



## **Sex and Punishment: Four Thousand Years of Judging Desire**

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*Eric Berkowitz*

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### Kurzbeschreibung

Sex and Punishment tells the story of the struggle throughout millennia to regulate the most powerful engine of human behaviour: sex. From the savage impalement of an Ancient Mesopotamian adulteress to the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde for 'gross indecency' in 1895, Eric Berkowitz evokes the entire sweep of Western sex law. 'I don't think I've ever read such an entertaining historical work. Whether you want to fuel your indignation, or simply furnish yourself with enough jaw-dropping data to galvanise a hundred party conversations, you really must shell out for this book. It's worth every penny.' Nicholas Lezard, Guardian 'A wonderful exposure of the illogicality of so much legislation that attempts to regulate sexual activity ... from the age of consent to adultery and sex on college campuses.' Mary Beard 'A fascinating and gruesomely compelling study of human sexuality' Mail on Sunday 'Eric Berkowitz's cross-examination of human sexuality is both exciting and impressively relentless.' Sunday Times 'Stimulating ... Berkowitz has achieved a perfect balance between case study and analysis, and between narrative and reflection. ... This is a wonderfully well-written, well-organised and accomplished book.' Sarah Wheeler, Literary Review The cast of Sex and Punishment is as varied as the forms taken by human desire itself: royal mistresses, gay charioteers, medieval transvestites, lonely goat-lovers, prostitutes of all stripes and London rent boys. Each of them had forbidden sex, and each was judged - and justice, as Berkowitz shows - rarely had anything to do with it. Pressestimmen

"A wonderful exposure of the illogicality of so much legislation that attempts to regulate sexual activity ... from the age of consent to adultery and sex on college campuses." Mary Beard "I don't think I've ever read such an entertaining historical work. It has the wisdom granted by perspective, without the condescension of someone who thinks we're wiser than our ancestors. Whether you want to fuel your indignation, or simply furnish yourself with enough jaw-dropping data to galvanise a hundred party conversations, you really must shell out for this book. It's worth every penny." Nicholas Lezard, Guardian "At once broad-ranging and rich in detail, Berkowitz's cross examination of human sexuality is both exciting and impressively relentless." James McConnachie, Sunday Times "...throughout history men and women have been forced to pay a fearful price for doing what to the birds and bees comes naturally. As Eric Berkowitz points out in this fascinating and gruesomely compelling study of human sexuality, the consequences for those whose proclivities fall outside the boundaries of convention have generally proved devastating." Simon Griffith, Mail on Sunday "Stimulating - Berkowitz has achieved a perfect balance between case study and analysis, and between narrative and reflection. - This is a wonderfully well-written, well-organised and accomplished book. But it comes with a health warning. 350 pages of sex resulting in impalement or a barbed fish up the bottom may have a deleterious effect on the libido." Sara Wheeler, Literary Review "Throughout Berkowitz smoothly straddles the divide between the explicit and the subtle, the ridiculous and the sublime...Sex and Punishment constantly reminds us not to be complacent about past victories - nor to rest until genuine equality has been won, from the barricades to the bedroom." Socialist Review "An illuminating and deftly told account of the two urges that have done so much to define civilization: humanity's appetite for sex and its concern to regulate the consequences. As Eric Berkowitz shows, both impulses have been in flux for centuries, and his colourful history serves as a timely reminder of just how arbitrary and ludicrous the moral certainties of one era can appear to the next." Sadakat Kadri, author of 'The Trial: A History, from Socrates to O. J. Simpson' "Eric Berkowitz leads us through the inventive and ultimately futile ways that mankind has tried to tame its most troublesome pleasure. His comprehensive tour is sometimes funny, more often scary but always entertaining." A. J. Langguth, author of 'Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution' "Sex and Punishment is built on solid scholarship and spiced with plenty of sordid details that will make you the hit of any cocktail party." Christopher Ryan, author of 'Sex at Dawn: The Prehistoric Origins of Modern Sexuality' "It's rare that a book so well researched and provocative is also so downright entertaining Sex and

Punishment will have you gripped and fascinated (and sometimes laughing out loud) at how legal systems over the millennia have attempted to regulate mankind's unruly carnal desires. The chapter on ancient Mesopotamia alone is worth the price of the book." Tony Perrottet, author of 'Napoleon's Privates' Kurzbeschreibung

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