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## **PENILE IMPERIALISM**

### **The Male Sex Right and Women's Subordination**

*Sheila Jeffreys*

In this blisteringly persuasive and piercingly intelligent book, Sheila Jeffreys argues that women live under penile imperialism, a regime in which men are assumed to have a 'sex right' of access to the bodies of women and girls.

She reasons that the 'sexual revolution' that began in the 1960s unleashed an explicit male sexual liberation and that even now, under current laws and cultural mores, women do not have the right to self-determination in relation to their bodies.

Sheila Jeffreys argues that the exercise of the male sex right has mainstreamed misogynist attitudes and so-called sexual freedom has meant the freedom of men to use women and children with impunity.

The power dynamics of sex, rather than being eliminated, has been eroticised, supported by state regulations and structures that have further entrenched male domination. And while men's sexual fetishisms such as BDSM and transvestism have been normalised, women now have to fight as their spaces are being erased and their voices silenced in a faux inclusivity that has 'naturalised' sexual harassment.

Sheila Jeffreys contends that women's human rights are profoundly harmed and sexual violence is used more than ever to enforce social control of women.

This is a sobering and brilliant analysis of the modern predicament of women that is impossible to ignore.

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Sheila Jeffreys is a radical feminist writer and activist who has worked mainly against male violence and for lesbian feminism. She joined her first Women's Liberation Movement group in the UK in 1973. In 1991, she moved to Australia to teach at the University of Melbourne where she is now a Professorial Fellow in the School of Social and Political Sciences. She moved back to the UK in 2015. She is the author of twelve books on issues such as the history of sexuality, lesbian feminism, prostitution, gay men's politics, beauty practices, the threat of patriarchal religion to women's rights, and the politics of transgenderism. Her most recent book is *Trigger Warning: My Lesbian Feminist Life* (2020).

*There can be no liberation of women without a complete transformation of the way that male sexuality is constructed. Whilst the eroticising of women's subordination remains the basis of what is seen as sex, women cannot escape coercion in the bedroom, sexual harassment on the streets and at work, and the requirement to service men's excitements in the way they dress and behave.*



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