of conventional attitudes. In the 20th century section, the book gives whores their voice and describes whores' movements such as the English Collective of Prostitutes and the American COYOTE ("call off your old tired ethics"). The author also dissects feminist approaches to the subject and argues strongly in favour of decriminalization of prostitution and the sexual and financial autonomy of the whore.

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