

Excerpts from
Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work

From Laura McClure's entry on Auletris

The *auletris*, or flute player, provided musical accompaniment at the Greek symposium, a drinking party enjoyed by aristocratic males. She normally was a slave under the control of a male brothel keeper. Xenophon in his *Symposium* described a guest as bringing with him to the party an *auletris*, along with various other entertainers. Another passage discussed the instructing of a servant to bring an *auletris* from the brothel so that the guests “might be entertained by her playing and made glad.” In a reversal of sympotic protocol, Socrates at the beginning of Plato’s *Symposium* dismissed the flute player with the words, “Let her play to herself, or if she wishes, to the women within.” Comic fragments allude to flute girls offering their services to men on the streets, suggesting that they were not simply hired for their musical abilities alone.

From Catherine Davis's entry on Hip-Hop

By the late 1990s, hip-hop had seen its market share of all music purchased in the United States steadily grow every year. With rap songs regularly topping the *Billboard* pop chart and hip-hop otherwise infiltrating every corner of pop culture, many cultural critics began voicing concern that as the increasingly consolidated music industry expertly marketed hip-hop to teens of all races, the genre was moving ever further from its roots as an expression of the social realities of black and Latino urban youth. What had previously been a meaningful source of empowerment for those youth, they argued, was becoming homogenized and gutted of its political potential by the demands of what sells best in the American marketplace. And what sold phenomenally well in hip-hop at the turn of the century was pimping. ...

For as long as rappers have been using the words *bitch* and *ho* in their songs, hip-hop has drawn criticism for irresponsibly glorifying sexual degradation and exploitation of women. Defenders of hip-hop’s pimping fixation, on the other hand, say that it actually has very little to do with prostitution; it is more about style—a way of walking, talking, acting, and dressing that signifies swagger and self-confidence. Besides the obvious affinity rappers have with pimps because both earn their living from their wit, guile, and dexterous use of language, the pimp figure is romanticized in hip-hop for what he represents: a black, urban antihero. He is at once a mythic American outlaw existing totally outside mainstream notions of respectability and American capitalism personified: the entrepreneurial spirit and egotistical pursuit of financial success.

From John Holmstrom's entry on Rock Music:

The relationship between punk rock and prostitution is compelling because the earliest meaning for the word “punk” is “prostitute” and an often-cited modern definition is “young man used as a homosexual partner in prison.” It also of course refers to rebellious and immature young people. The term “punk rock” came about in the early 1970s, when rock writer Greg Shaw used it to refer to “garage rock” groups such as Count Five, The Troggs and The Standells. Later, Nick Tosches, Lester Bangs and Richard Meltzer used “punk” to label those bands, as well as the Velvet Underground, the MC5 and The Stooges, in Detroit’s *Creem* magazine, and the term “punk rock” described hard rock bands such as the New York Dolls and The Sweet as well as English “pub rock” bands such as Eddie and the Hot Rods. *Creem* featured Alice Cooper on the magazine’s cover for winning their “Punk of the Year” award in 1974.

From Bruce Brandt's entry on Shakespeare:

William Shakespeare is acclaimed as English literature’s greatest dramatist. His most significant portrayal of prostitution occurs in *Measure for Measure*, in which Angelo, ruling in the Duke’s absence, has begun ruthlessly enforcing laws against fornication and prostitution. Brothels are pulled down, including one run by the comic character Mistress Overdone and her servant Pompey, and Angelo condemns a young man, Claudio, to death for impregnating his fiancée. The play ultimately suggests that the moral assumptions behind such laws run counter to human nature. The Duke returns to a more tolerant and compassionate administration of the law, and characters like Angelo and Claudio’s sister Isabella come to accept their previously repressed sexuality.

From Evgeny Steiner's entry on Ukiyo-e:

A combination of socioeconomic, political, and religious reasons led to the eminence of the prostitutes’ images in ukiyo-e. City dwellers, often well-to-do middlebrow folks of humble origin, were politically deprived and restricted in the rigid society with limited opportunities for social, class, and geographic mobility. Often they had to channel their time and money to a rather narrow range of spare-time activity, such as theater and pleasure quarters. Also, there was a chronic shortage of women in Edo (in some periods the ratio of men to women was 10:1), and sex never had serious connotations of sin. So catching the fleeting pleasures of life basically meant having fun with the fleeting beauty of prostitutes. Prostitutes were considered the very embodiment of the transient world in its Buddhist sense. On a certain level they were closer to the real understanding of the impermanence of life than the major population was because they had less attachment to worldly things—no family, no property, and no permanent relationships, but a succession of transient guests. All this made prostitutes in the traditional Japanese society a counterpart of monks or even the incarnation of religious deities, like bodhisattva Fugen. Often prostitutes were called *Daruma*—after a semi-legendary founder of Zen Buddhism, who was a popular subject in erotic prints (“A Prostitute as Daruma” and “Daruma Crossing the River to Visit Yoshiwara Pleasure Quarters,” for example).

Pictures of beautiful women served several purposes in Edo society. They were first seen as illustrations in erotic books (in the fiction genre [*ukiyo-zoshi*], in books on prostitutes and brothels [*keisei-mono*], or in sex manuals known as “pillow-books”) at the end of the 17th century. Later they were compiled in albums and series of loose leaves (often 12 pictures in a series). They served as promotional pictures of prostitutes in description of Yoshiwara brothels and critical catalogs with price lists. Another important use of images of courtesans was as a sexual aid.

From Melynda Barnhart’s entry on Trafficking

Trafficking involves the movement of persons to exploit their labor. Trafficking in persons is a form of slavery and encompasses debt bondage, peonage, and involuntary servitude. Historically, trafficking of women and children was associated with the capture of young women and girls for forced prostitution. Trafficking was originally referred to as “white slavery” in the late 1800s when the phenomenon was distinguished from the African slave trade as the sale of women and girls of European descent for sexual servitude. Because of this early definitional connection, many still conflate trafficking and prostitution. The definition of trafficking in persons is still disputed. Some groups, notably a section of the feminist movement, define trafficking as the buying and selling of women and children for sexual exploitation. This definition includes all forms of prostitution, pornography, and any labor in the sex industry and does not require a lack of consent by the women or children involved. This definition assumes that no woman would ever choose to engage in such activity without some form of economic or social coercion. The current international legal definition of trafficking in persons looks not to the industry in which a person works, but to the elements of force or coercion involved in the labor. This definition is much broader, in that it includes forced labor in any industry. However, voluntary consensual labor in the sex industry is not included in this definition of trafficking, given that the element of coercion is central to the current understanding of trafficking.

From Tracy Quan’s entry on Opera:

Opera has been the perfect medium for telling sentimental stories about prostitutes. Giuseppe Verdi’s *La Traviata*, the best-known opera based on a prostitute’s life, has become a classic, but its first performance in 1853 provoked outrage and controversy. *La Traviata* was to religious authorities in many cities what the film *Pretty Woman* was to secular American feminists in the 1990s. The opera was condemned because a prostitute, Violetta Valery, was sympathetically portrayed and central to the story—and audiences liked her.

From Bebe Loff’s entry on Research Ethics:

One of the earliest systematic responses to research misconduct arose as a direct outcome of research conducted on sex workers. Albert Neisser is known today for his pioneering work in the area of sexually transmitted diseases, and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* and *Neisseria meningitidis* are named after him. However, less well-taught in medical schools is

the content of the scandal that exploded in Prussia during 1898. Neisser had injected serum from patients with syphilis into other patients, mostly prostitutes, some of whom were minors. This was done without the prostitutes' knowledge, and a number of the them contracted syphilis. Although his research drew support from the medical community, no similar support was forthcoming from the public. Neisser was tried and convicted of the crime of inflicting unlawful physical injury. He was ordered to pay a significant fine. In addition, an inquiry resulted in legislation in 1900 prohibiting the conduct of nontherapeutic research without informed consent. This is particularly significant given the behavior of many German medical professionals during World War II.

***From the entry on HIV/AIDS and the Prostitutes' Rights Movement,
by Cheryl Overs and Melissa Ditmore***

The prostitutes' rights movement was underway before the onset of the HIV epidemic. Feminism was the background to the onset of sex workers organizing in the many countries in the 1980s, although feminism and sex work have always had a tense coexistence. The goals of the nascent prostitutes rights movement in the United States, Canada, Australia/New Zealand, and several Western European countries included achieving better working conditions and stopping violence and police abuse, primarily through the decriminalization of prostitution and other policy change. In the 1970s, sex workers formed the Prostitutes Collective of Victoria in Australia, COYOTE (Cast Off Your Old Tired Ethics) in California, and Prostitutes of New York (PONY). Prostitutes in Lyon, France, called a strike and occupied a church in 1975. Feminism was a major topic at the first World Whores' Congress in 1985. By the second Whores' Congress one year later, feminism was eclipsed by HIV/AIDS. This marked an important turning point in the history of the movement, which was to expand rapidly to sex workers in developing countries and to male and transgender sex workers and see a shift in the emphasis from women's rights to health and human rights.

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