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# Prostitution and the Representation of Anxiety in London, 1723-1870

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**Prostitution and the Representation of Anxiety in London, 1723-1870**


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by

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INTRODUCTION

"Of those in different ranks in society, who live partly by prostitution…there may

be in all in the Metropolis about 50,000."[1]

Due to their overwhelming numbers, prostitutes were of great interest in eighteenth and

nineteenth-century Britain, and specifically to those living in urban environments.

Though prostitution had existed for millennia, the subject never ceases to evoke discourse

within a given society.  Discussions of this period of British history often focus on

industrialization and its consequences, including urban growth, gender-based ideologies,

and public health.  As we will see, this topic was debated in any and all media of the time,

ranging from newsprint to literature, poetry to parliamentary proposals.  Religious groups,

political parties, social reformers, and the general public all held views on the subject of

prostitution, some claiming it as necessity, others the supreme vice of mankind.  Qualms

with prostitution also came in varying forms.  While many argued that prostitution was a

morally corrupt trade in need of abolition, others found prostitution to be a nuisance in

that it filled the streets with soliciting women.  These women would interrupt the flow of

commerce and traffic through the city, and perhaps discourage patrons from visiting

certain shops.  Others would claim morality as an impetus for reform when perhaps their

true and underlying reasons were to control the streets and public spaces of the

Metropolis.  Thus, it is clear that the discussion surrounding prostitutes and prostitution

in general was and still is, incredibly varied and complex.

My thesis will focus on the rhetoric surrounding prostitution in London, in the

period between roughly 1750 and 1870.  My reasons for choosing these particular points

are varied.  London started its major growth in both trade and population size at mid-

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[1] Patrick Colquhoun, "A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis," (London: 1806), 340.

eighteenth century. Industry was increasing over Britain as a whole, and thus, the entire makeup of the nation was changing at a very rapid pace. This led to new social concerns, many of which were tied closely to the control of disorder, and in extension, prostitution. I carry my research through a century, ending at roughly 1870. At this time, the battle surrounding prostitution had come to its culminating point with the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts. My research is on the rhetoric that surrounded prostitutes, the societal fears that this rhetoric represented, and how the dialogue changed throughout the period. In order to do this, my main source of primary documentation is in the form of reform proposals that were written by various individuals holding in a wide range of professions and roles. I also make use of court documents, pamphlets, various artistic mediums, and the documentation of social inspectors. What I do not use however is supposed accounts by the prostitutes themselves. My reasons for this are numerous. First and foremost, sources claiming such authorship are typically written by others (typically men) for mere entertainment purposes. No doubt the stories written in this pretext were highly exaggerated and sensationalized. It is very difficult to find existing accounts by the class of prostitutes that my research focuses on. The women that solicited in the streets were often poor, and their capacity to write is questionable. "Kept women," women who acted more as mistresses, existed in a typically higher social strata did in fact leave memoirs. However, their experiences differed greatly from that of the common prostitute, and thus, would not be of great use to my investigations. We only have the related stories that persons such as Henry Mayhew have recorded, yet these too must be taken cautiously as filtration or supplementation of facts is highly likely.

Despite such importance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, historians in the twentieth century almost wholly neglected the topic for years. Not until the 1970s was due attention given to prostitution as a legitimate subject of historical research. In a 1972 reveiew article titled, "Notes on the History of Victorian Prostitution" Judith Walkowitz brings forth the responsibility of scholars to pay due attention to lower-class prostitution, and override the "elitist" approaches that had until that time dominated the field. She highlights the work of E.P. Thompson, the historian most responsible for bringing attention to the working class, and whose lead Walkowitz follows in her exploration of the lower-class prostitute. Her first book, *Prostitution and Victorian Society* opened a floodgate of research that would allow for other scholars to approach the subject. While the main premise of this text is to investigate the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s, and their eventual repeal, Walkowitz devotes amble space to analysis of the "common prostitute in Victorian Britain."[2] In doing so she gives an illustration of women, varied in their situations and backgrounds, yet similar in their trade. Since Walkowitz, other historians have offered their contributions to the field, and at present, countless texts and articles exist on the subject.

The analysis that Walkowitz gives to Victorian prostitution is matched only by historian Tony Henderson, and his scholarship concerning prostitutes in eighteenth-century London. In *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London*, Henderson puts forth an analysis of numerous elements associated with the life of the prostitute, and how she was regulated within the Metropolis. Through geography, law, policing policies, and contemporary attitudes, Henderson illustrates, much like Walkowitz, that the experience

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[2] Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 13.

of the prostitute varied greatly between individuals. In his final chapter, Henderson approaches the contemporary attitudes towards prostitution, and justly portrays such sentiments as complex, often contradictory, and widely diverse.  Through such an approach Henderson supplies a basis for his readers to understand the debates on prostitution and place these in the context of eighteenth-century London.

One of the main debates that surrounds the scholarship on this topic is the amount of personal agency that the prostitutes actually had. Tied into this debate is the question of whether prostitutes came into the trade by necessity or by choice.  Contemporaries such as William Acton, Bracebridge Hemming, Henry Mayhew, and John Chapman all encouraged the public to view most prostitutes as victims of an economic situation that forced them to the streets for want of work.  John Chapman went so far as to suggest, "a woman's sexual desire is dormant, not non-existent until excited,"[3] and in this, he held men as responsible for the majority of women's "falls."[4]  Chapman argued that prostitution was the result of a man's "brutal desire" and a woman's "reluctant and loathing submission," and thus, void of mutual pleasure.[5]  However, this position was far from gaining unanimous support at the time.  Many felt that prostitutes were vicious and corrupt women, feeding on the young men of the respectable classes, and corrupting the whole of the county.  This debate has carried into the present day, and historians such as Judith Walkowitz and Tony Henderson have illustrated that while necessity was the predominant drive to the trade, various other factors played into the decisions of these women, and scholars must acknowledge such a fact.  It must be considered that some

[3] John Chapman, "Prostitution," *Westminister and Foreign Quarterly Review*, July 1850, reprinted in *The Great Sin of Great Cities* (London: 1853), 10.
[4] Chapman, 10.
[5] Chapman, 3.

women perhaps did have the agency to choose their profession, or, at the very least, enough agency to find a way of subsistence. However, even in this consideration, the question still remains as to the extent of this personal agency, if in fact it did exist.

My research does not attempt to answer this question. Rather, I hope to contribute to the knowledge surrounding the debate by looking at the different ways in which contemporaries tried to suppress the agency that they feared prostitutes might possess. Fear is essential in my analysis, as I believe that the regime against prostitution is only in part related to moral qualms about the exchange of sex for profit. I believe that the fears of contemporaries on various other matters (such as disorder, gender roles, and disease) were acted out in hostility towards prostitutes. Prostitutes had long been targets of public scorn, and thus, were easily targeted by contemporaries. They came to represent larger debates over prominent concerns in the period, and the image of the prostitute was constantly being morphed to best fit this substitution. As I have already stated, I have focused my research on the period roughly between 1723 and 1870. During this period, Britain was going through considerable change. The Enlightenment philosophies of the mid-eighteenth century ran deep at the period's start, while concurrently the first rays of the industrial revolution began to show through. The city was expanding in both size and population, which caused officials to worry about space and the ways in which it was used. Additionally, trade within the Empire and a growth of industry created both economic prosperity and strife, increasing the disparity of wealth. Specific events such as the outbreak of cholera and the Crimean War supplied surges of heightened fear, contributing to the nation's sense of unease. Because of this unique and

ever-changing situation of Britain in this period, anxiety was of constant presence, and so too was the rhetoric and condemnation put forth against prostitutions.

I have identified two major turning points in this period, and thus, have divided my investigation into three sections. The first section examines the years between the mid-eighteenth century, and the start of the Napoleonic Wars in the early1790s. At this time the fears contemporaries held can most accurately be identified as a general fear of disorder. Growing population size, the rise of industry, and increasingly visible signs of poverty all contributed to the amount of crime and disorder thought to be present in the metropolis. Prostitution was easily grouped within this classification. Prostitutes were of common occurrence in the city's streets, and their presence was thought to greatly contribute to the overall chaos that came to characterize the city. Abundant first-person commentaries exist on the sheer number of women thought to use the streets for solicitation. While the act was in no way deemed morally appropriate, the general trend of proposals for dealing with prostitutes was to somehow clear them from the most popular streets, and confine them into either vice-sanctioned districts, or into reform hospitals, such as the Magdalan House.

However, at the end of the century, a shift began to take place. Influenced by the outbreak of the Napoleonic wars, contemporaries in Britain began to view the threats of prostitution in a different light. The Revolution in France along with the beginnings of industrialization had sparked a great wave of domestic sentiment, and aided in the formation of a separate-sphere ideology. Prostitutes clearly did not fit into this established set of roles, and further, the very nature of their employment was in direct contrast to the prescribed gender roles of the era. In order to render the prostitute

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somewhat less threatening, contemporaries invented the image of the "fallen woman." In doing so, prostitutes were reduced to pitiful, helpless creatures in desperate need of paternalistic care. The "fallen woman" rhetoric stripped away personal agency, leaving nothing but a powerless woman wholly dependent upon others for her salvation and subsistence. How could a woman so pathetic in her situation ever be deemed a threat? Contemporaries were able to ease their numerous uncertainties over gender roles, the integrity of the nation, and domestic ideals through the suppression of prostitutes, and the creation of the "fallen woman."

The second shift and final phase began in practice during the 1850s, yet the events leading up to the transition can be witnessed as early as the 1830s. The fears of contemporaries became less rooted in disorder or in gender ideologies, and more in growing medical concerns. The 1830s saw the initial outbreak of the cholera epidemic, the first mass unexplainable disease to beset Britain since the Bubonic Plague centuries prior. All forms of cross-class interaction were deemed dangerous to the health of the city's more fortunate inhabitants. Thus, prostitutes, known for their ability to transgress societal boundaries, were worrisome in their constant interaction with those of all classes. It was also thought that the filthy state of the working family's home was undoubtedly associated with looseness in morals and the degradation of health. A prostitute, in her 'unquestionably' immoral practice contributed to such unhealthy living conditions, and therefore to the welfare and health of the community at large. I will end my discussion on responses to prostitution in the 1860s, with the proposal and initial implementations of the Contagious Diseases Acts. These Acts were first proposed in response to investigations into the health of the British military, and the startling results proving that

venereal disease was running its course on the regiments.  Prostitutes were cited as the source of this disease, and thus were the target of the Acts.  Those responsible for the Contagious Diseases Acts did little to convey their fears as anything but what they were – a fear of both the diseases these women carried, and of the women themselves.

Though it may seem odd to conclude an investigation into prostitution with the piece of legislation most directly related to the subject of my inquiries, it is not without reason.  My study focuses on the ways in which contemporary fears were conveyed and played out in relation to prostitutes.  Fears about urban growth, social stratifications, public health and gender all took the form of hostility towards the prostitute.  These fears were played out through prostitution, yet prior to the passing of the C.D. Acts, the prostitute was merely most visible of those attacked by contemporaries.  In the last half of the eighteenth century, the prostitute was looked upon as representative of a larger segment of society, most responsible for the disorderly state of the city's streets.  In the period consisting of the French Revolution and the years directly following, prostitutes were symbolic of the non-conformed and non-domesticated women who did not act in accordance with the newly established separate-sphere ideology.  Beginning in the 1830s prostitutes came to represent the poor and unhealthy, those who were most accountable for the spread of cholera throughout the city.

However, with the implementation of the C.D. Acts, the prostitutes came to represent no one but themselves.  The campaign waged against them was explicitly described as a method by which to control prostitutes, and in extension, the spread of the disease for which prostitutes were supposedly responsible.  The prostitute came to be recognized as precisely what she was, and no longer as a piece of a wider group of the

general "underworld." All accountability was placed on the prostitute, and campaigners for the acts made no attempt to depict the situation otherwise.  It was the events that happened prior to the 1860s that factor in greatly to this culmination.  The events discussed throughout my inquiry built upon one another, supplying the ground foundation for an explicit medical rhetoric against prostitution to emerge as the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s.

The entirety of this thesis is meant to prove that concerns over prostitution were incredibly complex during this period, and more specifically, that these concerns were representative of larger societal anxieties.  Sex had much less to do with contemporary worries about prostitution than one might think.  While the issues of morals and disease cannot be separated from sexual intercourse, they can be extended further to other facets of society and human interaction.  Connections such as these help us to fully comprehend the dynamics of the relationship between prostitutes and society, and how fear and representation came to be incorporated into this relationship.

CHAPTER 1: PROSTITUTION AND DISORDER

The Street in Eighteenth Century

> Crash! a porter runs you down, crying 'By your leave', when you are on the
> ground. In the middle of the street roll chaises, carriages and drays in an
> unending stream. Above this din and the hum and clatter of thousands of tongues
> and feet one hears the chimes from church towers, the bells of the postmen, the
> organs, didles, hurdy-gurdies, and tambourines of English mountebanks, and the
> cries of those who sell hot and cold viands in the open at the street corners. Then
> you will see a bonfire of shavings flaring up as high as the upper floors of the
> houses in a circle of merrily shouting beggar-boys, sailors, and rouges. Suddenly
> a man whose handkerchief has been stolen will cry: 'Stop thief', and everyone will
> begin running and pushing and shoving - many of them not with and desire of
> catching the thief, but of pigging for themselves, perhaps, a watch or purse.
> Before you know where you are, a pretty, nicely dressed miss will take you by the
> hand… [6]

As London visitor Georg Christoph Lichtenberg states in the above passage, the streets of
London were anything but tranquil and tame during the eighteenth century. Crime,
prostitution, and general disorder all seemed to find their way into the city's main
thoroughfares, proving an unpleasant experience for those forced to pick their way
through such chaos, and causing much anxiety among the higher orders.

Connection to Prostitution

Prostitution factors into these anxieties concerning disorder on a number of
different levels. On the most basic level, the prostitute was an active member of the
'London Mob'. As described by Henry Fielding, the London Mob consisted of not only

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[6] Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Lichtenburg's Visits to England,* quoted in Robert B. Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), XI.

those participating in some sort of riot or protest in the streets, but rather, all members of the lower classes who frequented the city's public spaces.[7]  Therefore, as most prostitutes were in fact members of the lower class, and of constant presence within the streets, they were effortlessly grouped into the general mob.  Secondly, prostitutes were an easy outlet through which contemporaries could express their fear of general disorder.

Eighteenth-Century Britain

The eighteenth century was a time of great political, economic, and social transformation in Britain, and more specifically within the city of London itself.  Britain was on its way to becoming Europe's first industrialized nation, and the repercussions of this change were already taking a toll.  As industry increased, the need for small-scale family businesses and operations declined.  Families in the country were not able to compete with the types of production that began in this period, forcing families to seek employment elsewhere. Migration into the city increased rapidly. However, it was not only Britain's rural inhabitants who looked to London as a place of economic betterment and opportunity, for immigrants from France, Eastern Europe, Ireland and the West Indies were also coming to call the city home.[8]  In a matter of two hundred years, the population of London grew from 200,000 inhabitants, to nearly a million by 1800.[9]  Most of this growth occurred during the eighteenth century specifically, as the 500,000 in 1700 grew to 700,000 fifty years later.  The Roman city walls ceased to fulfill their function of confinement as the population spilled over, expanding the city in all directions.  While

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[7] Shoemaker, XI.
[8] Arthur Weitzman, "Eighteenth-century London: Urban Paradise or Fallen City?," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 36, No. 3. (Jul-Sep., 1975), 473.
[9] Shoemaker, 10.

city officials once found it necessary to limit the construction of new building outside the medieval town walls, most now agreed that such growth was necessary and unstoppable.

Yet, with such great influx, and despite the growth of trade and industry, many of those coming in search of work and subsistence were forced to turn to other means by which to make a living, namely robbery and vice.[10] The emerging London "underclass" lay in stark contrast to the newly affluent merchants. This emergent "under-class" loosely describes an entire section of people who had fallen victim to the evolving economy, and were now left in trying financial circumstances. These people typically lived in the eastern part of the city, divorced almost entirely from the city's wealthier inhabitants. This was a phenomenon that was new in the eighteenth century, as prior to the rebuilding of the city after the Great Fire of 1666, the poor and wealthy were integrated to a greater extent throughout the city.[11] Increased wealth from trade encouraged building initiatives that deliberately separated the classes and created a concentration of the underclass in housing areas in London's East End.[12] John Fielding, walking through one particular neighborhood of the East End states:

> When one goes into Rotherhithe and Wapping, which places are chiefly inhabited by sailors, but that somewhat of a language is spoken, a man would be apt to suspect himself in another country. Their manner of living, speaking, acting, dressing, and behaving, are so very peculiar to ourselves.[13]

While this particular observation was specific to an area dominated by sailors, the general trend of separation of inhabitants based on wealth, and the isolation this created was present and recognized throughout the city.

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[10] Weitzman, 473
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Quoted in Shoemaker, 20.

Importance of the Street

In this growing and morphing city, the importance of the public spaces, and specifically, the streets, must be understood.  To the eighteenth-century Londoner, the street was far more than a well-trodden path or an alignment of cobblestones; it was arguably the most important feature of the metropolis itself.  The majority of Londoners spent a great deal of time in the city's streets.  Street sellers depended upon the thoroughfares to act as a storefront, allowing them to display and sell their goods to the general public.  To the merchants, the streets were the main avenues of capitalism, allowing the transport of goods from areas of production to places of consumption.  For those of higher ranks, the streets provided a place to be seen, a stage on which to flaunt their wealth and indulge in new conspicuous consumptions. The street also existed as a public forum, a place for members of the common public to express themselves, their ideas, and their concerns with current affairs.[14]

Therefore, even more problematic than the reputation of individuals was the reputation of the city itself.  A rise in global travel left cities to worry about the judgments of foreign visitors.  Travelers such as German Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, Frenchman Pierre Jean Grosly, and Swiss-born Béat-Louis de Muralt, all commented on the disorder and chaos that consumed the London streets, each making specific reference to the abundance of prostitutes.[15]   It can justly be surmised that such impressions led foreigners to make negative characterizations of the city.  As London was the capital of Great Britain, and the empire, the extension could easily have been applied to the country as a whole.  Thus, due to the street's crucial nature and impressionable foreign visitors,

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[14] Shoemaker, 111.
[15] Shoemaker, 1-4.

Londoners of the upper orders of society came to be very protective over their public avenues.

To be able to better visualize the eighteenth-century London streets, one only has to look as far as artist William Hogarth, and his pictures of street-life within the Metropolis.  Hogarth was born at the very end of the seventeenth century, and lived long enough to see Britain through many of its rapid social and economic changes during the eighteenth century.  Best known for his depictions of public culture, Hogarth was able to gain a reputation by illustrating the social interactions between London's common people.  Several of his engravings and paintings could be referenced in a discussion of London street life, yet a few are especially relevant to the subject of prostitution.  The first of these, titled *Gin Lane*, is an engraving of the St. Giles area of London, and portrays the ill effects of gin and various other vices upon both the scene of the street and the area's inhabitants.[16]  The central figure in the picture is a bare-breasted woman, perhaps a prostitute, her eyes half closed due to presumed drunkenness.  As she takes a pinch out of her snuff pox, her child falls out of her arms and over the railing.  She appears unaffected by this loss.  In the background, chaos runs free.  A child and dog fight hungrily over a bone, a starving man withers at the foot of the stairs, and a corpse is placed into a coffin.  An entire side of the image is occupied by an angry mob with stools, axes, and sticks waving in the air.  They congregate at the foot of a crumbling building where if one looks carefully, a man hangs still in the upper floor.  This overcrowded picture reminds viewers of the squalor, vice, and disorder that had come to take over certain districts of London.  The picture lacks control, authority, peace, and order, and is a depiction of what horrors a certain class of individuals could inflict if left to their own devices.

[16] Mark Hallett, *Hogarth: The Artist and the City* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2006), 224-226.

While *Gin Lane* is an excellent representation of the effects of specific vices within the context of the streets, two other pictures by Hogarth aid in achieving a more encompassing view of the streets and its inhabitants. In the final two plates of his 1747 series *Industry and Idleness*, Hogarth depicts two mobs in London. These two scenes *The Idle 'Prentice Executed at Tyburn* and *The Industrious 'Prentice Lord Mayor of London,* are composed of hundreds of carefully sketched individuals, taking up the whole of the image. The first of these depicts a swarm of people following a cart to the hanging gallows. Street sellers throw fruit into the depths of the crowd, while one man grabs a dog by the tail, readying his arm to launch him as well. A fight commences in the center of the image, resulting in a child falling to the ground and a man sinking deeply into the muck of the street. The crowd is composed of street vendors, crippled individuals, and figures dressed in tattered clothing. Similarly, in the second image, people crowd into every inch of the engraving, leaving not a single space free of face. Children are trampled over, women hang out of windows, and men line the roofs of houses in the distance. Despite the contextual differences, the theme remains constant. The streets of London were full of activity, excitement, and disorder, and Hogarth does an exemplary job in highlighting such a theme.

Locations of Prostitution

Amidst such disorder, prostitutes found themselves dotted throughout the city. While contemporaries may not have liked the presence of prostitutes in public, the physical expansion of the city encouraged dispersal and profusion of prostitutes throughout its streets. The actual City of London became increasingly crowded as people migrated in from the countryside and foreign countries. Historian Tony Henderson has

constructed several London maps illustrating specific locations of prostitutes' arrests during the latter half of the eighteenth century.  In order to do this, Henderson used records from London's chief criminal court, the Old Bailey.  Although prostitution was not illegal at this time, prostitutes were often taken in for causing "disorder" in the streets, or engaging in theft or assault. Henderson's maps indicate that as the nineteenth century approached, arrests associated with prostitutes occurred less frequently within the old City. Instead, the records imply that arrests were on the rise in the surrounding areas of Westminster and Middlesex.  In addition to migration motivated by the search for customers, prostitutes also left the City in hopes of obtaining poor relief.[17]  Many of the smaller parishes outside the City provided aid to those they believed were in dire need. This was often the case for prostitutes, though eighteenth-century writings reveal a dispute over what drove women to the streets.[18]  Whether these women were in search of paying clients or poor relief, financial necessity acted as a key determinant in the migration of London's streetwalkers.

The construction of new buildings also contributed to the ever-transitioning location of prostitutes throughout the century.  In order to neaten its appearance, the City began renovations of the older streets and buildings.  Stricter patrol of the area for "disorderly activities" was also implemented.[19]  These features drove many prostitutes to abandon the City in hopes of finding a location more suited for their business. Simultaneously, the areas of London outside the City saw a rise in entertainment venues.

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[17] Tony Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London* (New York: Pearson Education Inc., 1999), 57.

[18] John Fielding, "An Account of the Origin and Effects of a Police Set on Foot by His Grace the Duke of Newcastle in the Year 1753, upon a Plan presented to his Grace by the late *Henry Fielding*, Esq; to which is added a Plan for preserving those deserted Girls in this Town, who become Prostitutes from Necessity," in *Prostitution Reform: Four Documents*, Randolph Trumbach ed., (London: 1753; New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 42.

[19] Henderson, 62.

The area of Whitechapel founded a theatre in 1728, which ushered in a great

concentration of prostitutes.[20]  Londoners from many different ranks of society could

gain entry into the theatres, as fees were often low or reduced in price halfway through

the showing.[21]  In a 1786 letter published in *The General Advertiser* and addressed to the

owner of the Haymarket Theatre, one citizen makes known his great distaste for the

theatre's use of cut-rate fares, as it brought those "disagreeable to the modest eye" into

the theatre "to the great injury of our youth."[22]  The area just outside the theatre was also

deemed "dangerous," for when the curtain fell and the doors opened, men were met by a

great number of women offering their sexual services.  The streetwalkers were aware that

men often associated sex with a night of leisure, thus the theatre was a prime location for

the prospect of business.  This same association can in part explain the abundance of

prostitutes in the vicinity of coffeehouses, taverns, and gin-shops as well.

The more elite West End also had its share of dubious theatres and sites of leisure

as it housed Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the Strand.  In the early eighteenth century,

poet John Gay warned his audience to take caution while venturing out into these areas at

night, as prostitutes frequented such places.[23]  Gay writes:

> O! may thy virtue guard thee through the roads
> Of Drury's mazy courts and dark abodes,
> The harlot's guileful paths, who nightly stand
> Where Catherine Street descends into the Strand.

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[20] Ibid., 58.
[21] The rates charged by prostitutes varied tremendously.  'Penny-whores' were the lowest in cost, but the chances of obtaining a disease through intercourse was high.  Other women charged enormous rates, ensuring only the wealthiest of men could afford their services.  Therefore, a prostitute's reputation and the rates she charged were directly dependent on one another.
[22] T.L., quoted in Tesspis, letter to the editor, *Times* (London)*,* August 17, 1786.
[23] John Gay, "The Art of Walking the Streets of London," in Rick Allen, comp. *The Moving Pageant: A Literary Sourcebook on London Street-life 1700-1914* (London: Routledge, 1998), 48.

He later describes the harlot as looming about outside the taverns, and gently tugging on the sleeves of passersby.[24] In the1760s, James Boswell, famous for his London travel journal and infamous for his sexual adventures, cites the Strand as a prime location to visit if in "want of a woman."[25] The amount of writing in this period with similar themes and mention of the same localities is indication of an underlying truth. Directories, the best known being Samuel Derrick's *Harris' List of Covent Garden Ladies*, featured lists of prostitutes, their addresses, and their attributes (or lack thereof). These regularly updated lists circulated well after Derrick's death in 1769, leading men to the area of Covent Garden and encouraging an association between place and trade.[26] However, it is important to note that though Gay, Boswell, and Derrick do mention specific locations in their writings, there were no spaces strictly devoted to or devoid of prostitution. Harlots roamed throughout the city streets, taking advantage of locations where men were often found, yet not limiting themselves to these areas alone.

Prostitutes and the Fear of Disorder

"Disorderly" became the description most associated with the city as a whole, and the streets and public areas more specifically. In recent years, historian Robert Shoemaker has done extensive work on the London mob, and the general trends of disorder and violence in the eighteenth-century city. In his analysis, Shoemaker convincingly argues that during the mid-eighteenth century, specifically between the Sacheverell Riots of the 1710s and the Gordon riots of the 1780s, Londoners had a preoccupation with disorder and the urban mob within the city's streets. Prior to this

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[24] Gay, 48-50.

[25] James Boswell, *Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), 49.

[26] See Hallie Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies: Pimp General Jack & The Extraordinary Story of Harris' List* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2005).

period, the word "mob" had yet to be introduced into the English language. Shoemaker

suggests that this new term was birthed as a result of the increasing anxiety over the

"ungovernability of the throngs of people who crowded London's streets."[27] Poverty,

crime, population size, improper use of space, and economic instability were all grouped

into a category that was seen as working against the common good of British society, and

therefore, disorderly. Prostitutes, of course, were included into this assemblage. Social

reformer Saunders Welch explicitly demonstrates this connection by stating, "Those who

offer themselves for prostitution justly fall under the description of loose, idle, and

disorderly persons."[28] However, what is interesting is that prostitutes were much more

than simply a part of the disorder. In this period, prostitutes came to embody and

represent the general fears of eighteenth-century contemporaries, illustrating that there

was much more to the rhetoric against prostitution than simply concerns over morality

and sexual transaction.

First and foremost, eighteenth-century prostitutes were criticized for their

presence, or nuisance, in the city's public spaces. Their presence within the city was

something that could not be ignored. These women were often loud and assertive,

soliciting their services to any passerby. As stated by Welch in his 1758 proposal to

eradicate the problem of prostitution from the city of London, "Prostitutes swarm in the

streets of this metropolis to such a degree, and bawdy-houses are kept in such an open

and public manner, to the great scandal of our civil polity, that a stranger would think that

the whole town was in general stew."[29] This emphasis on the perception of the "stranger"

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[27] Shoemaker, XII.
[28] Saunders Welch, "A Proposal to render effectual a Plan, to remove the Nuisance of Common Prostitutes from the Streets of this Metropolis," (London: 1758), 17.
[29] Ibid., 1.

illustrates the concerns about foreigners within the city. As already mentioned, contemporary Londoners of upper status were aware that foreigners came to judge the nation as a whole merely by the impression left by a visit to London. Saunders goes on to say:

> What idea must foreigners have of our policy, when in almost every street they see women publicly exposing themselves at the windows and doors of bawdry-houses, like beasts in the market for public sale, with language, dress, and gesture too offensive to mention.[30]

These fears proved to be not unwarranted, as many foreign visitors did in fact find the disorderly character and immense number of prostitutes to be worthy of note.

In addition to the concerns of foreigners, many argued that navigating through the streets was very difficult due to the presence of streetwalkers. Shopkeepers complained that patrons could not make their way into the shops, as prostitutes obstructed the entrance.[31] Areas of prostitution were sometimes associated with criminal activity, deterring consumers from attending the shops nearby, and causing tensions to arise. In a more violent instance, neighbors of a known brothel ran to the streets to cheer as dissatisfied sailors set fire to the building.[32] They believed that without the brothel, the street would prove to be a more pleasant place to live.

However, the urban population, specifically those laboring as artisans, also often took a protective position in regard to the prostitutes. This is in part due to streetwalkers' unique place in eighteenth-century London society. Historians such as Tony Henderson argue that because of their constant presence in the public space, prostitutes existed as

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[30] Ibid., 19.
[31] Henderson, 107.
[32] Ibid., 194.

part of the general population, rather than some sort of estranged "other".[33]  Their lives

intertwined with city inhabitants in such a way that the existence of separate societal

spheres cannot be argued for.  Accounts survive of men and women protesting the arrests

of prostitutes and reminding watchmen of their financial dependence upon these women.

Butchers, tailors, cobblers, and bakers were all among those who relied on the patronage

of the prostitutes in order to keep their businesses running.  The owners of taverns and

inns also reaped benefits from prostitutes, as their presence often attracted patrons.[34] Thus,

London's merchant and working orders, much like the magistrates, had wavering

attitudes towards the women of the street.

       The presence of streetwalkers was also met with concern when it posed a threat

to the innocence of children and "honest" women.  Young minds were worryingly

exposed to the often-vulgar language and the promiscuous dress of the streetwalkers.  In

addition to children, women not of the "profession" were also victim to its effects.  With

the rise in consumer culture, women of all classes frequented the public spaces in their

daily activities.  The proximity of prostitutes and "honest" women often caused problems

of mistaken identities. An incident involving Phyllis Wells in the summer of 1742 is a

perfect example of such a mistake.  Ms. Wells, a woman of "modest dress" and "honest

disposition," was mistaken for a prostitute and incarcerated in the "hole" at St. Martin's

Roundhouse.[35]  That same night, several of the prostitutes confined in the "hole" perished

due to unbearable heat, mass crowding, and a lack of water and breathable air. The case

of their deaths was brought before the courts, engaging significant public interest.  Rather

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[33] Ibid., 45.
[34]Ibid., 46.
[35] Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore, eds. *The Streets of London*.  (London:  Rivers Oram Press, 2003), 69-70.

than outrage over the deaths of the prostitutes, or even sympathy for their "immoral souls," the public was far more concerned with the circumstance of Ms. Wells.[36] She too could easily have expired that evening, simply for being a woman out after nightfall. If not even the watchmen could discern between those of a respectable nature and those of ill repute, who was to ensure that the wives and daughters of those in the higher ranks would be not mistaken as well?

Prostitutes were also easily held accountable for the disorder in the streets, as other forms of disorder were often associated with them. Robbery, pick pocketing, excessive drinking, and rowdy behavior were all closely tied to the work of the prostitute. Many accounts survive of women working in pairs, as one would solicit the man for services, the prostitute's partner would be waiting nearby. When the man was in a rather trying position, the second prostitute would steal away his wallet. As Welch offers, "Common prostitutes are another cause of robberies. Little needs to be said to prove that these wretches, who are lurking at every corner of our streets, are an intolerable nuisance"[37] As the alehouse was often a sight to find a customer, prostitutes were also attached to the stigma of alcohol and drunkenness. They were threatening as they could bring otherwise righteous men down to their level of disorder. Prostitutes would "prey on the unwary apprentice, and intoxicated husband," disrupting family and instigating the crime of adultery.[38]

Proposals

Contemporaries chose an array of proposed methods to keep prostitutes clear from the city's streets, and therefore, less problematic. Some looked to the Continent for

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Welch, 15.
[38] Ibid., 15.

guidance as the regulation of prostitutes was a typical feature in many nations' legal

systems.  In France, the regulation of prostitution went through numerous reforms during

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.  In 1713, women that walked the streets were

divided into two groupings: those who were professional prostitutes, and those who were

forced into the trade out of necessity.[39]  Punishments could way down harshly on

professional prostitutes, but those more pitiful souls found leniency in the laws.  It was

left to the police to decide who was a member of each category.  However, very rarely

were women actually labeled professional prostitutes, and even more rarely were they

punished for practicing their trade.[40] Parisian police regulated the brothels and a section

of the city was allocated specifically for the concentration of these buildings.  The

managers of these brothels, Madams, were required to submit weekly reports to the

police detailing the fiscal earnings and wages for the establishment.  Countries such as

Italy and the Netherlands had similar sanctions in dealing with prostitutes.

      In 1724, with this trend in mind, the respected Dutch philosopher (and

longstanding London resident) Bernard Mandeville proposed a somewhat radical plan for

enclosing prostitutes, suggesting that England act as its fellow European nations and

sanction "publik stews."[41]  The results of his proposal would clear streetwalkers from the

streets, while still maintaining the act of prostitution under official guidelines.

Mandeville makes little attempt to create a moral backing for his concept as he states,

"Publik whoring is neither so criminal in itself, nor so detrimental to the *Society* as

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[39] Bullough, 167.

[40] Ibid., 168.

[41] Bernard Mandeville, "A Modest Defense of Publick Stews," in *Bernard Mandeville's "A Modest Defense of Publick Stews": Prostitution and its Discourses,* ed. Irwin Primer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 55.

private whoring."[42]  Importantly, in his use of the word "publik," Mandeville does not

endorse streetwalkers roaming the city at will; rather he uses the term "publik" to define a

city-sanctioned area for the prostitute's confinement.  As a result of these "publik stews,"

prostitution would be "reduced to the narrowest bounds which it can possibly be contan'd

in."[43]  Reactions to Mandeville's proposal were generally disapproving.  In 1725, a year

after the proposal's publication, George Bluet wrote the book-length criticism of

Mandeville's work, claiming it to be "immoral and aesthetic" and offensive to the

common public good.[44]  Christian moralists such as John Disney and various anonymous

writers also made their dissatisfaction know, printing pamphlets targeting Mandeville's

work.  Though often times not citing his work directly (as it was technically first

published 'anonymously') these writers made explicit references to the content of his texts,

and how the sentiments held by Mandeville were in "defiance of virtue."[45]

     Others attempted to take less of a contested stance on the containment of

prostitutes, using moralistic rhetoric to justify rounding prostitutes up and keeping them

isolated from the remaining population. It was much easier for the public to support this

form of action, as emphasis was placed on redemption from the sin of prostitution

through confinement, rather than merely corraling the vice into one location.[46]  In 1758,

Robert Dingley, a respected public reformer, endorsed the creation of establishments to

house prostitutes, stating, "It will be a means of employing the idle, of instructing them in,

as well as habituating them to work; of reforming their morals; of rescuing many bodies

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Primer, 112.
[45] Primer, 116.
[46] Kevin P. Siena, *Venereal Disease, Hospitals and the Urban Poor* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 205.

from disease and death, and many souls from eternal misery."[47]  Together with Jonas

Hanway, Dingley went on to open the Magdalen Charity House for Penitent Prostitutes

later the same year.  Both men claimed that women of ill standing would receive great

benefit from such institutions, elevating them to a higher moral standing.  The main pillar

of the Magdalen House was reform.  It was an institution set up not for the treatment of

disease, but rather as a place for repenting prostitutes to go and gain both guidance and

comfort. The religious affiliations within the Magdalen House ran very deep.  Yet

underneath what scholar Betsey Rodgers titled the "Cloak of Charity," men such as

Dingley received a far greater benefit from these hospitals than the women themselves.[48]

Edward Bristow claims that the charity houses established for the women were mere

"sweatshops," producing mass profit for a limited few.[49]  Other hospitals, such as the

London Lock, also housed prostitutes during this period.  However, unlike the Magdalen,

the Lock Hospital was a treatment center for venereal disease, and therefore was open to

a range of individuals, not just prostitutes.  It was not until 1792 that the Lock Hospital

established the Lock Asylum for the Reception of Penitent Female Patients – a center

solely for prostitutes, and as entrenched in religious reform as its predecessor, the

Magdalen House.[50]

John Fielding also authored an inquiry into the circumstances and effects of

prostitution: "An Account of the Origin and Effects of a Police Set Foot by His Grace the

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[47] Robert Dingley, "Proposals for Establishing a public Place of Reception for Penitent Prostitutes," (London: 1758), 6.
[48] Though Dingley possibly believed his moralistic rhetoric, the convenience these establishments would award him, as a merchant cannot be over looked.  Total hypocrisy cannot be claimed, but neither can total conviction.
[49] Edward J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain Since 1700* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 63-64.
[50] David Innes Williams, *The London Lock: A Charitable Hospital for Venereal Disease 1746-1952* (London: Royal Society of Medicine Press Limited, 1995), 57-58.

Duke of Newcastle in the Year 1753, upon a Plan presented to his Grace by the late

*Henry Fielding*, Esq; to which is added a Plan for preserving those deserted Girls in this

Town, who become Prostitutes for Necessity."  In this 1758 document, Fielding combines

the approaches of both Mandeville and Dingley. While Fielding argues for regulation in

order to "keep the whores within doors," he also proposes a reform system intended to

take in young girls conned to the trade from their once virtuous, yet poor circumstances.

Under this proposal, a public laundry would be established:

> …intended to employ, breed up and preserve the deserted girls of the poor of this
> Metropolis; and also to reform those prostitutes whom necessity has drove into
> the streets, and who are willing to return to virtue and obtain an honest livelihood
> be severe industry.[51]

Fielding felt that such a regime of labor would restore, or at least promote a sense of

order that was not present amongst prostitutes and the daughters of the poor.  According

to Fielding:

> Religion, Education, and good-breeding preserve good order and decency among
> the superior rank of mankind, and prevent those disturbances and irregularities
> and injuries to our fellow-creatures, that happen among the illiterate and lower
> order of the people.[52]

Thus, by creating a space in which prostitutes and young girls could be schooled in a

domestic task, they could be turned from their disorderly ways.  Rather than emphasizing

virtue alone, Fielding stresses the importance of the creation of this order, which was

already present in the "superior rank of mankind."

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[51] Fielding., 49.
[52] Fielding, viii.

## Conclusion

Disorder was of great concern during the mid eighteenth century, and prostitutes supplied the prime outlet for contemporaries to express their concerns. Prostitutes were visibly present within the city, female,[53] and typically poor. There were few who took it upon themselves to protect these individuals from slander, and thus, defamation and blame were easily heaped upon the wretched women. The answers to the problem of prostitution were varied, yet all fell into the same theme of control. By controlling the prostitutes through either confinement or reformation, order could potentially be regained. Controlling the expanding population and ensuring the 'governability' of the Metropolis were tasks both overwhelming and unfeasible for contemporaries. Thus, control and order had to be gained on a much smaller scale. Controlling prostitutes offered such an opportunity, and thus, through various means and measures, prostitutes came to represent contemporary Londoners' fears of disorder and the ever-shifting makeup of the city.

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[53] Gender no doubt factors into this discussion. However, through my research, I have yet to find explicit mention of gender in association with the fear of disorder. Such an investigation could warrant an entire thesis in itself. I hope only show that the association of gender was much more explicit in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than at this point.

CHAPTER 2: PROSTITUTE FROM THREATENING TO "FALLEN"

The late eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century were a time of extended change in Britain. Mass urbanization, the growth of industry, and the looming revolution in France all contributed to the creation of an environment unlike any Britain had seen before. Cultural and political change was occurring at every level of social stratification. New ideologies, such as that of separate spheres for men and women, became rooted in the culture, and were played out in day to day activities across the nation. The new ways of viewing gender and the fears established by current events all had a significant influence on contemporary sentiments towards prostitution. Prostitutes were not only worryingly present in men's space, but were also threatening to the domestic ideal created for women during this period.

In order to deal with the increasingly worrisome presence of promiscuous women in public spaces, contemporaries constructed an image of the prostitute as weak, and therefore, not threatening. The prostitute came to be depicted as a fallen woman, in need of the encouragement and charity of the middle and upper classes. Such charity fit in well with the religious revival which found its new beginnings in the late eighteenth century. The 'Lord's work' could be easily completed by merely stepping across one's threshold into the sordid streets and caring to the sick and pitiful of the Metropolis. By reducing these women to such a pitiful state, contemporaries took away their personal agency. The prostitutes were to be pitied rather than feared. No longer viewed as independent in their capacity to make their own living, or roam freely throughout public spaces, prostitutes were made increasingly less frightening by contemporaries.

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It must be reiterated however, that this study is not one of how successful these attempts at degradation were, nor is it about how the prostitutes themselves felt about their attempted reformers. Rather this is a study based on the idea of fear, and fear of the prostitute particularly. It is the story of how these fears developed in the wake of events, such as the Industrial revolution and the revolution in France, and how contemporaries proposed to deal with their insecurities concerning gender, sexuality, and public space. Their proposals sought to not only render prostitutes less threatening, but to keep them within the spaces of various reform institutions, and to school them on how best to operate within the confines of their allocated sphere in society.

Separate Sphere Ideology

Due to the scholarship of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, historians have come to widely accept the notion that the end of the eighteenth century saw a rise in a middle-class desire to differentiate the sexes in their duties and roles, which in extension encouraged the emergence of a two-sphere ideology. In their text, *Family Fortunes*, Davidoff and Hall supply an analysis of a phenomenon that came to dictate gender, class, and the construction of a national identity beginning in the late eighteenth century and carrying through the entirety of the Victorian era.

The separate-sphere ideology called for a separation between the public and private spheres, and in extension, an explicit differentiation of gender roles.[54] Thus, a person was delegated 'proper' tasks according to his or her sex. For a male, these tasks included leaving the house on a daily basis to labor away from the home, and make the money necessary for the family's subsistence. He was the head of the household, in

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[54] Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 364-369.

charge of making the most important and public decisions on behalf of his family.  The woman's duties were very different.  It was not considered helpful for the woman to leave the home, nor was it suitable for a woman to labor in order to contribute to the household income.  Her place was in the home, no matter the financial circumstance.  In this place, the woman was left to care for the children, cook and clean, and complete various other tasks in order to render the home comfortable and pleasing upon her husband's return.[55]  Politics, current affairs, and commerce were not appropriate subjects for a woman to worry herself with, as they disrupted the 'natural' order of things that God had prescribed to humanity.[56]

It must be noted however, that this was a predominantly middle-class ideology, and not one generally adopted by the laboring classes.  Out of pure necessity, women of the laboring class were obligated to work in order to contribute to the family income. Even those of the middle class most adamant about preserving the 'domestic ideal' had difficulties applying this to the working class.  Social reformer and medical examiner James Kay, writing in the 1830s, had strong convictions about the betterment of morals within the working classes, and he found the heart of his crusade to lie within the home. While he explicitly advocates an orderly, clean, and righteous home, he never explicitly states that these laboring women should be prohibited from earning a wage.[57]  Mary Poovey analyzes the arguments put forth by Kay, and exposes what she believes to be the true nature of his reasoning.  Poovey suggests that Kay, an unwavering supporter of free trade and a man in stark opposition to government regulation of the economy, recognized

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[55] Davidoff and Hall, 357-360.

[56] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990* (London: Routledge, 1999), 181.

[57] James Phillips Kay, "The moral and physical condition of the working classes employed in the cotton manufacture in Manchester," (London: 1832), 99-100.

that in order for laboring families to earn enough on a single income, some sort of

economic change would have to occur.  Rather than state intervention, Kay looked away

from financial matters all together, and turned his attention to matters of hygiene and

health.  He stressed these features as crucial in the forming of moral integrity within the

laboring classes and advocated government aid in this endeavor, rather than on economic

matters.[58]  In short, Kay expected an improvement in morality (which was dependant on a

woman's upkeep of the family and house) without any sort of economic change that

would increase personal wages enough to allow for her to stay in the family home.

Instead, a concentration on health was placed at the forefront of Kay's agenda, allowing

for government intervention in the morality of the country through public health, rather

than financial policies.[59]

Two Body Ideology

In order to help justify the constraints placed on women in post-enlightenment

Britain, contemporaries looked to science and the human body.   More specifically,

contemporaries looked to the "two-body model" for ample proof that women were not fit

for a public life.  This model is best explained as the belief that the body of a woman and

the body of a man are two inherently different forms, rather than one body with simply a

variation of features.  In this theory, it is not only the body that is essentially different

between the sexes, but the humors, affections, and moral dispositions as well.  Historian

Thomas Laqueur, in his numerous histories of sexuality and the human body, has

provided a convincing explanation of the two-body ideology's origins.

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[58] Ibid., 16.

[59] See Mary Poovey, "Curing the 'Social Body' in 1832: James Phillips Kay and the Irish in Manchester," *Gender and History* 5 (Summer1993): 196-211.

Laqueur argues that it was political developments in Britain during the end of the century that led to a discussion of separate male and female bodies. He argues that the separate sphere ideology factored into the construction of the two-body model, ensuring that this new way of thinking about the body would be best suited to serve societal needs. Struggles for power were occurring on several planes of English society during the late eighteenth century: the aristocracy was fighting to retain peace after the onslaught of the French Revolution, artisans were battling the increasingly present industrial factories, and women were struggling with the contested nature of their existence. The culmination of these influences led contemporaries to create two separate bodies, each with their own distinctive attributes, and strikingly different 'natural abilities.'[60]

Until the late eighteenth century, the male and female bodies were regarded as one and the same. Rather than two distinct sexes, with two distinct bodies, the human body was seen as a single form that ranged in its degree of masculine and feminine qualities. Men and women were thought to have the same genitalia; the male's existing outside of the body, and the female's genitalia within. While the bodies were thought to be inherently similar, there still existed characteristics, both physical and emotional, that were associated with the different sexes. Men were viewed as hot, dry, beings who excelled in rationality, strength, and intellectual prowess. Women, in opposition, were considered weaker in the same attributes, though consisting of deeper spirituality. Rather than hot and dry, the female body was viewed as cold and wet. Despite these regarded differences, the contemporary ideology of a single human body remained prominent.[61]

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[60] Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and Politics of Reproductive Biology," in *The Making of the Modern Body*, eds. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 1-3.
[61] Hitchcock, 42-43.

As the eighteenth century progressed, however, so too did views on sex and gender. It would be easy to attribute this development to the Enlightenment and its growing anatomical knowledge, yet Laqueur offers a less straightforward analysis. He argues that it was social pressure and concern over differentiating men and women that led to the development of a 'two-body' ideology, rather than any sort of grand medical revelations. He claims that "oppositions and contrasts" had been recognized since the beginning of time, and thus there was no sudden breakthrough when contemporaries recognized the physical and systematic differences between the male and female sexual organs. In fact, early nineteenth-century medical theory developments would have partially supported the ideology of a single-body, as the newly slated 'Germ-Layer Theory' concluded that males and females both originated from an androgynous embryo within the womb. In this, Laqueur provides sufficient evidence that factors separate from medical development led to a two-body model.[62]

1790-1820: The French Revolution and the Years Immediately Following

Several factors can be cited as instrumental in the forming of this middle-class separate-sphere ideology, and the French Revolution is no doubt one. Firstly, it brought forth the question of a woman's place, or lack thereof, in political affairs. French women were active figures in the revolution, participating in varying capacities. Olympe de Gouges, Madame Roland, and Claire Lacombe are but of a few of the women who took it upon themselves to bring about change during the revolution, risking arrest and even death in pursuit of not only rights for women, but for an entire segment of French society. While women in Britain had also begun to ask for certain liberties, the French women had taken an active and forceful role in obtaining these rights. This of course led to much

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[62] Laqueur, 17-18.

debate within Britain, as feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays argued that women should be granted complete inclusion in the realm of politics.[63]  Their proclamations were met by much resistance.  Contemporaries argued that women should not meddle in political and civic affairs, but instead busy themselves with the domestic tasks better suited to their nature. As a 1795 issue of Gentleman's Magazine commented, women should "leave military duties and the defense of our national dignity to their fathers, their brothers, and their countrymen."[64]  Many added further support to such claims by characterizing the political frontier as a space sexually dangerous to women. As suggested by historian Susan Kent, contemporaries believed that the revolutionaries, "who had no respect for rank… would have no greater respect for sex, and women would suffer abuse at their hands."[65]

The French revolution also encouraged an idealization of domestic space, and more specifically, the nuclear British family within this space.  As the nation witnessed terror and disorder in France, the British realized that they wished to be what France was not: a country stable in both social and political order.[66]  The British household was thought to be the best place for a moral and somber lifestyle to take root, and thus, constant propaganda encouraged its existence.  Fear was often used as a tactic in convincing women to stay within doors, and sexuality often became entangled in such scenarios. A 1795 anti-invasion propaganda print sufficiently illustrates the merits associated with domestic life, and the turmoil endured by women who were not living in the British domestic ideal.  In the print, entitled "the Blessings of Peace, the curses of

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[63] Kent, 128.
[64] Quoted in Kent, 130.
[65] Kent, 130.
[66] Ibid., 129.

War," two pictures, one of Britain and one of a French-invaded country are positioned side-by-side. In the 'Britain' image, a happy family is pictured relaxing in the confines of their home. The father reclines in a chair as his two young children crawl onto his lap, his older daughter places dinner upon the table, and his wife lingers lovingly at his side. Under the picture "PEACE" is printed in large letters. However, the second image on the print depicts a strikingly different scene. In this illustration, the mother figure is outside, her hands thrown in the air at the sight of her murdered husband lying on the ground. The children surround the body, all in poses of distress. The mother's chest is bare, exposing her breasts and suggesting she had just been sexually violated. In the distance the French Revolutionaries march on. The word "war" takes the place of "peace."[67]

What this picture illustrates is the association that was made between domestic tranquility and a peaceful nation, and what lay in contrast – the shambles of the French Revolution. The woman in the "war" image is depicted through her disheveled and half-dressed state, illustrating the sexual threat that the revolution posed. In contrast, the woman in the British home is safe; she is fully clothed, protected by her husband, surrounded by her children, and seemingly content. It is important to note that this print shows both wife and husband in the household, thereby emphasizing that not only a woman should concern herself with the family, but the man as well. It was important for the husband to take up the position of head of the household, thereby spending the time not devoted to his public responsibilities with his family in the home, rather than squandering his wages on drinks and company. Pictures such as these were meant to be celebrations of domesticity, showing that merit and peace could only blossom from a morally sound British household.

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[67] Kent, 132-133.

<u>1820s and 1830s - Industrialization</u>

While the French Revolution played heavily into the separate sphere ideology in the 1790s and early nineteenth century, the 1820s and 1830s brought with them even greater enthusiasm for the model. The growth of industry and urban population density led to an economic backing for the "woman in the home" rhetoric that had first been initiated decades prior. The onset of industry began in the 1780s, and after that time, the role of women in the workforce tended to fluctuate greatly. Large machinery began to be incorporated into work typically done by women, such as spinning yarn, and in extension men began to take on the jobs once thought of as women's labor.[68] Women's employment began to become harder to come by, forcing many to find alternative ways of making money.[69] However, beginning around 1815, technology began to improve in its efficiency, and smaller machines could replace the older, more cumbersome ones.[70] Women were able to handle these machines, and factory owners began to hire women to fill their employment ranks. In the factory, women could be employed at much cheaper rates than men, and therefore, were more sought after.[71] It was thought that more opportunities for male employment would open if women would quit their positions within industry, and quietly retire back into their domestic realm. The man would then be properly employed, not idling about the streets, and the woman would be able to take care of the domestic affairs, keeping a tidy house and a morally-sound family.

Both the French Revolution and industrialization contributed to establishing the ideal British household, which was the standard to which most London inhabitants were

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[68] Ibid., 138.
[69] Ibid., 139.
[70] Ibid., 138.
[71] Ibid., 149.

held.  For both security and economic reasons, women were thought to be better off away

from public occurrences and tucked 'safely' away from both public freedoms and

measurable wages.  The woman was who held the family's private affairs together, and

thus her absence was felt dramatically. Her children were left to be raised by a neighbor

or some other member of the community.  If her departure was soon after birth, it was

thought that the infant would suffer from a lack of nursing, and in consequence, grow to

be a sickly child, if survive at all.  As industrialization picked up and urbanization

increased, inquiries were often made into the state of the population and the conditions in

which the laboring classes lived.  Contemporaries chose to associate high infant mortality

rates with the employment of women outside their homes.   The mother's neglect would

also account for the moral and intellectual shortfalls of the children, as one of the

mother's prime duties was to instruct her children in the early stages of development.

Thus, the children matured without the guidance needed to assure that they would take up

morally proper and responsible places within society in their adulthood.[72]

The mother's absence would extend to her husband as well.  The household

would lack in the comforts that were expected if the wife was out in some other public

place, and not concerning herself with the upkeep of her home.  The husband would have

to take on the domestic chores upon returning home from a long and laborious day of

work. His supper would not be ready and waiting upon his return, and the children would

need caring for as well.  The pleasures and comfort that a workingman was 'entitled to'

were not present in a household that was without a domestically bound wife, and thus, the

husband would have to find pleasure and comfort in other forms.  He might take to the

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[72] Ibid., 180-184.

pubs and indulge himself in alcohol, partake in gambling and squander away his wages, or involve himself in adulterous activities with a prostitute.

Contemporaries looked to find an easy representation of their anxieties, and a means by which to encourage women to leave the public streets and workplace and submit to the domestic confines. Prior to this period, women were of common occurrence in London streets and markets. They were essential contributors to the family income, often working alongside their husbands. In order to promote a two-sphere ideology, it was necessary to take away the sense of comfort that these public women felt, and instead replace it with fear. The prostitute became an easy target for many. Already seen as symbolic of general disorder and poverty, prostitutes could easily take on yet another metaphorical role - that of a woman dangerously present in the public realm.

However, resentment towards prostitution did not end here. The nature of the prostitute's work and the public nature of her solicitations were also worrying in that they brought together the two spheres that contemporaries had tried so adamantly to differentiate. By way of sex, prostitutes blended the worlds of the public and private, creating great anxiety and fear. Not only was the prostitute exposing such a private act in the public streets, but she also was endangering the sanctity of marriage by acting as a constant temptress, seducing men from their wives and children. Given a man's 'natural' tendency to be a sexual creature, it follows that the constant presence of prostitutes in the streets was troubling. Days were filled with temptation, and young men were thought to easily fall victim to the promiscuous prostitute offering up her services. This was not necessarily his own fault, as he was only acting upon the natural sexual desires that had

been given him, and all other males, at birth.[73]  Because use of public space was seen as essential for men, and not for women, eradicating women from such public areas was deemed an appropriate solution.  By clearing prostitutes from the city's thoroughfares, male lust was not tempted, and domestic tranquility was assured.

The emergence of the two-body ideology also factors into the fears associated with prostitution, as these women specifically did not conform to the new theory of sexual difference between men and women.  The late eighteenth century saw rise to a new philosophy of women's sexuality.  In addition to the newly perceived physical differentiation between the sexes, medical professionals were no long considering women as naturally sexual beings in any way.  Rather, women were deemed to be un-sexual creatures, who were not thought to poses the same sexual desires and passions as men.[74]  Sexual feelings were not only deemed inappropriate for women to experience, but abnormal as well.  British women, in contrast to women of other nationalities (namely the French), were not sexual beings, and in consequence, better fit to contribute to the stability of the nation.  The discovery that female orgasm was not necessary in order to conceive a child acted as final 'proof' to the redundancy of female sexuality.  Prior to this time, it was though that both men and women had to orgasm in order to successfully conceive a child, and thus, female sexuality was deemed equally important to that of the man.  However, this changed with the new finding, making a woman's sexual fulfillment not only unimportant, but absent all together.[75]  Thus, the trade of the prostitute stood in stark contrast to what were deemed feminine norms.

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[73] Laqueur, 23-24.
[74] Ibid., 22-23.
[75] Ibid., 24-35.

The Fallen Angel Solution

While the fear that manifested itself in this period revolved around women in public spaces, the solution to this problem was unlike the corralling methods suggested in the mid-eighteenth century. Rather, contemporaries chose to supplement their moral rhetoric with an equally righteous 'purification' of prostitutes. Prostitutes were turned into "fallen women" in need of the protection, aid, and sympathy of those of higher ranks. Prostitutes were feared because they embodied the traits thought inappropriate for women of the time, the most important of which was their autonomy and power in relation to men. Concerning the same subject, Judith Walkowitz states:

> Superficially, prostitution seemed to operate as an arena of male supremacy, where women were bartered and sold as commodities. In reality, women often controlled the trade and tended to live together as part of a distinct female subgroup. Prostitutes were still not free of male domination, but neither were they simply passive victims of male sexual abuse. They could act of their own defense…and they were as likely to exploit their clients as to suffer humiliation at male hands.[76]

Thus, society tried to remove this power by morphing the prostitute into a helpless creature, lacking in personal agency, and thereby making her less threatening to the prescribed gender norms.

In 1839 Michael Ryan, a medical writer and member of the Royal Colleges and Physicians and Surgeons of London, wrote a study on fallen women titled "Prostitution in London, with a Comparative view of that of Paris and New York." In the preface to his text, Ryan writes:

> According to our contradictory, anomalous, and absurd laws, statutes, common, and civil—women are most shamefully and inhumanly exposed to seduction,

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[76] Walkowitz, 31.

prostitution, adultery and ruin; they seem to be considered the lawful prey to the lust, treachery, cruelty, and artifices of licentious and profligate men, who may seduce and then abandon them at will, as is evinced by that infamous charter of libertinism, the Poor Law Bill; by the irrational and unchristian Marriage Laws, which encourage adulterers, fornicators and seducers, while they severally punish helpless and degraded women.[77]

From the very beginning of his text, Ryan hopes to convince his audience that though prostitution is an evil and wicked trade, those that are involved in it are not vicious women who are vengefully looking to disrupt the family and society as a whole. Rather, Ryan offers his readers the illustration of a poor and wretched woman, in desperate need of the attention of those of a higher and more respectable disposition. Rather than threatening, she is pathetic and weak. Ryan also alludes to the idea of class exploitation that often finds its way into the debate concerning prostitution. It was of common knowledge and public comment that middle and upper-class men were often responsible for the downward fall of otherwise chaste women. Neglected promises of marriage, power-tainted relations between the employer and the employed, and the simple disregard of humility all contributed to this discourse. A decade later, Elizabeth Blackwell speaks of the women of London in a similar tone: "At all hours of the night I see groups of poor wretched sisters standing in every corner of the streets, decked out in their best, which is generally a faded shawl and tattered dress, seeking their wretched living."[78] The theme remains the same: the prostitutes are the victims of an economic situation, leading their "poor" souls to participate in a "wretched" trade in order stay alive.

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[77] Michael Ryan, "Prostitution in London, with a Comparative view of that of Paris and New York," (London: 1839), v.
[78] Liza Picard, *Victorian London* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 255.

Following the same trend, a variety of groups and institutions were established with the salvation of prostitutes as their stated goal. The Female Aid Society was created in 1836 to help women who found themselves out of employment or prostitutes ready to leave their lives of sin.[79] In 1835, the London Society for the Prevention of Juvenile Prostitution was established, specifically placing its focus on reducing the increasingly vast number of child prostitutes who were lured into the city from the countryside and foreign countries.[80] Twenty years later, in 1853, the uniquely structured Midnight Mission was established. Prostitutes would be stopped on the street and offered a place to rest indoors, a cup of tea, and some food. In return, they would listen to scripture readings and hymns. After this, the prostitutes would be invited to seek shelter in the Midnight Mission house if they so desired, and in effect, be restored to a morally righteous life. Later, in 1858, The Female Mission to the Fallen Women was founded, yet another institution devoted to the reformation of 'friendless' women.[81] The typical rhetoric of these societies was religious in tone, as most theorists agreed that it was only through "religious orientation" that the fallen could take full advantage of the opportunities of redemption supplied by the societies.[82]

Reform institutions, as mentioned in the previous chapter, were established beginning with the Magdalen Hospital in 1758. Though this specific institution closed in the early part of the nineteenth century, its influence lasted throughout the Victorian period. It began a trend of institutional openings that was to be aided further by the

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[79] Ibid., 106.
[80] Ibid., 260.
[81] M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 200.
[82] Mumm, "Not Worse than other girls': the convent-based rehabilitation of fallen women in Victorian Britain," *Journal of Social History* 29, no.3 (Spring, 1996), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2005/is_/ai_18498207

religious revival of mid-nineteenth century, and the responsibility to 'unfortunates' that many evangelical orders felt.  Religion reigned during the Victorian period, with varying divisions of the pious all attempting to outdo one another in good Christian service. The Evangelical Church of England found great competition in the Methodists, Baptists, and Mennonites, all of which were heralded for their voluntary sacrifice for the betterment of the metropolis.  The Church of England itself established female penitentiaries, many of which were organized and run by groups of Anglican nuns, or 'sisterhoods.'[83]  These penitentiaries were in actuality less brutal than their name implicates, as each was voluntary in admittance and run on the premise of Christian charity and righteous transformation.[84]  Over the course of the century, the amount of institutional space for prostitutes grew rapidly; the Church of England alone increased the number of women admitted to their shelters across Britain from 400 to 7,000 in a matter of fifty years.[85] There were also numerous other institutions that had no affiliation with the Church, but which no doubt contributed significant amounts of space to the fallen women of the metropolis.

So too were there contributions on the individual level to the restoration of the fallen.  It was not unusual for a prostitute to attract the notice of a widow or middle-class woman, and for her to be welcomed into her savior's home in an act of great personal charity.  In a time in which evangelical and religious rhetoric was prominent, the idea of aiding a 'poor soul' in desperate need of attention was looked upon with great respect. Though it is hard find documentation of much of this charity on the individual level, famous benefactors prove easier to find.  Leading feminist Josephine Butler is

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

remembered for bringing the most desperate and destitute of all prostitutes back to her

home.  Prime Minister William Gladstone acted in a similar fashion inviting prostitutes

back to his home for tea and a moment's rest and shelter.[86]  Many authors such as Charles

Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell also took up the role as private philanthropist.  Thus, it

must be understood that not all reactions to prostitution were motivated by fear alone.

Rather, fear and moral obligation combined to produce an effective incentive for

contemporaries to lend aid to the city's unfortunates.

However, it was not only medical gentlemen and social reformers who took such

an approach to prostitutes, as poets, novelists, and artists all contributed to the fallen

woman rhetoric as well.  Poet Thomas Hood supplies a grim account of a prostitute, who

in desperation throws herself off a bridge and into the river below.  The poem begins by

describing the prostitute as "one more unfortunate," presumably amongst the thousands

of others in the Metropolis.  Hood begs his readers time and time again to look at the

prostitute not with eyes of contempt and hatred, but rather pity and sympathy:

> Take her up instantly,
> Loving, not loathing.
> Touch her not scornfully;
> Think of her mournfully,
> Gently and humanly;

While not diminishing the sinfulness of her actions, Hood, like Ryan and others, asks the

public to consider pitying these women, despite the nature of their employment.  He

appeals to her family, her loved ones, to anyone who might have saved her from such a

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[86] Paula Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914* (London: Routledge, 2000),
26.

lifestyle.  Similarly, Hood calls attention to the need of charity towards such helpless

women:

> Alas! for the rarity
> Of Christian charity
> Under the sun!
> O, it was pitiful!
> Near a whole city full,
> Home she had none.

Once again, the prostitute is turned into a helpless victim, lacking in any means of

personal stability or agency, and 'Christian charity' is called upon as salvation.  However,

we must be careful to not approach Hood's depiction of the prostitute too cynically.

Many writers were in fact moved by what they saw as an incredibly inhumane lifestyle,

one brought about by necessity and little more.  Though perhaps not consciously written

as an attempt to steal away a woman's agency, this portrayal did in fact contribute to the

trend of the era - that of removing the threatening attributes of a prostitute and replacing

them with helplessness.

The literary depiction of the prostitute did not end here.  Novelists such as

Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens included portraits of prostitutes that evoked a

similar sympathetic reaction from their readers.  While Gaskell set her industrial novels

in the city of Manchester, Dickens chose the slums of London for the backdrop to his

moral tales.  In both *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist* Dickens includes a female

figure who is driven to the hard life of prostitution by economic want.  Specifically the

character of Nancy in *Oliver Twist* calls into question how contemporaries should

understand the situations of such women. Her unique relationship with Oliver and the

kindness that she shows him fosters the reader's compassion towards her, despite her sinful ways. Though Nancy is able to come to the aid of Oliver, she is not able to extricate herself from financial distress and an abusive relationship. She lacks in personal agency, and is obligated out of necessity to keep to the trade of prostitution. The violent nature of her death (murdered by the lover) furthers the reader's sympathy towards the helpless woman in need of rescue. In must be mentioned that Dickens extended his interest in helpless women beyond his written work. In 1847, with the financial support of Angela Burdett-Coutts, Dickens established Urania Cottage, a shelter for prostitutes with an emphasis on reformation, followed by emigration.[87] In doing this, Dickens encouraged the image of the desperate prostitute through both fictional literature and his own actual philanthropic lifestyle. Through these outlets, either read or experienced, contemporaries of the Victorian era were continuously submitted to the rhetoric of the fallen women, influencing their treatment of these women from thereafter.

Conclusion

The worries that were expressed in relation to prostitutes in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century are most easily understood when we realize that these fears were representative of much larger fears of the period. Prostitutes were feared not simply because they were sexually explicit women. Rather, prostitutes were feared because they embodied many of the traits considered most threatening to the British at this time. In a nation where the two-sphere lifestyle was held as not only standard, but also integral to the stability and well being of the country, prostitutes were threatening in their inability to conform to a strictly domestically bound lifestyle. As a result, the prostitute's presence in the public realm was

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[87] Picard, 261.

threatening.  In order to best deal with these created threats, contemporaries attempted to demean the prostitutes by depicting them as helpless creatures, desperately in need of aid and paternalistic charity.  All personal agency was stripped away, leaving only a pitiful, miserable woman, perhaps suicidal in tendency, and certainly less threatening a presence. This casting of the prostitute as someone in need of rescue was not only helpful in the diminishing of these women, but it also supported the coveted institute of the family during this period.  Despite the variations of reform centers in content, language, and affiliation, all were similar in their intended outcome.  Prostitutes were schooled in proper feminine conduct and taught how to perform various domestic tasks.  As William Acton so adamantly argued, a reformed prostitute was able to reintegrate into society. Upon exiting these institutions, the fallen women would be redeemed, prepared to either marry or take up positions of domestic service.  Their new-found knowledge of household duties and chores would be beneficial in either circumstance.  In effect, much to the relief of their contemporaries, the former prostitutes would now be able to operate in the domestic sphere most appropriate to their sex.  As we will discover in the next chapter, this new interpretation of sex in both a biological and gendered context, coupled with the demeaning rhetoric of the fallen women, helped to create a social environment in which government sanctioned acts of sexual invasion would exist.

CHAPTER 3: MEDICO-MORAL APPROACHES TO PROSTITUTION

Imagine living amongst the tightly packed streets of mid-nineteenth-century east London. Your privy is shared with hundreds of neighbors, the slop of each spilling over into the streets. The dampness of the street sneaks inside the lower floors of the flat, flooding the living spaces of the cellar's inhabitants. No matter the floor level, the ventilation is poor, and the stagnant air tends to hang heavy within each one-roomed abode.

Now imagine the outbreak of an illness, a mysterious killer that brings its sufferers to their graves within hours. The infection causes severe dehydration, a condition reached by spells of fierce vomiting and diarrhea. Bodily waste soon takes the form of a grayish liquid, until only water and fragments of intestinal lining are left to be expelled. The abdomen suffers fits of unbearable pain and cramps, only intensifying the victim's nausea and dizziness. Soon after, the pulse rate of the infected person plunges to a near-death state. Fever and dehydration take their toll, leaving the victim's face bluish in hew, lips puckered for unquenchable want of water. At this time, sometimes only hours after first showing the signs of infection, the victim dies; his or her body parched, exhausted, and twisted in pain.[88]

This mysterious killer was *Asiatic cholera*, a disease that had spread from its original center in India to various locations around the globe by the mid nineteenth century. Cholera was a disease that sparked great fear in Britain during the early part of the century, as its course of proliferation was nothing short of baffling. The connection between cholera and prostitution becomes readily apparent when considering both the

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[88] Picard, 192.

ever-changing urban environment and government interest in public health. In large part, cholera was viewed as the disease of industrialization and urbanization. Overcrowded living quarters, the filth of the slums, and the increasing numbers of urban poor were all viewed as a result of industrialization, and also as instrumental factors in the spread of the disease. On a direct level, cholera contributed greatly to the discussion of prostitution through both housing and sexual reform initiatives. Time and time again, public health investigators would comment on the horrid housing situations of the poor that no doubt contributed to, if not encouraged vice. Sexuality is factored into this as it was the purity of women that was most threatened by the new urban environment. In addition, the movement of prostitutes throughout the city caused anxieties to run high as the mixing of the classes, especially through sexual transaction, could result in the spreading of disease and the pollution of those in higher ranks. Though an explicit and direct association between cholera and prostitution from a contemporary standpoint has yet to be discovered, ties between housing reform and sexuality inextricably linked the two. This medico-moral discourse in association with cholera provided the foundation for a much more explicit medical war to be waged against prostitution in the 1860s, with the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and this legislation's attempts to combat venereal diseases such as syphilis.

<u>1830s Cholera Outbreak</u>

Cholera first reached Europe in 1829, causing unrest in a continent thought safe after the 1820 spreading of the infection spared its population.[89] In1831, cholera made its first appearance in Britain, surfacing in the northern port-towns. The northeast battled the outbreak throughout the autumn, and into the winter months. In the meantime,

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[89] Ibid.

London awaited its doom, knowing that the disease would soon be encroaching upon its doorstep.  In mid-February of 1832, cholera finally made its way into the metropolis, claiming the first known victim in Whitehall, and initiating a wave of frenzy that quickly took hold of the city's inhabitants, officials, and newsprint.[90]  The *Medical Gazette* published a drawn-out debate concerning the existence and threat of the disease, concluding with an article titled, 'Cholera or No Cholera.'  The author of the article argued that the disease did in fact pose an eminent threat to those in the city.   He states, "The excitement has been followed by a quiescent confidence which bears… little relation to a sound and healthy state," arguing that authorities did a great disservice to the metropolis by attempting to hide the outbreak from public knowledge.[91]  All doubt of the disease's existence was eradicated as the infection spread throughout the streets of the eastern portion of the city, killing off the poor in unimaginable quantities - 18,000 by the end of its first wave.[92]

The cause of the disease was unknown, but theories did exist.  The *Times*, the *Lancet*, and numerous other newspapers and journals were swamped with editorials, opinion columns, and articles all concerning the spread, treatment, and resistance measures to be taken against cholera.  Though various in content, a concern with dirt and uncleanliness can be found throughout the printed material.  The poor were constantly being mentioned as the culprits of the disease; their filth, grotesque lifestyle, and sheer number all threatening to the health of a nation.  As stated in an 1832 editorial, the only way to alleviate the problem was by "removing the sick from situations in which they

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[90] Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 11-15.
[91] *Medical Gazette,* "Cholera or no Cholera," Feb. 25th, 1832.
[92] Picard, 192.

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contracted the disease, and also, if possible, removing from their abodes of filthiness and misery the inhabitants of those localities in which the malady first displays itself."[93]  Thus, not only was filth a perpetuator of the disease, the poor were viewed as the segment of society most responsible for starting the ghastly epidemic in the first place.

In attempts to subdue the disease, government investigators were sent into the most at risk cities throughout Britain.  Their role was to inquire into the lifestyles of the working class, the ways in which they conducted themselves, and most importantly, their moral qualities, or lack thereof.  Dr. James Phillip Kay famously took charge of the investigations in the industrial city of Manchester, publishing his findings in the pamphlet, 'The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester.'  As the title suggests, Kay believed the occurrence of cholera in the city was inextricably bound to the moral state of the working class.  He states:

> It is utterly impossible to separate any event which is witnessed by a human intelligence, from a certain inevitable moral consequence…it is melancholy to perceive, how many of the evils suffered by the poor flow from their own ignorance or moral errors.[94]

Kay goes on to echo the sentiments of the author of 'Cholera or No Cholera,' confidently asserting that the only hope for the eradication of cholera was to improve both the physical and moral situation of the poor, removing "predisposition to its reception and propagation, which is created be poverty and immorality."[95]

While Kay's work was focused on the spread of the disease amongst the working class in Manchester, his observations held true for the conditions of the London slums as

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[93] *Medical Gazette,* "Cholera or no Cholera," Feb. 25th, 1832.
[94] Kay, 5.
[95] Kay, 12.

well.  Edwin Chadwick, one of the earliest voices in public health reform, investigated the disease within the metropolis, adopting the miasma theory to explain such rapid spreading.  According to the miasma theory, cholera was spread amongst the population through smells and "noxious fumes."'  The poor not only smelled foul themselves, but due to the nature of their employment, "the sense of smell…appears often to be obliterated."[96]  Thus, they were not able to recognize when intervention and cleaning were needed in order to eradicate filth and disease.

Both Kay and Chadwick mentioned in their writing that the state of the working class would no doubt have an effect on the nation as a whole, and more specifically, what Kay termed "the social body."[97]  In this theory, the nation was represented as a human body, with all its parts and components tied to one another.  For example, if a malady had found its way into the body's foot, there existed a great possibility that another limb of the body would soon fall victim as well.  This transferred neatly onto the societal scale, suggesting that if the poor were in a state of moral and physical decay, the effects of this would soon be felt by the higher and more respectable orders.   But in 1832, some contemporaries believed that the outbreak of cholera amongst the poor posed little threat to those of the higher, more respectable classes.  In one article published in the *Medical Gazette*, the editorialist asserts that medical professionals were creating a "perfectly illusory and absurd the panic existing among many in the better ranks of life, who, we believe run little more hazard from the existence of cholera in London than from the plague in Constantinople."[98]

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[96] Picard, 192.
[97] See Kay.
[98] *Medical Gazette,* "Cholera or no Cholera," Feb. 25th, 1832.

Rather, the gross amount of fear created by the first outbreak of cholera was related to the functioning of the society on an economic level. As William Farr argued in an 1830s issue of the *Lancet*, "the health of an individual is directly linked to the vitality of the general population."[99] If the working class were to die off, their numbers dwindling to the point where factories were in want of laborers, then the financial affluence that had come to characterize Britain throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century would come to an end. The working class was the foundation of Britain's leading place on an international scale. The utilitarian belief that a healthy and strong population was necessary for a functional government was widely accepted; emphasizing that social and political order could only be maintained by a population both morally and physically sound.[100] Thus, if the working class was to be obliterated by the outbreak of Cholera, then the very foundation of the nation would crumble, taking with it all sense of middle and upper-class security.

Cholera and its Ties to Sexuality

Pertinent to the subject of my work, this fear of cholera was tied to ideas of sexuality in ways that cannot be separated. Cholera was frightening enough in and of itself, but when considered in the context of deviant sexualities it became even more disturbing and yet another symptom of social disorder. Historian Frank Mort has done much work on what he calls the medico-moral politics that dominated England beginning in the 1830s. As Mort acknowledges, the idea of moral betterment for physical benefit, such as that found in the work of Kay, typically includes sexual practices as one of the prominent factors contributing to immoral lifestyles. Sexuality was rarely mentioned

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[99] Mort, 16.
[100] Ibid.

outside a negative, immoral context.[101]  In descriptions of the urban environment of the

poor, investigators condemned the state of the poor's living conditions, constantly

reinforcing their beliefs that sleeping arrangements and clustered living situations

contributed to sexual deviance.  Lord Ashley, in his 1843 speech to the House of

Commons, describes the findings of his sanitary report and expresses his horror of

communal sleeping arrangements:

> I have met with upwards of forty persons sleeping in the same room, married and
> single, including, of course, children and several young adult persons of either
> sex…I have met with instances of a man, his wife, and his wife's sister, sleeping
> in the same bed together…I found in one room a prostitute, with whom I
> remonstrated on the course of her life…she stated that she had lodged with a
> married sister, and slept in the same bed with her and her husband; that hence
> improper intercourse took place and from that she became more and more
> depraved.[102]

Ashley fails to put any great emphasis on the fact that these situations which he has

witnessed have come about not by desire, but rather, by necessity.  It would have been

easy for Ashley, a prominent authority in London, no doubt living a rather comfortable

lifestyle, to criticize the housing circumstances of the poor.  For Ashley, it was most

likely not necessary to share a bed with his wife and sister-in-law for need of heat in the

winter, or lack of space throughout the year.  He was not faced with the question at night

as to if he wished himself, his wife, or his sister-in-law to sleep on the cold and damp

floor (no doubt a health concern in and of itself) in order to abide by a middle-class

ideology of what was proper and socially acceptable.  Rather than consider such an

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[101] Ibid., 30.
[102] Lord Ashley, Speech to the House of Commons, London, 1843.

arrangement a necessity, time and time again members of the higher ranks criticized working-class practices, equating 'otherness' with 'immorality.'

If slumbering in the same bed with a family member of the opposite sex was enough to initiate questioning of 'sexual immorality,' it is quite effortless to imagine the threat that the 'otherness' of the female prostitute posed. For reasons mentioned in the previous chapter, the prostitute was targeted for her inability to conform to the middle-class standards of femininity and a woman's place in society. She was seemingly sexual, public, independent, and self-employed - all of which were uncharacteristic of what a woman 'should be.' The front against prostitution had been laid decades prior, and now, with the heightened state of medical concern, the war against prostitutes had new ammunition at its disposal. This immoral otherness of the prostitute could be attacked as a symbol for the sexual irregularity that had come to characterize the urban poor; the same sexual irregularity that led to a continuation of the immoral practices of the poor; the same immoral practices that caused filth and destitution; and in final consequence, the same filth that allowed for cholera to run its vicious course throughout the whole of London's population.

The medico-moral discourse that took root in the cholera outbreaks of the 1830s helped to perpetuate the regime against sexuality and 'immoral otherness'. Because prostitutes were sexual, presumably immoral, a socially distinctive 'other', in addition to being members of the 'weaker sex', they came to symbolize and bear the weight of societal fears concerning public health and epidemic fears. However, the fears of the higher ranks shifted with the outbreak of the second epidemic of cholera in 1849. 14,000 more inhabitants of the city died, this time not all victims resided in the slums. Areas

once thought safe, such as the St. Pancras Borough, fell to the disease as well.[103]  For the first time since the appearance of the disease, the 'respectable' members of society had to fear the personal effects of the disease, perhaps more so than Constantinople's aforementioned plague.  The middling sort now feared the direct encroachment of the disease on their neighborhoods and families; no longer was the disease confined to threatening their pocketbooks alone.  Despite cholera's classless presence, the poor were still deemed to be the perpetrators, those responsible for the illness affecting the rest of the population.

The steps taken in response were similar to those that occurred in the 1830s, with investigations and inquiries into the state of the poor dominating the efforts.  The solution to the spread of the disease was twofold:  the poor were to be educated on health and cleanliness, and even more importantly, they were to be inspected and kept isolated from the other ranks of society.  It must be understood that the dynamics of the disease were still not known by medical practitioners of the time.  Most still believed the disease to be carried by way of air, and thus, being in the mere proximity of an infected person could cause the disease to spread.  Chadwick's call for mandatory flushing of the streets into the river Thames acts as sufficient evidence of the ignorance contemporaries had to the true cause of the spread of cholera.  Chadwick believed that by flushing the entire city's waste downhill and into the river, that the stench that was thought to harbor the disease would vanish, and in consequence, the disease as well.  Unknowingly, Chadwick was only increasing the risk of the disease's spread, as the filth, human waste, and soiled laundry water - all of which did in fact carry the disease - were sent straight into the city's main water source.  However, this fault would not be recognized for years to come.  As it was

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[103] Picard, 193.

put in a *Lancet* article of 1853, "We know nothing; we are at sea in a whirlpool of conjecture."[104]

Amidst such anxiety about the unknown, separation of the classes became of increasing importance. Mixing of the ranks risked the filth of the poor infiltrating into the clean neighborhoods of the higher orders. In general, maintaining a separation was not as difficult as one might think. Throughout the mid-century, social-reform novelists constantly criticized the ignorance of the higher classes in regards to the poor.

Prostitutes, however, were incredibly mobile members of London's population, effortlessly crossing the imaginary class boundaries laid out in the urban geography of the city. While the east-west divide remained rigid for most of the metropolis' inhabitants, the 'underworld' of Victorian prostitution stretched across both sectors of the city, unobstructed by such class divides. The working-class female prostitutes, and their typically middle-class male counterparts brought in contact the two sectors of society that authorities and moral reformers were most adamant about keeping apart. The sex that would take place in the transaction of the prostitute and her client would bring these two sectors of society together in a way unparallel to any other act. If a disease were to find a time to transfer from one human host to another, such intercourse would provide the prime opportunity. Though it is known that cholera was not infectious from person to person, but rather spread through water consumption, it is understandable that contemporaries would fear such occurrences of intimate physical contact as perhaps an outlet of transfer for any sort of disease. Thus, if we were to put all moral concerns aside, there would still exist a great fear about the prostitute's role in the perpetuation of disease and the destruction of the social body and the nation as a whole.

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[104] Quoted in Mort, 22.

For direct evidence of the way in which prostitutes could make their way about the city, we need look no further than the *London Journal of Flora Tristan.* Flora Tristan was a French traveler who made four trips to London between the years 1826 and 1839. She claims that her journal was an attempt to understand 'the plight' of the working-class of the world's most prosperous nation.[105] In her trips, Tristan found the state of England to be increasingly worse every time, concluding that England, despite its famously moral characterization, was the greatest obstacle to Europe's advancement on a global scale.[106] While Tristan was of a bourgeoisie background, her sympathy towards the working class, her comparisons between the early Christians and the Chartists, and her willingness to question middle-class practices creates a sense of legitimacy that is not present in a great majority of texts concerning the same period.

Tristan devotes the entirety of a chapter to the subject of prostitutes within the metropolis, prefacing her observations by stating, "I see prostitution as either an appalling madness or an act so sublime that my mortal understanding cannot comprehend it."[107] By beginning in such a way, Tristan reserves the judgment that many of her contemporaries are more than eager to place on prostitutes. In her text, Tristan focuses on the relationship between middle-class males and the working-class prostitutes, and how their relationship was encouraged by the unequal distribution of wealth within the city.[108] Taking a feminist standpoint on the matter, Tristan asserts that the trade of prostitution, and the evils that the middle-class see as spawning from it, will not vanish until women

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[105] Flora Tristan, *Promenades dans Londres, 1840 & 1842*. Ed. and Trans. Jean Hawkes (London: Virago Press, 1982), 1.
[106] Ibid., 8.
[107] Ibid., 81.
[108] Ibid.

are truly free and equal members of society, and their 'lifelong schooling in the art of attraction' is ended.[109]

Most significant to my argument is the description Tristan supplies for the mobility of the prostitutes between different geographical sections of the city, and in extension, the prostitutes' ability to traverse the different social boundaries of London society as well. Tristan says that after touring the east end with two of her traveling companions,

> We sat upon the bridge to watch the women of the neighborhood flock past, as they do every evening between the hours of eight and nine, on their way to the West End, where they ply their trade all night and return home between eight and nine in the morning. They infest the promenades and any other place where people gather, such as the approaches to the Stock Exchange, the various public buildings and the theatres.[110]

This nightly parade of women from the East End of the city to the West End would have been seen as one of the greatest threats to the health and morality of the middle class. As no laws existed that would allow police officials to arrest the women for merely passing into a different sector of the city, regardless of the known reason for doing so, the prostitutes were free to move unobstructed. Yet, it was more than this procession that Tristan supplies as evidence for the worrisome mixing of orders for the purpose of sex. Tristan makes mention of the significant number of 'fashionable' and 'well-furnished' brothels that existed in the West End. Though brothels were technically illegal, unless disorder or excessive noise was reported, the police had no ability to enter the establishment and shut it down.

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[109] Ibid., 82.
[110] Ibid.

<u>Women in Public</u>

As the nineteenth-century progressed, the rigid separate-sphere ideology that was of great importance in the early decades lost much of its force.  This is not to say that the theory disappeared completely, for such is far from the case.  Rather, in part due to both the philanthropy movement sparked by the cholera epidemics of the 1830s-1850s and urban poverty in general, and the new culture of commerce and consumption, women in the public sphere were becoming less of a social taboo.  Women reformers such as Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler, two women unquestionably devout and pious in their religious faith, were both in constant contact with the streets of urban environments, placing themselves amongst all that was deemed 'dangerous' and 'unfeminine.'  However, the moral sentiments of these women were never called into serious question.  It was accepted that these women were both public and righteous.  Because of this, the leading argument against prostitutes in the beginning of the century could no longer be effectively used.  Prostitutes could not be railed against simply because they were not abiding by the standards of middle-class female domesticity and staying in the home to take care of their children and husbands.

Additionally, as the culture of commerce began to grow, special outlets for women began to spring up throughout the West End.  It was no longer seen as wholly problematic for a woman to venture unaccompanied into the streets of the city, en route to shop at one of the newly opened department stores.  Judith Walkowitz, in her book *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* supplies a thorough analysis of this phenomenon in which "new social actors" came to be a part of

the ever-evolving composition of the city.[111]  While there did still exist some

stigmatization of a woman's presence in certain markets and infamous areas, an

identifiable shift in the way society was thinking about women in public did occur

beginning mid-century, and this shift was problematic for the typical rhetoric that was

used against prostitutes in the decades prior.

This shift is precisely why the emergence of a medico-moral discourse is

important in the evolving ways prostitutes were treated in the mid-Victorian era.  At a

time when women were becoming more accepted in the public sphere, new ways to

attack the existence of prostitutes were needed.  The medico-moral stance supplied just

this.  Prostitutes were symbolic in that they represented the irregular sexual practices of

the working classes, the excessive and uncontrollable sexual drive that caused moral

degradation, and the breaking apart of the sanctity of marriage and the family through the

sexual deviance of both sexes.  The prostitute was the most socially mobile of all those in

London's Victorian society.  While reformers and authors such as James Kay, Freidrich

Engels, and Elizabeth Gaskell moved back and forth between the classes, the prostitute

did so on a more personal and concrete level.  She could make herself a member of either

class, if only for enough time to complete a transaction with a middle-class male in a

West-End gin house, and make her way back to her East-End slum.  This transcendence

of the imagined socio-urban landscape was enough to brew fear amongst those worried

not only about the spread of disease, but also perhaps the breakdown of social barriers on

a more widespread scale.   While the years of the cholera epidemic are suggestive in their

association with and relation to prostitution, they are also important in that they laid the

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[111] Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 41.

foundation for the blatant medico-moral attack on prostitution in the 1860s with the formation and implementation of the Contagious Diseases Acts.

Syphilis and the "Contagious Diseases (Not Concerned With Animals) Act"

Syphilis was not a new concern in the 1850s. In fact, the infection had been present in Britain since about 1495, and recognized on the continent long before, as evidenced by the writings of numerous ancient Greek philosophers and medical advisors.[112] Originally deemed the 'French Pox,' syphilis make appearances in medieval poetry, fifteenth-century royal decrees of James IV, and sixteenth-century plays of William Shakespeare. The disease was abundant, feared by contemporaries, and a threat to the social status of any of its victims. However, reactions to syphilis changed in the mid-nineteenth century. Never before had the infectious nature of the disease found its way to such a prominent position on the governmental agenda.

As the nineteenth century progressed, Britain began to take the leading role in international empire. In order to maintain the acquired lands, it was necessary to have a fit military - a military capable of asserting the power required to maintain control. However, it quickly became apparent that vitality and health were not characteristics that could be associated with many of the enlisted. Hospitals were overflowing with soldiers and sailors, yet the maladies confining them to such quarters were not related to wartime injuries. Rather, Britain's military men were 'falling victim' to syphilis, much to the dismay of government officials and moral reformers alike. As written in a 1863 issue of the *Saturday Review*:

> Two hundred women are newly infected every day in London, who have no other
> means of obtaining food and shelter than by communication of the diseases thus

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[112] Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2.

contracted.  But even More startling…are the results of a recent official investigation as to the extent of the evil in the army and navy.  We gather from the returns of a committee appointed to report on this subject that these loathsome diseases are six times more prevalent among British than among French or Belgian soldiers – the numbers each year being 70 for France, against 442 for England, in every 1,000 men.[113]

Once ill, the disease would leave its victims incapable of working, and in need of treatment and hospitalization. This in turn cost the military thousands of hours of active service from the men while in treatment, and in extension, a great deal of money.

This focus of attention on the health of the military can be attributed to numerous circumstances, all of which encouraged a heightened interest among governmental authorities concerning syphilis.  In addition to the medico-moral platform provided by cholera fears in the decades prior to the 1860s, two specific phenomenon can be cited as influential in this new governmental interest in the health of the military: The Crimean War and the Sepoy Uprising in India.  Each of these events involved the British military on an international scale, and in effect contributed to the urgency felt by many Britons for military health reform.

Britain became involved in the Crimean War during the spring of 1853.  After a long period of relative peace across Europe, Britain, France, Sardinia, and the Ottoman Empire allied together against Russia, resulting in a conflict that lasted three years, and costing several thousand European lives.  In addition to the general anxieties that all wars produce in relation to the need for an able-bodied system of defense, British fears were furthered when it was revealed that more lives were lost in the hospital than on the actual

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[113] *Saturday Review,* "The Sin in Scarlet," September 12, 1863, in ed. Trevor Fisher *Prostitution and the Victorians.*

battlefield.[114]  The horrified reaction of contemporaries brought about cries for various

reforms within the military, specifically in regard to the medical departments and

commissions.  The Army and Navy Medical Departments, and the Army Sanitary

Commission began a series of investigations into the medical and living conditions of

enlisted men, and for the first time, produced statistical evidence to back the growing

health concerns. [115]

The Sepoy Revolt of 1857 increased contemporaries' anxieties over the strength

of the British military.  In January of 1857, a conflict arose with the Bengali Army

concerning the use of animal fat to grease the gunpowder cartridges.  This was obviously

of great religious concern for both the Muslims and Hindus, and the Bengali Army

refused to use the new style of ammunition.  This event, which started on a relatively

small scale, increased in its intensity and size, reaching the city of Calcutta by March, and

Delhi shortly after.  While other revolts had of course taken place throughout the period

of British occupation of the area, this rebellion was on a scale unknown to the East India

Company of Britain and the British Army as a whole.  In grew massively in size and

violence, and though finally suppressed, the British Army was left shaken by the ability

of Indians to wage attacks upon the colonizers.

Various individuals from both within and outside the armed forces commented on

the presence of vice and the detrimental effects this had on the strength of Britain's

military.  Florence Nightingale stated in 1861, "The disease of vice is daily increasing in

the Army - so that fully half of all the sickness at home is owing to that"[116] To

Nightingale, and many other reformers, vice and prostitution were synonymous,

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[114] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society,*74.
[115] McHugh, 35.
[116] Quoted in McHugh, 35.

completely interchangeable in usage.  Attacking the source was deemed the most effective way to deal with the spread of syphilis, and therefore, the premise for a regulatory system to control prostitutes was in place.  Some contemporaries, including Nightingale, were opposed to a system of regulation and instead prescribed "environmentalist" approaches to vice, which included outlets for leisure and extended leave for soldiers to visit their families.  However, individuals of greater influence, such as William Gladstone, argued that the rigid yet practical regulatory systems would be the only way to properly suppress the spread of the disease.

In July of 1864, after a relatively short period of consideration, the first step towards a regulatory system was taken, and the Contagious Diseases Act was passed in Parliament.[117]  The Act called for the Admiralty and War Office to control prostitutes through both inspection and confinement.  Every two weeks, prostitutes (or any suspected women) were forced into an examination.  If a woman refused to take part in the investigation, she would be brought in front of the magistrate, and in a very public display, he would advise her as to whether she was to be examined in not.  In fear of further public humiliation, many prostitutes surrendered to such invasive investigations.  If the prostitute was found in fact to be diseased, she would be held in a hospital for up to three months before regaining her freedom.[118]  The Acts were revised in 1866 to include a greater number of subjected towns, and a longer period of forced confinement for diseased prostitutes.[119]  Shortly after this ratification, advocates made a great, yet unsuccessful, attempt to extend the acts to London, northern England and Scotland.  In 1869, a committee in parliament was established to review the acts, and the conclusions

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[117] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society,* 76.
[118] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society,* 76.
[119] Ibid., 77-78.

led to the passing of a new bill that extended confinement periods even further, added

five more southern districts, and most importantly, deemed the acts effective

indefinitely.[120]

Though minor opposition had been shown during the 1860s, it was not until 1870

that a united front against the C.D. Acts had gained enough support to be of concern to

advocates.  In the summer of 1868, the first group, the National Association for the

Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, was established in opposition to the Acts.  At

the group's start, women were banned from membership, and in consequence, the Ladies'

National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (LNA) was founded

the same year.  Feminist Josephine Butler, took the lead of the women's repeal movement,

and later, the movement in its entirety.  The LNA put forth numerous critiques of the C.D.

Acts, claiming them (the Acts) to violate legal safeguards for women in public, allow

police complete control over women, punish one sex while leaving the other blameless,

and useless in both medical and moral pursuits.[121]  To Butler and her fellow feminists, the

attacks against prostitutes were in extension, attacks against the entire sex.  After a

tireless battle of nearly fifteen years, Butler and her counterparts succeeded in persuading

Parliament to repeal the 1869 Acts, and thus finally putting an end to the sexist regime of

investigating prostitutes.

During the period of the C.D. Acts and their repeals (1860s and 1870s), London's

association with prostitution took a very unique turn.  Rather than predominantly

factoring into the prostitution debates, London seemed to shrink into the background of

the overall picture of regulation. Initially, I found this incredibly problematic to my

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[120] Ibid., 86.
[121] Ibid., 93.

inquiries about prostitution in the Metropolis specifically.  If inhabitants were not speaking of the prostitutes in direct relation to their city, how could I incorporate the crucial period of the C.D. Acts into my research?  However, upon closer examination, it is evident that this phenomenon fits in well with the general trends of regulation that we have witnessed thus far.  While the early and mid-nineteenth century focused attention on urban space and the prostitute as a traveling contagion between classes, attention after mid-century began to slowly shift.  The urban environment, though still intimidating, had diminished slightly in concern, allowing for a more nation-based approach to prostitution to take hold.  With the international affairs in both Europe and India as they were, it follows that there would be a de-emphasizing of the concentrated concern on London, and a wider, more expanding concern for the nation and national strength as a whole.  However, this is not to say that concern about prostitution, or the act of prostitution in itself ceased to exist in London.  Prostitution and anxieties related to prostitution most certainly were present in this period in London; they were just not as central to the debate as they had been for centuries prior.  Because London was the capital of Britain, the city still acted as the main center for debate over regulation.  However, these debates concerned other port and garrison towns in Britain, and were disputed in London simply because the city played host to Parliament and numerous print and publishing outlets.

Though the Acts were finally repealed in 1886, and the regulation system never made its way into London, consideration of these Acts is crucial to the understanding of the context of my research.  The ways in which contemporaries feared prostitution, and their various attempts to deal with these fears all contributed to the creation of a governmental regime against prostitution.  London's urban environment created anxieties

associated with industry, population growth, and general vice and disorder. Most significant to the creation of the C.D. Acts, however, was the increased attention to public health in the wake of the cholera epidemics. London was devastated by the disease, as too were other British towns and boroughs. The nation as a whole was put on alert, and sensitivity to disease and illness ran high. In the wake of the rebellions in India and the startling reports from the Crimean War, the health of the British military also came to be of great concern. These two instances, coupled with the longstanding desire to control prostitution, supplied the precise platform necessary to enable the passing of Contagious Diseases Acts, the most medically explicit and direct attack on prostitutes in the history of Britain.

As I stated at the outset, my thesis does not focus on the experience of prostitutes in eighteenth and nineteenth-century London, nor does it try to answer any questions about the prostitute herself. While the topic of prostitutes' experiences is of great interest to historians, recent scholarship has done well to address the field's needs. Instead, through my research, I have attempted to show how prostitutes came to be used in many ways by their society, not simply as objects of sex. As anxieties changed, matured, and repositioned their focus, so too did the rhetoric associated with prostitution. Prostitutes often found themselves in a position where they could be easily ridiculed by their peers. Arguments could be made against their presence for a variety of reasons, and over the course of the era, each of these reasons made its appearance, wrapped with just enough contemporary anxieties to pass as a new phenomenon.

However, throughout all the changes, one element remained essentially a constant. No matter the dialogue, control stood as the basic pillar of the offensive. We first witnessed the desire to control disorder, and how prostitutes quickly became representative of rowdy, offensive street life. We then watched as the fear of the mob and disorder turned into a fear of women in the public realm and workforce. The prostitute once again fell target to a contemporary régime, as not only was she a woman in the city's public spaces, but she was also acting against further gender prescriptions by earning her own wages. The final transition came only after the prostitute had been depicted as both pathetic and devious. As disease devastated the city, and the military began to fall sick at rapid rates, society looked for someone to thrust blame upon, and

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prostitutes were once again brought to represent the ill fates of the Metropolis, and by this point, the nation as a whole.

However, my investigations have left me questioning further certain aspects of the culture of gender and the experience of the prostitute. My main concern is that of agency. While it is clear that all methods of control that were implemented against prostitutes were done in an attempt to take away personal agency, it has yet to be concluded if these efforts were successful. It will be difficult to ever fully answer such a question, as very few, if any, truly first-hand accounts exist from prostitutes. Historians must be suspicious of what is available, as authorship is never fully assured. Without such accounts, it would be difficult to avoid acting like the women's contemporaries, and construct their story ourselves. This would be doing a great injustice to the prostitutes, stealing away any agency they perhaps did enjoy.

What my thesis does show, however, is that the contemporary stated regimes against prostitution lay rooted in much deeper sentiments than merely sexual transaction. While sex of course did factor into this equation, we must not allow the sensational to overshadow the realities. The women who walked the streets of London came to represent an incredibly complex set of fears and anxieties associated with urban space, gender, and the construction of a national identity. What is truly striking, however, is that these same debates have survived over two centuries and still plague the discussion on prostitution today. Feminists disagree about whether a prostitute exhibits empowerment through her profession, or if the trade degrades her. Similarly too, women bear the brunt of the crackdown on prostitution in most countries, the United States included. Men are rarely ever prosecuted for patronizing a prostitute, yet the women themselves are

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repeatedly incarcerated and tried for their "crimes."   It appears that the continuity of

control that was present throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be

extended past the confines of my research, directly touching upon the world and cultures

of the present day.

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