

Matchwoman or vampire? (Seminar)

Strikes, sisterhood and the Victorian fear of female sexuality

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This was a special lecture for International women's Day 2023.

When the Bryant and May Matchwomen went on strike in 1888, it caused outrage. A 'respectable' woman's place was in the home, not the picket line! Bad enough these 'rough girls' were working outside the domestic sphere, without them also rebelling against their 'gentlemen' employers.

Their walk-out stirred fears of revolution- the mob as at the gates, in the form of 1400 women and girls in threatening hats (Too bright! Too many feathers!), parading the streets of Bow singing rude songs about their bosses.

Behind the opprobrium directed at them and 'factory lasses' in general, lay a disturbed, and disturbing conceptualisation, and fear, of female sexuality.

This would lead to a horrific 'trade' in virginity, bizarre anti-sex aids — and, eventually and unintentionally, to the birth of the Hollywood 'vamp'...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DY1C40EwhBY>

Good evening, everybody a fantastic to see you such a cold evening and it's really wonderful for rag to have Louise Dr. Louise raw back. Again. We had a a lecture from her on the match women's strike back when we were in over the cock Tavern in Camden. Now, we're in this illustrious circumstances of UCL anthropology, but we we draw the biggest classes and their Community classes.

So this is a special lecture for international women's day and we're starting to get that rolling as a tradition a radical anthropology. And yeah, we Louise most of you would know Louise is the author of striking a light and the historian as he says she's a historian and an activist and every historian obviously should be an activist and she's been broadcasting on TV radio. We can go in and on but yeah, her history of the match women's strike was is an absolutely outstanding read. I recommend it to everybody and tonight. She's gonna give us a kind of new angle on that by looking at the obsessive patriarchal imperious Victorian response to this Mighty 1400 women's strong uprising of East London of the Brian to May Factory workers and what and what was that responsibility here. They didn't like it. I'm going to make it. Thank you so lovely to be here. Thank you for inviting me again, and it's great to see you all and great to see you all at home, too.

Yes, we need to talk about the victorians good Lord. We really need to talk about the victorians. When I first began researching The Brighter main match women. I was stunned by the amount of Fear and Loathing of working-class women that I found at the time. I mean, I know it's not news that the victorians were weird about women like no way you don't say we had never heard this but it's even weirder than you thought.

When these so-called underclass rough set of girls as they were called.

One their strike which wasn't expected that was not allowed at all. That was completely very upsetting for their bosses. Never really got over that poor things. This is not how the Victorian class system works.

It was but when they won their strike and formed the largest Union of women and girls in the country at the time in just over two weeks these women who were literally spat on if they walked into post London. They would be have things thrown at them and be told to go back to where you came from. They were not supposed to be forming a massive Union and changing the world that was not in the script at all.

One of the first things that happened after that.

that a letter was ived at the brine of matchworks and it said I am putting you on notice that I'm going to visit your work girls. I'm going to see what they have in their stomachs.

nice And I'm going to take it out of them and it was signed J Ripper.

We think it was probably a hoax, but we don't know we will never probably no.

But how very telling you don't get this happening to male Strikers people don't love it when the Dockers go on strike in 1889. They're not like having a street party about it the middle classes, but nobody is sending sexualized death threats to the dock Gates something really weird.

Because the conventional narrative about women particularly working class women like this is that they are feeble little waves and Strays their little match girls like the Hands Christian Andersen story.

So therefore they're no threat are they we don't need to get so absolutely Furious about but this is a weird weird time. I mean the whole Victoria night is weird.

I blame it on the Lord and honestly the strange strange things going on Victorian good but this is a time when people start to get obsessed with the working classes because it's a time when a noticeable working class begins to exist with industrialization.

So what you get is the streets particularly of the East End and the poorer parts of London absolutely thronged with middle class people annoying the hell out of the poor basically with their clipboards.

Studying them and pretending to be undercover seamstresses and just bugging the hell out of these poor women here trying to get their work done and they're pretending to be undercover super study.

The working classes like they're subjects under a microscope and there's always a real degree of sexual Koreans always always we have to consider the sex lives. We absolutely have to Scientific. We have to consider the sex lives of working class women and what are the sex lives of working class women? They are all wrong.

I have to tell you completely wrong because working-class women date they date. This is not good. They don't always get married.

these little so they have in other words more Freedom by far the middle class and upper class women. We can't have if this is wrong. This is deviant. Something's very wrong here.

This is got to be pathological. They are rejecting conventionality really shocking.

So the kind of anger around that the concern around that the social Panic really around that begins and we live I would argue with the kind of Hanover from that a Victorian hangover. That would feature gin. That would be a lot of gin in the Victorian hangover. Probably some elderflower maybe some Northern But we still suffer from those kinds of feelings and that kind of anger about women being confident women starting to be independent.

Didn't like it then and I would argue that people like Andrew Tate the loath them Andrew Tate misogynistic influencer and in prison, just give him into love about that.

You know those ideas as a victorianist I see Victorian ideas things that victorians expressed about women in in cell threats on in cell sites and let's not forget that Andrew Tate has 5.5 million followers still.

On Twitter still even though he's in jail pool. Oh poor. Oh tragic smallest violin possible for Andrew tape, but genuinely worrying and I've had mum say to me.

My kids have turned into misogynists and I don't know how it happened suddenly girls as well. They're watching this Andrew Tate.

Turning into massage. So we need to look at this.

We need to examine all of this and tonight. We're going to jump from brace yourself. actual cannibalism he was too hot the Hollywood Vamp the brighter May match women at all as well and all the while please be careful not to lose your manly Essences if applicable.

Also come to any hungry wounds because they're a real problem. You know, the victorians will tell you terrible terrible problem.

So let me ask you first of all, has anyone ever had a terrible first date? Like a really? Oh, yeah, it's lots of ads just female hands going up. I wasn't interesting. That's very interesting or anything. You want to share. Feel free. Okay.

Yes is the answer to that one clearly, but let me console you.

The even if you've had a terrible terrible first date, it's not going to have been as bad as the appalling first date an insect first date, but nonetheless.

Described by a prominence entomologist in the journal science in 1886 and I'm selling I've got a praying mantis expert here.

If I get anything wrong, don't say anything, okay? Will pretend I got it, right? So this is what he says. I bought a male of the Mantis karolina to a friend who'd been keeping a solitary female as a pet.

Placing them in the same jar the male started in alarm.

Right, so it turns out endeavoring to escape.

the female succeeded in grasping him she first bit of his left front Tarsus is foot four layer might do that. It's testing if you can ume thibia and FEMA next she Nord out his left eye.

at this now Mrs. Surprising the male seem to realize his proximity to one of the opposite sex and began Endeavors to mate.

Fair lovely places. I mean that's impressive in the circumstances. You've got to admit right? The female had a she respond. She next ate his front right leg. Okay, then entirely decapitated him devouring his head and snoring into his thorax.

Not until she'd eaten all of his thorax except about three millimeters. Did she stop to rest? Well, she was tired. She's had a busy.

All this time, the male has continued his vein attempt to mate impressive and he now succeeded in Union took place. She remained quiet for four hours and the remnants of the male gave occasional Signs of Life.

the movement of one of his remaining tarsai for three hours the next morning. She had entirely rid herself of her spouse.

so then she'd eaten most of this porch.

She remains quite she eats his remaining tarsai. There's a female having a good old meal there the next morning. She had entirely rid herself of her spouse and nothing was left but his wings.

poor well, I'm so sure she felt terrible. Oh, maybe not.

Okay. Maybe she got over it.

Now I feel I have to be fair to female praying mantises mantises Manchester wine Manchester then anyways.

Right and they didn't always do that the women don't always do that. It's only if they're hungry. So like dinner first it's not a lot to ask. We've all got very hungry. Haven't we now and again, we've all got angry and felt like biting someone's head off.

We maybe haven't done it literally, but, we've all had dates like that. So you might think how does this disastrous birthday? I can pretty much guarantee there wasn't a second.

How does this concern us tonight? Well, that scientist doesn't think that he's just talking about insects sexual cannabis and nope. He thinks he has discovered a terrifying truth.

about the official female nature of human females as well.

So we think that when it comes to that attitudes to sex the victorians are like massive Hypocrites, but we think they're Hypocrites in a fairly straightforward way, right? We think they believe that women don't enjoy sex women don't like sex women and not sexual beings, but they have to provide it obviously within marriage obviously whenever hubby wants there is no such thing as Miracle rape, of course at this time. It's not possible.

So it's your job to lie back and think of England, which was something that was genuinely said to people at this time.

however at this time we also know That pornography flourishes that brothels flourish in London and all over the country. So it looks like a huge double standard and the victorians famously think that a woman's place is in the home and people usually think that's just a generic sort of old-timey idea that women belong at home women shouldn't be working. But actually it's new. It's modern to the victorians. It's one of

the big ideas of the Victorian age and that's a huge change because that wasn't what people were saying the century previously not at all.

In fact, there was a handbook for women giving them advice on if they how to get married if they wanted to get married the century before this that said the opposite that said only a fool will take for his wife a woman who cannot earn her own bread complete opposite of what the victorians are telling us.

So what has happened in the interim Well too much too, too many women trying to earn their own bread basically with industrialization like everything changes with industrialization.

The countryside gets hollowed out and people pour into cities and towns to work in factories to man and to women factories.

problem with that Is women are getting paid actual wages? You see women? Because women we know what they can't.

Have a thing. So it's not that women haven't always worked. It's that when they were working in the countryside we could call it like an extension of their feminine chores. They're just working a lot helping hubby helping Brothers helping father.

That's fine. They're not getting any actual money because that Monsters and the victorians decide it's a disaster in different ways. But everyone agrees. It is a disaster because women insist on earning low wages just to think they do and about half the way to cross all industry is half the male wage.

That they do and therefore because they're not earning enough.

They might be driven onto their streets Baba big euphemism. We know what that's euphem.

ISM for don't wait or any money might be too much. We're not quite sure could be the other way around and what they're going to do with that money. Well, obviously they're going to fritters away. They're gonna spend it on gin and sin aren't they excellent night for most of us but not to the victorians very very bad.

So we have to stop working close women from having this kind of Independence and earning these kind of wages or, what you're going to get you're going to get this that ladies and gentlemen is what you're going to get if women have their own wages and access to Gin.

It's not good. It's not safe. It's not safe for anybody and London is hugely a fronted by terrifying sites.

I'm sure you're all shaken to see these terrifying.

terrifying figures here, very very upsetting for London to have huge numbers of women and girls like these who worked at the Bryant and may factories in Bow because women are kind of tolerable as long as they're not seen and not heard.

They didn't get the memo Factory guns tended not to get that memo and it was ever so upsetting to the middle classes because there'd be being middle class, going to work or probably not going to work for a woman but, going around being middle class and enjoying the sights and then all of a sudden. Oh my God Factory girls watch yourself

and there's hundreds of them. They often are walking arm in arm it gets worse. They're cheeky to pass this by. I'm sorry. That's now the way of saying it they're length.

Their language is terrible.

So what people have to do is if they know the bright and Migos are coming off shift. They run into the houses. They get their children used to come along cover your ears, William and they run away from these terrifying match girls because everything they do is wrong everything.

They should be, maybe wearing beige and staying in the shadows and being silent, but they insist when they're on nights out in wearing bright clothes. I mean, it just gets worse bright clothes. Yes.

Huge hats big hoop earrings little high heel boots. It's not just as good is it none of this is good. It's all really appalling and they sing Musical songs now Musical songs are very, Road, I don't know if you've checked out any Musical songs, but my goodness my first match women's Festival. I had a socialist choir and they didn't want to see because they were yeah a little bit a little bit graphic. This is one of my favorite ever slides about what is wrong with a working class illustration. This illustration is called two Lively girls.

Because annoying the salvationists.

Or not to drink or have any fun because that's for middle class people and these.

Terrible hussies and they're showing their ankles. I'm sorry. I should I'm sorry. It's empedicates.

It's really shocking. So this is what you're going to get. Is that what you want? Because that's what you're going to get if you have women working. It is incredibly shocking.

sensibly They're victorians decide that what we needed to get women out of the public space. We don't want to see this get them back in the home not they've ever back is really a misnomer because they've always worked. However, let's forget about that and we'll get them back into the home and who wants that? Well, the interest groups that Co are less around that is interesting like the church. Oh no what surprise that's not a surprise.

Okay. That one's not a surprise. The tour is again not massively shocking but the unions of the day who you might hope one might hope would be on the side of working women. There's a lot I could say I won't say any of it. You would hope they be on the side of working women wouldn't you but the unions of the day largely not exclusively but largely the most established ones kind of boys club and they're really there to keep their labor price High to limit apprenticeship. So they're not there for like class war or any kind of sort of class solidarity really they're really quite Limited in their aims of objectives and there's chats with enormous bids. They've always got huge beers called things like Henry broadhurst to say the tea you see who say are our job should be to ensure that our wives and daughters are in their proper sphere at home and not forced into competition against the great and strong men of the world. So Henry, he's not having a bar of it. He doesn't like it at all.

so also the strangest thing the strangest thing perhaps Is that some of the people who are saying women shouldn't work? Are Factory owners what that's really weird, even for victorians who can always hold at least two contradictory ideas in there any one time it's like essentially if you're going to be a Victorian but Factory owners, right? They're making all their money out of women's labor women are the first women's crafts like textiles are the first two become industrialized. So these women are making us a fortune. Thank you very much, especially saying sister only being paid half the male wage and they're funny little way that they have so then making the country of Fortune and then making factory owners are fortune. And then what happens is that the fact you're owners become what we call if we're trying to be fancy in academic the heads are more like glass. Oh, yeah their heads and when it clouds which means they get to set the rules because they've got a load of money. Basically no one can stop them from setting the rules so they decide okay, who are we as a class? We've come out of the working class, but obviously you want to put that behind us.

But we're going to reject the upper class notion that gentlemen don't work because we are of course gentlemen, look, we've got the top hats and everything. Come on.

But they like the aristocratic idea of the lady of leisure.

So they tick that from the aristocratic View and they apply that to their own women's so it becomes like a status symbol my little ladders are at home embroidering and Order their minds and trying to get to the Lord and but they don't work. They don't work. So you're going in to the East End from your nice Suburban House Christine trains and suburbs and you're making a Fortune of the labor of women and then you're saying that respectable women shouldn't work. Yeah.

perfect sense The match women I hate to have to say this, but it's not just that they insist on being working class and EastEnders and working alongside men outside the home blatantly, but they also insist upon being Irish. I mean come on. It's really isn't it. and here we have the Victorian horror. That's Because the victorians decide that inventing steam train is great and all but let's invent a new form of racism. Yes. Nobody asked for that victorians, like literally nobody but they invent eugenics.

So they decide that the Irish are a negroid race. They decide that the Irish are black and therefore inferior.

because the people doing eugenics just happen to be working at upper class white men and they just happen to conclude but it is scientific and not at all biased that the most Superior thing you can be is enough class white man, but that's completely neutral. They're not buying that's doing that at all and look at what we're saying here contrasted faces Florence Nightingale The English Rose the beautiful English Rose and Bridget mcbruzer now when I finally formed that punk rock band today. That is my name. I am Bridget mcbruzer all the way. I'm team Bridget.

But look at poor old Bridget doesn't even look human. Does she that's a Simeon kind of feature. It's horrible and it's meant to be and it's saying she's sub human just in case you missed the point is very subtle and home, but that's the point that's being made.

Actually, if anybody if people are starving when people are starved like a lot of the Irish who come to London are they do look good, but we're not thinking about that. We're just blaming them for how they look and basing our opinions on them and there's an Irish man.

Terrorists a lot of them.

Highly dangerous. And again, does that look like she doesn't does it and it very deliberately.

as well so They've got everything against them the match women. They could not be more offensive and annoying.

But the comments you get about them again really peculiar, if we believe that women are these sexless waves and Strays because we're always getting these comments about their brashness and their confidence and they're very confident with men and they go to Penny Hobson they dance with men very close and they show their ankles. Oh, you can tell the men getting very excited by this. Although appalled obviously completely appalled all the male commentators appalled and yet needing to visualize it in incredibly great detail just for scientific purposes again.

So everything is wrong and poor old men.

There are working-class women waiting around every corner to lure them.

To lure them into their dense of vice and iniquity horrifying scene here.

Well, very awkward day in the marriage because this was captioned.

From Mrs. George this young person appears to know you George's busted because this flower girl. I mean look at her good great frequent practically see to advise low-cut top good Lord and we yes, we we hesitate to imagine how she might know George don't wait. I'm sure George was doing some scientific research working class with I'm sure Mrs. George that that's all it was.

there we are race. Did British Was a Race? Yes, according to the Victorians. If you didn't know that you haven't spent enough time hanging out with white Victorian men like Francis Goldson cousin of Charles Darwin who adapted misadactive Darwin's ideas to invent ideas of eugenics and ideas that, the poor are breeding like rabbits. We're still here this language today. Don't we unfortunately sometimes said about refugees and Asylum Seekers, they're everywhere.

They're bleeding like that pretty like rabbits and they've got naturally Bad Blood.

So they are a danger. They're working classes are a danger and they might breed the decent classes out of existence. Oh my goals. It's a bit like the far rights favorite replacement theory that they never stop.

Banging on about except with working-class people.

They're going to breed us out of existence. It's horrifying. And again, this is something you will see in cells and the far right and though sometimes quite even diagram overlap between those two groups saying today the Muslims if this week and are going to breed us out of existence and you just think well, I wish they'd hurry up because frankly we are sick of your s***.

So auto-sexual level women are a tremendous threat it gets worse. Oh So much worse here is a prominent position in 1855 Henry Wright. And here's what he says about women.

women often approach men as the blighting mildew two men's best affections and the richest fruits of his manhood. We're after your fruits boys what your cells what does that mean? There's no easy way to say this and this is the word. I'm going to have to use quite a lot tonight more than I would in normal daytime conversation spurn.

There I'm so sorry, but they're after your sperm Lads because women have a cannibalistic nature back to the Mantis. Right? We know this scientists work that one out. We are as cannibalistic sexually as the Mantis. We're not going to chew your foot off.

Probably we're a bit more subtle than that. It's the wounds. You see are wounds are little wild animals with I don't even do that. I don't know if you do that, but they are and within you and they're hungry.

Hungry you're worms. And they're after you press precious male Essences. I'm sorry, but they are and women can't help it because it's in their Savage nature. You see they don't know they're doing it.

They're like sort of zombies control by the womb. That's So no matter how prim and proper and lady like a woman looks doesn't matter. She is little more than a crazed womb on legs after your Essences and, why because we don't have these precious special Essences and that's why we're crap. That's why women are crap compared some men. I'm putting it nicely. You know, we are stunted mentally and physically aren't we? I mean, let's just submit it in compared to men because we have rooms which are inferior organs odds, right and they make us feeble and we are at best no better than defective men because we don't have that special spermi goodness going right? Well not always anyway, we try and borrow a bit occasionally because subconsciously we know this and so we're trying to this if you will we're trying desperately to get our and I'm afraid.

This is what a woman can do to you.

There's a whole treat is written on it about what can happen by masturbation. But also bye thanks. I feel a bit go bit sort of. Who is that comedian? Let's Dawson. Thanks and you can lose your very important essences and what's going to happen to you then while it's not going to be good that's going to happen that gentleman.

is one look at I that's what you're looking at.

Frequent emissions of semen. Yes, relax, we can dry innovate the body and produce numerous other evils apoplex's letter juice and epilepses loss of sight trembling and paralysis and all kinds of painful afflictions.

Ask yourself gentlemen. Are you prone to fainting fits? Are you lacking balmy and vital moisture? Are you? Do you have babies that always complain you're talking about being complaining? It's not what you think.

This is because of your failure to conserve your manly Essences, which are the source of male superiority. Yes you may have.

Spermatarea. Yes. It's a real thing. It's a serious a real and serious thing.

Here's a description of a suffer a frightful is the stamp which nature impresses on a sinner of this class. He is a Faded Rose a tree withered in that withered in the bud a Wandering corpse.

We've all seen it.

Nothing is left but weakness in activity deadly paleness wasting of the body depression of the Mind the hands tremble pains the felt in all the limbs the senses lose their power. All former activity of mind is Destroyed.

Yed nothing left, but epilepsy obsess.

Ed with consumption slow fever fainting fits and death Yes, yes early death men can die from excessive sperm loss.

Symbolicity going I know that's not right. Well, you've just been lucky. It's all I can say because doctors at the time are genuinely saying I have seen this I have seen men die from excessive ejaculation and their doctors say so sex is dangerous.

that masturbation I'm afraid is not a way out of that. That's kind of worse because it's self-pollution self-pollution. And even if you're not merrily self-polluting there are still risks. There are still risks.

nocturnal emissions say it and involuntary loss of those vital and precious fluids, but don't worry. I can see you're looking actually don't worry help is at hand.

Victorian equivalent of Amazon what a relief what a relief.

I shouldn't say help is at hand. We want to keep hands out of this.

Is the urethral ring with it's it's nice. It's got a bow on it. Just makes it all the nicer.

What you can imagine what's going to happen? If you're going to get a little bit excited thinking about that working-class flower girl, you saw showing her ankles earlier in the middle of the night. If not, it's not gonna happen.

again here explaining details I think you can work that out.

Here's another option another option. No because the ring on it so might not but this this is gonna do it. This is definitely going to do it and you can buy all of these people can and do by all of these but I think the one to really go for Is this one because this one brings a bloody Bell if? The house I was like really? Okay. Yeah.

I wonder if the Chuck Berry song My Ding-A-Ling was about I wonder if that's what it was about.

So it's terrible, isn't it? It's terrible. It's a threat men are dying. The Great British race is being laid waist too, and it is appalling.

I'm sex with a woman isn't good too. And it has to be with a woman.

We are only heterosexual because we are victorians obviously men with men is illegal and lesbian sex.

They have hilarious discussions in Parliament about whether or not they should ban lesbian sex and they say no because we don't want them to know about because like don't tell them because if they know exists they'll go and try it because, and then they're like it and they'll keep doing it right and you think very honest to praise of your own sexual prowess there Mr. MP. Yes, probably so we don't talk about that.

tool so what to do while celibacy is not an answer either you think that celibacy might be an answer but look at This time look walking past one.

Floors you'd think like celibacy would be an obvious way to not lose your manly, .
Fluids but no no because that would make sense and these are victorians nothing.

I think Nick said and we have to produce little soldiers for Empire. Don't we we have to constantly have all these children, factories aren't going to people themselves. We've got to have those little kids. They're very handy because little hands they can get into the weaving machines. Very handy child labor is so keep having children.

Women who are not having sex weirdly enough our worst of all, they're really really shocking because they're redundant aren't they obviously redundant spinsters and this is a real problem. Unfortunately, we have a journalist called W Greg who considers what to do with redundant spinster women because he's like, this is a problem. They are useless mouse that they're eating food and yet they're not producing children. What is the point of them? Literally? So what Greg decides is we should do this. We should send them to the colonists shipping to the colonists where men are See I suppose I don't know or we should have high class cortisans teach them how to do sex properly and how to lure men.

So when we don't like prostitution or sex work, and yes what we were okay, we want to teach spinsters how to seduce men so that they're not used to sexless creatures.

This is the woman you love is the worst thing of all because it causes more fluid loss. Apparently.

I don't know how they knew that. I don't know who's measuring. I don't know.

I don't know but this is apparently the thing. So what you want to do is have sex with women that you don't love which means brothels are okay for men. Thank God.

Thank God because we don't want to be blaming men for anything at all and brothels flourish and we have in London and in the West End child bottles.

frequented by upper class men Frequented apparently by Queen Victoria's cousin Leopold of Belgium. Allegedly.

He is dead he can't sue if it wasn't correct the stories that you can read about what happens to these children would give you nightmares. They are horrendous women from the East End of London and from poor parts are literally stalked abducted drugged chloroformed or given drugs in drink and taken to these brothels where they wake up and a particular thing that men like because they believe it can cure venereal disease is to have sex with a virgin to rape a virgin child.

That can apparently set you back up to 25 pounds and the person who vouched that information to a journalist was a member of parliament who sadly the journalist didn't name. I really wish he had.

There are awful accounts from these brothels of women who worked as madams and their job was to hold down these girls as they were beaten often because and that's something the men particularly enjoyed and raped by upper-classmen.

but it is of course not the men's fault. It is of course their fault because they should not be capable of being raped a truly good girl or woman cannot be raped because

her virtue will repel the man. So that's another great get-out Clause, isn't it? And also what are they doing out in the streets? Anyway, I mean, do we still hear this about rape victims today? I wish we bloody didn't but we do don't we when we're in a murdered. Well, what was she doing out at night? You know, what was Sarah ever. I'm doing walking home at nine o'clock at night. What was she doing getting into a car? Just because someone shows a woman card. So the big thing blaming is strong and it is absolutely hideous and disgusting.

So we are sexualising really young children as well who are working and some of the accounts again would make your blood boil girls who are working down a mine. So if you're crawling through a cold shaft pulling a cold cart, which is changed around your waist, which is a fine occupation for a Girl by the way. You're not going to be fully dressed.

Are you probably not going to wear like a white crinoline gown and gloves and a hats.

Because they were stripped down sometimes and they wore something like trousers. They are sexualized for this and blamed for this.

One mining commissioner said any site more disgusting or beastly than these girls at work Cannot Be Imagined. No brothel could beat it.

Really Mr. Mining commissioner and how would if I was Mrs. Mining commissioner? I'd be asking a few questions about how you are such an expert in what brothels can and can't beat but it's all the fault of and we have the Victorian obsession with the great social evil. And the evil is embodied by women.

So saying that women have an evil nature inherently, that's not new.

We get that from the story of Lilith onwards don't we that's an ancient Trope, but it really kicks up a gear in Victorian and Edwardian art.

What the bejesus is going on there. That's Alfred Cuban every night a dream visits us 1901 and there we have, insects imagery again Savage cannabalistic sexual female imagery.

That is the Sphinx there by William Sargent Kendall and this Is the vampire by Philip burnt Jones son of the famous Edward burn Jones and you just have to ask.

Are the men okay really is everything. All right at home Freud is like Lads what the what what is going on here? Because what a subconscious view of women if there was ever a man who has been drained of his manly Essences I beg to suggest this poor salt here. Is that about Now this is before Dracula is published by the way, so this is a very early female sexualized representation of the vampire.

This part this painting was a Smash Hit you could imagine paintings being Smash Hits. It was absolutely got rave reviews people queued up to see it and it inspired burn Jones's cousin Roger Kipling to write a poem called The Vampire about an evil woman who ensnares a respectable married man.

I know it's terrible business. It happens and he says a fool there was and his Goods he spent she threw him aside. So some of him lived but most of him died.

like a chewed up mantis, basically And then there's a play called a fool there was which is based on the poem that's based on the painting and then there is a film and look how that mirror is the painting better Barbara the famous first Hollywood Vamp in that film.

now the Hollywood Vamp very interesting. I mean subtle again very subtle image. I'm not sure what they're trying to say. I don't know really I mean, yeah Irish.

Yeah. Yeah, very good could indeed be Irish.

terrifying He would fan but unfortun.

Ately and what happens you women think it's cool, you get it completely wrong because of your inferior sort of wounds and feeble brains women love the Hollywood band and it becomes a symbol of glamor and kind of badass cooler and men are like no lady. That's not what we meant at all. This was supposed to be a terrible warning.

Fortunately in the Victorian period art comes to a rescue again and we have a long my God. It's long series of Epic poems by Coventry patmore called the angel in oh what a relief after all that's laziness the angel in the house at last. Thank God anybody read? No, if you ever like haven't got any anesthetic and they need to be unconscious for an operation.

Yeah, it can't get to sleep. Yeah book after bloody book about it's an etiquette guide really it's telling women how to behave I mean, thank God about time. So make notes. Ladies, please. This is what you have to do to stop being.

A woman and start being a lady because there is a massive distinction. Stop being a factory girl get back in the house Coventry is here. Your boy called is here to tell you how first of all women must avoid rages.

Okay, because strong passions mean weak will the angel is all mild.

It's all marvelous.

I should talk and that was here's a little bar from the Coventry man must be pleased but him to please his woman's pleasure.

Completely got to go down with that one down the Gulf of his condoled Necessities. She casts her.

Best she flings herself how we love to fling ourselves Uptown the Gulf of a man's condolences.

I do all day. So to please your man you happily sacrifice yourself ladies happily happily.

This poem was apparently based on Coventry patmore's first wife Emily who died young and who can bloody blame. Wouldn't you have done married to Coventry patmore on his incessant? Sorry now the poem was very very popular at the time again, it's a huge hit Queen Victoria bloody loves it. She'd never stops going on about it Queen Victoria as well. We should talk about her because she's always banging on about wifely sub.

Mission and doesn't like feminist feminists should be horse whipped.

Women should submit to Men Women a week women of feeble men are strong like girl, you are an empress. You're literally an empress and you're pretending that you're a little submissive sort of wife to Albert.

Not liking sex good Lord. That one was chasing Albert poor, man.

Around nine kids. He's like God's sake enough in her diary.

She's written this it's like some sort of sexy sort of fan fiction thing. She's written this thing about first meeting Albert and he goes out for a ride in the rain and Albert's my Albert came in from the rain wearing white Bridges.

To his body. It's like she's calm down someone.

Give us some she's getting very over excited. But so it's all right for her. She can do one thing, but it's incredibly different for working class.

course change way that working class women like the match girls are seen this has a really strong effect on how they're viewed.

Because people who are viewing women in this way do not want to see Teenage Irish eastend working-class girls leading a strike deliberately on purpose on their own and changing the world. We want to think.

That if they did go and strike us unfortunately had to accept they did.

They did it sort of by accident so like with nail and I we've gone on Holiday by mistake.

They've sort of gone on strike by mistake. Oh God, I mean lies the war.

We love with.

Good mistake again.

So, how do we do? The leadership role to someone else don't we we have to give it to a great leader who is not working class. Unfortunately, no man is available. It's a damn shame but step forward Annie besent who we can put in the frame. So that's She's middle class at least goodness and she's a socialist. This is the kind of thing that socialists do they go around randomly. Just making people go on strike for this year hell of it.

So that is at least safer than the idea of, thrusting teenage girls going on strike themselves. So when I came to study this strike and I had left school at 15 and then through being a Trade union rep. I started looking at the strike for an essay which I'm still writing. This essay is taking me like 30 years because I'm still researching the match women now and I was like, well, I've been on strike. I've worked with women from the East End. I can't imagine how this happens. There was no book on it. Did I mention there's a book now because I mentioned there is it makes an ideal gift for occasions, but I had to write it myself which is kind of weird because it was in I suppose a hundred years after the strike in the 1990s late 1990s that I started to research this. I'm like it's a stranger isn't a book but then it can't have been important.

That would be why there isn't a book there were a few lines in the history books of the day, but they were mostly well. Annie besant came along and made them go on strike, and I thought well how strikes work like how how they don't know her she's from a completely different class background. She's a posh lady.

There's 1400 of them that go on strike.

How does that happen? Because they've got no money if they go on strike. They're going to be sacked if they go on strike.

They've got no contracts. They've got no Union at all because unions don't want to organize the underclass like this. So what happens does Annie Besson just rock up at the factory Gates and go I say girls who don't know me, but I'm only Pleasant and George Benson and I were a bit pissed yesterday and we just decided it'd be a laugh if you all went out on strike. I don't know what happened. There's nothing in any of the books to explain it. They just say any best heard about the maximum being exploited and she went to the factory Gates and talk to them about their conditions and then they went on strike.

I'm like, there's about 10 stages missing between those two things, but no, As ridiculous as it is that someone like Besson who was middle class to her call.

Ooh Buckingham working class women really and who said this is my first clue. She didn't leave the strike. She said she didn't make the strike. She's all over in her Diaries going. Oh good lord, they'd gone on strike. I can't believe that I never told him to do that. I didn't want them to do that. I can't believe they went on strike. I hope they'll go back to work now call me old fashioned. That's not a strike leader really is it unless they're being really undercover about it and yet that's what history concluded.

so studying the strike I'm able to get out the way very quickly the idea that Annie Bessemer destroyed because of the thing where she said she didn't leave the strike, but then I had male academic say to me. Well, okay, then who did? Sorry, I thought that was sort of obvious. But no no, oh dear. Oh dear Louise we can see that you come from outside Academia and because they were illustrate and teenage I mean for goodness sake they just girls aren't they they couldn't possibly they couldn't possibly have led the strike. Someone must have led then and I would say but the Dockers some of them were very young that went on strike in 1889 and you're okay with that. Why is that please what's the difference professor? and that just is one you wouldn't understand because he proper academic so I then had to go back and prove.

By this stage. I'm doing a master swings. I got madly obsessed with this story and started finding my way through a master's degree, which after having less school at 15 my brain melted. I think under the pressure of that at first, but I'm determined to crack this case because I can see how important this story could be and I start to get Clues into what they're like, there are no names then given to the match women. There are no personalities given to them only any best gets that they're just the match girls. They're sort of a gray blob. They're a little bit Hands Christian Andersen Little Match girly perhaps, they're waste their Strays in The Little Match girl. The little magical dies quietly, which is important of starvation while selling matches. No talk about picket lines from her. I'm flat to note.

What's one of the first Clues I got into what the women were like a lot of the clues revolved around hats and hat pins. A lot of women's history does very good reason.

I was scrambling around trying to find little crumbs of information about the match women. In other people's in Diaries in local papers and National papers anything I could find and I found this one bit of oral history where somebody had said these match girls were very tough and on rare occasions when in any trouble read Because mess with them, they didn't hesitate to whip out their horrible long hat pins to defend themselves happens.

Very long and very very sharp. There were happy index accidental. There were a few cases of poor young gentleman standing next to a woman on a tram tram stops. Suddenly blood poisoning from hat pins.

There's a story but I don't think it's true, but it's a good story. So I'm going to tell you anyway women Woods when they went to the theater put their hats on the seat.

In front lightly pin them to the seat in front of them because you're not gonna put them on the ground with all sorts down there and apparently one man was skew it.

At the start of the musical but was so English. He made me remained silent for the whole of the First Act and said nothing until he into That's good. So that women defending themselves on the very very violent rough streets of the East End that is not little waste and Strays and then I read that they formed feather clubs. What is a feather Club? If they were going to go out on the occasions they could afford it.

They were going to look down good because they knew people look down on them because they were the lowest of the lower Factory lasses. They couldn't afford their own hats.

So they paid into feather clubs, which were communal hat clubs. I couldn't love it more and you paid in your penny or whatever you could and then when someone had enough money, they'd buy a hat and they would lend them presumably. Yeah, the hot date with a Docker on a Saturday night. You get the hell I bring it back in one piece. No matter what no matter what goes on.

another happy story six years before the strike Brian to May built a statue to William Gladstone, if the Beau wrote and boat church, it's still there pointing with its right hand to the Bryant and may Factory. So modest made boys.

So so modest They forced the match women to pay for this statue now boy this point Brian and may are so incredibly Rich. They could have afforded a hundred statues on their own but they why why would you when you can make you can deduct what they're going to do? They're not going to stop you when you can deduct from these women's wages. You can just suck them and then they gave them a half day off and the women said we don't want a half day off unless you're going to pay us and they said nobody pay you but the statue unveiling isn't that nice you can come and see the statue being unveiled and you've got to go by the way, I will suck you and they went.

Really? Interesting. And so there they all are in the middle of the bow row gently in their top hats the great good Sprite and may have invites everybody politicians and the statue is unveiled speeches. I'd imagine aces and the match women as one two Pull out their hat pins.

prick their fingers Smear they're Blood on the Statue. This is bloody ruining everything. Is it and stout our blood page for this? Incredible direct action, it's Extinction Rebellion. It's amazing. It's incredibly impressive and that's six years before the strike. So little waves and Strays. I do not think so and they had to be Because at the factory huge huge Factory site, one of the most awful things you'd probably heard of in connection with this strike phosphorus necrosis Jewel as they called it. So white phosphorus absolutely deadly horrendous toxic chemical used as an insecticide.

You could pass out you could just some people would just walk into a room with phosphorus dreams and pass out or vomit. It was that awful and oppressive.

But fine to have it floating around your factory. It's only working class women and girls after all there was a safe alternative red phosphorus. Guess what the problem was.

with expensive Yeah, it was more expensive.

So why would you bother and that's what happens your Jawbone rots? You would be spitting bits of your own bone out this necrotic bone abscesses, which absolutely stank which is a problem when you're living tend to a room with your family as many of them had to so we find matchmakers living on the outskirts of towns and cities are homeless away from their families in the last stages of the disease and you're fitting bits of your own skeleton out. It must have been absolutely horrendous.

If you survive that's plastic surgery Victorian style. That's all they can do hack away the dead flesh and screw in some nice.

Probably wooden false teeth.

completely avoidable but women like this are totally Predators upon by the capitalists in those days. It's completely acceptable for women and girls and children to lose their lives. As long as Brian and May are profit of oh my God, are they profitable? They're incredibly profitable firm.

So we have people like Brian and May making a fortune out of working-class women and girls and they are suffering because of it.

So after running besant writes an article after interviewing some of the women who come off shift, she writes a very Punchy article called White slavery in London, which is a hell of a title.

She talks about fussy Jewel she talks about the fact that the women are very small and frail, even for working-class women because the wages are lower in 1888 than they were 10 years before despite the huge profit surprise to me because shareholders we've got to pay the shareholders. They're getting 20% dividends.

So forth down wages not because we need to but because we can She writes about it. She sends the article to Brian and May.

They put pressure on the girls there.

They have carefully curated their public reputation.

They are gentlemen, they're in with Gladstone. They're in with a liberal party. Everybody loves them and thinks they're, good employers. So they've got to shut this down. So they put papers around this huge Factory site pre-prepared statements. We

love working for Brian May. This journalists are complete line we love the rotting Jewels doesn't literally say that but that's the kind of idea come back.

Nobody has signed all the girls refuse to sign. Although they know they're going to lose their jobs and they sent any besant a note and said dear lady.

They're trying to get the poor girls to sign a paper to say you have lied everything you said was true. We will not sign we will not go back on you.

Solidarity Sisterhood amazing really 1400 of them prepared to lose their jobs for one middle-class journalist because they understand solidarity. She stood up for us. We're not going to go back on her. That's how we live. That's how we work. That's how we operate. That's how we survive poverty with Incredible solidarity.

Doesn't work. So then the boss is sack one very popular girl.

On a pre-tax to terrify the others. Well, they should have known the women a little bit better than that were they terrify they were fails to be terrified. They laid down their tools. They picked up their hats they picked up their coats and they stormed out of the factory Gates and onto the Fairfield Road and the bow Road.

We're immediately they're really Democratic. They're really organized. They're not like oh no, what now? Should we go down the They immediately elect a committee. They send them back in to put their demands to the directives and immediately say we want to form a union. We want the right to form a union that amazing then they're not messing about at all.

Bright and may say well you can get started or equivalent there or if you're all sacked. Now, how dare you, how every day you ask us for things good God, so you're all sites and they're all right, then. I guess we're on strike and they ring that huge Factory site. They pick it the whole thing. So carts are turning up to to make deliveries like sorry love now. We're on strike. Turd it rounds. You're not getting in and within a week the whole Factory is shut down. It's absolutely but Bryant and May just laugh initially and they can afford to laugh because that's the home of one of the directors of Brian and May and that's the home of a match woman.

Trickle down effect trickle down economics what happened there things a piece of trickled up rather than down. Don't they? Imagine they think they're unassailable like this little gonna be us. You must be joking. They are unbothered.

paper fish off the women operating the streets of bother a bit worried about this as a look and worse. They are everywhere accompanied.

One of the very worst type the very best type my God. The working classes are on the street. Is there going to be a revolution? So they can't still police leave over the country. They bring police in just in case these terrifying match women do stuff the revolution.

Match women then go to meet with members of parliament and people throw things at them and Shout at them because they're in Posh London again, and that's not really allowed but they go in they make their points one girl takes off her Bonnet and shows that she's bored on her head. She's 12 years old because she's been carrying pallets of

matches on her head. She's And peace would not have talked to working-class women at all apart from sweep the floor to their servants.

So these women really impress them. They're like good Lord. They were eloquent,

Did you see that they could use entire sentences? They're absolutely stunned and the women form a strike committee? They hand out funds they collect funds they give them out and they manage to survive that way and journalists come down and say good Lord. This is astonishing they're helping each other. They're being nice to each other. They're lending each other things.

Or did this we thought the poor just fought each other for a penny? We didn't realize they're almost like human beings. Look. This accounts are absolutely astonishing.

They go back to work.

in just over two weeks because share prices tumble, right and may absolutely panic and get less on by their shareholders and they crumble and the match women get all of their demands and the right to form the largest Union of women and girls in the country at the time the union of women match workers.

It's astonishing it's an astonishing Victory and people say things like it's changed the way we look at working class women full stop because we thought they were just, fighting over gin and now we see that they're disciplined and their organized and they know what they're doing politically we had no idea about these people. So it really changes everything.

It's such a vital event. So why wasn't there a book about it when I came to the story? There was some ancient. No, I didn't mentioned.

Astonishing what happens afterwards as well as a wave of strikes after the match women's Victory strike rate shoot up the great duck strike the next year. That's a biggie that's traditionally where we trace the modern Trade union movement and the labor party from I thought that needed changing. I thought that needed altering because the dock Strikers said stuff like well, we did it because the match women obviously historians.

No, no, there was no influence whatsoever of the match girls on the Dockers Dockers, like hi. No, we that we are since coming to dress our Union and they came spoke to 5,000 of us after the strike. We went on strike. It's because of them and all through the dark stripe. We said don't forget the match girls. Remember the match girls act like the match girls and you can win historians know absolutely no connection whatsoever between the Dockers and the match between apart from the fact that they were in the same families because they were Irish EastEnders who were married to each other but apart from that no connection whatsoever.

So finally in 2016, I got a Mr.

Corbyn to acknowledge that they're the mothers of the labor movement and the labor party.

Mr. Starmie yet to comment. I'm sure it I'm sure any minute now is coming.

They went on to be suffragettes in the East End. They went on to be anti-fascists. I only discovered after I wrote the book that the only person that Mary Driscoll who went on to own a shop would not rent a room to ever because she had a back room. She would rent out for meetings was the world mostly of the British Union fascists and why she said because he's an a*****.

Amazing a complete and absolute Triumph yet.

Like I say no one had looked at it in that light and of course, we have had pushback ever since we had that awful letter supposedly from John Ripper and history kind of invisible eyes the strike or minimized it talked about it as not very important gave the victory factor to Annie Besson. It was just so unacceptable for this to have happened and I think I would argue that even today we have to be very careful about the creeping back the push back against women.

The creeping back of Victorian attitudes here in 2012 is an American Senator saying victims of legitimate rape can't get pregnant because their body is prevent them from doing so Victorian. It's a Victorian idea and it's back with that guy.

This is an Intel tweet women perform Alchemy men face the world and absorbed damage women absorbit during this Essence is again with back to Essences and cleansers during her period some periods man's emotional laundry. We're washing machines sisters. We are washing machines for men.

Rape doesn't produce children's as Jason buntcher numbers Jason bunch of numbers is confident about this. I'm going to say he's not a biologist. I don't know only willing women can get pregnant rape excuse stressful.

Pull yourself together. No, it's horrifying and there we had when this poor woman was murdered. Did you see the rhetoric perhaps the fact that she had a good job made that poor man kill her these ideas. They're still bloody out there. We haven't deradicalized people from them. You know, like we do notified after the second world war these horrible vicious erroneous ridiculous ideas. Unfortunately, they're still in the culture and they will come back anytime we give them a chance.

here is that little I really hope is not enjoying his Detention Center and I really hope.

has a prison but please talk to young people talk to your kids talk to your daughter's talk to your sons talk to any young people, about this our soul because he is out there influencing children and dragging us back to the Victorian period I mean mustn't let it it only remains for me to say please join me on the 15th of July in Beau if you can for the match women's Festival.

Al Kennedy Jeremy corbyn and Laura Alvarez, I'm Jeremy corbyn's wife who I think we're gonna let her husband speak as well. But we're definitely going to have Laura speaks. She's a brilliant speaker. So please join me if that have a look on Eventbrite match women's Festival 23, there will be gin. There will be Cocktails. So of course be no fighting and no showing of ankles and it only remains for me to say hats off to the match.

Okay.

So yeah, Galleria someone's been rather fruit about Kia stama. I'm short here. I'm reporting that swim. You're gonna get a spell from the party. Right? I think starma has one of those devices and any messages you can read.

The spiky one you think he's done was wearing the spiky one. Well, I'm possibly commenting. So what about questions from the room any questions I'll comments.

I don't know where you can get the devices by the way. I don't know have a look on Amazon.

We'll just sort of recognition or the women that you're advocating for your story that you're no longer The only voice yes. I mean people have written based on my book designs and they've written their own books and novels have been written and stories have been written about the match women as a result of that just really nice.

I was talking to a lady early today another talk who did a PhD based on my work and wrote a book about the match with me. So yes, they're definitely getting out into the culture Mall. They're in andola homes too on Netflix, but it's not, it's entertainment. It's not historically accurate, but we're getting the story out there and that's what matters and we finally last July got a blue plaque.

On the match Factory. There was a plaque not on English Heritage proper one, but one that said Annie Besson huge letters anywhere else underneath. You know, it took me about 20 years as I'm gonna get that Bloody pluck of that boy. If I had to get up there myself with a ladder. I'm getting rid of that plaque and finally we bought English Heritage to submission and hey put a clock up. They what didn't want English Charities don't usually put up plaques to groups of people. They like individuals. We like writings individuals history and we I really insisted. It has to be the match girls. It has to be too old. Yes, we have that now. So we getting there there's a long way to go. And also I probably got about another hundred stories of women that are just as exciting and impressive as these I've collected as I've gone around so we have so much work to do with working class history and working class women and guess what government don't like history a lot of working class history departments and universities have shut down the tourists have gone back to dates and battles and kings and queens because that's safer.

We do not want Working Class People to realize the biggest historical secret ever. There's more of them.

Don't tell them that that's terrifying so all that we are told that we learn British history.

We learn usually establishment history. That's what celebrated that's not our history. That's about 2% of them countries history. But my God, we get it celebrated and it's all to Blind us to the fact that there are more of us so that we need to get that.

Message that was absolutely when you spoke to us last you said a little bit more if I remember rightly about the way that you were able to go just a little bit more about that most wonderful thing for me because I've become such a ridiculous fangirl of the match with me was to be able to trace descendants people who had known them. I

just got there in time people who'd actually know these women and known them for like 20 years being kind of brought up by them as their grandmothers. Just got there in time. Thank God and people said to me.

Don't try to trace families. It's really hard to trace women forward through history, which it is because women change their names poor women move around a lot.

You will never do it through the census and they said other academics.

Well I mean, they won't know anything. Will they only might I don't but they'll be like work.

probably won't they and, they're probably old and a bit senior and I was Like okay. Can I at least try? I got the most brilliant education from these wonderful men and women who knew their grandmothers who were incredibly proud of them who'd barely heard about your Besson who had the East End version of the story. Yeah. That was my granted her mates, honey. Who any what what now what's someone told my grandma what to do? Yeah. Okay and they were my best teachers. They showed me around East London. They showed me a different side of Reason their musical was over there and over there my grand used to get a jelly Deals. They were amazing. A lot of them had gone on to be lifelong socialists and trading this because of their grandmothers. It was the biggest honor of my life. Honestly to meet I harass these poor people. I forced them to become my friends. I absolutely adored them and they're all mentioned in the book because I do not like it when academics don't credit the people that have given them all the information. They really were pretty much co-authors. I couldn't have done with that. They were incredible.

incredible People yes.

well I try. Oh, yeah. The question was did I have any did I have any feedback from Brian to May? Well, I tried and Brian and may closed in the 80s and the factory became what we used to call a yuppie flat younger. People will not know what he'll be flat is so it's a gated community now, it's real fancy. It's got like a bistro swimming pool. It's super super Posh very nice building and so Brian and may matches were taken over by Swedish company so you can still get primary matches, but they're made in Sweden so I thought Wow.

What I'll email them.

when I did my first matchmas Festival in 2013, I sent them a little email and I said no.

Reparations of some kind if you wanted to give me a check to fund my maximum Festival. I think that would be amazing. I heard nothing absolutely nothing but they completely ghosted me and completely ignored me but then a few years later when I digitized the bright and may archives and I had to contact them and I got a sort of very legalistic letter back through their lawyers and I was saying well, Is this you is this archive that we have of company papers that was just dumped in a museum when Brian and manufactory closed. Do you want copyright of this? Is this yours? And I just got these letters back in perfect English because they're Swedish.

I think probably correcting my grammar as well and said well we will not confirm nor will we not? That these papers are as I was like Lads can I do and I have this archive and then they just like, oh what the hell? Yes and didn't want anything to do with it. So they completely disclaimed and ownership of the archive. But no, I have invited them to donate to the festival several times they have yet to do.

So, I'm sure it's just an oversight.

I did suggest that, you voted these women's Jewels maybe perhaps that was where I went wrong. That's I shouldn't have phrase it like that. But, a nice check to the festival to pay my speakers to pay. You know, I give tickets as well to people who can't afford it. Perhaps you could fund say 10 tickets for people who can't otherwise afford to come.

No reply.

Yes, it's already what I'm Zoom would like to ask a question.

Anthony actually Yes, I can hear your lovely Louis. That was a fascinating talk. Thank you.

Terrifying in places and you really do talk about I did born you.

Well, yes, you do it with great human. Your storytelling is is impeccable. Thank you very much for that.

You said that and I have to say I learned all about? That girls right when I was at school. Yeah, and the world was talk to me at school with nothing like you just you just funny that little bit of credibility.

But you say that they the match girls were the biggest organized.

Women women Union in the UK.

Yes.

You think they were actually the in the world I would imagine so because we were really the first proper industrial trade union movement just because we're industrialized first unusual for Britain to do something first, but we did brexit no and so yes, I think it's probably a fairly safe bet historian shouldn't really say that without checking the entire rest of the world, but I think it's likely but it's important to say to at that time. They were the biggest Union of women and girls said being a huge all female Union.

I was delighted to discover in Leicester a hundred years before in 1788 of hand Spinners, which was known as being all female and terrifyingly militant women's unions.

I found sorry matches yourself Amazing and women women's unions and always one of the things that when I came to the Trade union movement, you would still get older students to say well women don't make very good trade unionists we can't get them to come to meetings. When do you have your meetings in the public? 3:30? Could I just suggest that they're picking up their kids and maybe if you had it in a different environment? Oh, they won't be good trade doing this if we go and strike, they won't go and strike. It's absolute below. I have to say actually women historically and now tend to be more loyal to strikes tend to stick by strikes more and all the older accounts of women's unions is if they went on strike, you better not break that dispute because

if you do you could get a bit accident prone people fell down Wells they were clumsy that broke strikes.

Tricked I think and all were dunks in water troughs in town squares that broke women's strikes. So yeah, they're always been a real female character to protest in this country. Go back to the peasants revolt and see women. Actually. We now know participating. So it's not one off incidences. It's not nothing before the match women hundreds of years of women being part of popular protest and very militant very upsetting for the victorians. But yes, thank you and you very much. No. Thank you Anthony. Thank you for being there.

Oh and that's a gentle here actually, yes. Yes.

People living in those days as people thinking pretty much the same way. Mmm due today. That's not true. You have different.

Back and obviously there were different mechanisms behind leading them to the actions. Yeah.

Well that really fascinated me and I had to because I could not understand why this strike wasn't more celebrated. I couldn't understand what other academics historians have come along and gone yarn and striped. It wasn't important wasn't really nothing to see here move along to the dog strike. I couldn't understand it. So I had to a very basic level study sociology.

I had to study psychology as well. I studied sex and relationship between the Sexes because I just couldn't get my head around it and without an understanding of those ideological blinkers. You cannot understand it at all. And yes, the past is another country. They do things differently there. But on other levels people are remarkably like us throughout history with certain basic with certain human emotions. There's not that much difference. The interesting thing for me was how much did women accept working class women accept this idea that they weren't respectable that they were shocking and evil and terrible and shouldn't be Because that's a heavy load to have put on you. If you're having to go to work or your kids are going to die and yet people like oh disgusting not a lady awful appalling and shocking and I found that they kind of were pretty good at rejecting that and I think that solidified the max women's identity. I think what they did was say, never mind what they say out there. You're a match girl. Now, you're one of us. We are our own cool girl gang and they form this really important sense of identity, which is like a family and all the grandchild said they were like a family they were like a family so they knew what was being said about them because even if they couldn't read and actually quite a lot of Working Class People younger Working Class People at this period learn to read But they knew what people were saying about them. They knew how they would disregarded and how they were spat on and how they were treated and how EastEnders particularly were treated and that's why they do what academics call revalorizing their identity so we get working-class probably get East End Pride East End becomes incredibly cool by the 1960s you've got with the class boys like Mick Jagger the Rolling Stone talking like that and trying to pretend you filming extender because it becomes really cool. That's

because of those people they seize on that identity. They say you think EastEnders an insult.

We're going to be proud to be EastEnders and I found that women did that a lot not always some women do kind of accept it. They're a little bit shifting embarrassed about working. They say, well I didn't walk after I was married obviously. I mean I took him washing and I made matchboxes at home and I feel pickled onions and I did this you so you worked basically you're entire life, but they don't call it work because they are aware of that respectability politics and that domestic ideology.

but on the whole I found really a community. That was very good at resisting this it's almost it's its own Community. It's its own culture. So there, so women are not marrying always they're slinging blokes out if they're not if they're not if they're not, good partners. They're not choosing to marry. They're choosing to have children without getting married. They're dating. It's its own culture and although there was some shaming going on a women's sexual behavior. I found that if you are confident and if you were respected, you could front it out front it out. It's a good eastend expression. You held your head high. You will like yeah got a problem have you with my behavior? A lot of the the women whose grandchildren I talked to had lovers they were fairly open. Oh, yeah, my grand got about a bit they but they had their own rules. They made their own rules and they were incredibly respected in their communities. A lot of these women. They were like answers queens of the street.

Were the people you went to if you were in trouble, they were like a One-Stop shop for kind of community activism. But yeah, I think to understand it. I couldn't have understood what happened. I couldn't have written my book unless I'd made it really sort of cross-disciplinary and pulled in all these different elements because I just wouldn't have understood what was going on.

It was already what else in the room.

But yeah, oh, that's sorry the lighting blue actually. Yes you mmm Yeah.

Mmm, it's really interesting. We repeat.

Oh, yes. So the question was and this portrayal of women as these kind of vampires and praying Manchester's and to say a bit more about that. I think it's incredibly interesting at this time when victorians are scientific and they're supposed to be anti kind of that kind of Mythology. They're using science to say actually this is what women are but this is not old mumbo jumbo. No. No this isn't it kind of Lilith? Myth. This is scientific. I've got a praying about it's in a jar. Look what she's bloody done cool. Basically, you cannot deny it. This is what's happening. So they're using a new scientific inquiry to go back to old and Prime on a really good horrible views about women as kind of demons and sucky by and just terrible terrible creatures. There's a fear a real fear and hatred Of women and female sexuality and so then when I learned later on that men are paying to beat working-class children and rape them in brothels. It kind of made sense.

Because they've been taught to hate them. They've been taught that they clean limbed and masculine and Empire. My God Empire is such a masculine project we

mustn't let women and foreigners because they're the kind of the same thing. They're equally bad degradus make us a feminate. Oh God. This is terrifying and foreigners can do that Jewish people can do that obviously gay people can do that and women can do that. They can make you a feminate.

It says like Lads is it gay to have sex with a woman? Yes, basically what to the victories it's really really strange but they use this kind of hatred of anything which is other anything which isn't a clean limbs fine spirited Public School white man going out and colonizing as the enemy we must suppress them their natural but they're Savage and that includes women with they have this Savage nature. So they don't think of nature as being good and healthy in the way that we do. It's something that must be changed. We have science. Now we contain these people we can get rid of the elements. We don't like in society we can Eugenics. What's the idea? If you do, it's we rid the population of these people you get people on the left and the right at this period saying we should sterilize These people we should stop them from having children. We need to breed these people out and we can do this with science.

So it's a weird mixture of old kind of demonic mythological imagery of women like Sila and terribness and all Cersei and these scary mythological women with a scientific justification and it's all to say it's all white supremacy. It's all to say white men must dominate the country the class the world basically and you have men saying at this time and the problem with the Empire is we've got to watch out for women because women destroyed other Empires apparently women destroy the Roman Empire. I never read that in Mary beer, but apparently they did.

So we've got a watch them. They'll make our Empires if we're not careful got a suppressed.

For this Christmas the three. Yeah, right.

This is a brilliant thing about this evening it so you've done that you made that linkage between those the women Strikers and he's weird Victorian ideas about sex. But when I was watching this the image you had of that poor poor poor man on the system. Oh, I know all the life parade that trained right? I was just say if you are writing up this talk is another book just a very interesting thing about science, which is actually communal reminded me. I mean, it's a book called whereas antibody called west of okay and it's all about this what used to be so did it goes right? Right. It's almost the earliest form of science had the patriarchy which is that semen is made of marrow marrows in all your bones, but it's your biggest burning your body is your head and when you have sex with what you're doing is you're ready your friends made a sperm which it's just from the time when patriarch is relatively so young and precarious and it just kind of everywhere and it's and it's science. It's a distinctual sciences and Friends made of bone marrow, which is square and you keep losing it to these women and what's so interesting is these are very old ideas. I think it was aristot Aristotle who said that women is an incomplete man. None of this is new, but we're proving it now.

We've got science and insects in general. It's gonna be true. Everybody was celibacy. It's one of the reasons why trees to shave of patriotic figures of need to be settlement to be proven that their brains in time it.

It's really interesting. Thank you. And yeah, there was Robert the there was that the back and I'd like to come in oh in and then Lawrence and ultimate after that. but yet.

You can trusted the the 19th century part of your story with two little excess from the century before there the textile workers in leicestershire in the 1780s. There was also yes a book produced around about the same time explaining to a woman how she should set up become economically independent. This reminded me I read something Similar to this in the question of sport. Okay. This was men but in in the 18th century, it was perfectly possible for say an army officer and a Tradesman to both be contestants in a race and if the working-class person one that would be accepted. And then I read with the coming of the 19th century that changed completely you would never have sporting events where an army officer and a working class below would compete against each other and it's one of the reasons why Working Class Sports, like football came totally separate and that yeah the upper class Sports English historical research.

Generally. Have you found out what was it that happened in that transition from the 18th to the 19th century that actually made things for Working Class People and for women so much.

Yeah, yeah, it's industrialization. Really.

I'm not going to suggest that the feudal system was great. The feudal system was s***. Unless you were the lord of the manner if you were a peasant or worse if you reserve absolutely stuff really but you've got a smaller microcosm of society in the countryside and at least there's the idea that the lord of the manner has to kind of look after you a bit. Maybe put a bit of a roof over your head possibly throw some food in your direction so you can keep working in this Fields, but it's a much smaller micro Christmas Society. Everyone knows everybody else Villages play football across the whole field of the whole village and through the streams and the other Village comes in place. So there's more activities where different statuses of people are going to meet and they're gonna be involved in life together with industrialization. You have stayed with East London people rush into East London. It's not ready for them at all.

We just subdivide houses into Dreams, it's all for the conditions are awful. And then with the coming of Steam Trains anyone with any money can get for help out of poor areas and live in suburbs and that's part of why the classes get so completely cut off from each other. But also it's done deliberately by othering them because otherwise it's really embarrassing that you can see it's not like when they're starving out in the countryside. It's not your business. It's a little to the manners. They're suddenly people complain there are starving homeless people sometimes when they're trying to go to the Opera mean for the love of God, they're visible in London. This is awkward because we were very moral Christian Society, aren't we we're teaching the world morality the world didn't ask too that's how good so this is awkward. So have you explain it? When

you have to other those people and say they're not like us they're different. They're other they're subhuman.

They're almost like animals. They drink they've got bad blood. They will go to the bad. There's no helping them. You can't help them. All you can do is try to eradicate them and this view goes so deep that you even have another class socialists who have some really dodgy views about Working Class People.

Time at George Bernard Shore good Lord. Good Lord joins back into a shocking the things he just about working-class people and this is kind of in everybody's almost everybody.

I would say probably Eleanor marks avoids it pretty much every bloody other person accepts to some level that Working Class People they've all got a bit Daily Mail getting away from us there and under class. We'll catch fleas all lice or something of them. So it's a really deliberate process and it becomes so strong that people pretend they don't know where the East End is people who live near the East End Go Don't Know Jack London comes over here. The American writer just studied East End and it goes to his friends. So, can you tell me where the EastEnders are like what good? No, no.

One decent he's like what she's you lymus what the hell you must know where it is. You're in London. No, no don't know.

Where is never been there? No call to go there. Nobody goes there. Don't go there. Don't go there. They'll kill you.

Don't get there except for with police. And so he goes do you want me to have to go to a travel agent? Don't make me go to Thomas Cook and he literally does.

Ghost Thomas Cook. Can you tell me for the love of God you English? Where is the East End? I want to go there and live there and oh good.

God sir. No, no. No, we don't know. We don't know. He's simple by my reckon. It's about a mile from here. No, no never been there. Don't know where it is. No cool to go there. Nobody wants to go that we can take you to bet. I want to go to the Sorting. He said it's incredible talk about cutting off the class.

You know, we other them so strongly we pretend they're invisible can't see them incredible.

Incredible and so that process it starts with industrialization really really and the idea that they're just they're like machines Working Class People. They're sort of like ants they're just they're coming to factories and then they go and you keep them in one part of London you keep them away from you keep them away from Posh people. It's it becomes appallingly strong.

Louder yeah.

Thank you.

To be kind of traditional British section practices. Yeah.

Terrible has been seen around the world. Yeah often around the world.

a kind of a contrast between Yeah and the idea of modernized public sectional practices is something up. I am very restless. Yeah, so I was kind of trying to talk I

was kind of Like this question, correct me. I'm trying to work out how to phrase. Yeah, he's there a possibility for understanding in Britain in the West.

this section person section generals and I wasn't crazy and then it hurts me why because actually the mountain of modernizing traditional practices. Mmm.

Yes. Yes sadly.

Authorization is home range of semi-traditional 7 sexually thinking about senior retention and has emerged and why would modernize the economy? We haven't modernized how we think about exactly exactly you yeah, so it's wondering Reclaim the Mansion of modernizing rationalizing public sexual culture from the eugenesis.

We certainly need to but the problem is just so sorry Zoom a little. Yes. What hello theme is yeah the idea being can we modernize sexual practices? Can we look at doing that and having a better more modern debate around it? But the problem is that areas being colonized by the eugenesis and the in cells and it is a problem when I discovered that there were that people like Toby Young.

Is blocked me on Twitter? I don't know why and with attending a secret Eugenics Pro Eugenics conferences that were being held in London Pro Eugenics conferences. That was only a few years ago. And then Dominic Cummings hired a guy who was a young eugenicist who'd spoken at those conferences, and I thought what the b***** is going on here and that's exactly the problem. We haven't examined and got rid of those dodgy dubious horrible horrific ideas. And exactly they can always come back unless you stab them out. They can always grow back and they do because it's suits capitalism.

Basically, it's it's suits capitalism to have women failure to have women still not earning, equal wages to have women not too much in control to still have a paradigm when basically men are in control still works for us and as long as it works, Some wear a capitalist country we can push back we should push back we should always push back and fight it but the problem is it just keeps bloody going back. And as soon as you push it a little bit backlash because who's in power essentially it's, I don't think Richie seem like is like a massive.

Feminist, so we're not going to get that kind of thing discussed in schools the way they've clamped down on the teaching of History the way they've taken like black people LGBT people anyone who's not white British being pushed back and out of the curriculum again, so it's difficult except in spaces like this to have the kind of debate. We need to go big with that kind of debate is the BBC gonna let me do a series on that. Mmm. No, they're really easy is definitely not at this time. I've never seen such a culture war against us. It's incredible all that the means of the media the math media is so incredibly against any kind of debate on traditional roles. So we see the daily mail coming out with this nonsense about women being killed because they've upset their husband by having a good job, that is massive pushback against women and although feminisms made great strides with the comeback of insult culture.

That was horrifying and I watched that happen because I monitor their far right and I watched the point at which the far right who previously rejected people they

regarded as a bit geeky or, bitter men not Alpha men. They didn't want anything to do with them and then they suddenly went hang on.

These are disaffected angry white blokes and they've got money amazing. Let's get on board with them and they started recruiting them and at that point you saw in cell stockings talk about reception about mixed race dating and marriage and how bad and how dangerous it was and my God, they went full Nazi essentially and that's where we are.

Now. Let's make no mistake. We have Neo Nazis again.

We have patriotical terms of in this country.

Incredible misogyny incredible races of ink fascism they're literal literal neo-nazis. So that's where we've gone. I agree with everything. We say it needs to be done. It's going to be very hard at the moment to get that debate. But absolutely we have to try because it's all our Liberation is at stake.

Thank you.

question It's not.

a question very brief comments one one thing about both is just the physical landscape and this is endless streets of very small Victoria Terrace houses and this Mmm, it's like something from the north of England. It doesn't fit in London and you've got 14,000 women working there, but it's impact.

Stretched across the whole of the Northeast State like that's not green. Everyone was sticking the boxes together.

Yeah. Yeah.

Everyone was hmm Related yeah one way. Yeah. Yeah, that was really important everyone you match girls were and everyone knew who the Dockers where they were such similar communities such similar groups of workers casual massive scale employment. No contracts being taken on a bit of time. And so of course, they saw commonality in each other struggles. But yeah, the match women were famous in the East End when the docs leaders addressed Mass meetings of hundreds of thousands of men during the Great Dock strike of 89. They would say remember the match girls. Hold up be like the match girls Lads be as Brave and as strong as have as much solidarity as they did and they never had to explain by which I mean the Brian and Main workers everyone you who the match girls were they will legendary even before the story. They were kind of legendary cool girl gang, really? yeah, yeah on that note very curious because she's the way he described and they're really like the original sort of sub-counter culture reacting to this very oppressive, psychological and physical Victorian regime with their own propaganda are the examples of the magicals making pamphlets and the songs and where he find it what he no, unfortunately, I mean there is that song which I only managed to find out about that song which I'm kind of obsessed with because I heard a little Chocolate in the British Library sound archives where somebody is talking not about strikes, unfortunately, but about Street songs and I keep listening to it hoping he'll say more but he's dead. He's not going to say more but keep hoping and he says when the match girls went on strike, they used to walk down the street

and they used to sing. We're going to hang old Bryant on a sour apple tree. Not a tea, you see approved method of arbitration. Don't do that, but they sung it to John Brown's Body the Abolitionist him the battle of the Republic. It's incredible these women the solidarity between Working Class People in America and in Britain we have that during the cotton famine up north women are thrown out of work because of the war that's happening in America and the blockage on Cotton but rather than make the government support the, the wrong side in the war which is what they hope will happen. They say we even though Starving because of this we want to send solidarity the enslaved people of America. We understand that we have common cause with them incredible sophisticated politics and you can find women doing that kind of thing for hundreds and hundreds of years. There's so many examples of that creating their own culture because that the prevalent culture is so hostile then they create their own.

I'm gonna jump in. Yeah, and yeah, I really wanted to hear a bit more about the incredible direct action ritual with the Gladstone. Mmm stats you and the legend about the red hat the hand and the blood and the covering with yeah. And so yeah and but one reason because with a bunch of women and Marissa karnesca, who did the incredible bleeding woman as an international women's day theater here and we did these rituals and on the Centenary of the February revolution of the song which was of course led by women very special and the place that we thought was the best place to celebrate that was as close as we could get to Brian to main amazing and we also ringed around and did riches around the Gladstone statue. And this is this Legend of how the hand yes, how we came heads. Hey you ready to say thank you basically won't you criminal damage? Okay offices arrested women. Oh, okay.

It's still there. It's still there and it's happened. We know for sure since possibly as a gentrification protest in the 80s when the factory turned into Flats, we know that it happened from that point onwards. I would like to think it's also a bit of a protest against Gladstone's wealth coming from slavery because his father own shares in a plantation and that's where the Gladstone wealth came from. But when I was just oh he yes, didn't he do a research and then flagellated himself afterwards. I'm telling you these people I'm telling you.

They are so peculiar. But yeah really important that when I was talking to Ted Lewis or absolutely adored who sadly no longer with us who was the grandson of a matchwoman and I talked to him about the red hand. He said, oh that happened way before that my grand and her mates used to Chuck pain over that statue because they bloody hate it. They used to go past. It will give it the thing and so go past and I asked the council when I was writing my book about it and they said what? We're not even gonna bother cleaning it off anymore. There was no point. It's too expensive. They keep putting it back. I don't know who does it if I ever find out I'm gonna buy them a bottle of champagne.

I've always said this and I'm gonna do it's not me people have asked me people. Excuse me. I couldn't get up that high.

I'm only small and I was wanting to talk and someone said I know who did that and he said yeah my mate did that once she came out of a pub. She was a bit pissed and she did that and I'm like what she had some red paint with her and a lazer and a pain brush. I don't think The one so we still don't know it's nice to have some mistress left. But if anyone wants to confess to me in confidence, I will not tell the police. I will buy you a bottle of champagne.

Next to you just a great talk and really interesting. Thank you after they won this. I just wonder what about what how they organized in the factory and what Advanced they made after strike because the process conceded all day the margins you were able to retain like and the boss is really tried to push back. They were fuming.

In about the strike until like the 1960s you can find lettuce in their archive. People are like, oh hello. We're doing a performance my wi are doing a performance of the baptic girls' musical. Could you tell us something about could you perhaps send us some old signage or something and they got progressively angry through the sixes that this happened and they'd start off saying well, we'll have a look and then after a few letters they were like, no absolutely not sod off. We don't know anything about it. We haven't got anything at all from that period go away and leave us alone Furious still and there was still comments in the archives like oh what they didn't need to go on strike. We were paying them very well don't actually know but the ridiculous didn't need to go on strike they were so angry. I love that. I love that. They never got over it and they really really never did but the union survived now a lot of those new unionism unions that were formed around this period will crushed by an employers push back, but the match women's Union stayed until 1920 when it was merged into the gym be so Went away, even though an American academics written a paper about it saying that the union was basically a failure because it in the 1926 merge, it wasn't a failure. It was a really well organized Union and they had strikes afterwards even though any best said to them as a meeting. She's sort of said now girls you've been on strike.

Unfortunately, you've got away with it this time, but you mustn't do it again. Like I had mistress you're not going to do it again now girls are you and they're like, no probably actually we are yeah, I'll get into it again. And so yes, they kept striking against bossy Jewel when they were cases of it. They kept fighting they kept pushing and when new girls were taking on Brian and my typical employees thing this would try to give them worse. They try and the girls who with it had been on strike were very very cool. They had a lot of status in the workplace and they go. All right, so she'll pay packet what they're giving you nah. Nah, go and tell him now they're taking the Mickey go and tell him so they make sure that they maintain their conditions and they got this amazing separate dining room and Social Club, so they didn't have to eat their bread with particles of white fosterous on it. Which, crazy George. So yeah, it's amazing what their shoes? Yeah.

when you're talking a little bit about the feather clubs and did that have like did they use like other clubs also during the steering the strike and they use Did they use it? I like to assume that when they came back Victorious they had their best like f

off half on we certainly know that when the Dockers went on strike matter and took solidarity action.

I'm just about old not remember when you could do that was tremendous fun when you could take support strike action with other unions. You can't strike now at all, and but they would take supportive action again, and again, you can find references to it. And there's one occasion that I love. It's it's the Dockers Victory procession when they finally got as much as they can and they had this huge procession throughout East London and like the match women they have music they have bands they have kind of floats. They make sort of almost not in your carnival style floats. It's incredible. I think we should bring this back we need to bring yeah, and there's this wonderful article in a newspaper that says, And advancing like a moving a rainbow a match girl who are supporting the doctors because they all wear the huge hats of Many Colors. They love to wear on a day out.

Right. Yes. Is it amazing? It's beautiful beautiful image, isn't it? And we we're going to have to wind up. Yeah.

The refusal to actually rationing public sexual culture and actually trying to put the end traditional forms of information and instead to actually move forward. Yeah. It's it's really scary. We are facing our cheers. Thank you for coming. We are facing a time now where we are looking at the most from the most far right governments I can recall.

The fascists almost don't have to bother because it's all been done for them and yet we they are doing it and yes, I protested patriotic alternative in London outside the drag queen story out because they were raging about that raging about Refuge is usually refugees but they'll pivot they'll do both it's scary eventually because it's celebriman. Someone's going to firebomb a refugee Hotel. They tried to in no sleep. It was anti-fascist who stopped them. They built physical barricades.

The police said we can't protect you. Sorry. We're out numbers. Sorry, you're on your own and I talk to I've written an uncle about this for the morning star. Actually. They built physical barricades. They were prepared to protect that hotel. There were terrified people in there. They were kids that can see these Maniacs with viables for the love of God and then soil a brave him and said we shouldn't call them racists. They're concerned citizens, in every area of life. We're at risk from the far right, .

As women as people who are not purely heterosexual as people who are not white as people who are not Christian. We are all in terrible Danger from them and I would say joining you and join your local anti-fascists.

We need to yeah, we've got to push back but we've got to do like the max women did remembering there are more of us. There are always right. Thank you very much. Thank you lovely audience as well and everybody on zoom and the next week. We're back here again and with another kind of mix of anthropology and politics and the apology activism and local environmental knowledge. So it's how anthropology can inform and nurture climate and environment activism. We've got a whole panel of es-sentists historians more historians and paulsland who's the rights to of nature activists

who's just been doing various direct actions saving. Oh treat he was in the tree. Yes, Harry generally send the right to Roman and all those guys who'd be taking direct action Mass trespass actionable. So that would be very exciting next week as well. So it's hard act to follow very Yes, thank you. Thank you. Thank you Zoomers as well. Thank you very much. Thank you so much.

Yeah, you do that Chris. What are gin Palace? Okay.

It's the tennis dog. Goodbye. See okay.

The Ted K Archive

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Matchwoman or vampire? (Seminar)
Strikes, sisterhood and the Victorian fear of female sexuality
7 March 2023

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