



Bawds, Pimps and Procurers: Images of the prostitute in medieval England

Prostitution is like 'a sewer in a palace. Take away the sewer and you will fill the palace with pollution... Take away prostitutes from the world and you will fill it with sodomy.'

Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica.*

The history of prostitution is the history of women on the very edge of society. It is the history of a marginal world that was for most dominated by poverty, violence, deprivation and crime. A squalid world within a society whose laws were created and enforced by men who in general considered women to be a subordinate species, inferior, yet threatening, who easily overstepped the boundaries of reason. A society that had seen the church, the guardian of morality, through gradual secularisation, decay into a 'Great Whore arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with precious stones and pearls'. A society whose cultural foundations were built on a firm tradition of misogyny; one that perceived women as the original cause of all evil, whose independent sexuality was the sexuality of the whore that lurked behind even the most virginal of female facades.

The medieval prostitute, as has always been the case, was demanded and desired by the same men who abhorred and persecuted her, and her history has also been coloured by the attitudes of the men who recorded it in court records, ordinances, canon laws, surveys and chronicles.

Brothels

Prostitution was a fact of life, tolerated and even regulated, nearly all attempts to eliminate it failed. In England, as with the rest of Europe, the municipal and licensed brothel was established to regulate and control prostitution. It has been suggested that prostitution is a consequence of urban life, and to a certain extent this is true. The countryside offered sexual opportunity by way of slaves, concubines, daughters

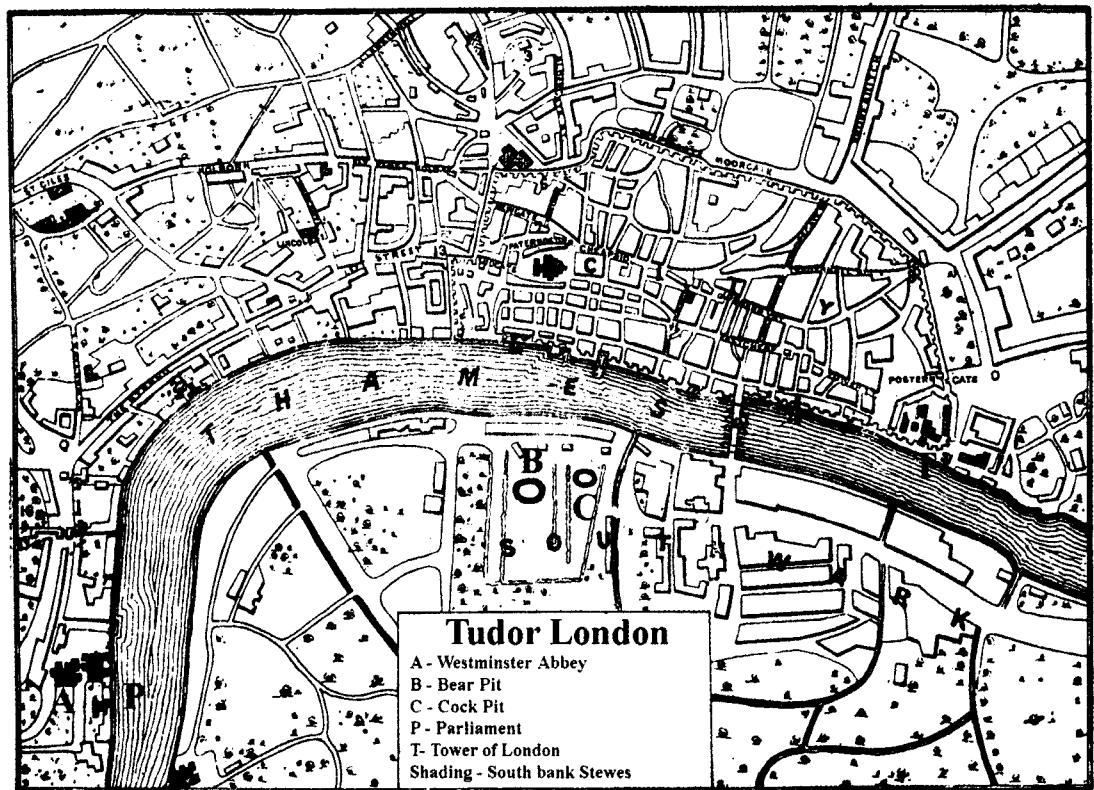
and indeed any female in the family; but urban life introduced one fundamental problem – a lack of room. Since very early times men have realised that the way out of this conundrum is the establishment of special houses for sexual purposes.

One of the earliest recorded of these houses is a Sumerian brothel, the Ka Kum in the city of Erech. It had three grades of prostitute and it is intriguing to learn that the third tier, the ambulant whores, were even three thousand years before Christ, being reviled for carrying out their business. The Romans then reinvented the municipal type brothel, and several hundred years later, in the England of 1176. Henry II turned his attention to the Bankside Stewes of Southwark and bringing them under municipal control.

The brothel thus became the 'focus of this necessary evil, this societal safety valve' and a number of arguments have been put forward to explain the almost universal movement towards municipalization during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Richard Trexler says it was a move to combat homosexuality; Jaques Rossiaud says that it was to deal with the sexual needs of a large, unmarried population and to protect wives and daughters and Leah Lydia Otis argues that municipalization took place because of the profits to be made and because of a need to regularise the supply of prostitutes after the black death. These are all probably valid conclusions. Municipalization was born out of a moral atmosphere and to regulate the sexuality of its members, a desire to channel the impulse for fornication, homosexuality and masturbation in to an acceptable haven. Impor-

tantly, it provided official legal protection for the whores themselves. It also came from a desire to place some law and order over the brothels, which, especially in London, were becoming the focus for crime and violence. Municipalization was not then an example of moral laxity as some historians believe, but of moral rigour. As well as restraining male sexuality the brothel provided the opportunity to restrain the sexuality of the prostitute. Perhaps not the rule in England, the regulations that survive from the official brothels in Southwark do allow us to infer a great deal about the attitudes towards prostitution in other English towns.

Although it is often difficult to produce as detailed a picture of the prostitutes themselves in the brothels it is possible to say a little about the brothels and their owners. A brothel was a flesh peddling business. It was therefore necessary to have clean and relatively contented prostitutes. A whore was an asset and most houses had a midwife if not a regular physician to keep that asset in reasonable condition. This was mainly because pregnancy and births were for obvious reasons unwelcome, they were dangerous and interfered with business as men, in general, did not feel comfortable having sex with pregnant prostitutes. Those women who became pregnant would be expelled from the brothel. This is not to say that prostitutes were as expendable as some historians believe. It is true that there were always girls to take up vacant positions in the brothel, but training the replacement of a girl who was likely to have built up a large and regular clientele was never going to be preferable to looking after a dependable wage earner.



Prohibition

Most English towns prohibited prostitution. In 1467 Leicester attempted to ban prostitution within the city walls, as did Cambridge. Bristol classed the whores with the lepers and thus effectively banned them from the city. In 1445 Coventry tried to ban prostitutes and from 1394-95 Hull attempted to remove prostitutes by leasing an area of land to them near the Humber for the sum of £3. 6s. 8d. This does not mean however that most English towns seriously attempted any long-term eradication of prostitution. The York civic ordinances of 1301 ordered all brothels found within the city to be destroyed and their proprietors to be imprisoned. However, this order only lasted for a day and a night and is representative of the sporadic and generally ineffective fits of civic rectitude in the medieval English towns. Most cities simply strove for some sort of control. Ruth Karras points to a system of de facto licensing fees being imposed upon brothel keepers in the form of regular fines, suggesting a more pragmatic as opposed to moral approach. In England the levels of controls over prostitution, even in cases

A 'stewe' or bath-house was simply a synonym for brothel. It is thought that the fashion for bathing was brought back to England by returning crusaders who wished to recreate the hammams of the east. There is evidence of 'estewes' or being located on the bankside dating from c.1100. Of course the Romans had used baths long before this.

like fifteenth century Southwark, were well below levels of control in France, Spain, northern Italy and even Germany where civic brothels were commonplace. Both the civic and ecclesiastical bodies were adopting a more laissez-faire attitude. Spiritual and moral obligations set aside, some of the ecclesiastical community were well prepared to take advantage of the prostitutes. The major landlords of the Winchester prostitutes (the 'Winchester Geese') were the Abbot of Hyde and the wardens of the Trinity chapel and St. John's hospital. In York known prostitutes rented cheap accommodation from the Vicars Choral, their landlords as well as their clients.

Religious Clients

The clients of prostitutes were, perhaps not surprisingly, frequently religious. Although not an English source it is of interest that Humbert of Romans, Master-General of the Dominicans once observed of the urban prostitutes that they 'take in not just a few, but very large numbers of men; now their own relatives; now even monks and friars'. There is a record of an Exeter prostitute, Emma Northcote 'the

majority of [whose] clients were priests'. In York in 1424 Elizabeth Frowe and Joan Skryvener were presented as procuresses for Austin friars and priests in general. In London, in 1401, there is a record of one Elizabeth, wife of John Waryn, who kept a 'bordelhouse for monks, priests and others'. The presence of clergymen who had come from all over the country 'on their own affairs' to London, and the frequency with which they were referred to in the courts, suggests that in the crowded conditions of the city and in the absence of their immediate superiors many assumed a certain amount of latitude. Even well known ecclesiasts such as Hugh Weston, who was made Dean of Westminster in 1553, were not exempt from scandal. His taste for the Winchester Geese became so outrageous that he had to be removed from office in 1557. There was no lack of contempt for the clergy who behaved in this manner and in 1535 Davyd Lindesay commented that 'biscopps... may fuck their fill and be vnmarit'. {Bishops may fuck to their hearts content whilst being unmarried}. In 1542 Henry Brinckelowe remarked that 'if all the byssop of England were hanged whiche kepe harlots and

whorys, we shuld have fewer pompeos bysshops'. {If all the bishops in England who kept harlots and whores were to be hanged, we would have fewer self-important bishops}.

Even women weren't free from suspicion. There is an ordinance which demands 'that no steweholder {brothel-keeper} receive any woman of [a] religious [background]' suggesting that perhaps there was a risk of defection from the convent to the brothel.

The locations of streets that were occupied or frequented by prostitutes in medieval England are frequently found to be close to major religious houses and this is probably not simply coincidence. The streets can be connected to the prostitutes through their names. These were often explicit and some survive today in a contracted form. Love Lane, Cokkeslane, Slut's Hole, Gropecunt Lane, and Codpiece Alley were popular names throughout Europe; the last two still persisting as Grape Street and Coppice Alley in London. In York, Grape Lane was near the Minster; in Whitby it was near the abbey and in Winchester the prostitutes were likewise located near the abbey.

Effects

By the late thirteenth century the image of poverty as a spiritually virtuous misfortune was being replaced by the view that it was an increasingly alarming menace. The poor were rapidly becoming a more distinct social class and the criminal underworld was becoming increasingly associated with the traditional haunts of prostitutes; namely the baths and the taverns.

Taverns and tavern so-

ciety was an integral part of the social life of the medieval city. However they tended to pose a threat to social order and demanded strict control. Associated with prostitution and petty crime, surviving ordinances reflect a growing concern throughout the fifteenth century. In 1463 tavern owners in Nottingham were ordered not to admit suspect persons and to close their doors at nine o'clock. Leticia Dodsworth and Elizabeth Fox were presented as violating this ordinance and Leticia was actually ordered to leave the city. In 1492 ordinances passed in Coventry virtually equated the tapster with the prostitute: 'no person in the city is to receive a tapster' and 'no tapster is to receive any man's servant or apprentice'. In 1567 a quarter of the twelve unlicensed victuallers presented in Chelmsford were charged with keeping brothels. From the earlier middle ages a number of surviving documents indicate further problems that the authorities faced with prostitution. The first Saxon law codes of Aethelbert (565-616) deal with neither prostitutes or brothels, which is curious since rape, incest and adultery are dealt with in some detail. However, in William of Malmesbury's somewhat prejudiced account of pre-conquest England, he describes a 'custom repugnant to nature... namely to sell their [the English] female servants, when pregnant by them and after they had satisfied their lust, either to public prostitution, or to foreign slavery.'

In 747, a letter was sent from Pope Boniface to Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, saying that it was a great 'scandal and disgrace' that so many English women and nuns should be allowed to set out on the pil-

grimage to Rome, for very few of them 'kept their virtue', and there was scarcely a city in Lombardy or Gaul where you could not find several of these English pilgrims turned prostitute.

In 1129 Henry I at a great council in London reiterated an ordinance on the celibacy of priests first issued in 1080. This ordinance demanded that all focarii or 'hearth girls' (also known as meretrix foco assidius – fire tending whores) belonging to priests were not to have money exacted from them. However, it looks like Henry couldn't pass up the chance for easy cash and we learn later that 'he deceived the archbishops and took money from innumerable priests and allowed them to keep their hearth girls'.

In 1161, Henry II tacitly condoned prostitution and gave the brothels of Southwark a status and protection they were to enjoy for the next 400 years in his 'Ordinaunce touching the Gouernme[n]te of the stewholders in Southwarke vnder the Direction of the Bp of Winchester'. {Ordinances relating to the government of brothel keepers in Southwark under the control of the Bishop of Winchester}. The ordinance does not exist as an original, but a proper copy remains from the early part of the reign of Edward IV. Its Latin rubrics seem to suggest that the original would have been wholly in Latin to be translated into old English for the benefit of the brothel keepers and the prostitutes.

Control

By the later middle ages it appears that the civic authorities had developed a number of pragmatic ways in which to control prostitutes. Two of these were the

The thewre: Like the stocks, a place to punish and humiliate people in front of the public

foundation of segregated districts and the establishment of specific wardrobes. London prohibited prostitutes from 'parading' anywhere except in the regulated districts under pain of expulsion from the city, and Bristol decreed that the hoods of prostitutes should be made with striped fur in order to distinguish them from 'respectable women'. This of course meant that it was easier for men to find the prostitutes and it suggests that the authorities were well aware of the abuse prostitutes were subjected to. In the ordinances of Henry II there is a rule (no. 8) which demands that whores must be 'seen every day [for] what they be'. Later, in London and elsewhere, the apron came to be seen as the sign of a cheap whore. An ancient history makes reference to a 1354 act of parliament at Westminster that says: 'no common whore should waer anie Hood: except rayed or striped with divers colours nor Furres, but garments reversed the wrong side outwards... to set a deformed marke upon foulness to make it appear more odious'. {no common whore should be permitted to wear a hood, unless it is brightly coloured with narrow stripes; nor shall she wear fur, but garments turned inside out... to make her foulness more deformed and contemptible}. These acts were re-enacted in 1382 and 1437, when it was stipulated that the prostitute's hood be red.

In 1565, John Hall wrote:

*That women theyr breasts dyd show and laye out,
as well was yt mayd whose dugs
were stoute:
which usance at first came upp
from the stues
which mens wyves and daughters
after did use.(1)*

*{Women show their breasts and display them publicly
they are well built and their
breasts are substantial
this custom was adopted from the
brothels
and men's wives and daughters
now follow the fashion}*

Throughout history women's fashions have often originated from those of the courtesan and prostitute. The authorities must have found it peevng to say the least when they found their 'respectable' women succumbing to an image that was designed to mark the whore from 'decent' wives and daughters. Along with designating specific areas to the prostitutes, the London city council imposed a curfew in 1393 forbidding any man from going about the city or suburbs after 9 p.m. No one was to go around masked and no alien was to be out after 8 p.m. It went on to say:

Whereas many and divers frays, broils and dissension have arisen in times past, and many men have been slain and murdered, by reason of the frequent resort to, and consorting with, common harlots, at taverns, brew-houses of huksters, and other places of ill-fame, within the said city, and the suburbs thereof; and more especially through Flemish women, who profess and follow such dolorous life we do by our command forbid, on behalf of our Lord the king and the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, that any such women shall go about our lode in the said city, or in the suburbs thereof, by night or by day; but they are to keep themselves in the places there unto assigned that is to say, the Stews on the other side of the Thames and Cokkeslane.(2)

Although the effect of such laws and ordinances was probably minimal, such rules are direct evidence of the association of prostitution and crime in Southwark and the city. It is apparent that neither the temporal nor the ecclesiastical courts had much success in prosecuting prostitutes. The reasons include pitiful police methods and a level of poverty that, coupled with a lack of opportunity, ensured a constant supply of women to the profession. There were times when the civic authorities increased their drive against the prostitute, but these were more outbursts rather than any sustained policy. In 1529 a scribe lists thirteen harlots from Portsoken Ward who were condemned to be 'washed over the eares' on the ducking stool. However, the main reason for the lack of sustained action is probably the age-old fact that the civic and ecclesiastical authorities simply felt ambivalent. This attitude is reflected in the lack of success many courts had with preventing prostitution. The London commissary court, perhaps through lack of interest or any real coercive power, held little influence over the inhabitants of the streets. Excommunication might pose some threat to an upright and influential member of the community, but was it ever really going to concern the prostitute?

The civic authorities were a little more successful and aldermen, through their constables were required in 1483 'to eschew the stynkyng and horrible Synne of Lechery' {to avoid the stinking and horrible sin of lustful behaviour} to rid their wards of all such 'strumpettes, misgyded and idil women daily vagrant and walkyng about the stretes and lanes in this citee of London

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and Suburbes of the same and also repaireyng to Tavernes and other private places of the said Citee provokynge many other persones unto the said Synne of lechery'.(3) {strumpets, misguided and idle women who, each day, are to be found vagrant, walking the streets, lanes and suburbs of the city of London, and who are to be found in the pubs and other private places of the city encouraging others into lustful behaviour}.

It is interesting to observe that secular punishment and ecclesiastical penance held some similarities. Prostitutes were required to march through the town in a mock procession as punishment just as the penitent was made to lead the Sunday procession in a humiliating costume. Sinners were excommunicated from the church just as prostitutes and criminals were ordered to leave the city. Both civic and church courts talked

about prostitutes in terms of sin and penance. In 1529 five pimps were scorned in court for 'not dredyng god ne the shame of the world' (4). {having no fear of God or shame in this world}.

The Bankside brothels along with the illegal, but tolerated bull and bear baiting gardens, lay within the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester and therefore outside the London diocese and its ecclesiastical jurisdiction. It is not clear how the authorities felt about the bishops who tolerated the prostitution in their diocese, but maybe Shakespeare, whose Globe theatre was located in the heart of Southwark, gives us a clue when, in Henry VI, he puts into the mouth of the Duke of Gloucester the rebuke that: 'Thou givest whores indulgence to sin'.(5)

There is no question that the crime associated with prostitution seriously worried the city authorities. The banning of

the stews in London in 1417 did little to assist the maintenance of law and order on Bankside and thus did little to stop the influence of brothels beyond the Bishop of Winchester's liberty. The point is, prostitution for some members of this criminal element not only provided money but also afforded a reasonable amount of power. A petition of 1433 complained that a number of men who had made money as stew holders were setting themselves up as landlords within the borough. The petitioners not only found the fact that these people had managed to profit from their iniquitous work intolerable, but that they had managed to achieve status and a degree of authority as well. They realised that once the stew holders had accumulated freehold land worth 40s. per annum they would be eligible to sit on juries and pervert the course of justice in favour of their associates: 'thieves, common women and other misdoers'.



John Stowe in his survey of London talks of 'the Clinke, a Gayle or prison for the trespassers in those parts. Namely in old time for such as should brabble, frey or break the Peace on the aside bank, or in the Brothell houses'. The regular clients of the Clinke were rather unsurprisingly prostitutes, their employers and their clients, but with a customary fine of only 12d. one is tempted to agree with David Johnson in saying that the prison can hardly have been filled with recalcitrant tenants.

Vicious methods of punishment for whores such as the slitting of noses (now only very rarely used on prostitutes who plied their trade with armies) had

Bawds, Brothels, Pimps and Procurers

Below: In medieval history, the providers of intimate personal services were punished more than the customers who maintained the need for those services. A Latin manuscript of the twelfth century



been replaced by more humiliating punishments. Along with the pillory there was the thewe, which in London was used almost exclusively for degrading prostitutes and brothel owners. However, there is evidence to suggest that the prosecution of prostitutes in this way was not directed in the main at women in the brothels, but more at the women who walked the streets, women like Isabella Herne who committed her crime 'in the town dyche' {in the town ditch}, and Elizabeth Tomlyns who frequented 'The George tavern in Lombard Street'.

From 1384, male and female brothel keepers who were on conviction were led to the thewe with their hair cropped accompanied by a band of musicians. Convicted whores suffered a similar treatment only they wore a cloth hood and carried a white wand. Procurers would be led to the thewe carrying a distaff dressed with flax (this was particularly humiliating for men as it implied effeminacy and a lack of control over their emotions). All would remain at the thewe at the alderman's discretion. Such ordinances give us a glimpse of the more public aspects of her life, but we still know very

little about the prostitute herself other than can be gleaned from civic and ecclesiastical court records and, more precariously, from contemporary literature.

Art & Literature

The scribes who kept the court records present an intriguing image of the prostitutes. Many of the women were so well known that we find their professional names repeated, names like Pusse le Cat, Bouncing Bess, Flying Kate, Johanna Greatbelly and Joan Hawyer alias Puppy alias Little Joan. Other names suggest possible reasons for the prostitute's choice of career. Perhaps they were doomed to the career by disability, like Johanna with the One Hand or Bette cum Yoldefoot [clubfoot]. Other names suggest that many prostitutes came from abroad: Anne Ireland, Spanish Nelle, French Jane and 'Christine that cam from Romayn'.

The free and easy reputation of English women is apparent in the literature of the fourteenth century, from Chaucer's Wife of Bath who is apparently condemned to a life of vice because of the astrological sign she was born under to Thomas the Rhymer who says of a girl in Sir Tristram that 'her queyne aboven her kne naked, the knyghts knew'. {The knights knew well the naked parts of her body above her knees} A ballad of 1325 entitled 'In the Merry Month of May' says 'Wymmon, war thei with the swyke that feir ant freoly is to fyke'. {Dishonest women are fair game and have sex freely}. A vulgaria published by William Horman introduces some sophisticated seven-year-old Tudor grammar school students to sex:

*Grete drynyngge of wyne maketh
one redy to lechery;
Comen women with oft misu-
syng of theyre bodie, be made
barren;
Whoris caste awey theyr chil-
dren;
He gropeth uncleanlie children
and maydens;
My daughter was intysed of hym
to do lechery;
All thy conversacyon is amonege
brotels and drudges.*

*{Too much wine makes one
lustful
Common women (whores) by
misusing their bodies too much,
become infertile;
Whores abandon their children
Men abuse children and young
ladies
My daughter was persuaded by
a man to carry out unsavoury
lustful behaviour
All conversation is on the subject
of whores and brothels}*

Possibly the best contemporary account of a prostitute's life as portrayed in literature is John Skelton's 'Eleanor rummyng'. Here he graphically recreates the image of an ageing prostitute:

*Her lothely lere
Is nothyng clere,
But ugly of chere,
Droupy and drowsy,
Scurvy and lowsy;
Her face is all bowsy,
Comely and crinklyd,
Woundersly wrynklyd,
Lyke a rost pygges eare,
Brystled with here.(6)
(Her loathsome skin
Is never free from blemishes
But deficient in beauty
Droopy and tired
Scabby and rotten
Her face is all drunken
Comely and crinkled
Remarkably wrinkled*

Footnotes

- 1) John Hall, *The Court of Virtue*, (1565)
- 2) Calendar of Letter Books: Letter Book H, p.371
- 3) Calendar of Letter Books: Letter Book L, p.206
- 4) R.M Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society* (1981) p.94
- 5) Henry VI, Part 1, act 1, scene 3.
- 6) E.R Skelton, *The Complete English Poems* (1983) ed. J. Scattergood, pp 214 – 30.
- 7) Book of Hours, Douce MS 6.
- 8 Rosa Anglica, Lib. II, para. vii, 'de Lepra'.
- 9) P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (1) 1485 – 1553 (1964) pp. 365-66

*Like a roast pig's ear
Bristling with hair;*

One prostitute who went by the name of Lucy Francis is recorded to have been very forthright. Entering one workshop (the workshop seems to have been as good a place as any for sex and was sometimes used as a cover for an illicit brothel) she put her back to the side of one of the looms and said: 'here is a good place to go at trading'. Another man lucky enough to run into Lucy found her 'thrust herself on his lap saying I must needs kiss you'. Other whores were not necessarily as forthcoming. A widow from Wells proclaimed her innocence when accused of prostituting herself by claiming that when she was sent by the innkeeper to take a clerical guest his bill, she was taken aback when he put 'his private member to his hand'.

The opportunities for illicit sex in the country seem to have been just as available as in the city. Although not regulated it is interesting to find a number of records showing that some husbands played an active role as panders for their wives. Attewell Leiker of Asholt would invite young men to 'lie next unto his wife' who would then 'with enticing words and impudent behaviour' encourage them to steal things from relatives and associates in return for her favours.

In art the prostitute is given a great deal of popular treatment. In the margins of a tiny book of hours in the Bodleian Library(7) a madam is leading a young man to a house where a prostitute and her client are already in bed. The gateway of the house mirrors the words of the psalm at the top of the page: 'I said in the midst of my days I

shall go to the gates of hell.'

Disease

In the year 1498, the image of the medieval prostitute was to receive, via Bordeaux and Bristol, a catastrophic blow in the form of the 'perylous infirmite of the brennyng' that is, the arrival of syphilis.

The whorehouses and their inhabitants quickly became the objects of public odium, and not surprisingly women were attacked for the spread of venereal disease that for some was simply another extension of the sin of Eve. It is unlikely that conditions in other areas of society were much better, but the world of prostitution provided a scapegoat for a disease that was to spread wherever men and women were herded together in dirty and unsanitary places. In 1505 Henry VII ordered the stews to be closed down permanently. Although they did reopen, the seriousness attached to the spread of syphilis is reflected in a law that proclaimed any woman found suffering the disease would be fined the phenomenal sum of one hundred shillings and be expelled from Bankside. The phrase to be bitten by a Winchester Goose was quickly to become a euphemism for the contraction of a venereal disease from a Bankside whore.

Although it may be true that many doctors wanted little to do with prostitutes infected with venereal disease there are some remarkable instances of the most bizarre medical advice. John of Gaddesdon (1280-1360) in his *Rosa Anglica* advised a woman who suspected she had caught something from a 'leprous man' that she could avoid the symptoms if she 'jumps, runs

backwards down the stairs, induces sneezing by inhaling pepper, tickling the vaginal membranes with a feather dipped in vinegar so that the seed would flush out. Then she must wash her genitals with a decoction of roses and herbs boiled in vinegar'.(8) Some physicians even advocated the contraction of venereal disease as a cure for the Black Death, making the resort to prostitutes for some a potentially life preserving duty.

Closure

In 1546 the brothels on Bankside were closed. Henry VIII had issued an earlier direction in 1535 that 'brothels [were] to be as far as possible publicly and entirely suppressed'. This did not achieve much at all. So, at Easter of 1546 'the Stewes were put down by the king's proclamation and a herald-at-arms'.(9) There is no obvious reason for this. Some say it was because of the increasing Puritanism in England, but then Henry was never a Puritan. Perhaps it is as E.J. Burford suggests, the young, handsome, energetic prince who was it seems not averse to a bit of whoring, had turned into a violent, brutal, unbalanced tyrant because his mind had succumbed to the syphilitic periostitis that had entered those houses just under half a century before.

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Further reading

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