Buying and selling sex has never actually been illegal in Britain. However, solicitation and other activities that facilitate commercial sex were increasingly prohibited by legal statute and police action since the late nineteenth century. In Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens, Julia Laite explores the complex and contingent experience of prostitutes in relation to the criminal justice system. Nineteenth-century writers were characteristically melodramatic and encapsulated the concept of a perpetual battle between good and evil, order and anarchy (Weiner, 1990: 21). Thus it is common to find in practical writings that the author’s personal morals are clearly visible, though their impact on the overall text is often harder to judge. Greg wrote that poverty brought boredom; sex provided an interesting distraction to the poor unaffected by morals (Greg, 1831: 26). Nineteenth-century male society held an ideal of womanhood to which women were encouraged and forced to adhere: selfless and compassionate; the ideal woman’s criminal counterpart was ruthlessly obstinate. Buying and selling sex has never actually been illegal in Britain. However, solicitation and other activities that facilitate commercial sex were increasingly prohibited by
legal statute and police action since the late nineteenth century. In *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens*, Julia Laite explores the complex and contingent experience of prostitutes in relation to the criminal justice system. Laite questions both the motivations and utility of criminalization, arguing that it "helped to make prostitution about specific demons in society that could be managed by specific laws, rathe