



Mobile Sex Trade: Fairs and the Livelihoods of Female Itinerant Sex Workers in Early Nineteenth-Century Finland

Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen

The topic of this chapter is early nineteenth-century fairs and marketplaces as possible locations for sex work. The people of the time knew that visitors to fairs were susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases. They were particularly afraid of syphilis, an insidious and painful disease which, besides being contracted by those of a sexually active age, also brought suffering to children and the elderly. As well as being transmitted through sexual contact, syphilis could be passed on through pox, warts, and ulcers around the mouth during the rash stage of the disease. An imperial decree of 1811 required that Finnish male merchants, servants of the bourgeoisie, and female hawkers traveling to fairs were free from venereal disease. They had to show a “certificate of health” from a doctor before they could be granted the required travel pass. In Sweden, an equivalent decree was issued a year later in 1812, enforcing the medical examination of tavern maids, traveling salesmen, and journeymen. As far as women were

K. Vainio-Korhonen (✉)
Finnish History, University of Turku, Turku, Finland
e-mail: kirvai@utu.fi

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concerned, this decree named various kinds of female market traders: sellers of spirits, coffee brewers, and sellers of trinkets. In Finland, other groups obliged to undergo medical examination for venereal disease were the urban “fornicating” female population, sailors returning home, and prisoners.¹

Correspondingly, the spaces and locations in which sex work took place changed over time from taverns and fairs to streets and brothels. During the eighteenth century, sex workers in European towns did not yet generally stand out socially or geographically from other members of the urban poor. They lived in the same blocks and plots of land where the poor customarily lived.² Historian Tony Henderson, who has researched London’s prostitutes in 1730–1830, found that these women walked on the same streets and in the same parks, drank in the same public houses, and lived in the same buildings as other impoverished Londoners.³ In research on sex trade, street prostitution and “streets of sin” are first cited as a common form of prostitution only from the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century onwards. As far as Finland is concerned, this describes ways in which late nineteenth-century “street walkers” in the cities of Helsinki or Turku tried to attract male attention through their movements, calls, or clothing. In the Swedish capital of Stockholm, only a few prostitutes lived in and received clients in their own homes. A quarter of prostitutes were housed in brothels, while the remainder plied their trade on the streets and in hotels that rented rooms by the hour.⁴

Prostitution has been described as “the world’s oldest profession,” but as a historical phenomenon it took many forms. In Finland, trade in sexual services was not a separate and distinct social problem in its own right before the mid-nineteenth century, as all sex between unmarried men and women was viewed as fornication and a criminal act.⁵ The word “prostitution” (Finnish: *prostituutio*; Swedish: *prostitution*), borrowed from French, was not known or used in Finland or in neighboring Sweden before the middle of the nineteenth century.⁶ In Finland’s Swedish-language newspapers, “prostitution” first started to appear as a loanword used to describe changing circumstances in the cities of continental Europe, where industrialization had led to the destruction of customs, the physical degeneration of children, the prostitution of women, and the immorality of the working men.⁷ The word “prostitution” only became established in Finnish in the twentieth century. Likewise, “prostitute” was a new word popularized by the emergence of Finland’s semiofficial brothels at the end of the nineteenth century.⁸

Swedish ethnologist Rebecka Lennartsson has found that it was not until the nineteenth century that a separate identity of the prostitute started to be distinguished in its own right from dissolute acts committed by the population in general. Any adult could be accused of fornication but not until at the end of the nineteenth century, prostitution was a label with which women who sold sex were specifically stigmatized.⁹ In the harshest approach taken at the time, the “wicked nature” of the prostitute was even considered to be an innate characteristic and an indication of hereditary degeneration. Medical science in Europe in the Victorian period often saw prostitutes as a separate species of human, deviating from their fellow human beings in their morals and their habits, and as antisocial, lazy, bloated, and dirty nymphomaniacs.¹⁰ French historian Alain Corbin links the official regulation of prostitution to major societal changes, such as industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of capitalism taking place in general in the late nineteenth century, in which everything could be traded and measured in monetary terms.¹¹ Similarly, the wide-ranging anthology *Selling Sex in the City: A Global History of Prostitution, 1600s–2000s* points out that the demonization of prostitution was linked to the major commercialization of sexual services in late nineteenth-century societies embracing capitalism.¹² As an early modern historian, I use the concept of “prostitution” when I describe and focus on the trade of sexual services in the beginning of nineteenth-century Finland. Instead of prostitution, sex work refers only to sexual transactions between adults, not to human trafficking or child prostitution.

In early nineteenth-century Finland or Sweden, a woman selling sex did not even have a name by which to refer to using sexual behavior as capital. In official documents, such women were usually females (Swedish: *kvinnspersoner*) who had given birth to illegitimate children and whose lifestyle was termed dissolute (Swedish: *lidelig, lösaktig, otuktig*), wicked (Swedish: *lastfull, vanartig*), indecent (Swedish: *oanständig*), depraved (Swedish: *lastbar*), or itinerant (Swedish: *kringstrykande*). These adjectives did not refer solely to having extramarital sex, or even to sex work, but to a broader loss of social respect. Prohibited sexual relations in the Nordic countries in the period before the mid-nineteenth century are in fact mainly studied as a combination of extramarital sex and wickedness, not as prostitution. Research has investigated individuals who committed fornication, men as well as women, and illicit sexual relations between unmarried people (Swedish: *lägersmål*), as well as adultery.¹³

In early nineteenth-century Finland, the sale of sex was not yet conspicuous or regulated and had not yet taken on an established form. The “dissolute women” of the day did not walk particular streets from one evening or night to the next in search of clients. The police did not arrest them for this kind of behavior, nor do the sources tell of their provoking passers-by with their shouts or by their dress. Nor did sex work yet have its own separate sphere along the lines of a brothel in the Finnish towns of the early nineteenth century. At this period, sex work was not yet tied to a specific place or location in which it was possible to offer sexual services and which clients would have had to know to go solely for the purpose of buying sex. Instead, the sale of sex was mobile and flexible, practiced in inns, outbuildings, saunas, and the small, rented rooms of the women themselves. Women also offered sexual services in places where many young, unmarried men were gathered: at fairs, in barracks or on the outskirts of garrisons and ports, and perhaps at public dances. Some of them also lived near inns, ports, or military outposts.¹⁴

The sale of sex is not even directly visible in contemporary sources. It is almost impossible to find unambiguous indications in Finnish or Swedish documents dating prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Before the end of the nineteenth century, Finnish, or Swedish courts in general, rarely dealt with crimes involving professional fornication.¹⁵ In terms of the documents, the prior history of sex work in Finland and Sweden is intertwined with the history of sexually transmitted diseases and vagrancy. Entries were made in the records when sex workers suffering from venereal diseases were treated in hospitals or sent to a penal institution as female vagrants with no place of employment. From the nineteenth century, there are registers of legal sex workers obliged to regularly undergo medical examinations for venereal disease.

This chapter specifically studies the visits to fairs made by women subjected to the compulsory medical examinations of anyone suspected by the police in Turku of carrying venereal disease in 1838–1848. Who were these women, and what kind of social backgrounds did they have? What were the reasons for their mobile life, either at urban or at rural fairs? Geographically, the women studied visited fairs and traveled around the area of southern Finland. Turku had been Finland’s largest and most important administrative city for centuries. In 1812, it lost its capital city status when this role was moved to Helsinki, but this did not diminish Turku’s population until the 1840s. Finnish towns were centers of trade for merchant burghers and craftsmen, but the towns also held fairs several

times a year. The largest fairs might bring together thousands of people from the local area and further afield for several days. Besides attending the fairs in Turku, people in the southern parts of Finland in the early nineteenth century were also drawn to the fairs in the towns of Tampere, Hämeenlinna, and Porvoo. The rural fair held in Salo (a center of rural commerce since at least the sixteenth century onwards), not far from Turku, and the fair further to the east in Heinola, which gained its town charter in 1839, were also popular.

Research on the history of prostitution in the Nordic countries has generally focused on the late nineteenth century onwards, in other words only during the period in which prostitution was officially regulated.¹⁶ The history of prostitution in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway has solely concentrated on this period or the period that followed.¹⁷ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, prostitution was regulated and prostitutes were monitored by strict legislation, which makes prostitution clearly visible in the sources and thus ostensibly easy to research. During this time period, prostitution is described as a subculture separate from the rest of society, in which women obtain income, directly or indirectly, from sexual relations.¹⁸ Besides prostitutes and their customers, pimps, brothel-keepers, the police, and doctors revolved around the money and sexual services.¹⁹ Researchers have found poverty and difficulties earning a living to be factors underlying prostitution, as well as a need on the part of society to control women who defied social norms.²⁰

WOMEN AND MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS OF VENEREAL DISEASE IN TURKU, 1838–1848

Henrika Österlund, who had first caused hatred and discord between herself and Johan Hongois due to evilness and wickedness, then separated from Johan Hongois against his will and two years ago moved to the village of Pahaniemi where she is still living with her mother, farmwife Brita Alistalo, also known as Österlund, during which time Henrika Österlund has also become pregnant from an illicit union and given birth to a child.²¹

Henrika Österlund, who had left her husband, was one of the women ordered to undergo monthly medical examinations to ascertain her sexual health in 1830s' Turku. Entered into the Turku police station's records of medical examinations for venereal disease as number 27, Österlund had

been married exceptionally young, when only 16. At the age of 22, she left her husband and as a consequence of several instances of adultery, a divorce was finally ordered in 1833. On her mother's death from cholera, the divorced Österlund was without close relatives. Towns offered earning opportunities and anonymity, and so Henrika Österlund moved to Turku, Finland's largest city, where she gave birth to two more illegitimate children. In 1838, she was one of the first batch of women in Turku ordered to attend the police station for a medical examination for venereal disease, which indicates that Österlund was obtaining income from selling sex.

In the 1830s, Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian Empire. The city of Turku had three different barracks, housing about a thousand Russian soldiers and their commanding officers. Cases of venereal disease were rising in the barracks, and therefore, in October 1838, on the orders of the commander of the Russian troops the Turku police started compulsory medical examinations of "the city's dissolute women" (See Fig. 7.1). At the national level, the background for this was an order issued by the Medical Board in April 1838, according to which towns that provided accommodations for Russian troops were to examine "the female population known to be immoral" to prevent syphilis.²² The model was taken from Napoleonic France, where sex workers were regularly examined to prevent the spread of venereal disease. The system was later widely adopted in a Europe overrun with syphilis.

In Finland, a woman who underwent such a procedure was called an "examined woman" (Swedish: *besiktningsskvinna*). At the Turku police station, a separate register or journal was kept of the examinations held every month, which contained each woman's personal details, place of residence, and the dates of the examinations.²³ When the examinations began, with its 13,000 inhabitants Turku was the largest city in Finland in terms of population.²⁴

In total, 164 women living in Turku were suspected, for one reason or another, of actively spreading venereal disease. The group mainly comprised unmarried women aged 25–35 born in Turku or near the city. At least half of them had given birth to a child or more than one, and half of them were suffering from syphilis or infected with it during this period. The average period of the medical examinations spanned about five years, but some women were involved in examinations for seven or eight years. One in five of the women examined for venereal disease disappeared from the documents of the Turku police upon moving to another large city, such as Helsinki or Saint Petersburg. Of the women who remained in



Fig. 7.1 Women examined for venereal diseases in the early nineteenth-century capital of Turku, Finland, worked at inns, in private homes, visited fairs, and traveled to markets, consorting with sailors, journeymen, and soldiers. Adolf von Becker's (1831–1901) undated drawing features a young man and an unmarried woman socializing. (Photo by Hannu Pakarinen. Finnish National Gallery)

Turku, a third (39 women) married during the period, after which their medical examinations for venereal disease ceased. Fifteen of the women died of tuberculosis or various fevers during the period. Seventeen of the women examined for venereal disease ended up in prison serving extended terms for such crimes as repeated vagrancy or theft. The remainder were liberated from medical examinations either due to old age or when they gained permanent employment (e.g., as a servant).²⁵ Several researchers have considered these women, with entries in police records denoting their having undergone medical examination for venereal disease, to have been working prostitutes.²⁶

It is clear that the officials suspected Österlund and other women entered in the medical examination register of spreading venereal disease. However, the fact that their names are in the register does not automatically mean that they were professional sex workers. Although all sexual relations outside marriage were a sin in the eyes of the Church and a crime in the eyes of the law, receiving payment for sex was not made a separate criminal offense in Finland until 1889. Under the Civil Code of 1734, only procurement and keeping a brothel were criminal.²⁷ At times, women were brought before the Turku police for practicing fornication and being caught in the act, but if they had a job or otherwise had the right to live in the city, they were released with a reprimand following a medical examination for syphilis. Neither the police nor the judges were interested in the source of the women's earnings, and therefore money is not mentioned in the archives of the Turku police or the courts.²⁸ However, it is probable that the women subjected to medical examinations were gaining at least part of their income from sex work.

Henrika Österlund is first entered in the Turku police station's register of medical examinations for venereal disease in October 1838 as a divorced woman aged 31. A year later, she was arrested at the Salo fair for pilfering and leading an immoral life. Gustava Förstling and Gustava Ilander, both of whom also underwent examinations for venereal disease, were in the same company. Henrika Österlund had her 12-year-old daughter and a three-week-old baby boy with her. She had probably become pregnant with the boy at an earlier fair in January, as the Turku city doctor had written a certificate declaring Henrika Österlund free of syphilis, enabling her to travel to fairs, in January 1839. Henrika Österlund became pregnant soon after receiving the certificate and gave birth to the boy in late September the same year. Förstling and Ilander were marginalized women

like Österlund, orphaned in childhood and as adults sentenced for drunkenness, vagrancy, and theft. The trio had clearly gone to the fair for the purpose of earning money, although, according to the custom of the time, Henrika Österlund would have still been in her lying-in period.

THE DARK SIDE OF FAIRS: DRINKING, THEFT, AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

The women examined for venereal disease in Turku traveled between all the fairs in the southern parts of Finland; besides Turku they visited Salo, Hämeenlinna, Tampere, Helsinki, Porvoo, and Heinola. Four times a year, the population of Turku almost doubled, when thousands of people and hundreds of vessels thronged to the St. Henry fairs in January and June, the Lenten fair in February–March and the autumn fair in September. The events were held in a fog of alcohol. In the view of people of the time, the whole city at fair time was simply an open tavern. Although public drunkenness was punishable by law and a drunk person whose movements, appearance, and confused state of mind revealed their drunkenness was liable to be arrested,²⁹ alcohol was sold without any restrictions.³⁰ After a couple days of revelry, the local paper was able to rejoice that “the drunken celebrations are over once more.”³¹

Fifty kilometers south of Turku, the Salo autumn fair also attracted visitors in their thousands. By the bridge over the Uskela River, the main roads from Turku, Helsinki, and inland Finland converged, and the people from the archipelago sailed to the site along the coast. The fair was held at the rainiest time of the year and crowds of fairgoers shoved and jostled each other in the mud and puddles on the riverbank. Drunks yelled, bony horses were whipped left and right, and thieves were busy among the crowds.³² Barrels of herring and grain changed hands and the servant population of neighboring parishes spent their annual salary, the men on drink and the maids on trinkets. Horses being driven at top speed, drinking, the sale of alcohol, fights, and pickpockets were a perennial nuisance. Arrests were frequent, especially of male drunks and female pickpockets working in pairs. One would steal a purse in the bustle and pass it on immediately to her partner in crime, who was keeping a lookout.³³

For women wishing to travel to fairs, a certificate of health issued by the Turku police station was required, at least initially, to show they had been examined for venereal disease. Turku city doctor August Wilhelm Wallenius

wrote ten such travel permits for the women he had examined in late 1838 and early 1839, when venereal disease examinations were carried out most frequently and assiduously in the city. These travel permits were most certainly written by the examiner even later, in accord with the imperial decree of 1811, but for some reason do not exist in the journal of the venereal examinations of the Turku police department after January 1839. Based on the different sources, a total of twelve women from Turku examined for venereal disease visited for different reasons the major fairs in the southern parts of Finland from October 1838 to October 1839.

TAVERN MAIDS TRAVELING TO FAIRS

Tavern maids who worked in market stalls, taverns, and restaurants were often also labeled as sex workers. The keepers of Turku's taverns and restaurants employed several women who were subjected to medical examinations by the police for venereal disease. At least three restaurant owners, Lovisa Almgren and Anna Plaisant born in Sweden and Maria Sjöberg born in Turku, also sent their maids to sell alcohol at fairs in the southern parts of Finland. None of them were of particularly good repute. Both Plaisant and Sjöberg had been convicted of drunkenness in a public place. Lovisa Almgren, on the other hand, was an unmarried woman who had been found guilty of *lägersmål* (sex between two unmarried persons). After giving birth to two illegitimate sons, she had not been "churched" afterwards; in other words, as the mother of illegitimate children, she had not submitted to reproaches from the priest, and she had not attended church or taken communion in years.³⁴

Anna Plaisant and Maria Sjöberg owned restaurants and inns in Turku's popular amusement area on the very edge of the city, close to the road to the new Finnish capital Helsinki.³⁵ Sjöberg had a total of four women in her employ, at different addresses, who underwent medical examinations by the police; Plaisant had three. Five of the women examined for venereal disease worked at Almgren's inn. Plaisant had originally inherited her late husband's inn, called Sibylla, which had a billiard hall and was a popular place of amusement among the gentry. It was located on the road to Turku's neighboring parish of Raisio, but she moved her business to Turku in 1835.³⁶

While all three restaurant owners employed waitresses, who were subjected to medical examinations, Almgren's, Plaisant's, and Sjöberg's

businesses could not, however, have been brothels as such; by law, procurement carried the threat of the pillory, whipping, and three years' forced labor. In their own way, the entries in the official documents also show this; for instance, Almgren first offered her guests food and a bed for the night. Thus, keeping an inn was not merely cover for a brothel. Similarly, in the winter of 1836, Maria Sjöberg and her maid Maria Lovisa Andersdotter traveled between fairs in the southern parts of Finland in Helsinki, Porvoo, and Heinola, selling spirits.³⁷ It was possible, however, that sex was also for sale, as Maria Lovisa Andersdotter, known by the ominous nickname *Musta Maija* (Black Maija), monthly visited the Turku police station for medical examinations for venereal disease in 1838–1845.³⁸

In early January 1839, Johanna Hornberg, Catharina Handfast, and Eva Grönroos, who worked as maids for Maria Sjöberg, were granted travel permits by the Turku city doctor following medical examination for venereal disease. Anna Rosenlund, also employed by Sjöberg, had traveled to the Tampere winter fair a couple of weeks earlier, at the end of December 1838. In January, permits were also granted to Serafia Lindström who worked as a tavern maid for Lovisa Almgren, and the Sweden-born Beata Moberg in the service of Anna Plaisant. Of these, we have the most information about the lives of Hornberg, Grönroos, Rosenlund, and Lundström. Eva Grönroos gave birth to four illegitimate children, who died young, before marrying a Russian noncommissioned officer named Ivanoff in 1841. Johanna Hornberg, who died of pulmonary tuberculosis in 1840, had three illegitimate children, while Serafia Lindström had five. Anna Rosenlund had hidden a newborn baby, which died unbaptized in July 1830. Although there were no signs of violence on the small body, Rosenlund was found guilty of infanticide and sentenced to two years in the Lappeenranta workhouse for women. On her release, she worked in taverns in Turku.³⁹ Suffering from mental illness, Anna Rosenlund spent the last months of her life in the county hospital and the poorhouse, where she died of a fever in May 1843 at the age of 38.⁴⁰

VISITS TO FAIRS BY POOR, UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

The poorest of all the women examined for venereal disease traveled from one fair to the next without a job. They survived through petty crime and, apparently, sex work. This group included the women mentioned above, Henrika Österlund, Gustava Förstling, and Gustava Ilander, arrested at the Salo fair in October 1839. These three women were suspected of

vagrancy and several petty thefts; three umbrellas were seized from them, presumed to have been stolen, one of which was dark brown with a yellow border and the other two of pale blue fabric edged with light grey. An umbrella was a valuable possession, and both lost and found umbrellas were often announced in local papers. The women claimed that they did not know to whom the umbrellas belonged. As there were no witnesses to the thefts, this aspect of the case was dropped.⁴¹

Besides the sale of foodstuffs, fabrics, spirits, hides, cattle, and trinkets, the fairs were renowned as places for intimate relations, and the visits to fairs of women examined for venereal disease show that sex was also sold there. Förstling, Ilander, and Österlund had also attracted the attention of the local authorities in this respect. They reported the women to the Turku police station for having behaved particularly immodestly and in a visibly dissolute and wicked manner at the fair. In the official documents of the time, these words were often used to describe sex work.⁴² However, the information did not give rise to any action on the part of the police in Turku. The women lead dissolute lives did not, as such, entitle the authorities to exercise their administrative powers or impose a custodial sentence. Gustava Förstling's medical examinations for venereal disease and visits to fairs only ended when she was sentenced to several years in prison in 1842 for persistent vagrancy. Gustava Ilander was sentenced to two years in prison for theft in October 1843. Henrika Österlund's life ended in the Turku poorhouse in June 1856.⁴³

Like Österlund, Förstling, and Ilander had been extremely disadvantaged women for years before being examined for venereal disease. Gustava Förstling, born in Turku as the illegitimate daughter of a maid, was orphaned at the age of nine. Her mother, Lovisa Förstling, died in childbirth, having previously given birth to four illegitimate children. The family had lived under the roof of Lovisa Förstling's elderly parents, but in January 1819 Gustava Förstling and her younger brother were the only living members of the family left.⁴⁴ Gustava Förstling first found herself in the police records ten years later, in 1829, as a female vagrant who had "lost her honor." In 1832, she received the severest corporal punishment penalty that existed for women: 90 strokes of the birch on bare skin. Over the years, Förstling had been convicted of drunkenness in a public place on four occasions.⁴⁵ Gustava Ilander was also orphaned in childhood; she was seven when her mother died, and her father died of cholera when Ilander was 12. Her older sister had died at the age of only five, so from 1831 onwards Ilander, too, was without close relatives and a recipient of

Turku's poor relief. As an adult, she was described as depraved, wicked, and indecent, and the court charged her with theft and vagrancy.⁴⁶

As well as Henrika Österlund, unemployed women from Turku named Ulrika Sacklén, Fredrika Hornberg, and Eva Wessman received permits to travel to fairs around the new year of 1839. Of these, the illegitimate Ulrika Sacklén, who herself had three illegitimate children who died in infancy, was the most socially excluded and disadvantaged. She was first examined for venereal disease at the unusually young age of 16. In addition, she was illiterate and thus had not been confirmed. Under the law, this meant that she did not have the opportunity to marry. In a society in which marriage was an important means of survival for women, not being confirmed was comparable to a physical deformity, a disadvantage that caused severe social exclusion.⁴⁷ The Henrika Österlund suffered from a similar burden, because as a divorced woman she was unable to remarry; the innocent party in the divorce, her former husband Johan Hongois, never remarried. Being found guilty of adultery isolated a person from their previous circle and from a shared married life, which in the nineteenth century was the best guarantee of economic and social security for women and men alike.⁴⁸ For women examined for venereal disease—like Österlund, Förstling, Ilander, and Sacklén, who were among the poorest members of society—the social whirl of the fairs, gathering together a large, anonymous population, seems to have offered, besides fun and excitement, a socially reprehensible and even criminal means of earning income, incorporating the sale of sex, pickpocketing, and the illicit sale of alcohol.

The women arrested at the fair could, like Österlund, Förstling, and Ilander, also be suspected of vagrancy. In Finland at that time, those who had no approved work or place of abode were considered vagrants. Although the women examined had illegitimate children and had contracted venereal disease, they were not fundamentally vagrants if they were employed or if their children were young and needed their mother's care.⁴⁹ Prostitution itself only represented one manifestation of vagrancy and lacking means of support in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As late as the Vagrancy Act of 1937, "a person who habitually obtains income by means that are contrary to decent behavior and abhorrent to society" was by definition a vagrant. However, this was not yet the case in Finland in the early nineteenth century.

When the local police chief arrested Henrika Österlund, Gustava Förstling, and Gustava Ilander at the Salo fair, they were charged with

vagrancy. The charge was dropped, however, since Förstling and Ilander had jobs as servants in the house of a certain burgher in Turku named Ekström, and Österlund was looking after her young children at home. However, Ekström said that his maids were at the fair without permission, and he no longer wanted such “disobedient” women in his house. The Turku police could do nothing other than order the women to seek new work and then release them.⁵⁰

CONCLUSIONS

There was not a single mention of selling sex in the documents studied. In early nineteenth-century Finland, the sale of sex was not yet regulated and had not yet taken on an established form. An adult could be accused of fornication but not profiting from selling sex. Only the procuring of prostitutes was an illegal act. The patient records of Turku’s hospital for venereal disease show that many of the women examined were prone to syphilis. At least half of them had been treated with mercury in hospitals, many of them several times. Sex work seems a natural explanation for contracting this disease, at least if the same person underwent the mercury cure several times from one year to the next. Similarly, at least half of the women examined for venereal disease had given birth to children outside wedlock, many of them several times, which indicates that they were practicing sex outside marriage, also over a long period of time. The director of the Medical Board and local doctors especially saw servant women working in inns (“inn nymphs”) and women who sold beer and spirits at fairs and at rural court hearings in the courtyard (“fair women”) as potential carriers of the disease. Another source of infection was seen in the largest towns, which had sailors, itinerant journeymen, soldiers, and, naturally, “wicked” women.⁵¹ For the women examined for venereal disease in Turku, their way of life included work at inns, visits to fairs and consorting with sailors, journeymen, and soldiers. These were clearly the places and the circles in which they engaged in sex work.

Otherwise, the life of the women examined for venereal disease conformed to that of the majority poor population in Turku, especially the way of life of poor women. Turku in the 1830s and 1840s was largely a city of workers and the poor. A quarter of the population comprised poor women, maids, widows, and women without means of support. Almost a thousand people in Turku relied on poor relief, either entirely or partly. About 500 women had given birth to children out of wedlock. The 164

women entered in the Turku police register as having been medically examined had hundreds of non-examined peers among the city's unmarried mothers, patients with venereal disease, women without means of support, alcoholics, and petty criminals. Well-off families were in a clear minority in the city.⁵²

In the sources, the difference between medically examined women and their non-examined fellows is often unclear and blurry. Through the documents, no unambiguous identity as sex workers can be attributed to the medically examined women, and their way of life or worldview cannot be reduced to a single format or into a "nutshell." Admittedly, some of the women examined for venereal disease were more visibly engaged in sex work at inns and fairs, during alcohol retail, and on the outskirts of ports and garrisons than others entered in the register of medical examinations for venereal disease, but by no means was this the case for all of them. The same picture is drawn in the recent research in *Selling Sex in the City. A Global History of Prostitution, 1600s–2000s*. One of its editors, the Dutch historian Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, emphasizes that in preindustrial societies, sex work was performed along with poor women's other economic activities, low-paid industry or domestic service, or employment in bars and taverns.⁵³

Based on the sources, we know that at least twelve women from Turku examined for venereal disease spent time at the major fairs in the southern parts of Finland from October 1838 to October 1839. Six of them traveled as tavern maids employed by tavern owners from Turku, while another six traveled with no such employment. If we compare these women with the 164 women examined for venereal disease, it is clear that the women who visited fairs were almost without exception the most disadvantaged and despised representatives of this group of women, who were already destitute. Only nine (or five percent) of the women examined for venereal disease had been orphans since childhood.⁵⁴ However, one in six of the women who sold sex at fairs was an orphan. Women who were sentenced to long imprisonments or died as sex workers were also in the minority, representing one fifth of all of those examined for venereal disease,⁵⁵ but clearly made up a higher proportion of those who visited fairs (a quarter of them). Those who visited fairs also included the only woman examined for venereal disease to be found guilty of infanticide, Anna Rosenlund. Of five unconfirmed and illiterate women examined for venereal disease, at least one, Ulrika Sacklén, turned to visiting fairs to survive; of three divorced women, this was also the case for one, Henrika Österlund.⁵⁶

It is also worth noting that most women who went to the fairs no longer had adult family members or other relatives living in Turku. Their social support networks were thus sparse or had entirely disappeared. At least Henrika Österlund, Anna Rosenlund, Gustava Förstling, Gustava Ilander, Johanna Hornberg, Serafia Lindström, Beata Moberg, and Anna Lovisa Andersdotter were particularly isolated in this way. Henrika Österlund, who lacked close family, even had to take her child with her to the drink-fueled atmosphere of the Salo fair. Ultimate loneliness and haplessness seem to have been the attributes of women who visited fairs and were examined for venereal disease.

NOTES

1. Kejsarl. Bref till samtelige Landshöfdingarna, ang. Veneriska smittans hämmande; den 12. Februari 1811. In *Finlands medicinal-författningar* 1837; Svanström 2006, pp. 40–41.
2. Bergqvist 2015, p. 183; Rebecka Lennartsson. 2015. “Prostitutionens korta historia. Stockholmska kvinnoöden på Skuggsidan”; Lewis and Ellis 2015, p. 2.
3. Henderson 1999, pp. 45, 194.
4. Grönqvist 2000, pp. 312–314; Häkkinen 1995, pp. 25–35; Järvinen 1990, pp. 98–111; Lundquist 1982, pp. 75–76.
5. van Nederveen Meerkerk 2017, p. 805.
6. Johannisson 1994, p. 15; Svanström 2006, pp. 33–34.
7. *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* 9/13/1844; *Åbo Underrättelser* 2/8/1843.
8. Suominen 2015, p. 15.
9. Lennartsson 2001, p. 16; Rebecka Lennartsson. 2015. “Prostitutionens korta historia. Stockholmska kvinnoöden på Skuggsidan”; Svanström 2006, p. 34; see also Rodríguez García et al. 2017, p. 11.
10. Corbin 1990, pp. 3–9; Johannisson 1994, pp. 63–64.
11. Alain Corbin. 1990. *Women for Hire. Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*.
12. Rodríguez García et al. 2017, p. 13.
13. Seppo Aalto. 1996. *Kirkko ja kruunu siveellisyyden vartijoina. Seksuaalirikollisuus, esivalta ja yhteisö Porvoon kihlakunnassa 1621–1700*; Hanna Kietäväinen-Sirén. 2015. *Eriytyinen ystävyys. Miehen ja naisen välinen rakkaus uuden ajan alun Suomessa (n. 1650–1700)*; Marie Lindstedt Cronberg. 1997. *Synd och skam. Ogifta mödrar på svensk landsbygd 1680–1880*; Mari Välimäki. 2009. “Vill du äkta denna kvinna? Universitetsstuderandes föräktenskapliga sexualrelationer och giftermål i 1600-talets Uppsala och Åbo.”

14. Vilkkuna 2015, pp. 264–271.
15. Häkkinen 1995, p. 163.
16. Marianne Grönqvist. 2000. “Glädjeflickor och bordeller. Den reglementerade prostitutionen i Åbo kring sekelskiftet 1900”; Tiia Hakanen. 2015. *Se tavallinen tarina? Ohjesääntöinen prostituutio Tampereella tarkastusnaisten elämäkertojen kautta tarkasteltuna*; Antti Häkkinen. 1994. “Maksettua rakkautta. Prostituutiokulttuuria Helsingissä 1860-luvulta nykypäivään”; Antti Häkkinen. 1995. *Rahasta – vaan ei rakkaudesta. Prostituutio Helsingissä 1867–1939*; Antti Häkkinen. 1996. “Rikkaiden pojat ja köyhien tyttäret. Helsingin vanha prostituutiokulttuuri”; Margareta Järvinen. 1990. *Prostitution i Helsingfors. En studie i kvinnokontroll*; Juha Lehtinen. 2012. *Laitakaupungin syntinen laulu. Ohjesääntöinen prostituutio Tampereella 1890–1905*; Pia Leminen. 1994. “Elämää prostituution jälkeen”; Pirjo Markkola. 2014. “Moraalin miehet. Mitä prostituution sääntely kertoo miehyydestä?”; Toivo Nygård. 1989. “Prostituutio 1800-luvun lopun ja 1900-luvun alun Suomessa”; Toivo Nygård. 1998. *Erilaisten historiaa. Marginaaliryhmät Suomessa 1800-luvulla ja 1900-luvun alussa*; Tiina Tuulasvaara-Kaleva. 1988. *Prostituotujen valvonta ja rankaisusäädökset 1875–1939*.
17. Ida Blom. 2012. *Medicine, Morality, and Political Culture. Legislation on Venereal Disease in Five Northern European Countries, c. 1870–c. 1995*; Merete Bøge Pedersen. 2000. *Den reglementerede prostitution i København fra 1874 til 1906. En undersøgelse af prostitutionsmiljøet og de prostitueredes livsvilkår*; Anna Jansdotter. 2004. *Ansikte mot ansikte. Räddningsarbete bland prostituerade kvinnor i Sverige 1850–1920*; Anna Jansdotter, and Yvonne Svanström (eds.). 2007. *Sedligt, renligt, lagligt. Prostitution i Norden 1880–1940*; Rebecka Lennartsson. 2001. *Malaria urbana. Om byråflickan Anna Johannesdotter och prostitutionen i Stockholm kring 1900*; Tommie Lundquist. 1982. *Den disciplinerade dubbelmoralen. Studier i den reglementerade prostitutionens historia i Sverige 1859–1918*; Yvonne Svanström. 2006. *Offentliga kvinnor. Prostitution i Sverige 1812–1918*; Tomas Söderblom. 1992. *Horan och batongen. Prostitution och repression i folkhemmet*.
18. Häkkinen 1995, p. 74.
19. Hakanen 2015, p. 6.
20. Grönqvist 2000, pp. 287–288.
21. The Archive of the Chapter of Turku Archdiocese, File FIg 3b Divorce application 322/1833, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
22. See *Finlands medicinal-författningar, 1846*, and there “General-Directeurens för Medicinal-Verket Embetskrivelse till Divisions-Generalen för Ryska Militairen i landet, ang. besigtningar vid inquartering till hämmande af Venerisk smitta, af den 26 April 1838.”; Grönqvist 2000, p. 293; Soikkanen 2016, p. 141.

23. The Archive of Turku Police Department, Journal of the venereal examinations n.d. 1838–1848, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
24. Grönqvist 2000, p. 286; Nikula 1973, pp. 122, 217.
25. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, pp. 9, 167–226.
26. Grönqvist 2000, p. 290; Hakanen 2015, p. 1; Häkkinen 1995, pp. 21–22, 216.
27. See *Sveriges Rikes Lag Gillad och antagen på Riksdagen åhr 1734*, pp. Missgärningsbalken LVII Kapitel Om koppleri och skiörlefnad §§ 1–2.
28. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, p. 12.
29. See *Den Unge Juristen eller Juridisk Handbok för Medborgare af alla Klasser i Finland*, pp. 154–156.
30. Nikula 1973, pp. 274–275, 359.
31. *Åbo Underrättelser* 1/21/1869.
32. *Åbo Underrättelser* 10/19/1867.
33. *Åbo Underrättelser* 10/27/1863, 10/19/1867; Kallio 1940, pp. 82–100.
34. The Archive of Swedish Parish in Turku, Communion records IAa2:20 Kingelins villa and Communion records IAa2:22 Real property number 6.4.1; the Archive of Turku Police Department, Letter concept book 289/1839, n.d. National Archives of Finland, Turku.
35. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, pp. 50–51.
36. Heinricius 1914, p. 128; Perälä 1951, p. 42.
37. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, p. 162.
38. The Archive of Turku Police Department, Journal of the venereal examinations, woman number 35, n.d. National Archives of Finland, Turku.
39. The Archive of Swedish Parish in Turku, Communion records IAa2:9 Norra 159 and Communion records IAa2:15 Kloster 166 and Sotalais Gammalgård, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
40. The Archive of Swedish Parish in Turku, Book of the dead 13.5.1843; The Archive of Turku Police Department, Letter concept book 1842/436 and 1843/12 and 1843/116, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
41. The Archive of Turku Police Department, Minutes and verdicts (Policekammarens i Åbo protokoll och utslag) 22.10.1839 § 16, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
42. The Archive of Turku Police Department, Minutes and verdicts (Policekammarens i Åbo protokoll och utslag) 22.10.1839 § 16.
43. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, pp. 181–192; The Archive of Turku Police Department, Minutes and verdicts (Policekammarens i Åbo protokoll och utslag) 21.2.1845 § 4, 5.5.1846 § 1 and 11.8.1848 § 1; Journal of the venereal examinations, women number 19 and 102, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
44. The Archive of Finnish Parish in Turku, Communion records IAa1:42 Östra 59 and Book of the dead 24.4.1815, National Archives of Finland, Turku.

45. The Archive of Turku Police Department, Journal of vagrants (Diarium över vid Poliskammaren i Åbo anmälda försvarslösa personer) 1829–1834, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
46. The Archive of Turku Police Department, Minutes and verdicts (Policekammarens i Åbo protokoll och utslag) 9.10.1838 § 3 and 22.10.1839 § 16, 3.10.1843 § 1 and 24.4.1846 § 2; The Archive of Finnish Parish in Turku, Communion records IAa1:43 Norra 172, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
47. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, p. 76.
48. Frigren 2016, pp. 165, 186.
49. Nygård 1985, p. 143.
50. The Archive of Turku Police Department, Minutes and verdicts (Policekammarens i Åbo protokoll och utslag) 22.10.1839 § 16, National Archives of Finland, Turku.
51. Nygård 1985, pp. 132–133.
52. The Archive of the Chapter of Turku Archdiocese, Population table of Turku 1845, National Archives of Finland, Turku; Nikula 1973, pp. 122, 217.
53. van Nederveen Meerkerk 2017, p. 809.
54. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, p. 75.
55. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, pp. 221–222.
56. Vainio-Korhonen 2018, p. 87.

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