The Prostitute and the Image of Prostitution in Victorian Fiction.

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THE PROSTITUTE AND THE IMAGE OF PROSTITUTION IN VICTORIAN FICTION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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B.S., Spring Hill College, 1963
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ABSTRACT

Two types of prostitutes appear in the pages of Victorian fiction. One, a monistic creation of the Evangelical temperament, finds the sinner in the sin and judges the prostitute to be crude, vile, avaricious, hedonistic, and totally self-centered. The second, more humanitarian, draws conclusions about the sinner from the causes which led her into sin.

Humanitarians such as W. R. Greg, William Acton, and Henry Mayhew argued that the majority of prostitutes were forced into their profession either by poverty or seduction. Thus, although they condemned the sin of prostitution no less than did the Evangelicals, they extenuated the fault of prostitutes themselves and depicted prostitutes as innocent, selfless, and anti-material.

The Evangelical prostitute appears in fiction as an image for sin in much the same way as does Adam and Eve's selfish and lustful postlapsarian sex in Milton's epic. Vanity, pride, self-love and ambition--values which are totally self-directed--could be imaged in prostitution where sex, properly the vehicle
for expressing selfless love, is redirected to serve the purpose of personal gain. Such an image is made use of by Samuel Warren in *Passages From the Diary of a Late Physician* (1832) and by Henry Gladwyn Jebb in *Out of the Depths* (1859).

Materialism, the commercial spirit which Carlyle feared was reducing all human relations to "Cash-payment," could also be imaged by a prostitution which debased sex, a means of giving in love, to a means simply of getting. The dehumanization that is a product of materialism is seen as prostitution in J.A. Froude's "The Lieutenant's Daughter" (1847), Augustus Mayhew's *Paved With Gold* (1858), and Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838-1839). In Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), Esther's prostitution images the depersonalization that is a concomitant of laissez faire. And the depersonalizing marriage of convenience is imaged as prostitution in *Vanity Fair* (1848), *Dombey and Son* (1848), and Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her* (1864).

Ironically, in the case of all but *Vanity Fair*, the prostitute is depicted humanitarianistically; although her prostitution represents and condemns materialism, the prostitute herself is not responsible for her actions. Becky Sharp freely chooses to marry for money, but in each of the other cases, a girl is forced into denying human values in favor of material values. Thus,
the persons or the institutions that do the forcing are condemned by the evaluative metaphor of prostitution while the prostitutes themselves frequently represent the selfless values espoused by humanitarian idealists.

When the humanitarian religion of duty sprang up in the wake of attacks on traditional Christianity, the prostitute, the most discriminated against sinner of the age, became the perfect means by which the true Christian could show the way in which he embodied the divine image of love. Among the prostitutes that are simply objects upon which a protagonist's humanitarianism might be expended are Carry Brattle (Trollope's *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, 1870), Annie Brook (Felicia Skene's *Hidden Depths*, 1866), and the whores of Mrs. Houstoun's "Recommended to Mercy" (1863). But when the divine image became divinity itself, became what Hoxie N. Fairchild calls the "divine immanence," the prostitute became a positive ideal by virtue of her capacity for sexual love and for spiritual love, the charity which had been attributed to her in the fiction of the humanitarians. The prostitute of Gissing's *The Unclassed* (1884) and those of Wilkie Collins' *The New Magdalen* (1873) and *The Fallen Leaves* (1886) are among late-century embodiments of this divine immanence. By the end of the Victorian age, then, the prostitute had gone from pariah to
divinity, from the most Godless of sinners to the most Godlike of humans.
"THE GREAT SOCIAL EVIL"

Macaulay may have boasted of the England of 1830 with satisfaction and confidence, and Bailey's Festus may have heard the age rung in with bells, but young Victoria was also met by a far more pessimistic, far less satisfied greeting. The blasting curse of Blake's diseased, youthful harlot stands as a symbol for the nineteenth century far more adequately than does any acre in Middlesex, for in Victorian England, prostitution was truly "the great social evil." Although the wealth of England "increased a hundredfold," the number of prostitutes in the country increased at unknown thousandsfold.\(^1\) Venereal disease spread at a pace more than adequate to match the strides forward in the field of medicine. Indeed, by the end of the century, Florence Nightingale, long a vociferous opponent of any system

\(^1\) Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Southey's Colloquies," Prose of the Victorian Period, ed. William E. Buckler (Boston, 1958), p. 32. Throughout this paper all references which clearly refer to a source previously cited within a given chapter will be noted internally.
which sought government control of prostitution, was forced to acknowledge that unless some measures of control were effected, venereal disease would run its blighting course from one end of the country to the other. Macaulay rested his entire creed on "the natural tendency of society to improvement" and on "the natural tendency of the human intellect to truth" (34), but in actuality neither of his articles of faith was particularly effective in dealing with the rapid spread of prostitution. Statistical evidence corroborates the contention of James Laver that "at no other time in English history, before or since, has prostitution been so rampant as it was in the mid-Victorian era." This is hardly the sign of an improving society. Even more at odds with Macaulay's confidence, "the human intellect" refused frequently even to acknowledge the existence of any problem. While a majority of the population proudly rejoiced in Macaulay's claim that all truth was emerging from its hiding place, they often hid themselves from the subject of illicit sex. Theirs was the truth of the ostrich. Those few brave pioneers who dared

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look at the issue at all were faced with a reality practically inseparable from the fictions and half-truths that had grown up around it. They sought to find the truth, but their attempts were frequently abortive, for unlike Polonius, they failed even to suspect that truth might be hid "within the center." The most noble intentions proved inadequate for dealing with a problem that resisted even accurate description.

Since losing its position as a form of worship in the pagan fertility religions, prostitution has had to fight for some kind of place in a world which valued, or professed to value, monogamy and sexual continence. Society has sought to exterminate the infestation, but harlotry has resisted, has refused to die, has refused even to stay on the darkened streets and in the damp shadows that society would grudgingly yield it. But during the 1700's, prostitution was hardly the problem it was to become in the following century. If one accepts the hypothesis that repression of sex goes hand in hand with, or at least leads to, obsession,\(^4\) it is clear that eighteenth-century attitudes regarding sexual morality sufficed to keep street prostitution a minor problem.

For every Fanny Hill, there was a Molly Seagrim and a Jenny Jones at one end of the social scale and an abundance of Mrs. Fitzpatricks, Lady Bellastons, and Lady Wishforts at the other. So long as social standards fostered adultery and extra-marital sex, the demand for common prostitutes remained minimal.

If whoredom and adultery flourished during the age of enlightenment, they did so without great condemnation from anyone. The "conversions" of Moll Flanders and Fanny Hill, one feels, are merely instances where authors prostituted themselves instead of their characters, where concession was granted to a reading public's demands for repentance after a full life of sin. Sophy Western has no trouble in forgetting Tom's repeated incontinence, and Hogarth's harlot is pitiable primarily because she dies a horrible death. Mandeville even wrote a defense of the "Publick Stews." The eighteenth century had no trouble accepting the ways of the world.

By the beginning of the nineteenth, however, the situation was radically altered. New attitudes towards sex brought with them an increased demand for prostitutes, and a more than adequate supply was prepared to satisfy the demand. Street prostitution, militant and competing for a place during the eighteenth century, was harshly repressed in the nineteenth
and became, therefore, harlotry triumphant.

The middle class apotheosis of woman and its warnings against early, and therefore foolish, marriages created a huge demand for prostitutes. The conditions created by the Industrial Revolution, furthermore, were more than adequate for furnishing a supply of prostitutes to accommodate these demands. Chroniclers of the phenomenon attempted to describe its extent based on whatever, if any, information was available. Failure to define and to obtain factual information resulted in unreliable statistics and probably in gross inaccuracies.

There was no accurate or even accepted definition of the word "prostitute." There were, indeed, definitions, but in general they made little or no distinction between the two classes of women designated by the terms "prostitute" and "whore." Henry Mayhew, in London Labour and the London Poor (1861-1862), after giving the matter of definition extended consideration, settled on "the putting of anything to a vile use." Paul Dufour's 1853 History of Prostitution chose the definition, "that illegitimate abandonment which a girl or a woman makes of her body to a

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person to the end that this person may take with her forbidden pleasures. 6 All of these definitions ignore the fact that whether there is pleasure or not, the prostitute abandons herself for some kind of remuneration. As we shall see, the huge numbers offered by these commentators as the estimated extent of prostitution in London account not only for the prostitutes but for all those women engaging in any kind of extra-marital sex. Even Dr. Acton, a physician, although he recognizes that prostitution is a business transaction, claims that the difference between prostitution and "general immorality, or depravity" is, for the purposes of a work entitled Prostitution (1857), "immaterial." 7 Not until 1883 when Dr. John Chapman accepted the definition of a Frenchman, Yves Guyot, was there a differentiation made between a prostitute and a whore: "Est prostituée toute personne pour qui les rapports sexuels sont subordonnés à la question de gain." 8 (Because the distinction between "prostitute" and "whore"

6Paul LaCroix (Pseud. for Pierre Dufour), History of Prostitution Among All the Peoples of the World, From the Most Remote Antiquity to the Present Day, trans. Samuel Putnam (Chicago, 1926), I, 1.


seems to be a product of the twentieth century, in the following pages I shall follow the Victorian custom of using the two interchangeably, at least in so far as their denotations are concerned. In the connotations of the words, the Victorians implied perhaps a stronger condemnation and greater disgust in "whore" than in 'prostitute."

Furthermore, no trustworthy figures on the numbers of prostitutes in England during the nineteenth century are available, for there existed no system of licensing, no census similar to the one in Paris by which officials could count women who sold themselves in prostitution. All that officials could do was estimate. The earliest estimate seems to be that of a police magistrate, Patrick Colquhoun, who published in 1800 a Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis in which appeared the appalling figure of 50,000 as an estimate of the number of prostitutes in London. This figure, however, is not so outrageously large when one considers that Colquhoun included in his estimate a large number of women involved in traffic in sex who could not be considered prostitutes. Of his 50,000 prostitutes only half are clearly professionals. The

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other 25,000 are whores and "occasional prostitutes," those "who live partly by prostitution, including the multitude of low females, who cohabit with labourers and others without matrimony" (49-50). Commentators following Colquhoun seem to have adopted his figure without taking the trouble to see what he included in his estimate. Thus, the Bishop of Exeter in 1838 told Dr. Michael Ryan, a physician working with prostitutes, that based on the population increase since 1800, he estimated about 80,000 prostitutes in London. In the same year, however, the London City Police, actually dealing with the problem, assured Ryan that the number of prostitutes could not exceed 8,000,\(^{10}\) and it was from police magistrates that the only factually based figures came. Through their knowledge of the brothels and the women of the streets, they presented to Parliament in 1841 an estimate of 9,000 known prostitutes in London.

But Dr. Acton was quick to point out that the number of known prostitutes hardly suggested the actual extent of the problem, for the police took no account of "the vast numbers who regularly or occasionally abandon themselves, but in a less open manner" (32). If there were known to the police 9,000 prostitutes, how

\(^{10}\)Ryan cited in Mayhew, IV, 211.
many remained unknown? How many women escaped notice by the police because they worked independently of any brothel and clandestinely, out of sight of the law? Dr. Chapman accepted the figure of 6,515 as the number of known prostitutes in 1859. Based on corresponding figures from Paris, Chapman estimated 49,000 clandestine prostitutes in London. His total figure of 55,515 prostitutes in London was very close to that of *The Lancet*, a medical journal. Samuel Bracebridge accepted an official figure of 8,600 for 1857 and estimated that when one accounted for the clandestine prostitutes, "the circulating harlotry of the Haymarket and Regent Street," the figure of 80,000 was probably lower than the actual number of prostitutes:

Another cause of confusion was the impossibility of making any accurate estimate of the "occasional" prostitutes, not those

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11[Dr. John Chapman,] "Prostitution in Relation to the National Health," *The Westminster Review*, XCII (July 1869), 185.

12Samuel Bracebridge, under the pseudonym of Bracebridge Hemyng, wrote the section entitled "Prostitution in London" for Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*. The major portion of the research had been done by Mayhew himself over a period of at least fifteen years. Although the writing is Bracebridge's, the attitudes are probably those of Mayhew himself.

13Mayhew, IV, 213.
who resided in brothels or who could be seen on the same corner nightly, but the women who worked at respectable jobs, milliners and dressmakers, and who were forced occasionally to prostitute themselves in order to live. To call a woman in this situation a prostitute with no discrimination between her and a professional is, according to one true professional, "a cruel calumny."

"Would it not," she continues, "be truer and more charitable to call these poor souls 'victims'? --some Christian expression, if you cannot better the unChristian system which created them?"\(^{14}\)

It is, then, these confusions, the indiscriminate lumping together of professional prostitutes, occasional prostitutes, and whores, and secondly, the impossibility of doing anything but estimating the number of clandestine prostitutes, which were responsible for the large figures used to suggest the extent of the great social evil in Victorian England.

But if 80,000 is a figure out of all proportion to reality, there were, nevertheless, thousands of women swarming the streets and blocking the way of "respectable" people. Hippolyte Taine, visiting England in the 1860's noted that in the Haymarket

\(^{14}\)Letter to the editor, The Times, February 24, 1858, p. 12.
and the Strand

you cannot walk a hundred yards without knocking into twenty streetwalkers; some of them ask you for a glass of gin; others say, "It's for my rent, mister." The impression is not one of debauchery but of abject, miserable poverty. One is sickened and wounded by this deplorable procession in those monumental streets. It seemed as if I were watching a march past of dead women. Here is a festering sore, the real sore on the body of English society.  

According to a group of clergymen in 1858, prostitution in London was "carried on with a disregard of public decency and to an extent tolerated in no other capital city of the civilized world."  

Dr. Ryan estimated that one out of every three daughters in working class families became prostitutes before they were twenty years old. A report of the London Society for the Protection of Young Females, and Prevention of Juvenile Prostitution—much is said by the very existence of such an organization—found that in 1853 there were over four hundred people living on incomes derived from "trepanning females from eleven to


16 Reported in The Times, January 8, 1858, p. 6.

fifteen years of age for the purposes of prostitution. "18 W. R. Greg, usually more concerned with rhetoric than with figures, stated that the number of young girls who take up prostitution "at the age of fifteen, twelve, and even ten years, is such as almost to exceed credibility."19 According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dickens took a very pessimistic view of English moral standards, and Emerson described him as suggesting that "if his own son was particularly chaste, he should be alarmed on his account, as if he could not be in good health."20 Even Carlyle assumed that "chastity in the male sex was as good as gone in our times."21

The extent of prostitution in England brought on the outraged cry of the middle classes, not because immorality flourished but because it did so openly. It may be impossible to rid the city of immorality, they roared in indignation, but certainly "insolent

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18 Cited in Mayhew, IV, 211.
20 Emerson's Diary quoted in Pearl, p. 19.
21 Ibid.
indecency" could be suppressed. A group of churchmen in the late 1850's was aware that prostitution could not be eliminated, but it could be suppressed, could be made to go back into the hiding place from which it had crawled. According to The Times, what the promoters of this movement do desire and claim is the repression of the present flagrant display of profligacy in our great towns, at once so revolting to the virtuous and so perilous to the weak.

The newspaper itself was behind the efforts of the movement. The Times lamented that "outward decency" was no longer preserved, that "our most crowded thoroughfares [are] daily and nightly paraded by some scores of gross foreign women, interspersed with a sprinkling of the most shameless among our own countrywomen." A writer for Tait's Edinburgh Magazine grieved over the fate of the "raw youth" fresh from the country who meets accidently with a prostitute and is turned from the straight and narrow to the broad path that leads shortly to the penal colony.

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23 March 6, 1858, p. 5.

24 February 25, 1858, p. 6.
in New South Wales. "And all this," he cried, "because prostitution is allowed, in this Christian country, to prowl about our streets unabashed, seeking whom it may destroy."\(^25\)

Another concern, more immediate than that of Tait's, was the widespread occurrence of venereal disease in the second half of the century. If one can accept the police estimates, if there were eight thousand full time prostitutes in Victorian London,\(^26\) if these women did serve an average of fifteen men a week,\(^27\) and if ten per cent of these women, apparently a conservative estimate, were diseased,\(^28\) syphilis conceivably could be spread at the prodigious rate of twelve thousand infections in a single week. It is, thus, no wonder that in the 1860's Manchester's hospitals were treating an average of 387 patients per day for venereal disease,\(^29\) no wonder that the medical officer for the Privy Council, Dr. John Simon, opposed the Contagious Diseases

\(^25\) "The Greatest Social Evil," Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, XXIV (December 1857), 748.

\(^26\) [Chapman,] "National Health," p. 221.

\(^27\) Mayhew, IV, 211.

\(^28\) Laver, p. 96.

\(^29\) [Chapman,] "National Health," p. 223.
Act for the eminently logical reason that the government would never submit to providing at least three thousand beds for syphilitic prostitutes. It is not at all strange that many others seized upon this same act, which sought to control prostitution, when it was reported that over an eight-year period, 2,700 cases of venereal disease were found in London hospitals in girls under fourteen years of age.

Syphilis was a very real and a very frightening thing. The figures given above do something to suggest why the Victorians often compared the Bubonic Plague of the Middle Ages to their own plague, why they frequently saw venereal disease as both God's judgment on the sins of man and God's means of seeing that the spread of sin be halted. That they did so suggests that if the Victorians were only too fully aware of the effect, they only partially understood the causes of prostitution. A Dr. Solly, a member of the Council of the College of Surgeons, has earned a permanent place in the annals of infamy by thanking God for

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30Dr. Simon quoted in [Dr. John Chapman,] "Prostitution; its Sanitary Superintendence by the State: an Extract from the Eleventh Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council," The Westminster Review, XCII (October 1869), 558.

venereal disease and suggesting that it was indeed God's means to check the spread of fornication throughout England. In general the Victorians lacked the vantage point from which to see that the proliferation of street prostitution in the nineteenth century was the inevitable result of a coming together of two things, the Industrial Revolution and the Evangelically inspired values of the newly risen middle classes.

In the Middle Ages, many a serf stood by and calmly watched the defloration of a daughter by his lord, and his tacit approval kept him in his lord's favor, kept him from being turned out into the world with no hope of finding another place. Because the relationship between master and laborer was not essentially different from that between lord and serf, opportunities for the gratification of lust were not qualitatively different than they had been several hundred years earlier. But the lord's opportunities had been quantitatively limited; he could gratify his lusts only when a daughter, or perhaps a pretty wife, of one of his serfs—was at hand. The factory system, however, made use of a labor force. As did the lord before him, the master had a group of people depending on him for existence, but they were

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32 Laver, p. 105.
not spread out over several hundred miles. The laborers con­gregated daily within the walls of a single factory, and the master had a veritable stable of women from which to choose, all of whom knew exactly who held the keys to the kingdom of this earth. And choose he did! In 1828 a visitor to the Lancashire mills was told by the owner to take his pick of any of the girls who worked in the mill.\(^3\) The Reverend P. Gaskell reported that young masters set up collective establishments "for the prosecution of their illicit pleasures," staffed entirely by girls taken from the mills of Manchester.\(^4\) Any time, pointed out Dr. Acton, that "idle and wealthy men, with vicious tastes, which they spare neither pains nor expense to gratify" and "the needy, the improvident, and the ill-instructed" are forced into close proximity, the latter soon become the "victims of sensuality" (126).

Inevitable was a demoralization within the ranks of the poor, whose moral standards presumably were not too high in the first place, for if virtue existed only as long as the master's whim


\[^4\]Ibid.
allowed or only as long as he overlooked a potential conquest, any effort to preserve chastity became rather meaningless. This situation, combined with the squalor and meaninglessness of life in the factory system, led to a decline of morals among the lower classes. Impoverished and forced to lead a life of endless repetition, the factory worker found that sex was the only pleasure he could afford. One traveller through Britain reported that in the mines, if "a man and woman meet... and are excited by passion at the moment, they indulge in it." In Manchester, again, the magistrates created laws whereby a woman was subject to imprisonment if she bore above a certain number of illegitimate children.

Poverty itself ranked first on the list of causes of prostitution. A young and pretty girl could earn only so much working in a factory or taking in sewing work, usually not enough to live on. To supplement that income, the poor frequently resorted to the only marketable item they had, their bodies. The largest proportion of women who resort to prostitution, noted Dr. Acton, are "driven to evil courses by cruel biting poverty" (129). In Paris

36Epton, p. 316.
the great nineteenth-century sociologist Parent-Duchatelet surveyed over five thousand women and found that better than eighty per cent became prostitutes for economic reasons. And Tait's noted ironically that the decrease in prices for goods of clothing, the result of an abundance of inexpensively priced imports, led to a corresponding "reduction in the price of women" by swelling the ranks of prostitution with milliners and seamstresses forced to bruise soul merely to keep body alive.

A closely related cause of prostitution was the horrible overcrowding, the slum housing born of poverty. Modesty and decency disappeared when an entire family, frequently several families, occupied the same one- or two-room flat:

however large the family, they have seldom more than one bedroom, never more than two. Married couples, grown-up children of both sexes, cousins, and even lodgers, occupy the same room where the bedding is often insufficient, and the proximity necessarily close. The consequences may be easily imagined--more easily than described.

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37Cited in Havelock Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, in Studies in the Psychology of Sex (Philadelphia, 1925), VI, 257.


"Until I became 'gay,'" wrote a prostitute to The Times in 1858, "I never slept fewer than six grown-up people in a room, for my parents had but one." One 1850 estimate places some three thousand persons in just "ninety-five houses in a space of ground of little over an acre in Church Lane and Carrier Street." In 1881 better than fifty per cent of the residents of Sultan Street lived in houses which contained from thirteen to eighteen people. Many contained even more. These appalling conditions led to widespread sexual promiscuity among the lower classes. A great many girls learned that if there were no moral value placed upon chastity, their virtue did have a monetary worth, and the conversion of it to money was easily accomplished. The girl who escaped the slums by becoming the mistress of a wealthy man, far from being shunned when she returned home, commanded respect, admiration and awe, just as the local girl who makes good in Hollywood does today in America. Mayhew was right; there was lacking in the cities the "tone of morality" found in the

40 Letter to the editor, The Times, March 17, 1858, p. 5.

41 Laver, p. 41.

rural districts of England (255). Conditions fostered promiscuity, prostitution, and according to the Saturday Review, even widespread incest among the poor. 43

If the Industrial Revolution created in no small measure the conditions that forstered harlotry, the rise of the middle classes and the values they brought with them were equally effective. For their values were those diametrically opposed to those current prior to their rise. The conjunction of the middle classes and the values of the Evangelical movement created "a sexual morality which destroyed, at any rate overtly, the libertine morality of the previous century." 44 In this value system no sin was worse than that against chastity, for, in the case of women, no sin had such consequences. Simple loss of chastity, regardless of the circumstances, rendered the sinner hopelessly depraved. It was God's mark on the godless. There would very probably be no salvation in the next world and most certainly no forgiveness in this. Girls were raised from childhood hearing vague abstractions about the importance of honor, and if a woman failed to heed the warnings, it could only mean that her passions were simply

43 V (April 8, 1858), 343-344, cited in Bevington, p. 105.

44 Henriques, III, 211; cf. Acton, p. 59.
uncontrollable. These passions had no counterparts in "decent" women, but were rather the animal lusts of a daughter of Eve, those of the woman singled out by God to go wrong. In man sexual incontinence was youth sowing its oats; but when a woman fell, her dead honor bequeathed to her the brand of "innate depravity, hopeless degradation, unworthiness which must be pushed out of sight, blotted from memory, ignored in good society and polite speech." Once she was branded, the fallen woman was kept degraded by the middle classes. No decent person would risk the slightest contact with her, for total corruption could not help but be contagious. The whore was cast out, and the only course open to her, the only way in which she might maintain herself, and frequently her infant, was prostitution. Ironically, this same value system that forced many to prostitution, the Evangelical ideal, strove to reform the Magdalens it had helped to create by establishing "homes" or "refuges" for repentant sinners.

Another middle class attitude that contributed to the main-
tenance of a vast system of prostitution was the ideal of marrying only when one could well afford to do so. Zealous in holding on to their newly acquired places in the world, the middle classes abhorred anything which might endanger those positions. Marriage

\[\text{[Greg, p. 474.}\]
before one could afford to live "comfortably" would be disastrous. Normally a young man had to make his own way until legacies allowed some measure of independence. He should try to establish a position, he was told, until he was at least thirty years old. Then, and not until then, could marriage even be considered. In the meantime, the virtuous young man "repressed" his passions. A fine theory, it had the practical result of increasing the demand for prostitutes who provided an inexpensive means for "repressing" passion. Speaking of the causes of prostitution in London, a Times leader said, "The preposterous measure which is taken of the income necessary to support a family, if a young man would not sink in the social scale, is no doubt a fruitful cause of the deplorable evil."46 A whole series of letters to the editor of the newspaper arguing the advisability of early marriages (Can a young couple live on three hundred per annum?) was inaugurated by a letter from "Theophrastus" who acknowledged that while some young men might be "keeping themselves pure amid all the temptations of London life, . . . there are thousands who are living in sin, chiefly in consequence of the impossibility (as the world says) of [early?]
marrying.\textsuperscript{47} The mischief done by this false notion is doubly deplorable, argued Tait's, for when a man reaches thirty and marries comfortably, he is too thoroughly indoctrinated in his lascivious habits to forego them; they "cleave often through life."\textsuperscript{48}

Noted above was the fact that middle class morality tended to overlook in man that which in woman was the unforgivable sin. This attitude is merely a symptom of a larger attitude toward woman and toward the family which helped in several ways to create a demand for prostitutes in the nineteenth century. The idealization of woman, so much a part of the Victorian middle class morality, put her on a pedestal; but the trouble with being on a pedestal is that there is no room to move. One can either stand perfectly still or move and fall off, and these were precisely the choices available to the Victorian woman. She was raised right into slavery.\textsuperscript{49} Like Marlow's aunt in \textit{Heart of Darkness}, women were to be "out of touch with truth." Man's was the realm of truth; woman's was that of the pleasing and the

\textsuperscript{47}May 7, 1857, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{48}"Domestic Slave Trade," p. 257.

\textsuperscript{49}Laver, p. 31.
beautiful. "For my part," said Rousseau, "I would have a young Englishwoman cultivate her agreeable talents, in order to please her future husband, with as much care and assiduity as a young Circassian cultivates hers, to fit her for the harem of an Eastern bashaw." These agreeable talents, he went on to say, were her "subtlety [sic] and her beauty." Mary Wollstonecraft was quick to point out that if these were the only virtues a wife possessed, she would quickly lose the interest and attentions of her husband, for even the greatest charms would soon become stale (72). Because the Victorian wife was trained to offer her husband no companionship, no intellectual satisfaction, the man often sought women who represented variety, and thus the Eastern bashaw's was not the only harem. Of the prostitute Havelock Ellis has said:

She has unbridled feminine instincts, she is mistress of the feminine arts of adornment, she can speak to [a man] concerning the mysteries of womanhood and the luxuries of sex with an immediate freedom and knowledge the innocent maiden cloistered in her home would be incapable of. She appeals to him by no means only because she can gratify the lower desires of sex, but also

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because she is, in her way, an artist, an expert in the art of feminine exploitation, a leader of feminine fashions . . . . Her uncertain social position makes all that is conventional and established hateful to her, while her temperament makes perpetual novelty delightful. (299)

Furthermore the wife learned only those things that could be used for evil as well as for good, for subtlety and beauty which can snare a husband can also be the tools by which that husband is cuckolded. "Will it be allowed," asks Mary Wollstonecraft,

that the surest way to make a wife chaste is to teach her to practise the wanton arts of a mistress, termed virtuous coquetry by the sensualist who can no longer relish the artless charms of sincerity, or taste the pleasure arising from a tender intimacy, and rendered interesting by sense? (78)

Thus spring up the intrigues of married women chronicled so frequently in Victorian fiction, the adultery sought for the sake of varying a dull life and tacitly approved by society for as long as it kept its ugly head hidden. So long as women "are only made to acquire personal accomplishments, men will seek for pleasure in variety, and faithless husbands will make faithless wives."51 While women were not allowed to cultivate their intellects and make of themselves companions for their husbands,

51 Wollstonecraft, p. 20.
harlotry, and adultery, flourished.

More importantly, because women had to be protected from the truth, because there were many subjects not fit for the ears of a maiden to listen to or the mind of a virgin to dwell on, many a Victorian bride went to her wedding bed without the least suspicion of her wifely duties. The lessons learned on the first night of marriage were hardly palatable to the girl who spent the first third of her life unaware of such realities. The psychological consequences could be awesome; the young girl "pure as snow" and "chaste as ice" became frequently the frigid wife. On the other hand, those women who did accept the reality of sex did so with no notions of their own pleasure, for they took no pleasure in sex, nor could they give much; the pleasure was that which could be taken, forcibly or otherwise, by the male.

The importance of sex to the woman was that it allowed her to fulfill her function as wife and mother. Motherhood was the greatest of all blessings bestowed on woman by God, and God was certainly liberal in the bestowal of his blessings, for large families became a hallmark of the Victorian age. Dickens' wife managed to have ten children before her husband became infatuated with Ellen Ternan and moved out of the house. A "good" woman's attitude toward sex fostered a system of prostitution,
for pleasure in sex was non-existent, and if positive frigidity were avoided, frequent pregnancy and the ravages of childbirth often sent the husband in search of that other kind of woman, the one who seemed to thrive on passion. The whole concept of the family, then, tended to render the marital bed less inviting than that of the nameless creature found in the Haymarket or the woman cosily installed in an out-of-the-way lodging house in St. John's Woods. It need hardly be pointed out that the wife who knew that her husband had found a better bed to sleep in saw in the whore some kind of rival. She could hardly be expected to forgive and help in the reclamation of the woman who sought the destruction of her family. Her only weapon against sexuality was rejection; if she could not be exterminated, the prostitute could at least be forced to work her wiles from outside the pale of respectable society.

Certainly other causes had a part in creating a place for the prostitution that existed and flourished during the reign of Queen Victoria. From the vantage point of a century, however, the two dealt with above seem especially instrumental. The Industrial


\(^{53}\) Henriques, III, 189.
Revolution placed the poor at the mercy of the rich, placed the poor in a situation in which more immediate concerns than morality were uppermost, placed temptation in the way of females who saw in prostitution an escape from their own deplorable conditions, and placed far too many people in slums, in close proximity whereby morality and decency were destroyed. Middle class attitudes, on the other hand, made the sin of the fallen woman irrevocable, made marriage an institution to be eschewed until one could afford to marry comfortably, and consequently made the "bought red mouth" a satisfactory substitute. Furthermore, the accomplishments accorded the wife made her an unfit companion for her husband, and she frequently saw him lost to a woman of more variety. Young girls, too, were kept in a state of ignorance before marriage and in a state of pregnancy afterwards. The revulsion of feeling that a wife could have towards sex or, at best, the passive acceptance of something unpleasant often drove the husband to the woman of no such scrupulosity. Thus, these two factors contributed in a large measure to a system of prostitution which, during the early years of the nineteenth century, outgrew the few small dark streets to which it had been previously restricted and moved throughout the city. By 1832 "every borough in London was . . . able to offer its quota of
whores." The extent of the "great social evil" was indeed great.

The twentieth century hardly needs My Secret Life to reveal to it that "underneath the world of Victorian England as we know it . . . a real, secret life was being conducted." Information given on the preceding pages attests very clearly to the existence of a "secret life of sex." What is more significant than the phenomenon, however, is the responses of the Victorians themselves to this phenomenon. What did they do in the wake of this widespread evil? We have seen, in part, but only in part, their attempts to explain its causes, but causal analysis was only one way in which the nineteenth century reacted to this "democratization" of prostitution. G. M. Young's assertion about "the central theme of history" is never more applicable than in the case of Victorian prostitution (which problem Young never mentions): Victorian prostitution is a phenomenon less interesting in itself than in the attitudes held by the Victorians concerning

54Henriques, III, 189.


56The term is used by Henriques, III, 52.
the problem—"not what happened, but what people felt about it when it was happening."\textsuperscript{57}

The following chapters, then, represent an analysis of the thoughts of some Victorians on the "great social evil." The way in which they responded, the conceptions which they bore, and the misconceptions under which they labored are all worth of study, for they all tell something about the Victorians, something, perhaps, about Victorianism and, therefore, something about the antecedents of modernity. The long years of Victoria's reign saw many changes in England, among them great changes in attitude toward the prostitute. These changes are worth looking at, particularly those embodied in the genre in which the nineteenth century excelled, the novel. The majority of the attitudes discussed in the following pages are those of the writers of nineteenth-century fiction, but the two chapters immediately following this one examine dominant attitudes towards prostitution, stands taken either against or for the polluted sinner. Thus, the opinions of both journalists and novelists are presented, for the fundamental assumptions and confusions of the journalists are reflected in

the two classes of prostitutes depicted in fiction, the depraved
and the redeemable.
CHAPTER II

"THE LOWEST FORM OF SEXUAL IRREGULARITY"

Evangelicalism began, in part, as a movement to counter the lax moral standards prevalent in England during the late years of the eighteenth century.\(^1\) The focus of one of its sharpest attacks was prostitution, the same "great social evil" that Evangelical condemnation of extra-marital sex and condonation of marrying late helped to promote. When it was learned, for example, that the Duke of York's mistress had a huge trade in selling military appointments and when the papers reported that at least four hundred prostitutes went to watery graves when one of the navy's men-of-war sank,\(^2\) the pious group was convinced that prostitution was single-handedly undermining godliness in England.


\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 21-23.
The Evangelicals had several reasons for heaping the collective guilt of a nation upon the prostitute. Their own reverence, literally, for chastity and marital continence led them to find doubly abhorrent the prostitute who valued neither. Secondly, they feared, not without some justification, that prostitution would soon undermine all moral standards by tempting from the path of virtue all the youth of the nation whose march along that path was so precarious. And finally, sexual frustration and inhibitions aside, once they began their clean-up campaign, there loomed the very real frustration of effecting no improvement, indeed, of ultimately helping to foster the very disease they sought to cure. The result of these fetishes, fears, and frustrations was that the common prostitute came to loom in the minds of the Evangelicals as an omnipresent plague of evil and corruption. By magnifying her evil, they distorted her importance and probably their own image of her. The resultant monster, a combination of fact and fantasy, was a woman, if not an animal, who was to be associated with all that is foul and rotten, a creature whose profession necessitated that she be unimaginably crude and vulgar, a beast whose mode of life suggested a completely perverted sense of values. For what else could be expected of a woman who professed absolutely no awe for, and placed no value on, the temple
that was her body and the God that had created her. According to the Evangelicals, her profession clearly revealed the nature and the values of the prostitute.

It has been frequently pointed out that as a movement, Evangelicalism predated the Victorian age and that the morality advocated by the movement merely carried over from one age to another. The same might be said of the image of vice that the Evangelicals created in the prostitute. Their vision of total corruption and utter pollution became, by 1832, a stereotyped image for the huge class of England's sexual offenders. The evaluation fostered by the image lasted into the Victorian age, and the results were a set of descriptive characteristics that Victorians felt distinguished the prostitute and that demanded of society a complete condemnation of this beast.

The elements of prostitution as the Evangelical described them are treated in the following pages. The passages that are used to exemplify these characteristics are not taken from writers who are themselves Evangelicals. Rather they are the words of Victorians who were deeply influenced by the vision of a religious

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group that shaped moral standards during the age just prior to the Victorian age, or they are the words of men and women who looked around them at the pervasive and pernicious prostitution that flourished so during Victoria's reign. That they might be either attests to the accuracy with which the Evangelicals described the whores they so despised. The problem, however, lay not in the veracity of the Evangelical claims--they were indisputably true--but lay, rather, in the indiscriminate universality with which the Evangelicals and those influenced by them attributed these characteristics to female sexual offenders. Everyone from the young girl who allowed her fiancé to anticipate the joys of marriage to the bawd who lured virgins to her home that they might be deflowered (and after the defloweration, the virgins themselves) was lumped into a single class and was thought to possess the same distinguishing characteristics. Because a girl committed a sexual sin, because she transgressed physically, the Evangelicals reasoned that her entire nature, her soul, was totally corrupted.

To the Evangelicals, the prostitute's profession, her wallowing in the physical, revealed clearly her spiritual nature, a nature that was vile. Thus commentators frequently emphasize this vileness, a characteristic the whores themselves try to hide.
Dr. William Acton, for example, depicts as utterly vile the girls who make up the stable of a pimp. They are, he says, "rouged and whitewashed creatures, with painted lips and eyebrows, and false hair." The impression Acton gives is of Marlow's "whited sepulchre," death and corruption unconvincingly disguised. Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861-1862) also imparts something of this vileness, but the women he describes are beyond dissimulation; they simply reveal completely corrupted and debased natures. One woman he interviewed in a brothel was too diseased to ply her trade: "Her face was shrivelled and famine-stricken, her eyes bloodshot and glaring, her features disfigured slightly with disease, and her hair dishevelled, tangled and matted. More like a beast in his lair than a human being in her home was this woman." In another room in the same house, Mayhew finds a prostitute and an East Indian sailor "stupefied from the effects of the opium he had been taking." The woman

was half idiotically endeavouring to derive some stupefaction from [sic] the ashes he had left in his pipe. Her

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5 *London Labour and the London Poor* (New York, 1968), IV, 232. All citations are from Vol. IV.
face was grimy and unwashed, and her hands so black and filthy that mustard-and-cress might have been sown successfully upon them. As she was huddled up with her back against the wall she appeared an animated bundle of rags . . . . In all probability she was diseased; and the disease communicated by the Malays, Lascars, and Orientals generally, is said to be the most frightful form of lues to be met with in Europe. (231-232)

Yet another woman Mayhew meets, a horribly disfigured creature, tells him that syphilis "attacked my face, and ruined my features to such an extent that I am hideous to look upon, and I would be noticed by no one if I frequented those places where women of my class most congregate; indeed, I should be driven away with curses and execrations" (244). Unable or unwilling to make mention of venereal disease in his work, the writer of fiction chose to suggest the vileness of prostitution in vague general terms. In Samuel Warren's *Passages From the Diary of a Late Physician* (1832), the title character attends a sick prostitute in a brothel but is nauseated by the "horrid closeness" of the air he is forced to breathe: "My soul was sick within me. I would fain have slipped away, once for all, from such a horrid scene and neighbourhood." 6 Similarly, in Felicia Skene's *Hidden Depths* (1866), Ernestine Courtenay is sickened at the prospect of spending even

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6 (New York, 1871), II, 281, 290. All citations are from Vol. II.
a few minutes in the same house with Mother Dorrell, another
whited sepulchre who hypocritically protests that since her husband
died she has been forced to take in lodgers but that all of her girls
are highly respectable young ladies. 7 Whether they attempt to
cover over the vileness or not, it remains clearly perceivable,
and whether it is vileness observed in working with prostitutes,
as in the cases of Acton and Mayhew, or whether it is the vileness
of an Evangelically influenced concept of the whore, it is the same
vileness.

Another aspect of prostitution frequently noted by both social
workers and Evangelicals, one not unrelated to its vileness, is
the crudity and vulgarity of the women who make up the class of
prostitutes. This is certainly a phenomenon with a basis in fact.
Hippolyte Taine, in the 1860's a visitor to England, describes the
"Beggars, thieves, and prostitutes, especially the latter, [who]
swarm in Shadwell Street":

Three times in ten minutes I saw crowds collect round
doorways, attracted by fights, especially by fights be-
tween women. One of them, her face covered with blood,
tears in her eyes, drunk, was trying to fly at a man
while the mob watched and laughed . . . .

7 (Edinburgh, 1866), II, 127.
A few of the women show vestiges of former cleanliness, or wear a new dress; but most of them are in dirty, ill-assorted rags . . . . I noticed numerous black eyes, bandaged noses, cut cheeks. These women gesticulate with extraordinary vehemence; but their most horrible attribute is the voice—thin, shrill, cracked, like that of a sick owl.  

Taine's description is a combination of vileness and vulgarity.

Dr. Acton points out the same vulgarity, although less active, in a brothel. Of the whores he says, "They are usually during the day, unless called upon by their followers, or employed in dressing, to be found, dishevelled, dirty, slipshod and dressing-gowned, in [the] kitchen . . . . Stupid from beer, or fractious from gin, they swear and chatter brainless stuff all day, about men and millinery, their own schemes and adventures, and the faults of others of the sisterhood" (40-41). Mayhew also comments on the environment of the brothel kitchen. In one such kitchen he finds four prostitutes:

They were waiting for their men, probably thieves. They had a can of beer, which they passed from one to the other. The woman of the house had gone out to meet her husband, who was to be liberated from prison that night, having been imprisoned for a burglary three years ago,

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his term of incarceration happening to end that day. His friends were to meet at his house and celebrate his return by an orgie, when all of them, we were told, hoped to be blind drunk; and, added the girl who volunteered the information, "None of 'em didn't care dam for police." She was evidently anticipating the happy state of inebriety she had just been predicting. (232)

The extent to which vulgarity and crudeness were actually considered inseparable from prostitution is suggested by Florence Nightingale. Noting the indecency and immorality which prevailed in hospitals before she inaugurated her reforms, Miss Nightingale comments on the hardness necessary in any woman who sought to be a nurse: "It was preferred that nurses should be women who had lost their characters." 9

Many of the individual whores interviewed by Mayhew attest to this coarseness. The woman, already referred to, who was too diseased to receive clients earned her room in the brothel by cleaning out the water closets during the day (232). "Chousing Bett" is described by Mayhew "as if she would be a formidable opponent in a street-quarrel or an Irish row" (223). Another whore that he meets in a bar shows Mayhew the scar she has from a bayonet wound (236). She is bitterly critical of "such -- --

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cowards" (236) that would hit a lady. When the interviewer asks her how she began in the profession, she replies, "Get along with your questions. If you give me any of your cheek, I'll -- -- soon serve you the same" (236). The "same," it turns out, refers to the fact that with a crowbar she once "lamed one of the bobbies for life" (236). Another woman, a self-styled "drunken old b -- --," laments the loss of her youth. Forced by age from active service in the profession, she serves presently as a watchdog over one of the younger girls. Although it does not have the rewards of actual prostitution, her job does provide her with enough money to stay drunk nearly all of the time (246).

"Chousing Bett," mentioned above, accepts Mayhew's offer for a drink and proceeds to gulp down three glasses of gin after which she tells all about the pimp for whom she works. Mayhew finds "Lushing Loo" suffering acutely from the previous evening's drinking. When he offers to buy her a little something to make her feel better, she quickly drinks herself into another stupor and begins to speculate on the amount of time that will elapse before she falls victim to the D. T.'s (224).

In fiction the crudeness and vulgarity of prostitution are frequently noted. In Mrs. Norton's Lost and Saved (1863), Beatrice Brooke rushes from her home to get medicine for her
sick child but is detained by a group of "gaily-dressed" and drunk prostitutes. When one of the whores recognizes the anguished mother's distraction, she attempts to extricate her from the crowd. Her efforts are rewarded with a blow on the head from the fist of another prostitute. When the girl returns the punch, a full scale street fight erupts.10 As the physician in Warren's Passages approaches the brothel he has been summoned to, he sees "slatternly half-dressed figures of young women, clustering about the opened doors of every house in the court, and laughing loudly as they occasionally shouted to one another across the court" (280). This kind of description is standard in any depiction of brothels or areas where whores congregate. That it is factual, as well a product of the Evangelical imagination, is attested to by a very similar description of casual crudeness noted by the youthful Stephen Daedalus roaming through the brothel area of Dublin.11

The vulgarity of the individual prostitutes in fiction is simply marvelous. In "The Lieutenant's Daughter" (1847),


Catherine Gray spies the man who originally seduced her in a low tavern with a gaudy prostitute on his lap. When Catherine appeals to the man for help, he shoves her away while the prostitute laughs gleefully to see the miserable girl so ill-treated that she passes out.\(^{12}\) The physician in *Passages* meets at the brothel a prostitute yelling that she is innocent of the robbery she has been accused of by her customer. With "her dress almost torn off her shoulders, and her hair hanging loosely all about her head and neck, and almost covering her face," she screams violently that the man is a "-- liar" (290). In Alfred Butler's witty *Elphinstone* (1841), the country-bred Amelia Williams is shocked at the conduct of the women who accompany her protector's friends to a party. They dress immodestly and use language that is "a mixture of oaths and cant."\(^{13}\) At the party they attend, Amelia is appalled when every "lady" present drinks too much and is soon "seated on a gentleman's knee, and her neck encircled by his arm" (171). Soon after "one of the ladies volunteered a dance upon the table; an exercise not adapted or intended


\(^{13}\) (London, 1841), II, 169-170. All citations are from Vol. II.
to hide the charms with which nature had blessed her . . . " (172).

When her protector eventually leaves Amelia stranded in their hotel room (actually a brothel), the fat, evil-looking "landlady" demands Amelia's rent. The girl protests that she has no money, but the woman scornfully replies, "Oh! I dare say you don't want me to tell you how [to get some]; with such a pretty face as yours, you've no need to want money" (194). The bawd eventually sells the girl to a drunken soldier, and while he violently rapes Amelia, the landlady stands in the doorway chuckling (198). A final example of the crudity associated with prostitution is Rhoda Somerset in Charles Reade's A Terrible Temptation (1861). Modeled after Skittles, the reigning quean of London's demimonde in the 1860's, Rhoda even repeats one of Skittles' classic remarks: "Lucky for you beggars that I'm a lady, or I'd break every d--d window in the house."14 Based on fact, Rhoda is consistent with what the Evangelicals conceived the prostitute to be like.

They saw as another distinguishing characteristic of the prostitute a perverted hierarchy of values. Spiritual things that

should be important were ignored or despised by the whore while her positive values were materialistic and physical. This was derived from the fact that the whore obviously valued money and luxury more than she did virtue.

In his important essay on "Prostitution" (1850), W. R. Greg condemns those "for whom no pleas can be offered--who voluntarily and deliberately sell themselves to shame, and barter, in a cold spirit of bargain, chastity and reputation for carriages, jewels, and a luxurious table." An anonymous writer for Tait's Edinburgh Magazine also sees "extravagance" as a major reason for women becoming prostitutes. They are determined, he says, "to display finery, for which they could not work." One of the atrocities of prostitution is in the smallness of the amount of money involved. According to Dr. Acton, the prostitutes of Aldershot, a military town, receive occasionally half a crown, "but the usual honorarium is 1s. For this poor pay, these wretched women are content to surrender their persons" (57). Acton is clearly amazed at the value these whores place upon themselves,

15*Westminster Review*, LIII (July 1850), 458.

amazed at the little amount of money for which they consent to sell themselves. The small figure suggests a monstrous avariciousness, and the testimony of prostitutes does nothing to dispel this idea. One woman freely and unabashedly confesses to Mayhew that although she holds down a respectable job, she occasionally resorts to prostitution: "I am extravagant, and spend a great deal of money in eating and drinking, more than you would imagine. . . . I have the most expensive things sometimes, and when I can, I live in a sumptuous manner" (255). In an extraordinary letter to the editor of The Times, "Another Unfortunate," a self-confessed prostitute, brags about the gains her profession has resulted in. With some of the money she has made, says the girl, she provided for her parents' old age, bribed an official to keep her younger brother from being convicted of a robbery he committed, bought another brother, too lazy to work, a position on the police force, and got her sisters started in her own profitable profession.17 Her own reward has been an easy life complete with all possible material comfort. In spite of the manner in which she earns her money, "Another Unfortunate"

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17 February 24, 1858, p. 12. Because it appears on but a single page of the newspaper, subsequent references to this long and important letter will be left unnoted.
brags that

I go to all places of public amusement, behaving myself with as much propriety as society can exact. I pay business visits to my tradespeople, and most fashionable of the West-end. My milliners, my silk mercers, my bootmakers know, all of them, who I am and how I live, and they solicit my patronage as earnestly and cringingly as if I were madam, the lady of the right rev. patron of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

For "Another Unfortunate" the gains clearly outweigh the loss.

In fiction, too, avariciousness is a distinguishing characteristic of many prostitutes. In George Moore's A Mummer's Wife (1895), Kate Ede's friends, prostitutes all, try to convince her of the material advantages of prostitution. The money she would make, combined with her husband's allowance to her, they say, would make Kate "better off than any of us." For just a few drinks, Kate, an alcoholic, does finally take their advice. In Miss Skene's Hidden Depths, all the prostitutes in Mother Dorrell's house hurriedly leave for Aldershot when they learn that recently paid troops are returning to that garrison town (II, 145).

Chrysostomos Holton, the Tom-Jones-like foundling whose follies are depicted in Elphinstone, learns very soon after his

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arrival in London of the give-and-take system that governs the relationship between young men and the prostitutes who accompany them to the nightly bacchanals:

they were infinitely better than wives . . . . In fact, the young ladies considering it their duty to make the gentlemen as comfortable as possible in return for the liberal treatment they were receiving, were so polite and kind, and merry, and willing to join in anything and every thing promising amusement, that Mr. Holton was entirely delighted with the result of his first acceptance of an invitation to join them. (90)

In Henry Gladwyn Jebb's Out of the Depths (1859), Mary Smith learns much the same lesson that Mr. Holton does but from the female's point of view, for her roommates, Kate and Lizzy, have jobs to provide them with the necessities, but with no great qualms of conscience, they take to the streets in order to be "able to buy finery which did not come out of the savings of our trade."19

In Wilkie Collins' Armadale (1866), Maria Oldershaw, a bawd, functions only as an advisor to Lydia Gwilt in the latter's scheme to make a wealthy marriage for herself.20

A fine example of a character whose only values are money and the things money can buy is Bessie, the prostitute of Kipling's

19(New York, 1860), p. 94.

The Light That Failed (1891). Dick Heldar, contemplating making the girl his "housekeeper," acknowledges her greed: "The girl can't care [for me], . . . but if money can buy her to look after me, she shall be bought." \(^{21}\) She can be. When the proposal is put to her, Bessie knows that the "dresses and the pretty clothes were almost within her reach now" (285). When Dick reconsiders and withdraws his offer, Bessie evaluates her loss entirely in terms of material objects and cries over losing "the money, the blessed idleness and the pretty things, the companionship, and the chance of looking outwardly as respectable as a real lady" (293).

In her values Bessie is yet another whitened sepulchre.

Occasionally, the novelist depicted the prostitute's avarice as all-consuming. Not just her profession but her whole life was devoted solely to making money at the expense of others. In Hidden Depths, for example, Mother Dorrell's avarice is represented by the information she sells to Ernestine Courtenay concerning the whereabouts of a wayward girl. The pernicious bawd has absolutely no personal interest in the matter, but almost as a point of professional honor, she goes to great lengths to get money from Ernestine in return for false information. In Warren's Passages

\(^{21}\)The Writings in Prose and Verse of Rudyard Kipling (New York, 1898), IX, 283.
From the Diary of a Late Physician, avariciousness is seen in the plot of the bawd and the bully to rob a sick prostitute of her purse. When another prostitute reminds "mother" that the girl is dying, the "hateful harridan who owned the house" replies, "Well, slut, . . . and what if she is? Then the loss of a few pounds can't signify" (302).

Miss Arthur, the bawd in Froude's "The Lieutenant's Daughter," is revealed to be a woman whose only value is money and who even justifies her greed. The keeper of a bordello which specializes in providing virgins or near-virgins to rich and dissipated young men, she defends herself against the charge levied by a regular customer that she is inhumane, but her defense shows only that she is incapable of valuing anything but money:

We are very kind to our young ladies, and if it does not last very long, it is merry enough while it does. You keep your people to work for you as long as they are of any use to you, and when they can do no more you turn them off, don't you? Everybody does. Make what we can out of one another, that's the way with everything . . . . Eat one another if you like it, like the beasts do. . . .

If our girls are sharp, they can do very well. Coronets have been made out of our house. . . . However, most times we are only the friends of the friendless. You good gentlemen pick the flowers, and when you have had as much of the sweet as you want, you fling them away in the road: we only pick them up and put them in water. (232-233)
Lest there be any danger of his readers responding to the bawd's defense, Froude allows the woman to demonstrate precisely how her charity works for "the friendless." She sells Catherine Gray to a dissipated nobleman for two hundred pounds so that he can drug and rape her. Miss Arthur is a minor character in "The Lieutenant's Daughter," but in her brief appearance she represents the callous avariciousness of prostitution more fully than does even Becky Sharp.

To the sober minded Evangelicals, all pleasure was suspect; therefore, it was fitting that hedonistic pleasure came to be considered a distinguishing characteristic of the whore, and again Evangelical assumptions accord with actual fact. The most important and the most condemning aspect of the prostitute's pleasure was sexual. So enslaved by a monstrous and bestial lust was she, it was assumed, that she chose prostitution as a means by which to gratify this lust. Then there were the accompanying pleasures of the life of sin, the ease, the drink, and the crude jokes that only an abandoned creature would listen to.

Love of ease was a widely noted reason for girls turning to prostitution in the first place. Girls often became prostitutes, it was assumed, simply because they were too lazy to work hard for honest money. This kind of assumption is reflected in the
fact that Mayhew treats prostitutes and their profession in a section of *London Labour* entitled "Those That Will Not Work." If such an attitude towards prostitution is both naive and cruel, Mayhew had at least some basis for such an opinion, for several women he interviewed unashamedly claimed that they were just too lazy to work for a living. One girl became a prostitute simply because "I wished to escape from the drudgery of my father's shop" (216). And "Chousing Bett" tells Mayhew that she became a soldier's woman because prostitution offered her a way to rise in the world without working (223). Mayhew's findings are corroborated by several other commentators. According to the writer for *Tait's*, a major cause of prostitution is "indolence." Dr. Acton says the supply of prostitutes remains great partly because of the preferment of "indolent ease to labour" (118), and in distinguishing the prostitute of the melodramatic stage from the real prostitute, the *Saturday Review* sees the same set of values as does Acton:

The Traviata of London life, and of fact, is a young person of vulgar birth and still more vulgar soul who probably never lost her virtue, because in the true sense she never

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possessed any; but who of malice aforethought, and with a full determination to better herself, went upon the town because it was a pleasanter and easier life than honest service and respectable labour.²³

It is almost impossible to separate laziness as a cause from money as a value. Bessie, for example, in The Light That Failed, is a materialist, but she also looks forward to the slothful life she will be able to lead as Dick Heldar's mistress. Equally impossible to separate are crudeness as a distinguishing characteristic and hedonism as a way of life, for the prostitute's pleasure is invariably vulgar. This is simply the case in fact; prostitution's pleasures are vulgar, but the Evangelicals' intuitive perception of this phenomenon is probably due to their uncertainty about the whole subject of sex. Aware of pleasure in sex, they were inclined to condemn anything pleasurable, and their disgust for the prostitute inclined them to see her as a living pleasure thermometer desperately seeking forbidden pleasure in which the greater the taboo, the greater the pleasure. Dr. Acton's description of the music room behind a pub suggests something of this hedonism, for he witnesses there

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the vicious and the profligate sisterhood flaunting it [sic] gaily, or 'first rate', in their language--accepting all the attentions of men, freely plied with liquor, sitting in the best places, dressed far above their station, with plenty of money to spend, and denying themselves no amusement or enjoyment, encumbered with no domestic ties, and burdened with no children. (54-55)

Mayhew expresses his amazement at a syphilitic prostitute who "had obtained the soubriquet of 'hospital' as she was so frequently an inmate of one" who "only yesterday had two buboes lanced; and yet she was present at [a] scene of apparent festivity" (234). This "scene of apparent festivity" is another music hall, and seemingly the music halls and night houses, places such as the renowned and infamous Kate Hamilton's, were responsible to no small extent for this association of prostitutes with bacchanalian pleasure.

In fiction, too, the nightly orgy consisting of music, laughter, drink, and, after the chapter ended, sex was frequently described. In Harrison Ainsworth's Jack Sheppard (1839), for example, Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot share the attention of the title character at a feast interrupted by Jack's mother. This lady is shocked to find her son drunk and "receiving and returning, or rather attempting to return... the blandishments of a couple of females, one of whom had passed her arm round his neck, while the other leaned over the back of his chair, and appeared from her
gestures to be whispering soft nonsense into his ear. 24 When Mrs. Sheppard tries to extricate her son from these evil females, Poll Maggot, "nearly six feet high, and correspondingly proportioned, ... a model of symmetry ... with the frame of a Thalestris or a Trulla, the regular lineaments of the Medicean Venus" (XIII, 211), lifts the boy above her head and orders Mrs. Sheppard to leave so that the group might resume its partying.

In Elphinstone Mr. Holton's degeneration begins when he attends his first drinking party at which "every Jack had his Jill, and jollity was the order of the night" (81). As we have seen (above, p. 44), this "jollity" consists of ribaldry, drink, dancing on the tables, and sex. In Augustus Mayhew's Paved With Gold (1858), "four lovely Venuses" are spotted in an open carriage on the way to the Derby. The "angelic maidens" spend the day flirting with anyone willing to offer them champagne and finally go home with the best looking men. Looking like "fancy nuns," they enjoy the attention lavished on them, and they bring a great deal of pleasure to the dandies of the town. 25 In Mrs. Houstoun's "Recommended

24 The Novels of William Harrison Ainsworth (Philadelphia, 1902), XIII, 211.

to Mercy" (1863), Katie Reilly refuses the offer of the heroine to reform. When the latter warns Katie that she cannot long keep up the whirlwind pace of her life, the girl replies, "Time enough! I am but twenty-two--five years perhaps before me--a short life and a merry one."26 A final aspect of bacchanalian pleasure in which the Victorian prostitute indulged was gambling, and she was generally depicted at the tables at Baden-Baden. In Trollope's Can You Forgive Her (1864), to cite just one example, when Lady Glencora places a bet at the roulette table, she is stared at by "those horrid women with vermillion cheeks, and loud bonnets half off their heads, and hard, shameless eyes, and white gloves, which when taken off in the ardour of the game, disclosed dirty hands."27 In collecting at these tables, the whores were merely following the lead of Cora Pearl, one of the high-priced whores of the demimonde who loved to gamble and who frequently made her bedquarters at Baden-Baden.28

The life of the prostitute was often depicted as pleasurable but not in any bacchanalian way. It simply offered ease and


27 (New York, 1893), III, 220-221.

variety, neither of which were available to the Victorian housewife who had to bear and care for a great many children. This evaluation of the "great social evil" is seen especially in Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1884). Ernest Pontifex's wife Ellen rejects her illegal marriage to Ernest in favor of selective prostitution. When Ernest turns her out for drunkenness, she is more than willing to go back to her old life in order to escape the drudgery and monotony of marriage: "What us poor girls wants," she says, "is not to be jumped up all of a sudden and made honest women of; this is too much for us and throws us off our perch; what we wants is a regular friend or two, who'll let us keep from starving, and force us to be good for a bit together now and again. That's about as much as we can stand."29 In the same novel, Ernest's landlady Mrs. Jupp is too old to work actively in the profession. She laments the passing of her youth and tries to recapture youthful pleasure by taking dancing lessons. The "old sinner" leers with anticipation when she asks Ernest if his new book is about love (370-371). Thus, in several different ways, prostitution is equated with the life of pleasure.

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The values espoused by these prostitutes, then, are money and the things it can buy, and pleasure. With such a value system, whores quite obviously have no room for the value of selfless love, for among their material values there is no place for anything spiritual. The very fact that they have chosen prostitution implies that they value money more than love of which the highest expression is sexual union. Of prostitution Greg says, "Its peculiarity and heinousness consist in its divorcing from all feeling of love that which was meant by nature as the last and intensest expression of passionate love . . . . It is a voluntary exchange of the passionate love of a spiritual and intellectual being, for the mere hunger and thirst of the beast" (450).

Because she constantly and indiscriminately changed partners, the sex act could have no meaning for the whore beyond what the Evangelical conceived as the mere gratification of passion. Noble and exalting love, he assumed, was an absolute impossibility in a creature of such depravity.

The only kind of love the prostitute was thought to be capable of was love of self, or vanity. Vanity, points out W. R. Greg, is frequently a reason for women becoming prostitutes. They are "flattered by a language more refined and courteous than they hear from those of their own sphere" (458), and this flattery soon convinces
them to give themselves to evil-intentioned men. Servants, says Henry Mayhew, are especially susceptible to the snares of vanity, for they try to imitate the ways of their mistresses and to dress like them: It is a voluntary species of sacrifice on their part. A sort of suicidal decking with flowers, and making preparations for immolation on the part of the victim herself" (258). "Another Unfortunate" corroborates both Greg and Mayhew: "Vanity and idleness send us a large body of recruits," she says. This is especially true among "Servant girls, who wish to ape their mistresses' finery, and whose wages won't permit them to do so honestly." Some of the women interviewed by Mayhew attest to the prostitute's vanity. One woman gave up a decent job for a life of prostitution because she "liked to be noticed by the soldiers" (235), another because she loved clothes and "display" (216-217). In fiction, the girls who vainly listen to a tempter's flattery only to end up deflowered and abandoned are legion. Among the best known are Little Em'ly, Hetty Sorrel, and Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth. Seduction and abandonment became a favorite exemplum in the nineteenth century to illustrate the dangers of vanity.

Once she fell and became a whore, the prostitute was thought to be incapable of all but love of self. Her profession coarsened
her to such an extent that all feelings for others were rooted out and destroyed. For example, prostitutes sought to make their trade a springboard to marriage, and, consistent with their natures, they married wealth solely for the sake of the money. One girl tells Mayhew that "we often do marry, and well too; why shouldn't we, we are pretty, we dress well, we can talk and insinuate ourselves into the hearts of men by appealing to their passions and their senses" (219). Quite obviously, such marriages are not founded on mutual and selfless love. Mayhew comments on marriages involving the women of the demimonde: "The other day one of the most well-known women about town, Mrs. S____, was married to a German count; a few weeks ago Agnes W____ married a member of an old Norfolk family, who settled three thousand a year upon her." One woman he talks to denies any feeling of love when she tells him that she will probably end up marrying the boyfriend presently receiving gratis that for which others have to pay (256). As she tells of her plans, she considers only providing herself with a future life of ease.

In a variety of ways, fictional prostitutes deny the value of love. Bessie, for example, in *The Light That Failed*, responds

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30IV, 251. For the story of Agnes Willoughby's marriage to William Frederick "Mad" Windham, see *Pearl*, pp. lllff.
positively to Dick Heldar's proposal that she move in with him, 
but in spite of the fact that he appears to be searching for some-
thing meaningful--for what he does not yet know--Bessie's only 
response is to the material comfort to be derived from such an 
arrangement. She is incapable of responding to the needs of the 
blind painter. Similarly, Ellen's response to Ernest, in The Way 
of All Flesh, after she realizes that they belong to the same class 
by virtue of their both having been in prison, suggests that she 
sees in him a means to leave the streets where he meets her and 
to rejoin respectable humanity again. No sooner does she size 
up Ernest's naiveté than she begins to praise his parents who fired 
her. Ernest even has to talk the modest girl into drinking a glass 
of beer with him (296-297). She does not respond to Ernest, only 
to the position he can provide her with, and when she is faced with 
the monotony of being a housewife and mother to their two children, 
she simply turns from her family back to alcohol and the life of 
prostitution. Her values are clearly indicated by what she takes 
with her when she and her "husband" separate: "He may have the 
children; he can do better for them than I can; and as for his money, 
he may give it or keep it as he likes, . . . but if he means me to 
have it, I suppose I'd better have it," to which speech the narrator 
adds simply "--and have it she did" (324). And Katie Reilly, in
"Recommended to Mercy", demands that her men have money, for according to her philosophy, "there's no living on love" (272).

Highly indicative of the prostitute's inability to love is her failure to respond, not necessarily with love, but with charity to anyone other than herself. She feels no obligations to anyone but number one. Ellen's response to her children exemplifies an unfeeling nature. In *Hidden Depths*, the prostitutes all run off to Aldershot and leave behind them the bastard children that are their occupational hazard. Mother Dorrell, the bawd who is left holding the children, demonstrates her callousness by periodically beating them until she can supply herself with an airtight alibi. Then, when her presence is accounted for, the children mysteriously die in a fire. It is later revealed that the bawd arranged for the accident by locking the ignorant children in a room and letting them play with matches (II, 152). The bawd's response to the dying prostitute in Warren's *Passages From the Diary of a Late Physician* has already been pointed out: if the girl is dying, argues the crone, she has no need for her money. And Miss Arthur, the heartless bawd who makes a living by selling virgins, cannot respond to the girls as humans in spite of her protestations of charity. Her speech even robs the girls of their humanity. They are not girls; they are flowers. Catherine
Gray was not quite a virgin when Lord William bought her, says Miss Arthur, but "the rose was sweet enough still to make him forgive the taint upon its perfume" (248). At other times, the girls are simply unidentified "its" rather than humans. This same Lord William is willing to pay "two hundred pounds . . . if it's quite fresh" (229). Clearly, then, the prostitute depicted in accord with an Evangelical description may love money, material objects, ease, pleasure, and herself; but she is incapable of loving or even of acting charitably towards others. It is simply a case of the material over the spiritual.

A final characteristic comprising the Evangelically inspired picture of the prostitute is her lack of conscience, and the testimony of actual whores verifies the fact that they feel no sense of sin. More than any of the other characteristics seen by the Evangelicals, the lack of conscience in prostitutes seems to accord with actuality, for from about 1860 commentators are by and large agreed that prostitutes do not view their profession as others view it. Like their inability to love, their lack of conscience suggests a perverse nature, a blindness to any claims on them outside of those they selfishly make on themselves or those for which men are willing to pay. As the prostitute's
professional values are grounded in the physical and material to the exclusion of the spiritual, so are her moral values (if she has any at all).

Many prostitutes never learn anything about conscience, about right and wrong. Products of the slum, they come from families that cannot afford the luxury of a spiritual life, for it takes all their efforts to provide for their physical existence.

According to W. R. Greg,

The first and perhaps largest class of prostitutes are those who may fairly be said to have had no choice in the matter—who were born and bred in sin; whose parents were thieves and prostitutes before them; whose dwelling has always been in an atmosphere of squalid misery and sordid guilt; whom fate has marked from their cradle for a course of degradation; for whom there is no fall, for they stood already on the lowest level of existence; in whom there is no crime, for they had, and could have, neither an aspiration, a struggle, nor a choice. (457-458)

Some sixty years later, a correspondent of Havelock Ellis, a "man of the world," comments on the same environment: "... the terrible cases of overcrowding that are daily brought to light suggest that at very early ages the sense of things sexual takes place. This "sense" removes all "restraint" from an early and
totally meaningless loss of chastity. In 1890 G. P. Merrick reported that the term "immorality" had literally no meaning for a great many whores.

Prostitutes themselves substantiate these claims. One woman told Mayhew that she felt no shame at being a kept woman (216), and another reported that not only did prostituting herself not bother her but that she doubted whether it would even bother her boyfriend if he knew about it (256). Several women denied feeling sinful but did lament their loss of position in the world (219, 235-236). As early as 1840 William Tait noted that Edinburgh's prostitutes were very religious in spite of their profession, that they felt neither shame nor estrangement from God because of the life they led. This religiosity and lack of shame are attested to by the supposedly authentic remark of a Scottish prostitute, one Sunday night, to a potential client so pleased with his prospects that he began to whistle. Appalled, she said: "Jist button up yer breek, and gang yer gate, my chick: --G-d for

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31 Havelock Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, in Studies in the Psychology of Sex (Philadelphia, 1925), VI, 256.

32 Quoted in Ellis, VI, 289-290.

sakes, ma man; I'm na goin to fornicate the nicht wi a man who
whistles on the Sabbath!"34

"Another Unfortunate" gives a full account of her background
in order to explain her attitude towards her profession. She was
brought up with no religious training, for "No parson ever came
near us. The place where we lived was too dirty for the nicely
shod gentlemen." Nor did her parents, who "both loved drink,"
take the place of a religious instructor:

My parents did not give me any education; they did not
instill into my mind virtuous precepts nor set me a
good example. All my experiences in early life were
gleaned among associates who knew nothing of the laws
of God but by dim tradition and faint report, and whose
chiefest triumphs consisted in picking their way through
the paths of destitution in which they were cast by cunning
evasion or in open defiance of the laws of man.

Without any upbringing, her loss of chastity was inevitable:

I was a fine, robust, healthy girl, 13 years of age. I had
larked with the boys of my own age. I had huddled with
boys and girls together, all night long in our common
haunts. I had seen much and heard abundantly of the
mysteries of the sexes. To me such things had been
matters of common sight and common talk. For some
time I had trembled and coquetted on the verge of a strong
curiosity, and a natural desire, and without a particle

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34In a letter found among the papers of Bertrand Russell's
grandfather, in Pearl, p. 77.
of affection, scarce a partiality, I lost--what? not my
virtue, for I never had any. That which is commonly,
but untruly called virtue, I gave away. . . . Is [virtue]
not the principle, the essence, which keeps watch and
ward over the conduct, over the substance, the
materiality? No such principle ever kept watch and
ward over me, and I repeat that I never lost that which
I never had--my virtue.

Two years later "Another Unfortunate" followed in the footsteps
of girls of her neighborhood who had "been started off, none knew
whither or how, to seek [their] fortune" and who, later, "would
reappear among us with a profusion of ribands, fine clothes and
lots of cash." She was taken off by "one of our be-ribanded
visitors" who "introduced me to the great world . . . . I cannot
say that I felt any other shame than the bashfulness of a
noviciate [sic] introduced to a strange society." Since that time,
says the girl, her life has alternated "between reckless gaiety
and extreme destitution."

"Another Unfortunate" never learned anything of morality as
a child, and when a kindly protector helped her educate herself,
she succeeded in all but "moral science" which "has always been
an enigma to me, and is so this day." Thus, it is not surprising
that she is unrepentant and actually defensive of her right to choose
any profession that will prove profitable:
Now, what if I am a prostitute, what business has society to abuse me? Have I received any favours at the hands of society? If I am a hideous cancer in society, are not the causes of the disease to be sought in the rottenness of the carcass? . . . what has society ever done for me, that I should do anything for it, and what have I ever done against society that it should drive me into a corner and crush me to the earth?

Thus, in 1858, "Another Unfortunate" lends a weighty voice to the cries of those who deny any sense of conscience in England's prostitutes.

Even those who do possess a conscience and a sense of sin when they first become prostitutes soon forget their scruples. Charles Booth provides a keen analysis to explain the falling away of the moral sense:

When quite new to the life, the memories of home may have power, or if a baby is born, the maternal instinct may make rescue possible. Otherwise there is little to stimulate the conscience. There being no strong passion involved, there is little reaction to be laid hold of, perhaps nothing more poignant than a dull sense of degradation.35

One whore even claimed to have been given a religious education, but she was drugged and raped shortly after her arrival in London

and in this way forced to become a prostitute. Her moral back-
ground, she told Mayhew, is all but forgotten: 'I don't think
much of my way of life. You folks as has honour, and character,
and feelings, and such, can't understand how all that's been
beaten out of people like me. I don't feel. I'm used to it' (241).

Most of the fictional prostitutes referred to in this chapter
are not treated in terms of their attitude towards their profession,
but their positive values--the laziness of Bessie, the avaricious-
ness of Miss Arthur, the callousness of Mother Dorrell, and the
vulgarity of the chuckling bawd in *Elphinstone*--all suggest that
they are incapable of any sense of wrong, incapable of feeling
any responsibility to any law, God's or man's, outside of them-
selves. The one character who might be said actually to sub-
stantiate "Another Unfortunate" is the wonderful Mrs. Jupp of
*The Way of All Flesh*. Too old to be actively in service, Mrs.
Jupp spends a good deal of time lining up customers for her
younger friends and mixing up the sacred with the profane in
lamenting over the unnaturalness in the young men of the day,
particularly that of Ernest Pontifex who "never took no notice of
[Rose] no more than he did of me":

I can't make out what the young men are a-coming to;
I wish the horn may blow for me and the worms take
me this very night, if it's not enough to make a woman stand before God and strike the one half on 'em silly to see the way they goes on, and many an honest girl has to go home night after night without so much as a fourpenny-bit and paying three and sixpence a week rent. (257)

Ultimately, the impression that one is given by the plethora of unrepentant prostitutes of the Victorian age is that they are so devoted to their positive values that there is no room for conscience. They are self-centered or superficial. They value themselves, money, and ease. Love, or a feeling for someone outside of themselves, and conscience, a feeling for the dictates of God and morality, are excluded because these are not self-oriented. Katie Reilly, the unrepentant courtesan in "Recommended to Mercy", rejects respectability which to her is all hypocrisy, for "respectable" women envy those of the demimonde: "Yes, envy us. . . . Don't I see how they look at us in the Park, how they dress after us, talk like us, ride like us? They see we have the men they want, the money they want, and the fashion they want" (307). Whether her accusation is true or not, it is perfectly clear that all of Katie's values are material--men, money, and

\[36\] Apparently it is, for the same charge is levied in William Black, In Silk Attire (New York, 1883), p. 120, published originally in 1869.
fashion--just as her profession is physical. Similarly in Ouida's *Under Two Flags* (1867), the Zu-Zu has no particular need to reform. As the acknowledged leader of the demimonde, she is "the rage" and "perfectly happy" as such, for "her childish recollections were of a stifling lean to with the odor of pigsty and strawyard, pork for a feast once a week, starvation all the other six days, kicks, slaps, wrangling, and a general atmosphere of beer and wash-tubs; she hated her past and loved her cigar on the drag." The Zu-Zu confirms the contention of the *Saturday Review* that the "fall" of a girl from virtue to prostitution consisted usually of "a transition from a state of vicious squalid poverty to a state of vicious brilliant opulence." It is by no means surprising that the Zu-Zu has no moral qualms, for, like those of Katie Reilly, her values are all materialistic. She need not even plead, as did "Another Unfortunate," that she does not understand moral science, for what she does understand is that conscience and selflessness are luxuries incompatible with the material comforts that surround her. One set of luxuries, therefore, has to go, and the spiritual are much more readily expendable than are the material.

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37 Quoted in Pearl, p. 183.
The prostitute, then, as the Evangelicals described her, was crude, vile, hedonistic, avaricious, and incapable of either love or conscience. She was completely self-oriented, and her concern for self superficially ignored all aspects of her inner nature and concentrated its focus on physical externals.

Well into the Victorian age these characteristics were recognized and condemned. "Another Unfortunate" and many of those interviewed by Mayhew confirm Evangelical claims regarding the prostitute. Thus, an 1839 police report noted that prostitutes in Liverpool were "the companions and accessories of thieves; and in general, themselves thieves and pickpockets."\(^{39}\) And this is sociological study rather than Evangelical deduction. The following year William Tait enumerated prostitutes' distinguishing characteristics as "deceit, dissimulation, and dishonesty."\(^{40}\) But even more condemning than these was the belief that the prostitute's profession depraved her nature (or that a depraved nature originally drove her to prostitution). Mayhew's ultimate evaluation of prostitution is that it makes women "brutal," that it destroys in them "the finer attributes of human nature" (241).

\(^{39}\) _First Report of the Commissioners . . . , 1839_, in Henriques, III, 83.

\(^{40}\) _Magdalenism_, quoted in Henriques, III, 108.
And finally, an indignant W. R. Greg tells why he considers the sin of prostitution to be "the worst and lowest form of sexual irregularity," because, he says, it is "the most indicative of a low nature, the most degrading and sapping to the loftier life" (449). Because they could not accept the false value system that was part of the prostitute's degraded nature, the Evangelicals and many in the Victorian age who were influenced by them thrust the polluted outcast from their midst and tried to ignore her altogether.
CHAPTER III

"LE COEUR ET L'ESPRIT DE CES FEMMES"

Evangelical generalizations about the nature of the prostitute were undeniably true. Modern psychology and sociology have shown that girls do usually turn to prostitution for money, or luxury, or ease either because they are too lazy to work or because they cannot earn as much in another job as they can by prostituting themselves. Field research and case studies have substantiated the claims that the profession does make a woman crude and callous, that it does leave her frequently incapable of meaningful interpersonal relationships, and that the whore does not evaluate her profession in terms of morality any more than does a plumber.¹

But the Evangelicals did not base their conclusions about the prostitute on field research. For fear of contamination, they

shunned her and reasoned analogically about her. They saw what her sin consisted of, a sin by which they were disgusted, and they simply drew conclusions about the nature or the inner life of the harlot, conclusions which depicted the whore's spiritual life as projected or externalized by her physical. Therefore, the nature they described, as we saw in the preceding chapter, was that of a selfish woman without worthwhile values. In Greg's words, the prostitute had "a low nature."

By the beginning of Victoria's reign, the Evangelical movement, by now twice as old as the queen, had succeeded in giving the impression to an ignorant nation that each and every prostitute in England shared this common group of characteristics and, therefore, that every one of them was polluted and contaminated. The Evangelicals gave to the nation their own anguished detestation of an entire, large class of women. They may have established refuges and Lock asylums to help reclaim some of these women, but their own over-reaction to the sexual sinner led them to create cheerless prisons of harsh discipline, frequent and fervent prayer sessions, and, in general, a way of life Benedictine-like in the physical and spiritual privation that was its cornerstone. The Evangelical theory for such reforming policies, of course, was that only great penance, austere self-control, and self-abasing
prayer could effectively change, not a physical way of life, but a spiritual nature that was completely polluted. Thus, their theory had the practical result of producing remarkably few penitents, for no matter how bad the life of prostitution, it was still preferable to the non-life of the refuge.

At any rate, the Victorian age inherited a detestation for prostitutes and for prostitution. Like its predecessor, the age tended to class all sexual offenders together, to condemn them and to refuse thereafter even to acknowledge their existence. But what about those who for one reason or another were wrongfully placed in this class? What about the girl who did fall, who, unlike "Another Unfortunate," did have a virtue to lose and did lose it because of factors outside her control? What about her whose values were not solely self-oriented? In short, what about the prostitute whose spiritual nature remained distinct from her sinful physical life? Was she to be lumped together with "Chousing Bett" and Mother Dorrell and summarily dismissed as unworthy of anything but scorn dealt her by a self-righteous middle class?

Although its influence was indirect, the major factor in bringing home to a nation the fact that many of the sinful sisterhood were outsiders forced into the ranks of prostitution was the monumental study of Parisian prostitution De la prostitution dans
announced that of about five thousand prostitutes he interviewed, almost a third claimed that they became prostitutes because they were seduced and abandoned, and another third because of poverty. His ideas, transmitted to England largely by W. R. Greg, did much to make the British question their assumption that prostitution automatically indicated a depraved nature. In 1848-1849 Henry Mayhew wrote a series of letters to the Morning Chronicle and pointed up something that Greg was to seize on in the following year. Poverty, said Mayhew as had Duchatelet before him, led many women to sell themselves in order to survive. Thus, poverty and seduction, factors over which a girl had no control, could force her into the ranks of prostitution.

When it became clear to Victorian humanitarians that they could not justifiably evaluate all prostitutes as creatures of depraved natures, when they became aware that there were prostitutes that had not freely and amorally chosen their way of life, they sought to correct the misconceptions of a society too influenced by its Evangelical ancestors and thereby correct the

\[2\text{Parent-Duchatelet's figures are given in Havelock Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, in Studies in the Psychology of Sex (Philadelphia, 1925), VI, 256-257.}\]
injustice being done to this group of suffering women. In the fifties and early sixties, England witnessed a large-scale campaign to soften society's attitude towards reclaimable prostitutes and to make available means for them to free themselves from the sinful morass in which they were trapped. W. R. Greg, for example, on the second page of his essay on "Prostitution" (1850), evaluates the prostitute-customer transaction as "the worst and lowest form of sexual irregularity, the most revolting to the unpolluted feelings." Greatly influenced by Parent-Duchatelet, however, he devotes fifty-seven subsequent pages of impassioned rhetoric and sentiment to defending the prostitute whose nature is not in accord with her profession, who has spiritual values. The key phrase of the entire essay occurs in the discussion of the attitudes of prostitutes towards their profession. He does not refer to all whores, he says, but only to "all who are not wholly lost" (494). The latter, of course, are those who have fallen from a state of innocence, those who have a spiritual life at odds with the very physical life of their profession.

Whereas the Evangelicals tended to ignore in practice those who were driven to a life of prostitution, the writers and reformers

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3Westminster Review, LIII (July 1850), 449.
who reacted to the Evangelical condemnation were inclined to ignore all those except the fallen. To represent the entire class, from Little Em'ly to "Lushing Loo," they depict the very recently fallen, those whose natures had not yet hardened and coarsened by conjunction with the corrupting influences of the profession. Thus, in its attempts to curb the proliferation of prostitution, Tait's Edinburgh Magazine offers no scheme for exterminating the evil, but it does call upon the public to confine "this infamous career to limited classes with a predilection to vice." These "limited classes" are obviously made up of those of no fall, but the article in which the appeal occurs and its two companion pieces concern themselves almost exclusively with the sympathetically treated fallen woman. About the social conditions that produced these "limited classes" the magazine has nothing to say, but it is little more than a matter of focus that differentiates Tait's, and indeed all of these humanitarians, from late-century environmental naturalists. Charles Dickens superintended, for a number of years, Urania Cottage, a home for

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4"The Domestic Slave Trade," XXVII (May 1860), 260.

penitent prostitutes established on the principles of kindness rather than severity and on building a new character rather than simply tearing an old one down. The efforts of the home were successful, in part, because of its theory of reformation, but primarily because of the selectivity of admissions to the home. Those who had no moral awareness, those whose natures were as corrupted as was their profession were refused admission. Only those who had "lost their characters and lapsed into guilt" were admitted. Thus, the women of the home were usually predisposed against the profession into which they had been lowered, and the prospects of reformation and even of the work to effect reformation were less repulsive than was continuing in the trade. Even Dr. Acton, whose vision is much more catholic than that of Greg, is inclined to slip into this synecdoche whereby the class of prostitutes is represented by "the helpless and shuddering victim of seduction, whose fall, though it has soiled and stained, has not utterly polluted her." Thus, one over-simplification, the Evangelicals', gave way to another, that of the humanitarians.

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6 Charles Dickens, "Homes for Homeless Women," Household Words, VII [(April 23, 1853)], 169.

The effect of a vigorous campaign waged by humanitarians and abetted by the stage of Victorian melodrama with its suffering sinners cast out into a snowstorm of universal condemnation was to create a new stereotype which by the end of the fifties was all too widely accepted as accurate. The prostitute's profession was still degraded, and she was still found amid filth and squalor; but the prostitute herself was thought to be an anomaly in this scene, for her own nature rebelled at her trade no less than did the natures of the Evangelicals. Thus, a kind of dualistic approach to prostitution prevailed, and this was the approach that proved most congenial to the vast majority of authors of both fictive and non-fictive literature.

The filth and the squalor remained. If anything, they were more intensified, more accentuated to provide a greater contrast to the inner nature of the prostitute. Greg, for example, describes the external condition of the woman who has "reached the last step of her downward progress, and has become a common prostitute":

Every calamity that can afflict human nature seems to have gathered round her, --cold, hunger, disease, often absolute starvation. . . . She is driven out . . . to wander through the streets by night, for a chance of earning a meal by the most loathsome labour that imagination can picture. (452)
The places where prostitutes dwell, says Greg, are "most loathsome abodes of sin and misery" (449). One is reminded of the house in Bluegate Fields visited by Mayhew (see above, pp. 36-38) which is surely of the type Greg has in mind when he refers to "the lowest dens of filth and pollution, where human despair and degradation ever dragged itself to die" (449). When she does come to die, says Greg, the prostitute is found on "a wretched pallet, in a filthy garret, with no companions but the ruffians, drunkards, and harlots with whom she had cast in her lot; amid brutal curses, ribald language, and drunken laughter" (455).

The squalor is emphasized even more in fiction than in the essays of the period. The house in which Martha makes her home in Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1851) bespeaks a faded glory like that of Martha and Little Em'ly who have lost their innocence:

It was a broad panelled staircase, with a massive balustrade of some dark wood; cornices above the doors, ornamented with carved fruit and flowers; and broad seats in the windows. But all these tokens of past grandeur were miserably decayed and dirty; rot, damp, and age, had weakened the flooring which in many places was unsound and even unsafe. . . . Several of the backwindows on the staircase had been darkened or wholly blocked up. In those that remained,
there was scarcely any glass; and, through the crumbling frames by which the bad air seemed always to come in, and never to go out, I saw, through the glassless windows, into other houses in a similar condition, and looked giddily down into a wretched yard, which was the common dust heap of the mansion. 8

The prostitutes themselves are frequently as filthy and squalid as are their dwellings. David observes that Martha "was worn and haggard, and that her sunken eyes expressed privation and endurance" (II, 331). Alice Marwood, in the same author's Dombey and Son (1848), is "miserably dressed" and has a face in which is seen "a dauntless and depraved indifference to more than weather; a carelessness of what was cast upon her bare head from heaven or earth." 9 And in Froude's "The Lieutenant's Daughter," Catherine Gray is described as a horrifying scarecrow:

Her tattered shoes had not served to cover her feet, which were wounded and bleeding; her dress was torn and soiled, and her long dark hair, which flowed out unconfined from under her bonnet, was all the shading which hid her neck from the moon. The haggard profile

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9 Dombey and Son, Part II, Works, VIII, 61.
ly in the light on that mournful pillow, showed deep fierce lines of famine ... So thin she was, the grass seemed scarcely to bend under her weight.\(^\text{10}\)

Through the fiction of an entire age passes fleetingly "the ghostly figure ... in its dingly garments, [who] leered at him with dull, faded eye, and stretched a wan, dirty hand for alms, and accosted him in the hollow whisper that tells of sore trouble, and want, and weakness, and gin."\(^\text{11}\)

But this is where the similarity between the Evangelical conception and that of the humanitarians ends, for the prostitutes described by the latter were forced into the life. They did not choose to degrade themselves. This important fact is explicitly stated by Greg: "Granting all that is or can be said of the idleness, extravagance, and love of dress of these poor women, the number of those who would adopt such a life, were any other means of obtaining an adequate maintenance open to them, will be allowed on all hands to be small indeed!" (461). And the two factors that were invariably attributed to forcing women into prostitution


\(^\text{11}\)Good For Nothing; or, All Down Hill, in The Works of G. J. Whyte-Melville (London, 1902), XXIII, 134.
were poverty and seduction.

Of the two causes, poverty appears to be the more realistic and, probably because it is more realistic, is less frequently the cause in fiction for a girl's fall. The essayists, however, universally agree to its importance. In fact, of the more than five thousand whores interviewed by Duchatelet, more pleaded poverty to account for their conditions than pleaded seduction. 12 Interesting, however, is the fact that these essayists interpret poverty's part in a woman's fall far differently than does "Another Unfortunate," the product of an impoverished slum. For "Another Unfortunate" poverty was the major cause for a totally amoral upbringing and prostitution the logical and sinless means of escaping poverty. For the humanitarians, however, poverty forces a choice between prostitution and starvation sometime in the life of a girl who has been brought up morally. "Another Unfortunate" suffers no fall because she never has any moral sense, never knows to choose between good and evil. The essayists, in positing a moral background behind the prostitutes they discuss, do assume that there is a choice between life and death. Whereas "Another Unfortunate" moves into prostitution naturally, these others, in accepting vice

12Ellis, VI, 256-257.
through a choice between that and death, move into a profession at odds with their spiritual natures. Thus, although Greg acknowledges the existence of those "for whom there is no fall, for they stood already on the lowest level of existence" (see above, pp. 64-65), he passes quickly over them to consider at length those whose "filial and maternal affection" have driven "to at least occasional prostitution, as a means, and the only means left to them, of earning bread for those dependent upon them for support" (460). He recounts one anecdote of a child brought up in an environment, if anything, worse than that of "Another Unfortunate." This particular girl, an orphan, ran away from a cruel mistress and took refuge in a "low lodging-house" and soon learned to swear as the others, both girls and boys, did. Because a great many people lived within a very small area, the girl learned all the secrets of sex. When she was twelve years old, she became the sexual partner of a fifteen-year-old boy. Within six months, she tells Greg, she contracted syphilis. Within another six months she was earning money as a prostitute con-sorting with very low men for very small fees. Eventually driven to thievery, she spent several terms in jail. When Greg refers to her, she is back working as a prostitute. But even this girl, says Greg, who has known nothing but depravity practically from
infancy, feels that she has fallen. Even she feels a sense of sin and of wrongdoing. She has a spiritual nature completely at odds with her physical life (496-498). For the most part, however, the women discussed by Greg were honest until they reached adulthood and stood face to face with poverty. Citing Mayhew's letters to the Morning Chronicle, Greg summarizes the stories of several women all of whose careers have the same formula: when they cannot make a living wage, particularly when sewing does not provide even the necessities of life, these women go out into the streets in a desperate attempt to survive. One was advised by her co-workers to "go wrong" when she could no longer feed herself. She is convinced that not one "slop" worker amid London's thousands can afford the luxury of virtue (462-463). Another claims that she tried to remain honest, but that after her husband and two children died of sickness and famine, she was "forced" out to the streets (464-465). In their essentials the accounts given by several others agree with the two noted here. In London Labour and the London Poor, Mayhew tells of the girl recently come with her father from Rochdale. Because the latter is sick and in need of medicine, and because the girl cannot get
work, she debases herself by going out on the streets. And Dr. Acton tells of seeing a seventeen-year-old girl in France announce that she is about to begin "a life of infamy" because she has nothing to eat and because she wears only the barest rags. Appalled by her pitiable situation, Acton asks, "Do many prostitutes, we may well ask, enter upon their career in this way? Is their name legion" (109-110)?

Essayists and novelists alike agreed that seduction was an important cause for girls becoming prostitutes. Several recognized the role of "professional and mercenary seducers," women like Miss Arthur in "The Lieutenant's Daughter," and one prostitute interviewed for Mayhew's London Labour attributes her fall to a bawd into whose house she wandered aimlessly when new to London (246). Of far greater interest, however, was the male seducer who too soon undeceived and abandoned the girl whose honor he had taken. He was widely believed in because many prostitutes claimed to have been seduced. The Times, for example, editorialized in 1858 that prostitution, "the contagion of vice, could

13(New York, 1968), IV, 256. All citations are from Vol. IV.

be best eliminated by making it understood that even among a
man's fellows and associates immorality is a thing to be
ashamed of. \(^{15}\) The newspaper's remark was prompted by a
letter it had received and printed from "One More Unfortunate"
who states that there are so many prostitutes in London because
the seduced woman is driven to prostitution while "the seducer is
countenanced and courted." "One More Unfortunate" herself was
originally a governess seduced by the son of the people for whom
she worked. \(^{16}\) One writer, apparently unconvinced of the im-
portance of seduction as a cause of prostitution, criticizes orators
and writers who deal with prostitutes as if they were all seduced
innocents: "They regard every one of these persons," says the
writer for Tait's, "as having once been confiding and pure in thought
and word. They speak of them as having loved, not wisely but too
well. [One reformer] talked to the females around him as if they
had all been deceived by men who are worse than murderers."\(^{17}\)
But this same writer, writing again in Tait's, turns around and
refers to the class of prostitutes as seduced victims: "The woman

\(^{15}\)January 8, 1858, p. 6.

\(^{16}\)Letter to the editor, The Times, February 11, 1858, p. 9.

\(^{17}\)"The Domestic Slave Trade," p. 254.
flaunting in silk and satin . . . was once a happy country girl,
with the flush of health upon that now brazen cheek--it is her 'fate'
to beguile many, being beguiled by one."

Those who claimed that seductions of this sort and with
these consequences existed only in the imaginations of writers
had only to turn to information furnished by prostitutes themselves.
"One More Unfortunate" provided one example; Dickens told of
others and Mayhew of still more. In "Homes for Homeless Women,"
Dickens describes an "extremely pretty girl of twenty" who was
seduced, became a prostitute, spent time in several institutions
and prisons before coming to Urania Cottage (174-175). This was
no figment of an author's imagination but a real person, super-
intended by Dickens, who eventually emigrated and became "a good,
industrious, happy wife" (175).

Girls interviewed by Mayhew attest to the existence and
extent of seductions with a variety of grotesque stories. Ellen
became a prostitute after her parents sold her, a thirteen-year-old
child, to "a gentleman" who took her to a brothel, drugged her,
and raped her (213). Another, "the victim of deliberate cold-
blooded seduction," was abandoned by her seducer after she bore

his child and was eventually reduced to prostitution through poverty (222). Yet another told Mayhew in extensive detail how she was seduced, drugged, and violated when she was sixteen years old (240). The daughter of a wealthy farmer claimed that her fiancé abducted her to London where he raped her and made her his mistress (260). Finally, the daughter of a Gloucestershire curate became a prostitute, she said, when the son of the family for which she worked as a governess fooled her with a fake marriage service, quickly ruined his "bride" and then left her to make her own way in the world (243-244).

Victorian fiction evidences a plethora of seductions. In Mrs. Norton's *Lost and Saved*, Beatrice Brooke elopes to get married to Montague Traherne; but he hires a man to impersonate a clergyman. Only after she has unwittingly become his mistress does Traherne reveal the truth to Beatrice who has lost her honor and reputation and must remain his mistress until he tires of her.\(^{19}\) In Alfred Butler's *Elphinstone*, Chrysostomos Holton knows that Amelia Williams adores him. He tells her that he must go away, convinces her at the last minute to ride a short distance with him in the coach, and then tells the starry-eyed girl that they have gone

\(^{19}\) (London, 1863), pp. 119-121.
so far that she cannot return, for her reputation is lost regardless of her virtue. In Felicia Skene's *Hidden Depths*, Colonel Courtenay's promise of marriage is enough to convince Lois Brook to sneak away from her home with him. When he grows tired of her, he leaves her a little money and the address of a "hotel" to which she is to repair and wait for him. He never comes. In *Dombey and Son*, Alice Marwood is deflowered by Carker (with her own mother's passive, if not active, help). When she is accused of robbery and sentenced to transportation, Alice says, Carker is "well satisfied that I should be sent abroad, beyond the reach of further trouble to him, and should die, and rot there" (II, 422). In Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her*, George Vavasor gets rid of his mistress by setting her up in a small business which does not bring in enough money "to feed a bird," but, the girl protests, she had no alternative but to go there: "I was obliged to go there because you took my other home away from me." Finally, Rhoda Mason, in Mrs. Houstoun's "*Recommended to Mercy*", is betrayed by "a good-looking and


21 (Edinburgh, 1866), I, 67-71.

22 (New York, 1893), III, 262.
thoroughly profligate young man, heartless, vain, and frivolous." 23 When Rhoda informs her seducer that she is pregnant with his child, he sends for her, but when she arrives in London he is not there to meet her. She learns, finally, that he has gone abroad on an extended vacation (323). Seduction and all its complex varieties were favorite subjects for the Victorian novelist. Some of these varieties will be examined in subsequent chapters.

The importance of attributing a woman's prostitution to poverty or seduction is that it removes all responsibility and guilt from her. Thus, there is no necessary correspondence between what a girl is physically, a prostitute, and what she is spiritually. The disparity between these two aspects of the prostitute's being was widely explored in Victorian literature. The entire basis for undermining the Evangelical condemnation of the prostitute rests on the humanitarians' claim that her nature, her spirituality, was totally at odds with her profession and her physical being.

According to these humane individuals, it was logical to assume that if a girl was forced into prostitution, she would certainly not be happy in the profession. Only "the unknowing world,"

says W. R. Greg, could be naive enough to assume that the
prostitute's life is a happy one. Far from it: "If the extremity
of human wretchedness . . . is a passport to our compassion,
every heart should bleed for the position of an English prostitute,
as it never bled at any form of woe before" (451). Similarly,
Charles Dickens wrote to each resident of Urania Cottage telling
her that her life had been "dreadful in its nature and consequences,
and full of affliction, misery, and despair to herself." The
prostitute interviewed by Greg who had been raised amid depravity
claimed that even though she began in her profession practically
before she knew right from wrong, she was never happy as a
whore (497). A woman interviewed by Mayhew said much the same
thing: "I swear to God I haven't had a moment's happiness . . .
except when I've been dead drunk or maudlin" (222).

This last statement brings up a further point. In the
Evangelical evaluation, drunkenness is simply one more aspect
of the prostitute's hedonism. This is attested to, for example,
by the four prostitutes described by Mayhew who hope to get drunk
in anticipation of an "orgie" (see above, p. 41). But as

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24 Letters From Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1841-1865, ed. with an Introduction by Edgar Johnson (London, 
1955), p. 79 (May 26, 1846).
humanitarians interpret her, the prostitute drinks, not for hedonistic pleasure, but so that she might obliterate all awareness of her miserable existence. According to Greg, prostitutes "ply their wretched trade with a loathing and abhorrence which only perpetual semi-intoxication can deaden or endure" (452). He calls upon Mayhew's letters to the Morning Chronicle to testify to the fact "that gin alone enables them to live or act; that without its constant stimulus and stupefaction, they would long since have . . . gone mad from mental horrors" (452). Although many of the prostitutes whose statements appear in London Labour and the London Poor are no better than common drunks, many others claim that alcohol is a spiritual necessity; it keeps them sane amid the knowledge of their own sinfulness. One girl tells Mayhew that "there's nothing like gin to deaden the feelings" (219). Another claims that her acquaintances drink when they get sad over thinking "that we have fallen, never to regain that which we have descended from, and in some cases sacrificed everything for a man who has ceased to love and deserted us" (219). Several others maintain simply that drink "keeps up our spirits" (236, 245).

In fiction, too, gin is an anodyne for physical and mental suffering. In Can You Forgive Her Burgo Fitzgerald is accosted by a begging prostitute who wants "only a penny to get a glass of
gin! Feel my hand, --how cold it is" (II, 39). If many of Greg's notions about prostitution come from Duchatelet, others come from a work of fiction, from Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) in which Greg finds a basis for his statements in the character of Esther. The prostitute says:

I must have drink. Such as live like me could not bear life if they did not drink. It's the only thing to keep us from suicide. If we did not drink, we could not stand the memory of what we have been, and the thought of what we are, for a day. If I go without food, and without shelter, I must have my dram. Oh! you don't know the awful nights I have had in prison for want of it.²⁵

If humanitarians explain away gin as a means by which the prostitute may obliterate moral awareness, fiction writers especially deny the importance of avarice as a motive for the prostitute simply by denying her any money. How can one claim that prostitutes are avaricious when it is clear that theirs is the most extreme indigence? The begging prostitute in Can You Forgive Her has not even a single penny for gin, let alone the sixpence required for a bed. In 1840 William Tait, not a writer of fiction but a Scottish sociologist, pointed out that many prostitutes "were even too poor to afford a lodging however squalid."

²⁵(New York, 1958), p. 156. This is a part of a long passage of the novel quoted by Greg.
These wretched women are to be seen sauntering about the streets at all hours of the night, barefooted, dirty, and emaciated, with their hands under their aprons and shivering with cold; and there is good reason to believe that many of them starve to death in the place where they lay themselves down to rest.  

Catherine Gray, in "The Lieutenant's Daughter," has a haggard profile" and a face showing "deep fierce lines of famine" (210).

In Whyte-Melville's Good For Nothing, the voice of the prostitute who begs money of Gilbert Orme "tells of sore trouble, and want" (134). Amelius Goldenheart, in Wilkie Collins' The Fallen Leaves (1886), meets Simple Sally when she passes out from hunger while begging money of him.  

Finally, Osmond Waymark, protagonist of George Gissing's The Unclassed (1884), gives his last few shillings to a sick prostitute who needs the money for her rent.  

It goes almost without saying that, for the writer of fiction, the begging prostitute had the advantage of accosting people without actually soliciting for prostitution. Thus, without offending his readers, the writer could still include in his work one of the

26Dr. Fernando Henriques, Modern Sexuality, in Prostitution and Society (London, 1968), III, 111-112. Quoted material is from William Tait, Magdalenism, 1840.


28(New York, 1968), p. 84.
century's representative women.

But even if her prostitution did give her more money and luxury than she had ever known before, the girl who had once been innocent could never enjoy the spoils of her degrading profession. Amelia Williams, the seduced of Elphinstone, very clearly points up the dichotomy between external and internal, between body and soul:

And now behold her in the fashionable streets, seated with some beautiful companions in an elegant carriage, her wrists bound with jewelled gold, satin on her feet, her fingers adorned with the richest rings, and her hair brilliant with gems. She was a beautiful sight. Art seemed to have given up all its treasures to embellish nature in her; but who that could rightly read the miserable smiles on her countenance . . . would not have lamented for the time, when with no other garments about her than those which humble modesty required--with no other ornament than a fresh-gathered flower in her golden hair, she walked through the green fields in the glory of innocence!

Months rolled on, and what had been a fear became a certainty. She knew that her situation was fixed for life--that she must live and die in shame. With this assurance she assumed that outward guise of content and satisfaction which is the last effect of despair. She went to all places of public amusement, and laughed with the gayest, as though in despite to her own heart which both in solitude and society yearned for the scenes of her childhood, and the purity of her home. (206-207)

In a sense Amelia's "miserable smiles" are microcosmic of both the humane explanation and evaluation of the prostitute. The characteristics of her profession noted by the Evangelicals are
not necessarily denied by humanitarians, but they do deny that one can formulate any conclusions about the nature of the woman from her postured countenance. The "whited sepulchre" metaphor of the preceding chapter is applicable here, also, but in the case of Amelia and others like her, the smiles cloak abject misery rather than disease and corruption.

From what has been said regarding the prostitute's values, it should be clear that the woman who has fallen from innocence to prostitution does retain a sense of shame and does feel acutely the godlessness of the life she is leading. Brought up in godliness and morality, she is as repulsed by her sexual sin as are the Evangelicals. Greg points out that "even in their lowest degradation these poor creatures never wholly lose the sense of shame" (455). After the prostitute has lived her wretched life to the fullest and abandoned herself to every conceivable form of vice, the sick and dying remnant of a woman is still aware of her moral obligations:

With a perspective beyond the grave which the little she retains of her early religion lights up for her with the lurid light of hell,--this poor daughter of humanity terminates a life, of which, if the sin has been grievous and the weakness lamentable, the expiation has been fearfully tremendous. (455)
The Reverend Baptist Noel, founder of the Midnight Meeting movement, was obviously of Greg's persuasion concerning the sense of conscience in prostitutes, for he passed out cards to London streetwalkers requesting them to "favour a few friends with [their] company" at a tea to be held that night in a Piccadilly restaurant. In nine Midnight "morality teas" Noel preached eloquently to over four thousand whores on the sinfulness of fornication and their profession and of the necessity for repentance before it was too late. Dickens certainly knew prostitutes, for he worked very hard to provide a reformatory for them. He knew, too, that he might appeal to their consciences. The plan of Urania Cottage, he explained, was to educate the prostitutes "in their duty towards Heaven and Earth." The majority of his attempts were successful.

There was ample testimony of prostitutes themselves to establish that they felt their sin. "One More Unfortunate," writing to


30 Cyril Pearl, The Girl With the Swansdown Seat (Indianapolis, 1955), pp. 50-51. Of the Midnight Meetings, Dr. Acton has this to say: "Of all the useless expedients adopted for remedying by private measures public wrong, this seems about the worst" (188).

31 Letters, p. 79 (May 26, 1846).
The Times, acknowledged that prostitutes know they are "cut off from the moral, social, and religious worlds. . . . We need not be told of our ruin and degradation, because we never 'fall' without being alive to the fact."32 And in a second letter, she states that she is very aware of the claims of God; indeed, "although it may excite a smile--I would remark that, somehow, even the most depraved among women--so far as my terrible experience enables me to judge--cherish some latent and lingering consolation in vague connexion with Him."33 When "Another Unfortunate" denied all the claims of "One More Unfortunate," The Times was prevailed upon to comment. The newspaper registered shock that "The great bulk of London prostitutes . . . have no remorse or misgivings about the nature of their pursuit . . . . Now, is this revelation about no shame so? . . . This is certainly a new view of the 'Great Social Evil.'"34 The paper may believe "Another Unfortunate," but belief requires them to alter radically their previous opinions, the truth of which opinions they seemed quite sure of.

32 February 4, 1858, p. 12.
33 February 11, 1858, p. 9.
34 February 25, 1858, p. 7.
Many of the anecdotes presented by Mayhew and Greg do suggest the existence of remorse, shame, and conscience in prostitutes. In spite of never learning anything about religion, Ellen tells Mayhew, "I certainly think it is wrong to live as I am now doing. I often think of it in secret, and cry over it" (213). Another woman claims that she is not worried by "the sin of it" only because she does not "dare think of that much" (235). The girl whose father's invalid condition drove her to the streets confesses that "I can't help crying a bit, sir.... I do wish I was dead and there was an end of everything, I am so awfully sad and heart-broken." Mayhew adds that he believes the girl's story to be "a genuine tale of distress told with all simplicity and truth" (257). According to Greg, all of the "slop" workers who earn extra money as whores know how "horrible" their profession is (462). One girl, the daughter of "a minister of the Gospel," cries while she tells how poverty forced her to prostitution even though her "whole nature rebelled at it" (465). The most interesting, if not necessarily the most convincing, evidence presented by Greg to corroborate his claim that prostitutes are ashamed of, and conscience stricken by, their trade is "Verses for my Tombstone, if Ever I Should Have One," a poem reputedly found by a doctor at the bedside of a prostitute who starved to death in Scotland. The
extraordinary document is worth quoting in full:

The wretched victim of a quick decay,
Relieved from life, on humble bed of clay,
The last and only refuge from my woes,
A love-lost, ruined female, I repose.
From the sad hour I listened to his charms,
And fell, half forced, in the deceiver's arms,
To that, whose awful veil hides every fault,
Sheltering my sufferings in this welcome vault,--
When pampered, starved, abandoned, or in drink,
My thoughts were racked in striving not to think;
Nor could rejected conscience claim the power
To improve the respite of one serious hour.
I durst not look to what I was before;
My soul shrank back, and wished to be no more.
Of eye undaunted, and of touch impure,
Old, ere of age--worn out when scarce mature;
Daily debased to stifle my disgust,
Of forced enjoyment in affected lust;
Covered with guilt, infection, debt, and want--
My home a brothel, and the streets my haunt.
For seven long years of infamy I've pined
And fondled, loathed, and preyed upon mankind;
Till the full course of sin and vice gone through,
My shattered fabric failed at twenty-two.

(453-454n.)

One is disposed to wonder how this girl would have reacted to a customer whistling on Sunday.

In Victorian fiction there is an abundance of conscience stricken prostitutes. The shame of Amelia Williams has been already referred to. If Bill Sikes keeps Nancy from going to the
there is no one to prevent Lois Brook from jumping, and in Hidden Depths, shame, rejection by her lover, and despair drive her to suicide (I, 72). Martha Endell's every word attests to the fact that she considers herself "a solitary curse to myself, a living disgrace to every one I come near" (II, 327)! In the same novel, Emily, no longer little Em'ly, is constantly aware of the home she has forsaken: "Has there ever been a single minute, waking or sleeping, when it hasn't been before me, just as it used to be in the lost days when I turned my back upon it for ever and for ever" (II, 375)? And finally, in Charles Reade's A Terrible Temptation, "the Somerset" may begin as a courtesan like Skittles, but when she undergoes a religious conversion and goes about preaching the gospel, she acts like Laura Bell, the leader of the demimonde in the fifties who had been converted from her sinfulness by the sixties. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the shameful and repentent prostitute becomes an important stereotype in Victorian fiction.


To complete the comparison of the prostitute as seen by the Evangelicals with the one seen by humanitarians, just a single aspect of the latter's spirituality remains to be considered. Whereas the whore of the Evangelicals was too selfish and too concerned with her physical existence to respond to anyone outside herself, the humanitarians' prostitute is capable of great love, extreme selflessness. On this point Greg, Dr. Acton, and Dickens are unanimous.

It has been pointed out that about the only "respectable" profession, and that not very respectable, for which prostitutes qualified was nursing (see above, p.41). To humanitarians the suitability of prostitutes for this profession had nothing to do with their coarseness. They qualify, rather, because of their instinctive tenderness. "Their kindness to each other," says Greg,

when sick or destitute, and indeed to all who are in suffering or distress, has attracted the attention and called forth the admiration of all who have been thrown much into contact with them. . . .Duchatelet states that their affection for children, whether their own or not, is carried to a point surpassing that common to women, and that, in consequence, they make the most careful and valuable of nurses. (455)

This "affection for children" is certainly not manifested by the prostitutes of Hidden Depths who desert theirs or by Mother Dorrel
who has them killed.

"Among the promiscuous prostitutes of the milder order," says Dr. Acton, the same phenomenon is observable: "The sick man is safe in their hands . . . . There is many a tale well known of their nursing and watching, and more than will do so could tell of the harlot's guardianship in his hour of drunkenness" (64). Dickens, too, knew of the fabled kindness of prostitutes, and when those at Urania Cottage proved to be "indifferent to one another in sickness," he looked to the system of government employed at the home to find the reason.

Numerous fictional prostitutes act, at one time or another, as nurses. Amelia takes care of the injured Mr. Holton in Elphinstone, for "who could nurse him so well as she" (II, 212)? To pay for his medical expenses she sells or pawns all the spoils of her profession and, thus, adds further weight to the anti-materialism frequently predicated of the prostitute. Nancy nurses Sikes in Oliver Twist (257-258), and when Simple Sally falls ill, in The Fallen Leaves, two friends, prostitutes both, nurse her. The doctor who attends the sick girl says of one of the nurses, "The woman . . . is as good a creature as ever breathed; and the

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other one who lives with her is the same" (336). In Henry Jebb's *Out of the Depths*, Mary Smith, a prostitute, cares for a dying friend Kate by reading from the Bible, and after her reformation she nurses the sick of the neighborhood. In this way she contracts smallpox and later the consumption that leads to her death. 38 Rhoda Somerset, even before her reformation, disguises herself as a Sister of Charity so that she might nurse Sir Charles Bassett through a severe illness (25-26), and Mercy Merrick, heroine of Collins' *The New Magdalen* (1873), extricates herself from her trade by becoming a military nurse for the troops fighting the Franco-Prussian War. 39

It has been pointed out that the novelists frequently presented the prostitute as penniless, but even more important, the humanitarians—essayists and novelists alike—represent the prostitute's charity through her rejection of material values. Prostitutes become the embodiment of generosity. Dr. Acton notes that the prostitute spends

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39 (New York, 1873), First Scene.
her vile earnings . . . with nothing saved for an evil day. For help when her own resources fail her, she depends upon the contributions of those of her companions whom chance has for the time being more befriended; and in justice to these women, it must be said that they are always ready to afford each other this mutual assistance. (57)

Mayhew comments on the same phenomenon: "One of their most remarkable characteristics is their generosity, which perhaps is unparalleled by the behaviour of any other [class], whether high or low in the social scale. They will not hesitate to lend one another money if they have it, whether they can spare it or not" (219).

In fiction this generosity becomes a positive rejection of money, either implicitly (as in the case of Amelia Williams) or explicitly, in favor of doing good simply for the sake of the good. As ironical as it seems, the woman who, according to the Evangelicals, has given away her most valuable possession in exchange for a little money becomes the great anti-materialist of nineteenth-century fiction. In The Fallen Leaves the two prostitutes that help Amelius Goldenheart take care of a starving Simple Sally refuse the money he offers them in payment, and they suggest that he give it to Sally instead. Of them the narrator
says, "All that is most unselfish, all that is most divinely compassionate and self-sacrificing in a woman's nature, was as beautiful and as undefiled as ever in these women--the outcasts of the hard highway" (187)! In Oliver Twist, Nancy, who has helped Oliver escape from Fagin, rejects the proffered money of Rose Maylie in order to keep the charity of her deed untainted: "I have not done this for money. Let me have that to think of" (316). Similarly, Martha Endell, who previously accepted the charity of Little Em'ly and David, refuses to take any money from Mr. Peggotty when she agrees to help him find his niece: "I could not do what I have promised for money . . . . I could not take it if I was starving. To give me money would be to take away your trust, to take away the object you have given me, to take away the only certain thing that saves me from the river" (II, 331). Martha responds, then, not to the material but to the immaterial. She will try to help Emily; she will carry out the task given her by Mr. Peggotty, and she will not violate his trust by killing herself. To put a price on these things would be to negate their true, non-material value.

There are other indicators of the prostitute's ability to respond to people, other proofs that selfishness and materialism have not sealed up her heart to humane considerations. For
example, Dickens reports that when an intractable resident of
Urania Cottage had to be turned away for the common good, not
just the girl, but every one of the prostitutes at the home wept
bitterly. This certainly does not suggest hardness of heart.
Several women report that they became prostitutes to help others
in distress. Reference has already been made to the girl who went
on the streets to get food and medicine for her injured father. One
of the women described by Greg watched her husband and three
children starve and finally went out on the streets to feed the one
child who lived (463-464). Finally, one other girl, says Greg,
became a prostitute only to get food for her starving infant. Her
story, comments Greg, is more pitiable than "the most tragic
and touching romance ever read" (465-466). These women, not
fictional characters but real prostitutes, are responsive to others
and are capable of Christian sacrifice to help others. They de-
serve something better than being lumped together with "Lushing
Loo" and Skittles and then being condemned for their total depravity.

Humanitarian reaction to the Evangelical condemnation, then,
led to another stereotype to counter the depraved prostitute depicted

40Letters, p. 153 (letter to Dr. William Brown, November 6, 1849).
by the Evangelicals and those that followed them. The nature of
the Evangelicals' prostitute had been analogically derived from
her profession; that of the humanitarians' prostitute was imagina-
tively created from the supposed causes for her fall. One was
given universal assent before the Victorian age began; the other
grew up in the age itself. The first undoubtedly had a far greater
foundation in fact than did the latter, but the humanitarians'
version, offering as it did the potential for reform, appealed to
an age which, according to Grahame Smith, was responsive to
"such phenomena as sentimentality, melodrama, and obsessive
activity." Smith contends that these are but some of the factors
which prevented the age from ever having enough "tough, know-
ledgeable intellect." There existed, he says, "a kind of
intellectual naiveté" (53-59). And nowhere is this intellectual
naiveté better seen than in the failure of Victorian humanitarians
to separate fact and fiction. For all of them allowed sentimen-
tality and an excessive, or obsessive, desire for reforming
activity to blur their perceptions and to dull their perspectives.
The poem printed by Greg and the stories so readily accepted
by Mayhew attest to this fact. According to "Another Unfortunate,"

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totally oblivious to considerations of sentiment, "Seduction is the common story of numbers of well brought up [sic] who never were seduced, and who are voluntary and inexcusable profligates." And yet widespread assent was given to a story that could have been true in no more than a small percentage of instances.

As exasperating as his sentimentality is the Victorian humanitarian's tendency to contradict himself or to ignore aspects of the problem that he should be aware of. Even Dr. Acton, the most logical and intellectual of them all, can condemn the prostitute in one sentence and ask his readers to pity her in the next. He knows full well of the bawds, "females of extreme avarice, and often ferocious manners . . . who had been bred to the business from youth, as relatives or old servants of their predecessors" (42-43). But where are the whores that have been "bred to the business from youth"? Where are all those like "Another Unfortunate"? He knows they exist, but for the most part he ignores them in favor of the seduced victim or the woman driven to prostitution by poverty. What Acton does occasionally, Greg, Dickens, Mayhew, and Tait's do as a matter of course. I have already mentioned that Greg offers a fifty-eight page defense

42Letter to the editor, The Times, February 24, 1858, p. 12.
of women in a profession he is repulsed by. This, of course, is Professor Smith's "hysteria of action" (53), the desire to reform social attitudes, to create a climate favorable to reformation and the reintegration into society of all four thousand whores that half-listened to Baptist Noel.

What happens in the century's journalism happens in its fiction. Victorian novelists are perfectly content to present prostitution as a foul and degraded profession and to depict the prostitute herself as the injured misfit, the fallen innocent. At the end of the century, Osmond Waymark tells Ida Starr, a prostitute in Gissing's The Unclassed, that her charity makes her "one out of a thousand" (85). Judged in terms of the whole range of Victorian fiction, however, she is anything but atypical, for against a background of avaricious bawds and hedonistic whores, Victorian novels present a great many prostitutes whose physical existences, their degrading and polluted trade in sex, is at odds with their natures, their spiritual lives. In so far as a century's fiction looked at the women of the streets at all, it looked not at them "dans l'exercice de leur metier," not at "leur ton, à leur impudeur, et aux mots lubriques qui sortent de la bouche de quelques unes." Rather, like Parent-Duchatelet in France and Greg in England, Victorian novelists examined
what they considered to be the other half of a duality accepted
by them but rejected by the Evangelicals, the soul of the
prostitute. For again like Duchatelet, they rejected the idea
of finding an image of the prostitute's soul in her profession:

Mais ce n'est pas dans ces circonstances que l'on peut
étudier le coeur et l'esprit de ces femmes; c'est en
prison, dans leurs moments de peines et de souffrances
. . . . Elles connaissent toute leur abjection, et en ont,
à ce qu'il paraît, une idée bien profonde; elles sont à
elles-mêmes un sujet d'horreur. 43

43 Parent-Duchatelet, De la prostitution dans la ville de
CHAPTER IV

EVANGELICALISM AND THE IMAGE OF SIN

Eighteenth-century literature depicted numerous fallen women who sooner or later repented. The extent and the efficacy of their reformations ranged from the utter despair of Clarissa Harlowe and the bosom wringing of Goldsmith's "lovely woman" to the questionably "sincere penitence" of Moll Flanders and the artistically inappropriate "conversion" of Fanny Hill. But repent they did and frequently as the culmination to a very, very full career of immorality. Therefore, the Victorian daughters of these eighteenth-century penitents became logical characters in whom to portray that favorite religious theme of an entire century, a theme practically reverenced by the Evangelicals, "The Pattern of Conversion."¹

"Love not pleasure; love God. This is the Everlasting Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved; wherein whoso walks and

¹Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture (New York, 1964), title of Chapter V.
works, it is well with him."\(^2\) The Evangelicals could apply Carlyle's formula for conversion to no one more successfully than to the prostitute, the woman who they thought so loved selfish pleasure that she was totally blind to God and to any work that might benefit others. She was the sinner, they assumed, most in need of the conversion experience. Furthermore, the gravity of her sin provided the moralist with an extreme example, the conversion of the sinner worse than whom there was, is, and could be none. (For humanitarians and Evangelicals alike, in short all Victorians, were one in the opinion that in so far as she was judged in terms of her profession, the prostitute was the worst of sinners.)\(^3\) If she could renounce a sinful life, certainly any other sinner could do so.

The two works of fiction regarding which I wish to discuss this religious conversion that so fascinated the Evangelicals are "The Magdalen," a chapter of Samuel Warren's *Passages From the Diary of a Late Physician* (1832) and Henry Gladwyn Jebb's *Out of the Depths* (1859). Each depicts the religious conversion of a prostitute, a turning from pleasure and sin to love of God and to


\(^3\) See, for example, remarks of Mayhew and Greg, above, p.73.
renunciation of self. I have chosen to use Warren's "Magdalen" simply to establish the oft-repeated pattern of conversion. It was written before the age even began, perhaps as early as 1829, and treats the prostitute analogically both while she is fallen and after she has risen; that is, at both periods of her life Warren depicts her physical existence as reflective of her nature. Jebb's novel, however, is worthy of consideration because it is much later. Written in 1859, it derives its fundamental assumptions about the whore from Evangelical beliefs, but by this late date humanitarian contentions have begun to undermine Evangelical professions about the nature of the prostitute. If anything finally can be said about Jebb, more deeply sunk in anonymity than even Warren, it is that he was unable to separate his low church leanings from the humanitarian attitude towards prostitutes that filled the air in the fifties and in the following decades.

As a typical conversion tale, "The Magdalen," one of the "series of what would now be called psychiatric case

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4 Thomas Seccombe in DNB s.v. "Warren, Samuel."

5 Warren's father was, for a time, a major figure in the Wesleyan movement, and Warren himself always had protestant leanings (DNB).
histories" that make up Warren's *Passages*, has three parts. The first represents Eleanor B---'s prelapsarian existence and her fall; the second, her prostitution and her conversion experience; and the third, her period of atonement culminating in her happy death.

While a young girl, Eleanor's "education--her associations,--her cast of character--her tastes and inclinations," and above all her remarkable loveliness earn for her the title of "The Madonna" among the townspeople who idolize her. However, the spiritual state of the young virgin is not as healthy as is the physical, for Eleanor is all too conscious of her own beauty, and she luxuriates in this consciousness. Her favorite pastime is reading "hateful novels" (316) full of "false sentiment" (295) and containing "erroneous and distorted views of life and morals" (295). Her reading convinces her that beauty alone will earn her a high place in the world (of which she is all too desirous), will earn perhaps even a proposal and a coronet from a nobleman (316). Thus, her superficial values are those of the prostitute. Pride


7Samuel Warren, Passages From the Diary of a Late Physician (New York, 1871), II, 294. All citations are from vol. II.
in herself and her beauty infects Eleanor with "rebellious feelings" (315) against her lot and leads her to theological pride, the willingness to place herself above God, self-love rather than love of God. When the death of Eleanor's father forces the girl and her mother to take over the management of a boarding house, the mother is unable "to bend the stubborn heart of her daughter into acquiescence with the will of Providence" (315). Self-love leads the girl also to filial disobedience, the most frequently recurring theme in eighteenth-century popular fiction. 

When Eleanor becomes infatuated with Captain ____, her ambition leads to disobedience, and disobedience leads to her fall. She establishes a liaison without her mother's knowledge, instructing the captain "not to appear to know me if he should happen to meet me with my mother" (320). In the world of Evangelical fiction, no love, and especially not the selfish infatuation Eleanor feels for the captain, can lead to anything good while still unsanctioned by a parent. Eleanor's base love for Captain ____ denies love of God because it denies love of God's emissary on earth, the parent. Eleanor compounds her

sin by accepting the captain's proposal for a secret marriage, a further denial of a mother's claim upon her daughter. Finally, when her mother goes out of town and leaves Eleanor in charge of the boarding house, the girl runs off with Captain ____, supposedly to get married (322).

Such an unholy alliance as that of Eleanor and the captain could not possibly succeed, and when the marriage never materializes, Eleanor becomes the gallant officer's mistress.

Prior to her fall, Eleanor's values, as has been pointed out, are self-oriented and materialistic. In the second part of her story, after her fall, she assumes all the other characteristics of the whore so despised by the Evangelicals. Thus, when his character becomes a prostitute, Warren presents her monistically. She grows fond of drink, and amid the material comforts purchased by the captain, the girl's sense of shame and remorse soon wears off: "I began to find my feelings dulled, and got in a manner satisfied with my situation" (325). When she leaves Captain ____ for "Lord ____, an extravagant, dissipated, but handsome young man" (325), Eleanor comes into enough money to be able to "blazon my shame. I was allowed whatever dress--whatever ornaments I chose to order. I quite shone in jewelry, till I attracted universal attention" (325). Her success, obviously,
is materialistic and of appearance only.

As her moral character degenerates still further, so does her physical being. Her appearance is changed by disease to such an extent that Lord ___ leaves in search of a prettier mistress. Alcohol, laudanum, and poverty soon drive Eleanor to seek company with the women of the streets, and she ends up in "a regular house of infamy" (331)! At this point, both her spiritual and physical lives are at their nadirs:

I lived in a state of mind that I cannot describe; a sort of calm desperation--quite indifferent what became of me--often wishing that I might drop down dead in the streets. I seldom passed three hours in the day sober; every farthing of money I could procure was instantly changed for the most scorching spirits! But I will not torture you with describing the life I led for a year after this; it was that of a devil! (331)

Eleanor's conscience is finally awakened when she sees her original seducer thrown from a horse and killed. She relates to the doctor the effect the incident has on her:

The moment I recognized the bleeding body . . . a strange pain shot across my breast. I felt--I knew it was my death-stroke--I knew I had not long to live--that the destroyer and his victim would soon be once more within the dreadful sight of each other! . . . every night I was scared with the spectre of Captain ____, every day tortured with the horrid associations of my past and present guilt!--Unable to follow my foul, revolting line of life as before, I wandered, like a cursed spirit, from one house of infamy to another, each worse than the
former--frequently beaten with cruel violence, half-starved, and sometimes kicked out of doors into the street, because I would not work! (335)

Eleanor is half correct regarding the imminence of her death, but rather than physical Eleanor's death is spiritual, "the little death-in-life, the dying unto the corrupted self." If it is a death, however, it is also a birth into a new life, a new beginning, and this birth, after which Eleanor refuses to ply her trade, is symbolically represented as a baptism in the blood of the dead Captain _____ with which Eleanor is "tortured" (335). For Professor Buckley reminds us that blood was used interchangeably with water as a sign of the "cleansing of the soiled self" (98).

In the third part of Warren's conversion tale, the girl's physical recovery from the illness which first brings her to the doctor's attention parallels the restoration of her spirit and the renunciation of her prostitution. The physician sees in Eleanor "signs of rejoicing in the desert--of gladness in the wilderness and solitary place, and of blossoming in the rose" (307)! The greatest aid to her recovery is, of course, "the inestimable support and comfort she received in the offices of that best, nay,

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9Buckley, pp. 91-92.
that only solace of the bed of sickness and death--RELIGION"
(311). Her conversion transforms sinful love of self and of Captain ____ into holy love of God.

The remaining years of the sadder but wiser Eleanor are balanced against those of her prelapsarian innocence. The girl who once appeared to be the "Madonna" now lives in "Magdalen Cottage" (344) and spends time working on a sampler inscribed with the name "Mary Magdalen" (351). Instead of fiction Eleanor reads only devotional literature such as 'the almost divine 'Saint's Rest' of Baxter. Morning, noon and night, did she ponder over its pages, imbibing their chastening, hallowing, glorifying spirit' (340). No longer concerned with obtaining a high place in the world, Eleanor lives in retirement directing her energies to worship and good works, hoping only to achieve a place in heaven (348). She is particularly devoted to teaching catechism to the young girls of the neighborhood, her only contact with society, and she gently reproves them whenever they are tempted away from the instrument of their spiritual improvement (346-347). Most important, of course, her pride and will to disobey give way to a complete acquiescence in the will of God. When she falls ill again, Eleanor rests "calmly awaiting the stroke of dismissal" (345). With "extraordinary meekness" (346) she
looks forward to leaving a world she once made her heaven. In all the ways in which formerly she erred, Eleanor is corrected by her conversion. Her self-love becomes love of God and is manifested in her desire to make her will submissive to the will of Providence.

Thus, Warren takes a sinner and demonstrates the pattern of conversion. In doing so he provides his readers with just the kind of morbid religiosity they liked. His choice of convert, however, is also dictated by the Victorian evaluation of the prostitute's profession. Eleanor is the perfect character by whom to demonstrate the too often ignored Biblical teaching that Christ so loved all men that not even the worst of sinners was to be excluded from his kingdom. By renouncing the physical and material ideals which are supposedly represented by prostitution in favor of a spiritual ideal that thrives on physical privation, Eleanor B____ becomes an Evangelical ideal.

Captain ____ is Eleanor's seducer, but he is not responsible for her descent into prostitution. For in a sense, the captain merely provides an occasion for Eleanor's sinful selfishness to become externalized. Her prostitution with all its self-oriented values is little more than an objectification or an image of a sinful, self-oriented nature. Her trade, the degradation of love to lust,
is merely a symbol of her reorientation of all values to self, and her recovery from disease a symbol of spiritual recovery.

Warren views his character monistically, views her profession as reflecting a sinful nature. Henry Gladwyn Jebb, on the other hand, is inclined to view Mary Smith, protagonist of his long-forgotten *Out of the Depths*, in the same way, but Jebb feels the impact of humanitarianism and in several particulars wavers between monism and dualism in his depiction of his prostitute.

In spite of Mary's description of the Edenic, "sweet dear little cottage,"\(^{10}\) of her youth, in spite of her "recollections of peace and innocence" (13) and her "birthright of purity" (13), and in spite of her assertion that on the evening that she first gives her virtue to George Fisher she dies a "spiritual death" (56), Mary's representation of her youth makes it clear that she is spiritually dead long before she ever meets George. From the time that she is five years old, Mary has the values of a whore.

Even as a young girl, Mary "never ceased to have before me the idea that I was a pretty child, with marks of refinement" (14). When she gets older, she is sinfully pleased with the admiration

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her beauty elicits at a party at which she is a servant (25), and when she first meets George Fisher she feels sure that his looks "utter silent admiration" (33) of her beauty. Thus, as with Eleanor, Mary's troubles begin with self-love. She loves her own beauty rather than the God that gave her that beauty, and she loves physical beauty rather than that of the spirit.

Her misdirected love is manifested in her failure to love and honor her parents. She hides from her mother the fact that she reads novels, intuitively perceiving that the pious woman would disapprove (19). After each secret meeting with George, Mary makes up a story to account for her absence from home (52). On one occasion she even sends her mother off on an unnecessary errand in order to keep an appointment with her lover (41-43).

Self-love soon leads Mary to believe that she is better than her parents. She manifests a "growing contempt for my equals" (24) and like Eleanor fails to make God's will her own. She determines never to marry "a low clownish fellow" from her own class (24). Her belief that she is "of a finer nature than [her] born equals" (29) soon leads her to find her life and prospects intolerable, and she seeks escape in fiction (15). Fictional romance soon plants the seeds of the ultimate form of
self-love—ambition—in Mary's breast. Convinced that she is "as good as the best of ladies, that [she] could have just as high thoughts, and as much sense and refinement, as any of them" (23), she aspires to escape from her own class, in which she has been placed by the will of God, into the class in which God should have placed her. After George reveals his love for her, Mary goes home "feeling that I had already begun to be a lady, and that I had set one foot in the region which I had ambitiously aspired [sic] for so long" (50). Love, even illicit love, genuine and unmixed with any base motive in George, is a kind of selfish poison in Mary's heart: "I question now whether I should have acknowledged my own love so quickly, had not the idea of becoming a lady, which I had cherished more or less warmly in secret since my childish years, held a prominent place in my heart" (48). It is clearly not the loss of chastity that is responsible for Mary's "spiritual death." Rather, her death comes about because, unlike the "pure, and true" George (326), Mary uses physical love as a means to achieve a selfish, materialistic end. Vanity, pride, and ambition all conspire to make the "innocent" Mary insist upon a final meeting with George in spite of his objections when he apparently senses the temptation involved in seeing her again (56). It is at this meeting that
Mary loses her "virtue."

George Fisher is abjured of all blame for Mary's fall; she is not the seduced innocent even though Jebb feels called upon to introduce, in George, a potential Captain . Throughout the novel Mary refers to him in terms of the highest praise. After her conversion she refuses even to think of him, for "the thought of him was surely not fit to enter such a polluted mind as mine" (240).

Furthermore, although she finds herself pregnant with George's child, she is not forced into prostitution. She goes to the university to find the father of her child, and he promises to make an honest woman of her. But George dies of illness, and Mary miscarries. Jebb seems, at this point, to be listening to humane claims about the seduced innocent. Childless and husbandless, Mary goes home to begin again. She is accepted back by her family and by her employer, and no one gets particularly upset over her loss of virginity. But Mary's ambition is unchecked, and she soon finds her home boring (86). By lying to her family, she escapes again to the city. Once in the dissolute city, there is nothing to constrain her sinful nature, and she soon takes to occasional prostitution. "A wild, reckless
spirit began to come over me at this time, " she says; "I seemed to lose all sense of shame; and very little affection for any thing in the world, save my own self, lingered in my own heart" (95). The change, the spiritual degeneration objectified by her recourse to prostitution, is explained by Mary in this way: "This change within me was a gradual one; no violent causes brought it on, but chiefly the absence of restraint" (95).

The depths to which Mary sinks are depicted, in Evangelical fashion, by her utter devotion to herself and to money:

The more I was admired and sought after for my external gifts, the more every moral feeling seemed to leave me. I could be wild with spirits, flashy, and sometimes even witty, in conversation; I was quick to apprehend and learn many new ideas about things in general; but the kind of life I was leading, in its debasing tendencies, quite paralyzed all the better parts of my nature. . . . I grew selfish . . . . I could do kindnesses, indeed, but only just as it suited me, and in my own way; otherwise no consideration, no claim of affection, or appeal to any portion of my nature, would have made me stir a hand to benefit any body. (96).

Although she is aware of the claims that her two friends have on her for their "past kindness," Mary's distorted and materialistic nature quickly rationalizes these claims away:

I considered that I had paid them both well for that; and so I had, if money could ever pay for such things; and in my creed at that time every thing could be bought
and paid for, and I fully believed, or thought I believed, that every one else held the same opinion. (97)

The other signs of her depraved nature—love of drink (99), crude language (100), and the feeling that she "could not live without excitement, the excitement of a lawless and godless life" (111)—are soon visible in Mary.

From the material in the first one-third of Out of the Depths, two facts emerge. First, Mary's fall is inevitable from her youngest years, the result of a nature predisposed to sin. Secondly, given this sinful nature, her prostitution is meaningful primarily because it objectifies that nature. Indeed, Jebb might well have omitted any mention of Mary as a prostitute, for there exist a great many other sins upon which to base a moral evaluation of her. But prostitution provides a concrete image of sin. What is important in the depiction of Mary Smith is not the kind of sin, the specific manner in which she devotes herself to false love, love of self, but is rather the extent to which she is degraded by sin, and for the Evangelicals no sin degraded as did sexual sin. Mary's sinful nature, the sum of pride, vanity, and ambition, is objectified, externalized, or imaged in the squalor of her trade and surroundings. Prostitution, a symbolic representation of the depths to which the sinner who unworthily loves an unworthy
object sinks, becomes the image for female sin in the same way that the selfishness of Adam and Eve's postlapsarian sex becomes the image of their fallen condition.

Consequently, Mary's renunciation of her profession is important less for itself than for what it symbolizes. When she renounces prostitution, she renounces her entire sinful nature. If prostitution is the greatest perversion of love, Mary's rejection encompasses her rejection of the selfish instincts and impulses that led her to prostitution in the first place. Because it objectifies her nature for Mary no less than for the reader, her fall is fortunate.

At times, but only at times, Mary seems aware that her prostitution has been little more than a result and an objectification of sinful tendencies existing within her long before she first commits any sexual sin. She acknowledges that before she ever meets George, "vanity and self-love" feed an "evil heart" (23), a heart already in need of cleansing. After her spiritual rebirth, she admits that had she never become a prostitute, she might never have undergone a conversion: "I see now, that it was the greatest blessing which could have happened to me, that I was made to suffer affliction then. Had it not been, I might never have become, what I trust through God's mercy I am, a contrite sinner" (127).
When Mary looks back upon her past and realizes that her own sinful inclinations constantly carried her "further toward the ocean of destruction," and that had they not been so there would have been no occasion for "a divine Hand" to have taken her out of "the imminent danger of being drowned in the gulf of destruction for ever" (241-242), she touches upon an important point—the love of God. Although the prostitute may be the most outcast sinner in the eyes of the world, the sinner most depraved by her transgression, the mere fact that the "divine Hand" does reach out to save her suggests that the all-merciful God, the God of love and forgiveness does not consider himself above saving even the worst of sinners. It is God who saves Mary, and the implication, of course, is that He does not withhold salvation from anyone, even the most sinful of his creatures; thus, the prostitute becomes the best example of God’s infinite mercy, the ultimate test to which that mercy could be put. What Mary learns from her experience as a sinner is what Jebb would convey to his readers, particularly to those who are on the verge of despair over their own inabilities to find some sign of their own election:

God does not disdain to visit with His grace those spots in human nature which by the respectable portions of
society are considered to be under the shade of the Upas tree; and I have learnt that repentance is possible, even to those who have started aside, as far as human nature can go, out of the path of good, and that Christ's blood cleanses from all sin, and that He is as willing as He is able, to save to the uttermost. Oh! I believe this, and clinging to it as only such a sinner could. (10)

Prostitution, then, becomes an authorial device by which the infinite mercy and love of God might be represented.

The most significant effect of Mary's fortunate fall is that it allows her to rise much higher than she ever before rose. She is like David who fell but who, after his "sad and inexcusable" fall, "became more holy and devoted than ever he had been before" (344). Whereas formerly she had fallen away from the religion she took for granted (29), to the point finally of pawning her Bible (126), her entire new-life is devoted to God. The sinful ambition to rise above her class is consumed entirely in Mary's newly acquired self-abasement. Her sin, she says, degrades her far below her own class, the class she originally "despised" and sought to rise above (29). When she takes a job in a tailor's ship, Mary is painfully aware of the godless actions of her co-workers done "in jest and thoughtlessness":

It seemed to me that they had not the same cause that I had to consider such trivial offences, as of the nature
of sins against God. There was no reason, I thought, for them to be so scrupulous in their behavior, who had never torn away from their souls the veil of morality and rent it into tatters. (193)

Mary is practically a saint at the end of *Out of the Depths* precisely because she was formerly the worst of sinners. Had she never fallen, she too would sin in jest and thoughtlessness, but because she has the fortune to fall and rise, through the mercy of an all-loving God, Mary’s original sinful nature is transformed into a nature devoted to God. Because she has been guilty successively of self-love and degraded lust, she is, at the conclusion of the novel, capable of the highest form of love, devotion to the God that loves even the prostitute.

Thus far, Jebb seems to be committed to a depiction of the prostitute that is essentially Evangelical. But the humanitarians’ cry that the prostitute was being unjustifiably discriminated against by society, if not by God, was heard by Jebb. Unfortunately he listened to the cry, and in doing so destroyed the artistic unity of his work. For in spite of Mary Smith’s own experience, in spite of her constant self-accusation for her sin, and in spite of her repeated attestations regarding George Fisher’s purity and nobility, when Mr. Berkeley, the minister who reformed Mary, asks her how to help fallen women like herself, she gives the
answer of a humanitarian: reformation of society in general, she says, "must begin with young men, sir; for as long as there are men to tempt, there are women who will be tempted and will fall" (345). Parents can help, she says, by telling their sons "what noble things virtue and charity are, and how base and demeaning intemperance and profligacy are" (345-346). And Mr. Berkeley, in spite of all his experience working with prostitutes--like Gladstone he accepts the solicitations of whores and when they take him to their rooms, he attempts to convert them--agrees with Mary: "The ground of the evil lies in the habits of our young men," he says, and "the cure lies there too" (346). This may be the moral of a story but certainly not of Out of the Depths.

In several other ways, Out of the Depths suggests the influence of the humanitarians on a basically Evangelical vision. For example, Jebb ignores the Evangelical device of revealing a nature through the body. Mary's sinful nature is never fully represented by her physical characteristics, for while she is sinful and a prostitute she remains beautiful. She is never like Eleanor B____ who loses her beauty in the course of leading her riotous life. Mary does lose her beauty, but only after her reformation. Like Esther Summerson she contracts smallpox
while nursing a sick child and is left disfigured for life (356). Jebb sacrifices a purely monistic prostitute to a depiction of the utter rejection of everything physical, for Mary is pleased to lose the beauty that has cost her so much (17).

A second way in which humanitarian influence is felt is in the partial acceptance accorded Mary by society and the implied rejection of Evangelical social banishment which by 1859 is under heavy fire from many quarters. But at this point Jebb gets caught again between Evangelicalism and humanitarianism. Mary is accepted by a limited group of people who are capable of overlooking her past and who are able to judge her in terms of what she has become. Foremost among these is Mr. Parkins, the farmer who, although he knows of Mary's sinful past, is desirous of marrying her. Convinced finally by Reverend Berkeley to accept the proposal, during the period of engagement Mary catches cold and dies before the marriage. The impression on the reader is that Jebb may theoretically reject banishment but that when he comes right down to the issue, he simply cannot risk the fate of his novel for theoretical and humanitarian considerations. So he kills her off before she can bring the wrath of Mrs. Grundy down upon her creator. This is substantiated by the defense of Evangelical banishment that Jebb slips into the mouth of a minor
character but one that the reader is clearly asked to respond positively to. The defense is basically a charge that Magdalens are hypocrites. The Evangelical morality rejects penitents, says Mr. Pollen, because so many have merely seemed to reform: "It is not that we do not want them to be good, but that we are afraid of them" (225).

By 1859, then, humanitarianism has clearly made its mark. The depiction of the prostitute in 1832 is quite similar to what is essentially an Evangelical, monistic description of the whore whose prostitution externalizes a debased nature. In Jebb's Out of the Depths, however, although the depiction is essentially monistic, there do exist signs that Evangelical contentions about prostitutes are no longer so firmly based as they had been in Warren's time.

The image of prostitution, by which both Warren and Jebb represent the nature of selfishness, pride, and vanity, in short, sin, was a useful image for writers of socially oriented fiction during the Victorian age no less than for the writers of religious exempla. As we shall see, however, the majority of these social writers were humanitarians; therefore, in their fiction, the prostitute's profession usually does not image her own nature but images, rather, something outside her. Furthermore, her
spiritual nature, conceived by humane individuals to be at odds with her profession, became also an image for these humanitarian idealists.
CHAPTER V

COMMERCIALISM AND THE IMAGE OF PROSTITUTION--I

The entire basis for the Victorian humanitarians' argument that the prostitute should be allowed to reform without society actively impeding her reformation was the dichotomy they thought existed between her profession--her physical lust which they despised--and her nature, her spiritual life which they thought to be at odds with her profession. If this dualism did exist in the prostitute, if her physical trade was not an objectification of a depraved nature, then, they argued, her rejection of that physical trade should logically be her passport to a place in society. In short, they juxtaposed the materialism and self-love inextricably associated with prostitution and the anti-materialism and charitable instincts that were characteristic of the most noble nature, and they used both parts of the dichotomy to image social conditions. Of interest is the fact that given the humanitarians' prostitute, the entire idea of conversion, so important to the Evangelicals, loses its importance, for if she convert, she deprives the social reformer of one image by which he can represent and evaluate society.
In her profession's avariciousness and selfishness that they neither could nor wanted to deny, humanitarians saw more than just a disgusting trade; they found there the perfect image, the ideal metaphor complete with evaluation, for an entire society rapidly turning to the worship of Mammon. "We have profoundly forgotten everywhere," warned Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present*, "that *Cash-payment* is not the sole relation of human beings."¹ Carlyle's warning, of course, is but one of many appeals to Victorians to pay less attention to money and more to relations between people. For like the prostitute in her profession, Victorians who embraced laissez-faire were willing to sacrifice all claims of love for materialistic, self-oriented gain. Like Mary Smith in *Out of the Depths*, the age was growing increasingly unresponsive to all but monetary claims and, thus, unresponsive to all human worth but that which was convertible into either hard cash or self-gratification.

On the other hand, anti-materialism and charity, spiritual characteristics of the dichotomized prostitute, were positive ideals for humanitarians. To counter the Mammonism and

utilitarianism of an age, these ideals needed to be resurrected in a world that had crucified them for a few pieces of silver. Thus, as the prostitute's physical trade came to be an image for the age's ills, her spiritual nature came to be an image for the romantic ideals of the humanitarians.

Of the four works considered in this chapter, "The Lieutenant's Daughter" and Paved With Gold are concerned with the dehumanization that comes about in a materialistic world, a problem that is imaged in the prostitute qua prostitute. The other two works, Oliver Twist and Mary Barton, are much richer novels which present both halves of the dichotomy. In the getting and spending of humanity is seen the trade of prostitution, but the positive values of spiritual natures are also offered, in the characters of Nancy and Esther, as correctives to these materialistic and selfish values.

In James Anthony Froude's "The Lieutenant's Daughter" (1847), Henry Carpenter is forced into a choice which is, in essence, between love and money. When he falls in love with his aunt's governess, Carpenter, a would-be idealist, describes to a friend the change that Catherine Gray has made in his life:

For the first time I know what it is to be a man. Wisdom, truth, beauty, God, duty, --I know them all now! Verily
am I now reborn of the Spirit, the child of love, whose new life now beginning shall be lovely as the lives of the angels are. O! when I think what I have been. But now that is past, gone . . . . Ah! now I am free again, once again baptized in fire the heir of heaven! And Catherine . . . you, you are the means of grace, the mighty channel through which God pours this blessed gift on me.2

The address to Catherine is merely apostrophe, for the passage occurs in a letter to a male friend. Thus, Carpenter is not merely attempting to fool the girl; he does sincerely love her, or perhaps, does sincerely believe that he loves her.

But Catherine Gray is a governess and the child of an Army officer, a man who, in Carpenter's own words,

because he served his king like a gentleman, and never troubled himself to bow down and worship the golden image of Cheapside and the Stock Exchange, had fallen under the displeasure of that Divinity, and been summoned out of life, leaving his daughter to the tender mercies of the world. (258)

The sarcasm in Carpenter's words makes it clear that he, too, rejects the false god of materialism, that he truly loves and that he believes love to be his highest value.

Catherine works for Carpenter's worldly aunt and uncle who, again in Carpenter's words, "act on [the] principle of buying and

2Zeta (pseud, for James Anthony Froude), Shadows of the Clouds (London, 1847), p. 261
selling, and yet they have never confessed it to themselves; nay, it has never once occurred to them" (254). Accordingly, when they find out that a relationship exists between their nephew and their governess, they dismiss Catherine from the position that she originally held only because Carpenter's aunt saw that by taking in the orphaned girl she might obtain a governess for her children at minimal expense (258). When she is turned out, Catherine flies to the university town where Carpenter resides. He takes her in, and the girl, friendless except for the man she so worships, becomes his lover. Because "no sacrifice is too great for her when she [loves]" (262), Catherine gives of herself--her virtue--to the man she adores. Her "sin," then, is what W. R. Greg excuses as "generous, though weak self-abandonment." 

The inevitable letter from Carpenter's worldly uncle is not long in coming. He reproaches his nephew for disgracing the family name and for associating himself with such an "unworthy creature," the adjective being an evaluation of her lack of fortune rather than of her character. The letter also mentions that if Carpenter wishes "to continue to be regarded as my heir,

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3"Prostitution," Westminster Review, LIII (July 1850), 471.
you will let me know . . . that your connexion with her is at an end" (236). Given the choice between love and money, between the spiritual and the material, the youthful idealist wastes no time in choosing the latter. His choice is a simple one, he explains, for "I couldn't afford to turn my back on ten thousand a year" (236), and like his uncle, he too does not see his own hypocrisy and Mammon worship. To Catherine he writes a note in which he reminds her "How sacred are the commands of a parent" (240), and entrusts the care of the girl to the bearer of the letter, Miss Arthur, the avaricious proprietor of a brothel near the university. Carpenter delivers the girl into the hands of the bawd with a great deal of self-reproach, but it is short-lived, for in his heart Carpenter firmly believes that "God never would venture to damn a baronet with ten thousand a year, or even the heir of a baronet" (246).

Once in the hands of Miss Arthur, Catherine quickly sinks to the level of a common prostitute and ends by taking her own life. In the obituary notice of the local newspaper, in spite of the fact that the writer knows both the circumstances of Catherine's betrayal and the universally known immorality of Carpenter, the "name of the gentleman" with whom the girl originally ran off is concealed "out of deference to his honoured and respected relatives"
(217), and it is added that this "gentleman" has been subsequently "recovered from his abandoned companion" (218). Carpenter, unaffected by the news of Catherine's death, continues to publish philosophical papers outlining "his theories of universal philanthropy, and the new reformation" (247).

Catherine Gray is really a minor character in "The Lieutenant's Daughter," nor does she ever come to represent any sort of ideal of selflessness. Rather, she is an objectification and an evaluation of Carpenter's hierarchy of values. He sells himself for the fortune he is to inherit and demeans himself to an uncle he despises. In selling himself, he sells Catherine; but it is Carpenter who, in the real sense, is the prostitute, for he denies love for money, and Froude images this materialism as prostitution, the harlotry into which Catherine is led. Unlike Eleanor and Mary Smith, Catherine is neither vain nor ambitious; nevertheless, the avarice and greed of others drive her to prostitution just as Eleanor's ambition leads her to the same sin. That Froude had this evaluation of Carpenter's values in mind is revealed in a speech of Miss Arthur, the bawd to whom Catherine is sold, in which she defends her trade in human flesh as but one aspect of a universal operation governing all human relations:
You keep your people to work for you as long as they are any use to you, and when they can do no more you turn them off, don't you? Everybody does. Make what we can out of one another, that's the way with everything... Eat one another if you like it, like the beasts do. I don't see much difference; some ways of eating are thought respectable, and others are not, but it is only a question of names. (232-233)

It is clear that for Froude the difference between the trade in prostitution to which Catherine is reduced and Carpenter's dehumanizing of Catherine "is only a question of names."

In Captain Merton Crosier, Augustus Mayhew presents another character shaped by the same mold that formed Henry Carpenter. In *Paved With Gold* (1858), however, the girl whom Crosier dehumanizes never becomes an actual prostitute. That prostitution is her eventual fate even she recognizes, but an ironic ending saves her. Thus, the prostitution to which she will be forced becomes the image of Crosier, for as Bertha Hazelwood will eventually be forced to degrade love to selfish lust available at a price, Crosier reduces all other humans to the level of objects for him to buy and then to use as his whim suggests. Thus, he never faces the choice that Carpenter at least thinks he faces between love and money, for he knows absolutely nothing of such a spiritual (therefore worthless) ideal as love. As is true for Carpenter, the prostitute's trade is his trade, and the
brother of Henry Mayhew obviously judges all society in much the same way, for in *Paved With Gold* almost every middle class character has a similar value system and is willing to sacrifice whomever need be sacrificed for money.

Bertie Hazelwood is in service for ten pounds a year, and her mother is a workhouse nurse. Thus, the girl is too poor to be the object of Crosier's serious attention. Even if she were richer and Crosier could marry her, their alliance would be legal but no better, for one of his friends makes it clear that even respectable marriage is just a means of getting money. If Bertie had a fortune of ten thousand pounds, remarks Charley Sutton, he would marry her and then, in a burst of generosity, adds, "Ah! I'd do it for eight thousand--down!" On no level does there seem to be the possibility of a meaningful relationship, one based on selfless love rather than on either selfish sex or money. The entire idea of human relationship is incomprehensible for people whose hierarchy of values begins and ends at number one.

Crosier sees Bertie as no more than an object to possess, and he tells his friends, "The girl's mine . . . you have no right

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to her" (181). When his ability to seduce Bertie is questioned, he sets a price of fifty pounds on her, the amount of the wager to determine whether he can seduce her in six months. According to the narrator, the high price of the wager is justified by Bertie's great beauty, for "Bertha had such a pretty face, that, to possess it, any of the gentlemen on town would have put themselves to considerable exertion or expense" (212).

When six months elapse and the gallant captain loses his wager, he is more than ever determined to have the "property" (181) that has so long escaped him:

"I'm positively entitled to her . . . . I've bought her. I look upon this fifty pounds to Fred Tattenham as a kind of purchase money. What a fool I should be to let her go, after investing such a sum! If I was to lay out fifty pounds in a house, I should be called a madman if I gave up the place without getting my money back. Then why should I give up such a palace as Bertha?" (260)

Crosier redoubles his efforts to seduce the girl, but he keeps his intentions from his friends and tells them, "If anybody likes to buy my share and interest, he shall have it for a pound of cigars" (275). He has made a mistake, he acknowledges, but next time he shall know "not to interfere with the legitimate property of footmen and grooms" (275). According to the Crosier view of things, all people, even footmen and grooms, view others
as nothing more than property. In the revelry that follows
Crosier's renunciation of interest, Bertha is auctioned off.
The captain asks ten pounds for her but settles finally for a
shilling (275).

Repeated failure to seduce Bertie and the consequent
despair over this failure drive Crosier to contemplate marriage
as a means of gaining possession of her. He has already denied
any selfless value in sex, the manifestation of love, so a similar
denial of any unselfish value of marriage is not surprising.
Because Bertie is poor, however, marriage is impossible. He
concludes his speculation with the thought that it is "a disgrace
[Bertha] should have to work so hard, thereby meaning that she
was worthy to live in idle shame" (213). He would like to make
the girl his mistress and set her up in a little house in St. John's
Woods, whereby he might satisfy his lust for her without forfeiting
his right to negotiate eventually a profitable marriage for himself:

The captain saw no objection to passing many years of
his life in Bertha's society; he would allow her to carry
his name, and have felt much offended if his friends had
treated her with disrespect; but he could not for one
moment think of making her his wife. That would dis­
grace him; the other position would disgrace only her.
He could put up with the latter indignity much more
cheerfully than the former. (302)
Furthermore, Crosier never loses sight of the fact that one can easily get rid of a mistress but not a wife (297). It is quite clear that the inevitable abandonment of a mistress leads her just as inevitably to prostitution. When Crosier finally suggests a secret marriage to the naive girl, even Bertie acknowledges the danger of being cast off (317). Her only recourse would be prostitution, she objects, but this in no way deters the captain, a model of perseverance.

Lurking in Crosier's mind is his awareness that all of his friends are able to seduce lower class girls at much less expense than his own unsuccessful attempts have cost him. "Charley Sutton . . . bolted with a baker's daughter from Cheltenham before he had wasted ten pounds in the courtship" (321). But despair drives the captain to spare no expense in buying his sex: "I don't mind risking another hundred pounds on the little witch" (276). Besides, reasons the captain, his pursuit of Bertie will eventually make money for him, for "it will keep me away from night work" (276). Thus, he begins an expensive, full-scale assault on Bertie's virtue.

He sets up in business Bertie's mother, the workhouse nurse, and in this way he enlists the support of the older woman who begins to get "ambitious" (305) for her daughter. The captain
then attempts to overwhelm Bertie with presents. The first, a dress on which he knowingly leaves the price tag, allows him to kiss Bertie lightly on the forehead. To himself he says, "Thank Heaven, I've introduced kissing! It was expensive, but by and by I shall get as many as I want--ah! more than I want--for nothing" (306). Subsequent presents, he hopes, will allow him to "get gradually down to the lips" (306). If they fail to accomplish their aim, he determines, "I'll cut the business" (306), and "business" is certainly the correct word, for "The foolish man had an idea that Bertha's embrace was to be bought, and he was prudent enough to wish to get them [sic] at the cheapest price" (306).

When Bertie finally professes her love for Crosier, he responds with mixed emotions. He is pleased that she loves him, and he looks forward to reaping the harvest, but, at the same time, he regrets having spent so much for that which he could have purchased at considerably less expense (315). The girl should love him, he reasons, after he has spent ten pounds on presents for her (306). Once sure of the girl's affections, Crosier re-introduces the idea of marriage, but he tells her that they must be married secretly (327). Marriage, a union of love, is to be made to serve the purposes of lust, the lowest form of self-love,
and Crosier, willing to prostitute all ideals, knows full well that his scheme will eventually drive Bertha to a life of prostitution. Crosier's view of the wedding ring that is a part of his plot sums up his whole philosophy: "I was a fool ever to mention anything about the ring. Throwing sixteen shillings away--for what?--a thing she will never be entitled to wear" (333).

The actual "wedding" is performed by one of Crosier's army comrades, and even the simple Bertha, when she sees her "husband" slip fifty pounds to the "Registrar," is amazed at "how much more expensive it was to be married in that quiet manner than at the church by the regular process" (394). Crosier would surely agree. The ruse is a complete success, but even the "bridegroom" regrets that the marriage had to be secretive: "There is a certain delight and importance in being able to talk of 'my wife,' which he was sorry to miss. It seemed like talking of his property. It was a hundredfold better than talking of 'my groom' or 'my horses' " (395).

The gallant captain is killed before he can ever consummate his "marriage," killed ironically while defending his father's house against a would-be robber. Thus, Bertie miraculously escapes from being robbed of her virtue and eventually being reduced to a common prostitute. Ironically, the will that Crosier
makes as a part of his subterfuge, in which his entire fortune
is left to his "wife," is honored by the officer's father who is
ashamed of his son's immorality.

The real point of this story in *Paved With Gold* is the vision
of Merton Crosier, the attitude which reduces everything to
monetary equivalents. Sex, the fullest expression of selfless
love, becomes mere selfish lust to be purchased as cheaply as
possible. Crosier's values are obviously debased as are values
in prostitution. Marriage, the institution of love, the union
bonded by and symbolic of love, becomes only a device by which
Crosier is to satisfy his own passions at the expense of Bertie's
virtue and ultimately at the expense of her entire life. Bertie,
for all her youth and innocence, is divested of all humanity
and becomes, to Crosier, just another "thing." Furthermore,
it is not Bertie's low social position as much as it is Crosier's
own corrupted value system and that of the society of which he, as
well as the prostitute, is a microcosm that produces the threat
upon the girl, for on the few occasions that he meets and courts
girls of the upper classes he clearly indicates that marriage
with one of them would be just another means for self-
aggrandizement. Self is Crosier's only recognized value, sexual
lust and the lust for money the objectifications of his selfishness.
Thus, the prostitution that lurks in the background of *Paved With Gold* and is understood to be Bertie's inevitable fate is the perfect image by which to represent the result of Crosier's selfishness and his denial of all human relations, all association with others based on love.

The story of Merton Crosier's seduction attempts is only one plot of *Paved With Gold*. The other, that of Philip Merton, traces the development of a parish boy from innocence to a callous materialism similar to that of the captain. The idea for this plot, depicting as it does the pernicious effects of a bad environment, came probably from Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, for Philip Merton's fate would have been that of Oliver had Dickens written the response to the new Poor Laws of 1834 that his novel started out to be. In spite of the different directions in which they go, the two novels do have one large area in common: they both depict a society thoroughly, or almost thoroughly, avaricious. According to Humphrey House, "Money is a main theme of nearly every book that Dickens ever wrote," and because the claim is applicable to *Oliver Twist* (1838-1839), Nancy's profession is a fitting symbol of a society's avarice.

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5 *The Dickens World* (New York, 1941). p. 64.
Her profession is just one denial of human relationship in a novel filled with such denials, a novel in which the innocent child who is its title character should be accorded love but who exists for almost everyone solely in terms of the price tag they can hang on him.

Most of the lower class characters evaluate Oliver in monetary terms, the only terms they have available for evaluating anything. Gamfield and Mr. Bumble argue over the amount to be paid for taking Oliver off the parish's hands. Mr. Sowerberry, the undertaker, likes Oliver because the boy makes a good mute, because he is good for business (34-35). Fagin's initial interest in Oliver is in the boy's potential as a thief. Later, Fagin claims that Oliver is "worth hundreds of pounds" (167) because Monks' greed and hatred demand that Oliver be corrupted. And Sikes' only use for the boy is as a means to break into Mrs. Maylie's house. For all of these characters, the innocent Oliver exists only as a commodity potentially useful for making money.

Many of the characters of the lower classes experience these nonrelationships, perverse family unions or unions imaged

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as family relationships which are as meaningless as the trans-
action between prostitute and customer. The paternalism of
Fagin cooking sausages over the fire and awaiting the return of
his "children" is a prominent example. A true utilitarian, he
has absolutely no qualms or sorrow when five of his charges,
rapidly growing too old for their profession, are captured and
sentenced to die (52). Monks robs his own mother when he
leaves her (352), and Mr. Bumble, who at least twice earns
money by means of Oliver, is probably telling the truth when he
claims to love the boy as he would his own grandfather (353).
"Morris Bolter" (Noah Claypole) represents Charlotte to Fagin
as Mrs. Bolter (292), but he allows her to carry their stolen
money so that the law will not find it on him (289). And instead
of brotherly love Monks feels "the bitterest and most unrelentin-
animosity" (352) towards his half-brother. Fagin, Monks,
Bumble and Noah Claypole all use other people as means to
an end, and this end always involves personal profit.

Sex, properly the sign of real love, is obviously corrupted
in Nancy's prostitution but to no greater extent than in several
other relationships in the novel. Monks, the legitimate child
(the innocent Oliver is a bastard), is "the sole and most unnatural
issue" (332) of a marriage founded on "family pride, and the most
sordid and narrowest ambition." Mr. Bumble marries Mrs. Corney only after he has had an opportunity to inspect the silver and to take "an exact inventory of the furniture" (151). "'Coals, candles, and house-rent free,' he says. 'Oh, Mrs. Corney, what a Angel you are'" (175). Just a small taste of marital bliss convinces him that he has prostituted himself: "'I sold myself'" (240), he says, and his "'All in two months! ... Two months!'" (243) recalls to mind Hamelt's similar lament over the degeneration into an incestuous travesty of his once happy family. Although Mr. Bumble only prostitutes himself metaphorically, Noah Claypole is hoping to prostitute 'Mrs. Bolter' literally so that he can live without working, so that, in other words, he can do "'A little fancy work.'" And Fagin acts as a "ponce" for Nancy, only one of the girls in his stable. Given this environment, the descriptive title accorded Charley Bates is not surprising, for "Master Bates" and the "ecstasy" (100) of convulsive laughter into which he is forever falling suggest

7 P. 332. This irony is pointed out by Steven Marcus, *Dickens: from Pickwick to Dombey* (New York, 1965), p. 80.

the ultimate denial of sexual relationship. The sex remains, but the relationship is gone, and self-oriented sex, that of the characters in Oliver Twist, is hardly better than masturbation.

In the world of the novel, where love, sex, and money form a most unholy triumvirate, Nancy's profession is but one more example, this one concretely imaged, of love that is selfish and debased by a price tag. A recent immigrant from the "remote but genteel suburb of Ratcliffe" (80), an infamous breeding ground for prostitutes and thieves, Nancy fits perfectly into the sordid atmosphere of Field-lane. There exists, however, a great gulf between the girl's spiritual nature and her profession. Nancy is not presented to the reader as a woman basely selling herself for personal gain. She is not the one now making the profit from her prostitution, nor was her own greed the reason for her taking up prostitution in the first place. Fagin initially corrupted the girl and still profits by Nancy's ill-gotten gains. Thus, part of the stigma of Nancy's profession is removed, and there is a suggestion that Nancy is anti-materialistic. Furthermore, Nancy is much like "Another Unfortunate" in her origins. She comes from an environment of squalor and is not herself the cause of her now being a whore. She too is a victim, a youthful sacrifice to Fagin's greed. She began stealing for Fagin "when I was a child
not half as old as [Oliver]" (104), and her transition to prostitution some twelve years prior to the time of the novel was also a result of the Jew's avarice. The "cold, wet, dirty streets" are her only home because Fagin "drove me to them long ago" and will "keep me there, day and night, day and night, till I die" (104)! Greed and avarice lead to Nancy's prostitution, but the avarice is Fagin's and the society's around the girl rather than that of the girl herself. Her spiritual nature rebels at such greed and at what has been done to her.

Thus, although many of the relationships of the novel are imaged and evaluated by the prostitute's trade, Nancy's nature is at odds with this profession. Her spirituality remains distinct from her trade, and it is this spirituality which, along with Harry Maylie's renunciation of his place in the world for the hand of Rose, provides the positive ideal of Oliver Twist.

Charles Booth noted that about the only time when a prostitute has any aversion to her profession is immediately after she gives birth to a child. Then, says Booth, "The maternal instinct may make rescue possible." It is quite clearly this same maternal

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instinct that the presence of Oliver awakens in the soul of the hardened prostitute Nancy. The juxtaposition of Oliver and the thieves into whose hands she has just delivered the boy awakens the urge to protect him, to keep him from a fate like her own, and it is for this reason that she mentions at this time a crime accomplished years since, her own corruption (104). Oliver's presence, says Nancy, "turns me against myself" (166), for Oliver reminds Nancy of her own lost innocence. She describes him as being as docile as a "lamb" (132) on the trip to Sikes' place. On the basis of her stuporous speech at the time of the robbery, it is clear that Nancy's drunkenness is a result of her attempt to drown both her sorrow and her guilt for the innocence Oliver is on the verge of losing. Even the boy himself senses that his power over Nancy is her "compassion for his helpless state" (131), and Fagin assures Monks that "as soon as the boy begins to harden, she'll care no more for him, than for a block of wood" (171). It is Oliver's "inner light of innocence"\(^{10}\) that leads Nancy to risk her own safety by confiding in Rose Maylie in order to secure Oliver's safety. And this same maternal response leads her to drug Bill so that she might meet Rose and

\(^{10}\text{Marcus, p. 82.}\)
Mr. Brownlow and reveal the plot of Fagin and Monks.

If, on the one hand, Nancy is a mother figure to Oliver, she is, on the other, the figure of the devoted and selfless wife to Bill Sikes. Although Sikes is incapable of responding to her, Nancy's attitude towards him is one of wifely tenderness and love. She tells him that if he were in prison, "I'd walk round and round the place till I dropped, if the snow was on the ground, and I hadn't a shawl to cover me" (99). When the housebreaker is sick, Nancy nurses him as carefully "as if [he] had been a child," and while she tells him of her concern for him, there is in her voice "a touch of woman's tenderness, which communicated something like sweetness of tone" (258). Her life may be "wretched," Nancy tells Rose, but she does have "one feeling of the woman left" (275), sincere and selfless love. Although she has been a member of Fagin's gang for many years, there still remains in Nancy "a feeble gleam of the womanly feeling which she [thinks] a weakness, but which alone connect [s] her with that humanity, of which her wasting life had obliterated so many, many traces" (270). What is important, of course, is that unlike so many of the characters in the novel, she is somehow connected with humanity. Thus, in spite of criticisms such as that of Richard Ford who found that Nancy's conduct with regard
to Bill was simply unexplainable in the light of his treatment of her.\(^{11}\) Nancy's return to the brutal Sikes after revealing the plot against Oliver is both justifiable and necessary to the novel, for it is precisely this disinterestedness, this sincere and ennobling love that she feels for Bill, that Dickens sets up as an ideal in *Oliver Twist*. The prostitution into which she has been forced may image the Mammonism of Fagin and most of the rest of the novel's characters, but the spiritual nature of the prostitute—her ability to love and to give—stands for the positive value espoused in *Oliver Twist*.

A good friend of Dickens and one who knew of his work at Urania Cottage is Elizabeth Gaskell, and the prostitute that she created embodies many of the same characteristics Dickens saw in the girls of the cottage. *Mary Barton* was written to depict and to offer a solution to the problem of poverty among the lower classes in Manchester during the late thirties and early forties, poverty born of the non-interference policies of a laissez-faire system of economics. In such a system, as manufacturing goes, so must go the economy of the workers. Thus, when a depression

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\(^{11}\)Review of *Oliver Twist*; or, *The Parish Boy's Progress*, *Quarterly Review*, LXIV (June 1839), 98.
in trade occurred in the late thirties, workers faced appalling poverty while employers remained unconcerned and seemingly unaffected by the slowdown of the economy. In *Mary Barton*, for example, George Wilson gives up his own meagre allotment of food for a fellow worker who is dying. When he goes to the sumptuous home of Mr. Carson, the mill owner, to get a hospital pass for the dying worker, he overhears a maid order Mrs. Carson's breakfast from the cook: "Missis will have her break- fast up-stairs, cook, and the cold partridge as was left yesterday, and put plenty of cream in her coffee, and she thinks there's a roll left, and she would like it well-buttered."¹² This juxta-position of murderous poverty and careless luxury creates widespread dissatisfaction among the workers.

Before she falls and becomes a prostitute, Mary's Aunt Esther is vain and ambitious. She works in the factory but despises the work; so she spends her earnings "in dress, thinking to set off her pretty face" (5). She hopes to use "your artificials, and your fly-away veils" (5) as a passport by which she might transcend her own class. In many ways, then, Esther resembles Eleanor B____, also vain, superficial, materialistic, and

ambitious, and these are the values inherent in the profession of prostitution.

Esther's ambition and its consequences are employed by Mrs. Gaskell as a forewarning, a "grim specter"\textsuperscript{13} hanging over and threatening to be a pattern for the fate of her niece Mary Barton, for Mary, too, is ambitious. With this ambition as the common ground, Mary and Esther are identified. While a very young girl, Mary climbs up on Esther's knee and aunt asks niece, "What should you think if I sent for you some day and made a lady of you" (6), and as the girl grows up the "old leaven, infused years ago by her aunt Esther, fermented in her bosom," producing "vanity" and "ambition" (75). As had Esther, Mary has every intention of social climbing on the wings of her beauty:

The sayings of her absent, the mysterious aunt Esther, had an unacknowledged influence over Mary. She knew she was pretty . . . trust a girl of sixteen for knowing it well if she is pretty . . . . So with this consciousness she had early determined that her beauty should make her a lady; . . . the rank to which she firmly believed her lost aunt Esther had arrived. (22)

Much of the imagery later in the novel serves to further identify Mary and Esther. When Mary's ambition seemingly leads to

\textsuperscript{13}Myron F. Brightfield, Introduction, \textit{Ibid.}, p. xii.
murder, an embittered mother refers to Mary as a "hussy" (216), as "Dalilah" (219), as a "vile, flirting queen" (219), and as a "whited sepulchre" (218). Another woman suspects Mary of having been victimized by a "love affair, and, perhaps, one of not the most creditable kind" (275). And still another suspects Mary of being immoral because she is so pretty (302). Thus, Esther becomes a kind of harbinger of Mary's fall.

There are essentially two plot lines in Mary Barton, a personal plot involving the vanity and ambition of Mary, and a social plot involving the separation--"ay, as separate as Dives and Lazarus, with a great gulf betwixt us" (7)--between affluent, insensitive masters and starving workers. Although it is an historical fact that women in Manchester frequently resorted to prostitution during "seasons of commercial distress, when trade [became] paralysed . . . and honest labor denied an honest livelihood,"¹⁴ Mrs. Gaskell treats Esther, in so far as she deals with causes, not as a victim of need but as a vain, selfish sinner. Thus, she functions specifically in the personal rather than in the social plot of Mary Barton. Esther's profession,

however, does objectify the social problem of the novel, for as prostitution debases human relationship for money, so laissez-
faire economic theory ignores the plight of the workers and allows them their "Liberty to die by starvation."15 And as the theory of the owners allows them to drive unswervingly forward in their attempts to make more money while remaining heedless of the suffering around them, Harry Carson, the son of a mill owner, also remains blind to human considerations as he seeks relentlessly to seduce Mary. Thus, through the image of prostitution, the two plots of *Mary Barton* are unified, for in both there is a transformation of humans into lifeless objects to be selfishly used. As in *Oliver Twist*, prostitution, Esther's and potentially Mary's, serves as an evaluative image for the rewritten Victorian Golden Rule of the Golden Cow: Do unto yourself as you would have others do unto you.

Like Jebb, Mrs. Gaskell is somewhat inconsistent in dealing with her prostitute, for although she establishes Esther's vanity and ambition, the girl's actual descent into prostitution is brought about by poverty. Thus, after her fall Esther is a prostitute as conceived by humanitarians. She plies a disgusting trade

which debases love to the level of physical stimulation only,
but her own spiritual nature remains aloof from the debasement,
and she is disgusted with her life. Because she does have a
spiritual nature, she is capable of love and charity.

Even after the soldier with whom she runs away abandons
her, Esther feels charity towards him. When Jem Wilson curses
her seducer, Esther defends him: "Oh, don't abuse him; don't
speak a word against him! You don't know how I love him yet;
yet, when I am sunk so low. You don't guess how kind he was"
(153). Her reduction to the level of a common prostitute is also
selfless, for she submits herself to the indignity of loveless
sex for the sake of her own child whom she loves:

It was winter, cold bleak winter; and my child was so
ill, and I was starving. And I could not bear to see her
suffer, and forgot how much better it would be for us to
die together;--oh, her moans, her moans, which money
could give the means of relieving! So I went out into the
street one January night--do you think God will punish me
for that? (154)

Thus, the vanity established by Mrs. Gaskell serves more to
relate Esther to the ambitious Mary than it does as a cause for
her own fall. One suspects that Mrs. Gaskell also listened to
several differing claims regarding the prostitute.
Esther's most fully realized attempt at charity is with regard to her niece, Mary Barton, for just as Nancy sees her own lost innocence in Oliver, Esther sees her vanity and ambition in Mary. The ambitious girl lacks the guide and advisor that she should have. When Esther, prowling around the streets and alleys, realizes that Mary has established some sort of liaison with young Harry Carson, she sees her own fate as the girl's future and attempts to avert this seeming inevitability. Attempting to protect the girl from the blight of selfishness, Esther tries to inform the girl's father of Mary's activities; but John Barton, convinced that Esther's original elopement contributed much to the death of his own wife, curses his sister-in-law, pushes her into the mud, and leaves her crying for his help (117-118). The only one to heed her pleas is a policeman who picks up the mud-spattered whore and has her sentenced to a month at hard labor for vagrancy. Again Esther manifests her selflessness by holding no grudge against John Barton. She simply laments her own impotence and fears for the safety of her niece: "God keep her from harm! And yet I won't pray for her; sinner that I am! Can my prayers be heard? No! they'll only do harm. How shall I save her? He would not listen to me" (118).
When she is released from prison, Esther's first thought is for the safety of her niece. She soon has an opportunity to help Mary, for the girl believes that her own ambitious flirtatiousness has been responsible for the death of Harry Carson, the would-be seducer. Mary's only explanation for her levity of conduct is that she never had a mother to tell her right from wrong (324), Mrs. Barton having died when Mary was still very young. At the height of her trouble and anxiety over the consequences of her selfishness, Mary turns to her aunt for a mother substitute. Alone with a stricken conscience, Mary, "as if she were a terrified child," instinctively reaches out for help when there is a knock on the door. Gasping, "'Oh! mother! mother! You are come at last?" she threw herself, or rather fell, into the trembling arms of her long-lost, unrecognized aunt, Esther" (224). And it is Esther who provides Mary with the information which Mary alone can correctly interpret to prove that Harry Carson's death has been in no way motivated by her conduct. Thus, Esther does become a mother figure for Mary and does guide the girl when she needs guidance. At the end of Mary Barton, it is fitting that Esther be "laid in one grave" with Mary's father (380), for the prostitute whose nature remains above her profession manifests the highest form of love, the love symbolically
presented as that of the mother for her child. Esther is a mother both to her own starving and sick child and to her niece, starving for a mother's guidance. Like Nancy's, Esther's care for her "children" represents the highest degree of tenderness and motherly affection.

Esther is also a pattern for the solution to the novel's "social" problem. The mill owners are counseled to love just as Esther learns to love, to care for others as Esther cares for her "children." The same kind of parent-child relationship must exist between masters and men, between the Captains of Industry and the workers under them. At the end of Mary Barton, the wish of one mill owner, Harry Carson's father, is clearly that of Mrs. Gaskell. It is a wish that

a perfect understanding, and complete confidence and love, might exist between masters and men; that the truth might be recognized that the interests of one were the interests of all, and, as such, required the consideration and deliberation of all; that hence it was most desirable to have educated workers, capable of judging, not mere machines of ignorant men; and to have them bound to their employers by the ties of respect and affection, not by mere money bargains alone; in short, to acknowledge the Spirit of Christ as the regulating law between both parties. (375-376)

What Mrs. Gaskell rejects Esther rejects, and what Mrs. Gaskell hopes for, human relation, is manifested in Mary Barton by the
humanely conceived prostitute who learns that life is not made up of "mere money bargains alone."

The same disparity between the prostitute's profession and her spiritual nature which humanitarians exploited for the purpose of reforming social attitudes provided two useful images for authors concerned with the greed and avarice that are such frequently noted aspects of Victorian commercialism. The prostitute's trade denied humanity for the sake of money by denying any meaning to sexual relationship. The nature of her trade made it a perfect image for the dehumanization that occurred as a result of mercantilism, for ultimately such concern for making money distorted the vision of a nation's people to the point where they could no longer see humanity as existing outside themselves. To an age being consumed by self-interest, the spiritual nature of the prostitute as conceived by humanitarians became a useful image, that of the Christian ideal of charity, selflessness, which Victorian visionaries tried to make their blind countrymen see.
CHAPTER VI

COMMERCIALISM AND THE IMAGE OF PROSTITUTION--II

In Oliver Twist the dehumanization that is a by-product of materialistic self-interest and that is imaged by the depersonalized copulation of prostitution is almost exclusively a phenomenon of the lower classes. In the other works considered in the preceding chapter, however, the dehumanization occurs when a self-important member of the middle classes dehumanizes a member of the lower classes. For example, in Mary Barton the owners see the laborers as "machines of ignorant men" by which they can make money, and young Carson sees the lower-class Mary as a mere object to be used to satisfy his lust. Similarly, Merton Crosier evaluates the impoverished Bertie Hazelwood as just an impersonal object for sex to be bought at the lowest possible price. But it is pointed out in Paved With Gold that Crosier's vision is so distorted that girls of his own class, the middle class, are also dehumanized. They, too, become a means to an end, and for Crosier and Charley Sutton marriage is simply a convenient means to a large sum of money--the larger the sum brought by

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the bride, the better the marriage. Thus, the depersonalization that is so bound up with making money is not restricted to relationships involving the lower classes. During the Victorian age it destroyed relationship on all levels of society. "In a society so permeated by the commercial spirit," summarizes Walter E. Houghton, "love could be blatantly thrust aside if it interfered with more important values."¹

But if Merton Crosier, Gilbert Osmond (Portrait of a Lady, 1881) and innumerable Trollope males, for example Lord Fawn in The Eustace Diamonds (1873), are no better than male tramps, men by no means had a corner on the marriage market. For Victorian fiction reveals a great many women who evaluated a prospective marriage partner's suitability exclusively in terms of his bank account. The mariage de convenance came to be a great object of derision among Victorian humanitarians who stood steadfastly in the camp of love in its ceaseless war with money. Thus, it took only a short time for humanitarians to recognize the analogy that existed between the woman who gave of herself physically in a money marriage and the mistress in

¹The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870 (New Haven, 1957), p. 381.
St. John's Woods who did the same kind of work but who had a less binding contract or the prostitute in the Haymarket who could be purchased much more cheaply.

It was inevitable, then, that the woman who entered into a loveless marriage for the sake of money came to be imaged and evaluated in terms of prostitution. W. R. Greg gives a succinct account of the ways in which two are alike:

For one woman who . . . , of deliberate choice, sells herself to a lover, ten sell themselves to a husband. Let not the world cry shame upon us for this juxtaposition. The barter is as naked and as cold in the one case as in the other; the thing bartered is the same; the difference between the two transactions lies in the price that is paid down. 2

Greg need not have worried about the slings and arrows of outraged readers, for he was far from being the first to make the analogy. It exists by implication in eighteenth-century fiction, for example in Tom Jones; and in A Vindication of the Rights of Women, published in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft condemns the practice explicitly when she advocates better education for women which "might save many from common and legal prostitution. Women would not then marry for a support, as men accept places under

Government, and neglect the implied duties."

Nor was Greg alone among Victorians in analogizing and evaluating the two. Two years after Greg's essay, Florence Nightingale asks, "The woman who has sold herself for an establishment, in what is she superior to those one may not name?" And in 1857 Dr. William Acton is not really digressing from the subject of Prostitution when he turns his Faulknerian prose to parents who have done much evil, I fear, by the attempt to set up the worship of society in association with that of Mammon. Wholesale dealers in so-called respectability, but screwing out scant halfpenny worths of brotherly love, they have passed a marriage code in the joint names of these false divinities, which renders day by day more difficult the union of youth and love unsanctified by money and position.

Henry Mayhew makes the same accusation but very pointedly and in very direct prose:

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3Mary Wollstonecraft, ed. Camilla Jebb (Chicago, 1913), p. 112. One hundred one years later George Gissing was to label the same aimless and ill-equipped females, whose only choice in life was "common or legal prostitution," the odd women in a novel of which that description was the title.


The offensiveness of the act of unchastity to the moral
taste or sense constitutes the very essence of prostitution;
and it is this moral offensiveness which often makes the
licensed intercourse of the sexes, as in the marriage of
a young girl to an old man, for the sake of his money,
as much an act of prostitution as even the grossest
libertinism.  

In The Fallen Leaves (1886), by Wilkie Collins, a character is
overheard to say regarding just such a marriage as that described
by Mayhew, "There is many a poor friendless creature, driven
by hunger to the streets, who has a better claim to our sympathy
than that shameless girl, selling herself in the house of God!"  

The analogy was so universally acknowledged and accepted as
just that by 1862 it made its way into the English judicial system
and was used as a point of defense in the trial of William Frederick
"Mad" Windham, accused of lunacy by his relatives because he
married a notorious whore of the demimonde Agnes Willoughby
(see above, p. 63 and n.). In a case argued before the Master
of Lunacy, the same Samuel Warren who authored "psychiatric
case histories," Mr. Montague Chambers' defense of Windham's
choice of a bride, according to The Times, was based on the

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6Those That Will Not Work, in London Labour and the London
Poor, (New York, 1968), IV, 36.

following analogy concerning Miss Willoughby:

There was not a tittle of evidence that she was a common prostitute. And as to criticisms of her behaviour in marrying Mr. Windham: A beautiful girl gives herself to an old earl or an old marquis for the sake of position. Why is that which is honourable, pure and right in Lady Mary or Lady Susan to be characterized as abominable, mercenary baseness in Agnes Willoughby?®

It took the jury only thirty minutes to decide in Windham's favor.

It is obvious, then, that the analogy between the prostitute and the woman who married for money or position was universally recognized. Indeed, a good case might be made to support the contention that The Vicar of Bullhampton (1869) was a commercial failure precisely because Trollope ignored the implications of his heroine's successively rejecting the proposal of the poor man whom she loves, accepting that of the rich man whom she does not love, and then breaking her engagement when the poor man comes into an inheritance—especially when the secondary plot concerns the reclamation of a common prostitute (see below, chapter VII). At any rate, just as Victorian authors suggested the commercialism of middle class men by imaging it as prostitution or as leading to prostitution, they applied the same image to

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women who married for money. In this chapter three such women will be considered. One of them, Becky Sharp, rightfully belongs among the lower classes, but in *Vanity Fair* (1848) her social climbing via the marriage bed establishes her among the middle classes. Her unceasing energy keeps her trying to get ever higher within this class and even to get into the upper classes. Edith Dombey restricts her activities to the middle classes, those in which the phenomenon of mercenary marriages seems to have been the most widespread. The third woman looked at is Lady Glencora M'Cluskie Plantagenet who serves as a reminder of something pointed out by Windham's lawyer, that marriages of convenience occurred even among the highest classes in the land.

Disconcerting to a number of critics is Thackeray's refusal to treat explicitly the sexual implications that are found in *Vanity Fair*. H.N. Fairchild uses Thackeray to exemplify his contention regarding Evangelicalism's effect on the content of literature during the Victorian age: "novelists who themselves would have been glad to deal honestly with their material found it expedient to trudge to that prudery which Evangelicalism had made a part
of the Victorian code. \(^9\) Mario Prax objects to the same expedience, which he calls "paralyzed realism," because it emasculates the key scene of *Vanity Fair*: "Consider how the whole plot hinges, at one moment, upon the fact that Becky Sharp is Lord Steyne's mistress. But is she really?\(^10\) A better question than Praz's might be, but does it really? What real difference does it make whether or not Becky has been in bed with Lord Steyne? Rawdon acts on the assumption that she has, and the reader should not need the clinical sex of a Grace Metalious to see that Becky is an Evangelically conceived prostitute.

The same Evangelicalism to which Thackeray "trucked\(^1\)\) (and resented) is perfectly compatible with his attitude towards character and especially so in his treatment of Becky. Not that his religious pretensions dictate his attitude, but he does present character externally and allows the character's actions to suggest his nature or internal, spiritual qualities in the same way that Evangelicals constructed the prostitute's nature based on her actions. For Thackeray, the external either reveals the internal--


monism--or is hypocrisy. Because of his ironist's view of life, most activity is hypocritic when good and revelatory of a nature when bad. Thus, although Thackeray never reveals sexual secrets about Becky and Lord Steyne, he does reveal, through Becky's actions, the selfish nature of the Evangelically conceived prostitute, not just at Praz's "one moment," but throughout *Vanity Fair*.

One way in which Thackeray employs a "less direct means of communicating the sexual component"\(^\text{11}\) of Becky's career is simply by making unspecified sexuality an omnipresent element of *Vanity Fair*. Illicit affairs are seemingly quite normal among the selfish residents but are kept reasonably quiet. Rawdon has a considerable sexual history before he marries Becky,\(^\text{12}\) and such histories are apparently the rule among young men:

\[\text{The times are such that one scarcely dares to allude to that kind of company which thousands of our young men in *Vanity Fair* are frequenting every day, which nightly fills casinos and dancing rooms, which is known to exist}\]


as well as the Ring in Hyde Park or the congregation at St. James's—but which the most squeamish if not the most moral of societies is determined to ignore. (579)

The liaison of Sir Pitt with his housekeeper attests to this sexuality as does the narrator's seemingly casual assumption that most of the men of Vanity Fair keep mistresses (653). The fullest description of this sexuality, however, details the excesses of Lord Steyne and, we might assume, for a purpose. The Marquis has introduced to his wife a great bevy of "frightful" women, each of whom has been the moment's "reigning favourite" (554). He even has some "famous petits apparteaments" (552) richly furnished in satin and velvet and staffed at great expense, it is implied, with infamous women (552-553). All Vanity Fair knows but will not talk of his immorality (560). Thus, Thackeray's novel does have a sexual context.

Into this sexually charged world comes Becky who, like the whore of the Evangelicals, values only herself, her money, and her position. That she has experience is implied very early in the novel. She is said to have had an affair with a Mr. Crisp and to have thus gained a knowledge of the world (27). This "picture of youth, unprotected innocence, and humble virgin simplicity" (35) is no more than just a picture, for she has a
perfectly clear understanding of the relationship between sex and money and an equally clear understanding of her own appeal. After she confirms her suspicions that Jos. Sedley is both wealthy and a bachelor (28-29), Becky determines to marry him, to sell herself to him in exchange for his money. Like the prostitute, Becky is unconcerned with sin, for she is merely trying to make her way in the world (40).

When her attempts to ensnare Jos. fail, Becky moves on to Queen's Crawley and again manifests a willingness to market herself. She cries when Sir Pitt proposes, not for joy, but because selling herself for something less than the best possible price prevents her from "becoming a baronet's wife" (178). She marries Rawdon not because he has money and certainly not because she is in love, but because he is Miss Crawley's proposed heir and because Miss Crawley tells Becky that she would like to see her nephew elope with a poor girl (125). Becky's mistake, of course, is taking at face value what someone tells her in Vanity Fair.

After Rawdon is disinherited, Becky sets out to make something of her husband and, more important, to make something for herself. To advance Rawdon, or so she says, Becky successively flatters and captures the attentions of George
Osbourne, General Tufto, Sir Pitt (the younger), and Lord Steyne. The extent to which these relationships are sexual is never specifically stated, but Becky is no less a prostitute if she manages to retain mere physical chastity. If it is not clear whether or not she sleeps with her admirers, it is undeniable that she "sells" everything else to them. She flatters, she cajoles, she convinces each successive admirer that he is the most important man in the world. And that which categorically classes her as a prostitute is the fact that in each case she is rewarded for her labors either with money or with expensive gifts. She cajoles George while Rawdon takes the foolish man's money at cards (334), money used eventually to support the penniless Crawleys. But Becky receives from George private presents also, presents she does not feel called upon to donate to the common fund (347). Toward George, then, Becky acts as both procuress and courtesan (430).

The attention lavished on General Tufto assures Rawdon of his leader's favor, and Becky's husband is soon seen riding "by his General's side" (346), to meet Napoleon. The General's appreciation is manifested in another way, for Becky's "slave and worshipper, had made her many presents, in the shape of cashmere shawls bought at the auction of a bankrupt French general's lady, and numerous tributes from the jewellers' shops,
all of which betokened her admirer's taste and wealth" (346-347).

Certainly this is prostitution.

Becky earns the favor of her brother-in-law by becoming a kind of English geisha, if not an actual prostitute certainly a courtesan type. The narrator provides the following description of the treatment accorded Sir Pitt by Becky:

Then when he had drunk up the bottle of petit vin blanc, she gave him her hand, and took him up to the drawing-room, and made him snug on the sofa by the fire . . . .

Well, Rebecca listened to Pitt, she talked to him, she sang to him, she coaxed him, and cuddled him so that he found himself more and more glad every day to get back from the lawyer's at Gray's Inn, to the blazing fire in Curzon Street . . . and so that when he went away he felt quite a pang at departing. (523)

Compare Thackeray's description with the following explanation provided by Havelock Ellis:

It is a mistake to suppose that the attraction of prostitution is inevitably associated with the fulfilment [sic] of the sexual act. So far is this from being the case that the most attractive prostitute may be a woman who, possessing few sexual needs of her own, desires to please by the charm of her personality . . . a very large number of men . . . seek an agreeable person with whom they may find relaxation from the daily stress or routine of life. 13

13 Sex in Relation to Society, in Studies in the Psychology of Sex (Philadelphia, 1925), VI, 304.
Ellis places the quintessence of prostitution precisely on the level on which Becky is most clearly a prostitute, the spiritual.

The public reward for services rendered to Pitt is the presentation of Captain and Mrs. Crawley to the king. This assures them a place among "the Very Best of Company" (561). Again Becky has her private rewards. Presentation to "that Magnificent Idea" (567) guarantees Becky something she values greatly: "If she did not wish to lead a virtuous life, at least she desired to enjoy a character for virtue" (561). This "character for virtue" is apparently not based on morals, for as she is being presented to the king, her attentions to "the August Presence" (567) give rise to the conjecture that "the little woman thought she might play the part of a Maintenon or a Pompadour" (568). Another of the "more positive benefits" (561) of Sir Pitt's patronage is the diamonds he secretly presents to his sister-in-law (566), referred to by Dorothy Van Ghent as "the pearls of an adulteress."\(^{14}\)

Becky's next affair, that with Lord Steyne, is only quantitatively different from those that come before it. The public reward for the great man's favor is the concern lavished upon Becky's

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family. Steyne arranges a place for Rawdy in the public school of Whitefriars, and through his influence Captain Crawley is appointed governor of Coventry Island. Becky's private rewards from the great man are several. (Lord Steyne quite obviously has in mind a private reward of his own in disposing of both father and son.) Lord Steyne gives Becky a great many expensive jewels (567), insures her a place in the society to which she aspires, and gives her a check for over a thousand pounds (619).

Whether Lord Steyne ever feels his generosity to be adequately repaid is never stated, and this, of course, is Praz's objection. But does one need to know in order to make a moral evaluation of Mrs. Crawley? Has Thackeray not clearly presented a woman with all the values of a prostitute, the nature of a whore? At the moment of crisis when Lord Steyne thinks he has been the dupe of a plot laid by Becky and Rawdon, he says in reply to Becky's cry that she is innocent, "You innocent! Damn you. . . . You innocent! Why every trinket you have on your body is paid for by me. I have given you thousands of pounds, which this fellow has spent and for which he has sold you" (632-633). If the innocence Becky is so vocal in defending actually exists, it is no more than physical chastity, and when one considers the circumstances of her marriage, even physical chastity cannot be
attributed to her.

Later accounts of Becky depict her living as a prostitute on the continent. While the narrator never actually calls his one-time heroine (347) a prostitute, the same sexuality that dominates England clearly dominates Becky's sojourn in Europe. The often quoted passage from Chapter LXIV, describing a "monster's hideous tail" hidden beneath the water, refers to Becky as a "Siren" (759), and her short-lived "boarding house existence" (767) presents her endlessly entertaining "shabby dandies and fly-blown beauties" (767). The most telling revelation of Becky's prostitution, however, is her habitual appearance at the gaming tables at Baden-Baden, the tables famous for the courtesans that congregated there.

Throughout the entire novel, then, Becky Sharp is presented as a type of prostitute. This explains Wayne Burns' contention that "Thackeray could never have ... developed her as he did, if he had not, towards the end of the novel, reduced her to a tawdry whore."[^15] Whether seeking to arrange for herself an advantageous marriage or earning expensive rewards for the comfort she gives to men or merely selling herself to anyone

willing to pay her price, Becky is a remarkably consistent character—consistently a prostitute. And Thackeray recognizes this. When Becky sinks to her Bohemian period, when she is a prostitute undisguised, it is said of her, "She was not worse than she had been in the days of her prosperity—only a little down on her luck" (782). When she looks back to her former triumphs, she remembers simply days "when she was not innocent, but not found out" (772). A chance remark by the narrator may well sum up the world of Vanity Fair, and it certainly sums up the biography of Becky Sharp: "Mutato nomine, it is all the same" (716). Becky is no less a prostitute when she first meets Jos. Sedley than she is when she travels around Europe with him until his unfortunately fatal illness.

In spite of the almost universally positive response Becky Sharp has elicited in readers, a response brought about probably with the "unconscious assent" of Thackeray, she is a prostitute and is to be evaluated as such. Thackeray no doubt resented the infringement upon his creative autonomy made by Evangelical morality, but he employed an essentially Evangelical concept, objectification of the internal by the external, to suggest the

sexuality of his essentially monistic prostitute.

The same externalizing process was unavailable to Dickens by virtue of his humanitarian concept of the prostitute. But his evaluation of marriages of convenience did not differ from Thackeray's. Thus, he employed comparison as a means to suggest the nature of Edith Dombey's marriage, the profession of prostitution, but his humanitarianism and his own opinion of the spiritual qualities of individual prostitutes led him to redeem the sinner as he condemned the sin.

In the world of Dombeyism, Edgar Johnson tells us, evils "creep from high to low like the greed-engendered cholera coiling from the slums into lordly homes,", for society is but "a single interlinked system." One manifestation of "greed-engendered cholera" is prostitution, and by linking class levels Dickens can show that the "great social evil" running its rampant course among England's slums is repeated on society's higher levels. Prostitution contaminates Dombey's class level in the form of a \textit{mariage de convenance}. Whereas a dehumanizing Dombey seeks

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\textsuperscript{17}Charles Dickens: \textit{His Tragedy and Triumph} (New York, 1952), II, 634.

a good breeder to provide a son and heir and a fitting ornament
to preside over the domestic portion of his magnificent empire,
Mrs. Skewton seeks only Dombey's money and position for
herself and for her too compliant daughter.

Dickens allows his readers more than adequate means for
comparing Edith Granger Dombey to a prostitute. Economic
terminology suggests that she, like Bertie Hazelwood, is just
another marketable commodity. She is said to be engaged in
"a sordid and miserable transaction," and to have been "bought"
(I, 526) by Dombey. Her entire life has been wasted in being
"hawked and vended" (I, 528). Though she denies to Florence
Dombey that she has been an adulteress, she does acknowledge
being cut off from "purity and innocence" (II, 574). Edith even
identifies with a street prostitute. In reply to the question "What
are you?" Edith says, pointing to the window, "I have put the
question to myself... more than once when I have been sitting
there, and something in the faded likeness of my sex has wandered
past outside; and God knows I have met with my reply" (I, 579).

The most obvious comparison of Edith to a prostitute is, of
course, in her relationship to Alice Marwood, the repentant and

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19 Dombey and Son, Part I, in The Works of Charles Dickens
impooverished streetwalker from the dregs of society. Various critics, among them Johnson and Ross H. Dabney, have pointed out that Mrs. Skewton's manipulation of Edith parallels the treatment of Alice by her mother, Good Mrs. Brown. The two daughters are further identified by the fact that Carker has ruined each, even though Edith's fall is moral but not sexual. Near the end of the novel, we even learn that the two prostitutes are related by blood, that Edith is "my Alice's first cousin" (II, 517). But the most telling indication of Dickens' equation of Edith with a prostitute appears in the narrator's comment appended to Alice's violent rejection of the money given her by Harriet Carker when Alice learns that Harriet is Carker's sister. The narrator asks, regarding Good Mrs. Brown and her daughter:

Were this miserable mother, and this miserable daughter, only the reduction to their lowest grade, of certain social vices sometimes prevailing higher up? In this round world of many circles within circles, do we make a weary journey from the high grade to the low, to find at last that they lie close together, that the two extremes touch, and that our journey's end is but our starting place? Allowing of great difference for stuff

and texture, was the pattern of this woof repeated among gentle blood at all?

Say, Edith Dombey! And Cleopatra, best of mothers, let us have your testimony! (II, 81-82)

On the evidence of the narrator's accusation in the passage just quoted, Dickens appears to condemn Edith as much as her mother for the marriage to Dombey that is no better than prostitution. Forster even tells us that Dickens' original plan for the novel had Edith become Carker's mistress. In this way the metaphorical prostitution of her marriage would become actual prostitution. However, due largely to the disbelief and objections of Sir Francis Jeffrey, Dickens found a means by which to extricate Edith from what appears surely to be adultery. The resultant "inverted Maid's Tragedy" consists of Edith's triumph over Carker who has inconsistently turned his back on Dombey's fortune and daughter for the sake of his employer's wife. According to John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, Jeffrey was not the reason for the change but was merely the occasion, for "in engaging the reader's sympathies [Dickens] had entrapped his own, and so was ready to welcome one influential reader's incredulity at Edith's


22 Ibid., II, 34.
guilt, as an excuse to swerve from this course" (86). Professor Butt and Mrs. Tillotson fail only to explain why Dickens ever sought to engage "the reader's sympathies" in the first place for a character who represents a social practice which Dickens was trying to condemn. The answer, of course, may be found in Dickens' idea of the prostitute, the dualistic conception which distinguished sinner and sin. Edith Dombey may be redeemed physically by last minute replotting, but spiritually the woman beneath the profession embodies the values that Dickens saw, or thought he saw, in the girls at Urania Cottage. Thus, the idea of the dualistic prostitute allows Dickens to condemn the custom of money marriages but to redeem Edith. Furthermore, in allowing her a selfless nature, Dickens provides a foil for the completely egocentric values of her husband who understands nothing beyond himself and who turns even his little son into a mere vehicle to carry on his name and his empire.

As the humanitarians' prostitute is traditionally a victim of seduction, Edith is victimized by her mother and "old Joe Bagstock." Seemingly indifferent to what is done with or to her, Edith remains externally passive while her mother seeks to arrange a profitable marriage. She has been abused for too long to defy her mother openly, but although physically calm she internally loathes what is
being done to her. Cleopatra and Dombey have no moral qualms whatsoever regarding a marriage all but professed to be one of convenience, but Edith is disgusted by the whole idea and has no self-respect left because of her part in such a travesty (II, 291). Paradoxically Edith condemns the very crime she embodies, but her crime is on the physical level, her condemnation of that crime on the spiritual.

Furthermore, in the world of Dombeyism, a materialistic world which values only money and appearance, although Edith spends liberally her husband's money she is a thoroughgoing anti-materialist. She manifests "a steadfast, haughty disregard of costly things" (II, 170), which is totally incomprehensible to her materialistic husband. When she finally leaves Dombey, she gives full expression to her regard for her husband's wealth: "Thrown down in a costly mass upon the ground, was every ornament she had had, since she had been his wife: every dress she had worn; and everything she had possessed" (II, 304). Thus, in the things she stands opposed to, Edith is like the humanitarians' rather than the Evangelicals' prostitute.

Edith's attempts to relate to others suggests a nature at odds with the non-relating sexuality of her marriage. Although Cleopatra and Dombey callously use her, Edith forgives her
mother as the old woman is dying (II, 199-200), and realizing that her marriage with the proud businessman is intolerable, it is Edith who tries to relate, who attempts to effect, if not a complete reconciliation, at least a truce by which the "most unhappy pair" may pass their lives together without open conflict (II, 177). She at least tries, but Dombey, blinded by a sense of his own importance, refuses to surrender any of his dignity, and this refusal produces the "scorn, anger, indignation, and abhorrence" (II, 178) that lead to Edith's flight with Carker. Even after the suffering she endures at his hands, Edith attempts to forgive Dombey: "When I thought so much of all the causes that had made me what I was, I needed to have allowed more for the causes that had made him what he was. I will try, then, to forgive him his share of blame. Let him try to forgive me mine" (II, 579). Forgiveness, humility, and self-knowledge here combine to produce a woman of great dignity, a woman who, beneath everything else, is very moral.

But it is her relationship with Florence that most fully characterizes Edith. The first half of Dombey and Son depicts a lonely and isolated Florence. When Dombey's second wife enters, she brings love and friendship into the girl's life. From Edith Florence derives hope for the future, hope that she may one
day find a place in her father's heart. The irony of her hope, however, resides in the fact that Dombey resents his daughter all the more because she once again wins the affection he feels is due him. As was the case with Mr. Dombey's son, Florence's submissive tenderness effects in Edith that which neither Dombey's money nor his own exalted image of himself can engender. Thus, Mr. Dombey steels his heart even more against his daughter, and Edith, who loves Florence, is forced to reject the girl, at least to appearances, or risk losing her altogether in yet another loveless marriage. Edith blames Carker and Dombey for estranging her from Florence, for they force her "to yield up the last retreat of love and gentleness within [her], or to be a new misfortune on its innocent victim" (II, 433). She sacrifices herself for Florence by denying the girl, and this generous impulse, as much as anything, offsets the crime of her marriage.

In spite of her sins and in spite of the haughty pride behind which she hides herself, Dickens' final evaluation of Edith Dombey is that she possesses a "woman's soul of love and tenderness" (II, 579), qualities compatible with prostitution only when one adopts a dualistic conception of the prostitute. The evil of prostitution is that it is both materialistic and false as are Dombey's values--his business empire and his identity which resides only
in the opinion of others. The spiritual qualities beneath Edith's sin are love and selflessness, qualities found in the innocent victim of seduction or the woman driven by poverty to prostitution.

If Dickens saw an image of lower class prostitution among the middle classes, Anthony Trollope saw on all class levels this same cutthroat materialism, and in *Can You Forgive Her* (1864) he depicts a multi-level society in which all marriages are of convenience. In the lower middle class, Mrs. Greenow, the wealthy widow of a tradesman is forced to choose between Captain Bellfield, an educated vagabond without a penny, and Mr. Cheeseacre, a boorish but wealthy farmer. The two suitors obviously care more for her inheritance than they do for her.

In the upper middle class George Vavasor schemes to marry his cousin Alice so that he can put her money to use furthering his political career.

But the marriage that really interests Trollope is that of Lady Glencora M'Cluskie to Mr. Plantagenet Palliser, and with this marriage Trollope reveals that prostitution occurs even among the British nobility.

While still very young, Glencora falls in love with the physically beautiful, spiritually dissipated, and thoroughly penniless Burgo Fitzgerald. Knowing full well his faults, she is simply swept
off her feet by the vigorous gallantry of the cavalier-like Fitzgerald. He, of course, is more interested in Lady Glencora's money than in her, and although he easily wins the girl's heart, "sundry mighty magnates" of the family conspire to prevent him from winning her hand and money. To guarantee Cora's continued obedience, the family marries her to Plantagenet Palliser. Trollope's evaluation of the situation, made later in his life, is as follows:

To save a girl from wasting herself, and an heiress from wasting her property on such a scamp, was certainly the duty of the girl's friends. But it must ever be wrong to force a girl into a marriage with a man she does not love, --and certainly the more so where there is another whom she does love.  

Lady Glencora's marriage is clearly an expediency, for even though Palliser has rank--as prospective father to the next Duke of Omnium--he does not have the money he needs to attain the position in the government for which he has been striving. The money that comes with his marriage puts him in the way to get this position. Significantly, it is Chancellor of the Exchequer for

23 Anthony Trollope, Can You Forgive Her (New York, 1893), I, 247.

which he is striving, and he has a very high regard for the
money with which the position concerns itself: "There is no
error so vulgar," he says, "as that by which men have been
taught to say that mercenary tendencies are bad. A desire for
wealth is the source of all progress. Civilization comes from
what men call greed" (I, 346). And for all purposes, the
marriage is little more than a question of money. Of her duties
as hostess in her own household, Glencora says to her cousin,
"I do so try to be proper, --and it is such trouble. Talk of
people earning their bread, Alice;--I'm sure I earn mine"
(I, 307). The narrator evaluates their marriage as "a complete
success" but adds "in a point of view regarding business" (I, 325),
and he refers to the union as a "judicious arrangement as to
properties, this well-ordered alliance between families" (I, 328).

In such a marriage, of course, there is no love, and this
lovelessness is objectified by one of the overriding concerns,
but for different reasons, of both husband and wife, Cora's apparent
barrenness which deprives Plantagenet of an heir. Of her own
lack of love, Lady Glencora says, "I never loved him. . . .
When I went to him at the altar, I knew that I did not love the man
that was to be my husband" (II, 8). Of Plantagenet, she says:
I have never said a word to him that could make him love me. I have never done a thing for him that can make him love me. The mother of his child he might have loved, because of that. Why should he love me? We were told to marry each other and did it. When could he have learned to love me? (I, 353)

Because she is a participant in a relationship which should be based on love but is, in fact, based only on money and the concomitant sex which is not used to express love but is only a means to an heir, Glencora's marriage is prostitution. In a discussion with Alice Vavasor, Cora refers to herself as "a false wife" and claims that her marriage is "all false throughout" (II, 8). When Alice replies that she is Plantagenet's "honest wife," Glencora vehemently answers, "No . . . no; I am not honest. By law I am his wife; but the laws are liars! I am not his wife. I will not say the thing that I am" (II, 8). Like Edith Dombey Cora thinks of herself as but a "faded likeness" of her sex. Edith was married to get money, Cora to save money, but both marriages are prostitution.

Because Burgo Fitzgerald knows that he still has the heart of Lady Glencora and because he still wants her money, he tries to convince her to leave her husband and run away with him. Thus, Cora is in a situation where she must choose between two men, and Trollope condemns the materialistic attitudes that put her in
such a situation by showing that whatever she does is prostitution.

She contemplates running away with Burgo but rejects that particular form of prostitution:

Do you suppose I have never thought of it;—what it would be to be a man's mistress instead of his wife? If I had not I should be a thing to be hated and despised. When once I had done it I should hate and despise myself. I should feel myself to be loathsome, and, as it were, a beast among women. (III, 132)

Thus, flight and the prostitution of adultery is not feasible.

But this is precisely where Trollope employs the image of the prostitute so effectively. For Lady Glencora has no real choice. She can go with Burgo and be his mistress or stay with her husband in a mercenary and loveless marriage, but in such a situation she is still a prostitute. Thus, she is caught in a bind.

Of the situation she says:

But why have I been brought to such a pass as this? And as for female purity! Ah! What was their idea of purity when they forced me, like ogres, to marry a man for whom they knew I never cared? Had I gone with him, --had I now eloped with that man who ought to have been my husband, --whom would a just God have punished worst, --me, or those two old women and my uncle, who tortured me into this marriage? . . . But it is all sin. I sin towards my husband, feigning that I love him; and I sin in loving that other man, who should have been my husband. (III, 205-206)
Like Edith Dombey, Glencora has the redeeming qualities of the humanitarianistically depicted prostitute, spiritual qualities which extenuate any physical "sin." That she is like the seduced innocent is fairly obvious. First of all, she has been forced, against her will, to marry without loving her husband. Secondly, she fully despises herself and what she is doing, and like Martha Endell she longs for the peace of death: "What matters it whether I drown myself...? I'd die;--I'd die willingly. How I wish I could die! Plantagenet, I would kill myself if I dared" (III, 82).

And finally, the most redeeming of all, although she does not love Plantagenet she contemplates accepting disgrace and ruin by running away so that he is freed to marry again and have the son he longs for: "Plantagenet," she says to him, "I do not love you;--not as women love their husbands when they do love them. But, before God, my first wish is to free you from the misfortunes that I have brought on you" (III, 82). Thus, Glencora has the external situation of the prostitute but the moral instincts of a Magdalen.

Glencora's confession of the faults in their marriage awakens in her husband an awareness of the reciprocation of affection upon which a marriage must be based and of the responsibility each person has to work actively and selflessly for the other. Symbolically, he turns down the offer of the Duke of St. Bungay
to become Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right to which position was originally brought about by Glencora's portion in marriage.

He chooses love rather than money and leaves England on a vacation with his wife. That they do infuse love into their marriage is implied by the fruits of the marriage--Glencora gives birth to the son who will inherit the dukedom.

Thus, Trollope suggests the danger of the marriage of convenience by imaging it as prostitution. If Lady Glencora chooses to remain in a loveless marriage which exists for monetary reasons, she is in her own eyes a prostitute. If she rejects that marriage and runs away with Burgo Fitzgerald, she will be a prostitute and an adulteress in the eyes of all the world. In such a situation, her only forseeable escape is death. There is no way for her to live without sinning until her husband makes of himself a person worthy of being loved and until she makes the effort to love the man who is her husband.

According to Edgar Johnson, Louisa Gradgrind's marriage to Mr. Bounderby, in Dickens' Hard Times (1854), is a kind of prostitution. 25 In so far as her marriage, or any marriage for

25 Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, II, 815.
that matter, is used as a means to materialistic advancement and is not a union cemented by mutually felt love, it is prostitution and would have been recognized by the Victorians as such. In this chapter, however, I have attempted to deal, not merely with examples of this type marriage, but with novels that consciously employ the image of prostitution as a metaphor by which to describe the marriage and condemn its prostitution without necessarily condemning the woman who becomes a prostitute. The monistic and the dualistic concepts of the prostitute allowed Victorian authors to do just this.
CHAPTER VII

A RELIGION OF DUTY AND THE TARNISHED IMAGE

Mayhew's letters to the Morning Chronicle made it abundantly clear that "slop" workers, women who worked in England's clothing industry, were frequently driven to prostitution by abominably low wages available in the only trade for which they were fitted. And as we saw in Chapter V, seductions of lower class girls by wealthy, dissipated young men unconcerned with the humanity of their victims were also responsible for driving deflowered and disgraced girls to a life of infamy. Thus, the image of the prostitute formulated by Victorian humanitarians was based ultimately on the belief that the majority of the nation's whores were victims of the decline of emphasis placed on human values, a concomitance of the Industrial Revolution.

Furthermore, Victorians could not remain unaware that the same Evangelicalism that denounced prostitution and called upon whores to give up their filthy trade conspired to keep prostitutes what they were by denying them the opportunity of making anything of themselves once they did reform. Mayhew, in London Labour and the London Poor, recounts the story of a prostitute who
responded to the entreaties of Reverend Baptist Noel at a Mid-
night Meeting she attended. After she endured the period of refor-
mation, she was allowed to go out into the world; but because of
her past she could find no employment and drifted eventually back
into her old profession. ¹

Appalled by this miserable and unjust system which first
produced prostitutes and then kept them what they were, and driven
to action by the Carlylean dictum, "Do the Duty which lies nearest
thee,"² humanitarians actively sought to reform prostitutes and
to make for these Magdalens a place in the world. W. R. Greg
took to the press in 1850 to plead for human pity for these wretched
creatures. Angela Burdett-Coutts gave freely of her money and
Dickens of his time and his organizational and administrative
talents to establish Urania Cottage so that prostitutes might
eventually emigrate and begin new lives. "Amicus," moved by
the pitiable tale of a prostitute that appeared in The Times, wrote
to the newspaper announcing, "If 'One More Unfortunate' will
communicate her name, however 'disgraced,' and her address,

¹(Ne w York, 1968), IV, 241.

²Sartor Resartus, in The Works of Thomas Carlyle in
however 'disreputable,' to 'L. J.,' care of Mrs. Griffiths, stationer, 8 Baker-Street, w., she may retrieve herself, and meet with a friend able and willing to assist her." And for years William E. Gladstone allowed himself to be accosted on the streets so that he might have an opportunity to talk to his accoster about the sinfulness of the life she was leading. Thus, the reformation of prostitutes became an important outlet of humanitarian energies during the nineteenth century. Indeed, the social stigma placed on the person who chose to associate himself with vice and who willingly allowed corruption into society made the field of prostitute reformation particularly attractive. Christ had been willing to suffer for the sins of man; could the nineteenth-century Christian be willing to do any less than to suffer personal rebuke at the hands of a self-righteous society for the sake of sinners? Thus, many practitioners of the religion of duty sought their Christianity in reforming prostitutes rather than in social activity among any other class, for there existed a positive obstacle—a prejudiced people—to be overcome. Opposition became a kind of thermometer by which the Christian could

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3Letter to the editor, February 6, 1858, p. 10.

evaluate his "offering."

In the fiction of the age there is a large number of prostitutes who remain minor characters and little more than recipients of humanitarian charity. Their raison de'etre is simply that: to provide an object for humanitarian sympathy and charity. For example, when both plots of Mary Barton have run their courses and Mrs. Gaskell wants to summarily show (not tell about) the moral improvement in the once ambitious, vain, and selfish Mary, she resorts once again to Esther and lets Mary know that her aunt is a prostitute. In the fictional world of 1848, there can be no reformation for Esther; she has to die. The time has not yet come when repentance will be allowed to go unpunctuated by death, but what is important in the revelation of Esther's sin is Mary's response, that of a true humanitarian who has come to love and to offer help to sinners. She tells Jem Wilson, "Oh, bring her home, and we will love her so, we'll make her good."5 Thus, Mary, who is for a time metaphorically imaged as a prostitute, assumes the values of the Magdalen—selflessness and charity. In Charles Kingsley's Alton Locke, Tailor and

Poet (1851), the title character's first poem, set in "a lone Pacific world," depicts "a troop of naked island beauties."

When Sandy Mackaye, created in the image and likeness of Carlyle, hears this, he grows indignant and takes the deflated Alton on a tour of St. Giles where the young poet is introduced to Lizzy, a seamstress forced to prostitution in order to get food, and Ellen, a sickened and emaciated girl who is thankful that disfiguration caused by smallpox keeps her from joining her friend in sin. These prostitutes act only as a spur by which Alton's creative energies are to be redirected to depicting the social problems with which the humanitarian should concern himself. And finally in Can You Forgive Her, although Trollope is not particularly concerned with the role of the humanitarian, he uses the responses of two characters to prostitutes in order to manipulate his reader's evaluation of those characters. Both George Vavasor and Burgo Fitzgerald seek fortunes by winning women that have money. The reader's comparative evaluation of the two rests in part on the fact that Burgo's attempt, as we have seen, involves adultery while George's merely means that

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he must marry for money. But George has had a mistress, a
girl he seduced from her parents' home. He is tired of her and
gets rid of her knowing well what must become of her. Burgo,
on the other hand, for all his dissipation is at least humane.
When he is accosted on the street by a freezing prostitute, he
buys her a meal and gives her the last of his money. In this way
Trollope reveals that Burgo is capable of love and evaluates
him and his plan of adultery as humanely, if not legally, preferable
to George's plan to make a loveless but monetarily advantageous
marriage.

In this chapter, then, I plan to examine three novels which
concentrate on the reformers of prostitutes. The first, Trollope's
The Vicar of Bullhampton (1870), concentrates on the social obsta-
cles of returning a reformed prostitute to society. The second,
Miss Felicia Skene's Hidden Depths (1866), depicts the social
obstacles of committing oneself to a selfless ideal and the resulting
spiritual rewards for the Christian willing to overcome these
obstacles. The last, Mrs. Houstoun's "Recommended to Mercy"
(1863), evaluates the moral efficacy of such conduct by presenting
as the reformer a woman who is herself a reformed prostitute. All
three novels emphasize the temporal duties of man that are
spiritually efficacious in his quest for heaven.
According to Samuel Chew, Trollope's "clergymen are Englishmen first and divines only a long way after." However, Frank Fenwick, the Vicar of Bullhampton, might be described more accurately as a Christian humanitarian, for although a member of the clergy, Fenwick's principal concern seems to be his parishoneers' temporal welfare.

Trollope's depiction of the prostitute and her plight in The Vicar of Bullhampton is quite possibly the most sensible picture of the nineteenth century. Carry Brattle is not innately depraved, nor is she pure but unsuspectingly seduced. She is simply a girl "doomed by her beauty" who in her youth and innocence loves and allows herself temporarily to forget the sanctity and blessedness of chastity. Trollope's real concern in telling Carry's story is to depict the way in which the world, with its ill-proportioned evaluation of female chastity, keeps the sinner from leaving her trade.

The first description of the fallen Carry is of no Evangelically conceived hedonist but of a pathetic creature who has sought to

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8 Anthony Trollope, The Vicar of Bullhampton (New York, 1910), II 356.
regain materially what she knows is lost spiritually:

There were the remains of great beauty in the face, -- or rather, the presence of beauty, but of beauty obscured by flushes of riotous living and periods of want, by ill-health, harsh usage, and, worst of all, by the sharp agonies of an intermittent conscience. It was a pale, gentle face, on which there were still streaks of pink, -- a soft, laughing face it had been once, and still there was a gleam of light in the eyes that told of past merriment, and almost promised mirth to come, if only some great evil might be cured. Her long flaxen curls still hung down her face but they were larger, and . . . more tawdry than of yore; and her cheeks were thin, and her eyes were hollow; and then there had come across her mouth that look of boldness which the use of bad, sharp words, half-wicked and half-witty, will always give. (I, 235-236)

Thus, the narrator reads in Carry's face, in Evangelical style, the effects of her sinful life, but like one of the women interviewed by Mayhew, Carry "ain't thoroughly hardened yet." Mixed together are "the sweet outward flavour of innocence" and the "heavy hand" of "vice" (I, 236). For Trollope this mixture is important, for in The Vicar of Bullhampton he sets himself squarely against the idea that one false step irrevocably degrades a girl's nature and destroys all "flavour of innocence."

If her indiscretion has not depraved her nature, it has blighted her hopes for a meaningful and happy future as a wife and mother. She says, "I never had a husband, nor never shall, I suppose. What man would take the likes of me" (I, 238). Thus,
Carry's only hope is to "die and have done with it . . . . What's the use o' living" (I, 238)? As a humanitarian Trollope's concern is temporal, for it is her earthly non-future rather than her spiritual afterlife over which Carry despairs. Possibly referring to Hood's "Bridge of Sighs," the girl anticipates the same future seen by Nancy and Martha Endell, but Carry's Waterloo Bridge is to be found at her father's mill:

Sometimes I think I'll walk there all the day, and so get there at night, and just look about the old place, only I know I'd drown myself in the mill-stream. I wish I had. I wish it was done. I've seen an old poem in which they thought much of a poor girl after she was drowned, though nobody wouldn't think nothing at all about her before. (I, 242)

To get the girl free of a life that she despises, not so much because it is sinful but rather because it is just futureless, Fenwick must find a respectable place for the girl to go. He promises that he will spare her the wretched institutions that exist for people like her when she anticipates the place he considers sending her: "... a prison, or to live along with a lot of others. Oh, Mr. Fenwick, I not stand that" (II, 243). She requires freedom to come and go but love to keep her from going astray again, for "The change from a life of fevered, though most miserable, excitement, to one of dull pleasureless, and utterly
uninteresting propriety, is one that can hardly be made without
the assistance of binding control" (II, 23). Thus, Trollope
seems far too humanly concerned to offer any solution in which
virtue is its own reward.

Carry should be placed, of course, at her home where she
could respond to the tender affection of her sister Fanny and
"to her mother's softness as well as to her mother's care
(II, 23). But this most logical and suitable of alternatives is
blocked by Carry's harsh father who refuses even to speak of
his daughter who was but who is now "a thing, somewhere,
never to be mentioned" (I, 49). Although a professed pagan,
his moral system is decidedly Evangelical: "In all the whole
world," he says, "there is nothing so vile as a harlot" (II, 157).

Unfortunately for Carry, the whole world seems to have
about the same opinion of the whore's wickedness. Fenwick cannot
take her in at the vicarage and let her work as a servant, objects
Mrs. Fenwick, because none of the other servants would stay
(I, 253). Because Carry would not subject herself to a reforma-
tory, Fenwick promises not to try to place her there. And even
the most squalid of hotels refuses to allow the girl to remain there.
The mistress of the Three Honest Men Hotel even accuses
Fenwick of immorality when he comes to take Carry away:
She was drunk, and dirty, as foul a thing as the eye could look upon; every other word was an oath, and no phrase used by the lowest of men in their lowest of moments was too hot or too bad for her woman's tongue; and yet there was the indignation of outraged virtue in her demeanour and in her language, because this stranger had come to her door asking after a girl who had been led astray. (II, 17-18)

Carry's brother Sam sums up succinctly the general attitude towards his sister's sin--the world is, he says, "Down on it, like a dog on a rat" (I, 348).

And except for Sam and the girl's mother, even her family participates in the world's opinion. Jacob Brattle's renunciation of his daughter has been already noted. When Fenwick tries to soften the heart of Carry's sister-in-law by reminding her of Mary Magdalen, the woman replies:

Perhaps she hadn't got no father, nor brothers, and sisters, and sisters-in-law, as would be pretty well broken-hearted when her vileness would be cast up again' 'em. Perhaps she hadn't got no decent house over her head afore she begun.... Them days and ours isn't the same, Mr. Fenwick, and you can't make 'em the same. And Our Saviour isn't here now to say who is to be a Mary Magdalen and who isn't. (II, 31-32)

Mr. Jay, the husband of Carry's sister, reveals to Fenwick an inhumane spirituality that is precisely the Evangelicalism deplored by the humanitarians:
He was quite willing that poor Carry's soul should be
saved. That would naturally be Mr. Fenwick's affair.
But as to saving her body, with any co-operation from
himself or Mrs. Jay,—he did not see his way at all
through such a job as that . . .
"I don't know whether almost the best thing for 'em
isn't to die,—of course after they have repented, Mr.
Fenwick. You see, sir, it is so very low, and so shameful,
and they do bring such disgrace on their families." (II, 88)

If Carry Brattle is to have any better fate than the mill-
stream, there must be someone willing to give of himself for the
girl, one whose guiding principle is something other than "Do
unto others as you think they would do unto you" (II, 90). This
someone, of course, is the Vicar of Bullhampton whose human
sympathies for the girl lead him to help her when even his wife
considers his attempts as ill-advised (II, 14). Like Gladstone,
Mr. Fenwick does not escape having his humanitarianism used
against him, for the Marquis of Trowbridge bruits about slanderous
rumors concerning the vicar's association with a prostitute. The
marquis starts a rumor, we are told, "that the Vicar of Bull-
hampton was **" (II, 102).

In spite of setbacks, however, Fenwick's human charity
serves Trollope as a model for the nineteenth-century Christian.
He lacks the self-righteousness of those around him and, conse-
quently, defends Carry: "Have we not all so sinned as to deserve
eternal punishment" (I, 171)? His humaneness even frightens Carry's mother, a strict and pious woman, albeit the girl's mother, for Mr. Fenwick speaks to her "so tenderly of her erring, fallen child, never calling her a castaway, talking of her as Carry, who might yet be worthy of happiness here and of all joy hereafter; that when she thought about him as a minister of God, whose duty it was to pronounce God's threats to erring human beings, she was almost alarmed. She could hardly understand his leniency,—his abstinence from reproof" (I, 61-62). Because Fenwick "never hardened his heart against a sinner, unless the sin implied pretense and falsehood" (I, 236), when he first sees the fallen Carry he has no wish to revile her. Rather in his humaneness, he longs to take her into his arms and beg her to be a better person, to convince her to be better by showing her that she is loved (I, 236). This same humanity rises up in him when Carry mourns over the fact that no one in the world could love such a sinner as herself:

He thought for a moment that he would tell her that the Lord loved her; but there was something human at his heart, something perhaps too human, which made him feel that were he down low upon the ground, some love that was nearer to him, some love that was more easily intelligible, which had been more palpably felt, would in his frailty and his wickedness be of more immediate avail to him than the love even of the Lord God. (I, 240)
Because the love of God is not immediately intelligible, Fenwick tells Carry simply that he himself loves her. It is this humanness that dictates Fenwick's entire theory of his own role as God's emissary on earth. Saving Carry's soul is very important, he tells the girl's worldly brother-in-law; "But we must get at that by saving her in this world first" (II, 87).

In this way Trollope establishes the means by which the temporal affects the spiritual realm of the eternal. And this relationship is the crux, not only of Fenwick's Christianity, but of that of all the practitioners of the religion of duty treated in this chapter who respond to the prostitutes set adrift on an Evangelical sea of pitiless self-righteousness. Largely through his efforts the girl is reinstated at her family's home, and largely through her own sweetness, which is not completely rooted out and destroyed by sin, Carry wins back the affection of her hard and stubborn father.

Trollope does not deny the sinfulness of unchastity. He makes it very clear at the end of The Vicar of Bullhampton that Carry's sin has cost her a great deal, that her life's happiness is to be only that which will come as her parent's child; she knows that "no lover should come and ask her to establish with him a homestead of their own" (II, 356). But if sin deprives her
of what might have been an idyllic life, it should not deprive her too of life itself. It should not force her into a horrible non-life of futureless prostitution or drive her to "starve, or die in a ditch" (II, 32). If the Evangelicals, such as Mr. Jay, had their way, this is precisely what would happen to the sinner. This is the tragedy Trollope attempted to avert by changing the attitudes of the self-righteous towards the fallen sinner.

If Trollope's representation of the attitude towards prostitutes and sexual sin is fundamentally accurate, the task of the Christian was indeed ennobling and sanctifying. Trollope by and large ignores the rewards that come to Mr. Fenwick by virtue of his humanitarianism. One can assume that his temporal reward is the satisfaction of knowing that he has helped restore value to a human life, but the novelist never even mentions this. Although his social orientation keeps him from dwelling on the spiritual rewards, Trollope obviously feels that the Vicar is the true Christian, that his spiritual reward for his human charity is to be reaped in the afterlife. In the second novel under consideration, Miss Skene's *Hidden Depths*, it is the spiritual realm—spiritual obligations and spiritual rewards—that is focused upon rather than the temporal.
The seduced and abandoned prostitutes of *Hidden Depths* are Lois and Annie Brook. George Courtenay tempts Lois away from her lower class but respectable home on the estate of his fiancée's aunt and uncle. He establishes her as his mistress and then threatens to expel her unless she sends for her younger sister. When the innocent Annie arrives, Courtenay gives her to a friend who lacks the colonel's perseverance (I, 69-70). When he tires of Lois, Courtenay sends her to a hotel and leaves her to get along as best she can. The girl becomes a prostitute, and when Courtenay refuses to have anything more to do with her, refuses even to allow her to become his servant, she drowns herself (I, 74). Her dying wish, which she writes down and carries with her to her death, is that George find Annie and make reparation for the wrong that both Lois and he have done to her (I, 73). Lois dies, then, worried about the welfare of someone else and still blind to the callousness and unconcern of her seducer whom she forgives. But if George remains deaf to Lois's application, his sister Ernestine does not. When she accidentally learns of her brother's immorality and the claim that the dying Lois makes on him,  

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Ernestine vows to be his surrogate, for "so well had she loved him, that [Lois's] agony seemed to fall like heavy guilt on her own soul; and she felt that . . . his victim must become her own most sacred charge" (I, 48). Ernestine welcomes her duty not only for its own sake but because it gives purpose to her life which has heretofore been spent in meaningless idleness.

The rest of the world, however, looks upon Ernestine's vow with anything but approval. When she tells her aunt, Lady Beaufort, that she plans to devote herself to saving the "perishing soul" of a prostitute, the shocked, society-minded woman replies, "A soul, indeed! much she cares whether she has a soul or not; and if she has, pray, what have you to do with it" (I, 132)? Hugh Lingard, her fiancé, asks a similar question: "Why should you have anything to do with such a one as she is" (I, 134)? Dr. Granby, the dignified rector of St. Gregory's, is also shocked at the girl's proposal. When she asks him if his duty as a pastor does not require that he too search out and save lost sheep, he replies:

Ahem! within proper limits, certainly; wherever there appears any reasonable hope of my ministrations being successful, and where there is no risk of my sacred person--I mean, my sacred office--being treated with irreverence. (I, 192)
As a model for redirecting her charitable energies, Dr. Granby suggests to Ernestine his own daughter who "visits the infant-school once a week, and it is most cheering to see how she has taught the innocent little ones to clap their hands in unison" (I, 195). These examples of Christianity do not daunt Ernestine. The only concession she makes is to Hugh, for he is the only one who has any real claim on her: she agrees to give up such work after they are married. And although she believes that "to stay the ultimate perishing of souls" is "the only worthy end, the only momentous object, to which . . . life and energy should be given" (I, 187), she is, nevertheless, hurt by the separation from Hugh that her mission imposes upon her and stung by the critical opinion of the world. Like Frank Fenwick, she pays for being humane:

No one, especially no woman, can brave the censure of the class to which she belongs, without being made to feel it keenly; nor does the righteousness of the cause which has made her depart from received opinion, prevent her from growing daily more sensitive to the blame she has provoked. She may be, as Ernestine was, too unselfish to forsake the truth and the right, because her defense of it brings the world's contumely on her head; but the harsh judgment that will assail her, the unworthy motives that will be attributed to her, the misconceptions and exaggerations which her every action will call forth, must gradually make her shrink more and more into herself, till she finds herself happiest in the isolation to which she has involuntarily exiled herself. (I, 167-168)
Ernestine's efforts are not in vain. She finds Annie Brook and places her in a refuge. Like Frank Fenwick, however, Ernestine comes to realize that spiritual abstractions are lost on the sinner caught up in a temporal world and hounded with physical problems. Faith and hope, abstract and without physical embodiment, will not do, for throughout much of the novel Annie has no faith, and when she does come to believe, she loses all hope for her own salvation. The only way to make her aware of God's nature, a nature of love, is by somehow imaging or dramatizing His charity. Thus, Thorold, a humane clergyman, gives Ernestine the following advice:

Where the love of God does not exist, human affection is the only other impulse that can work for good within the soul, though in a feeble and uncertain way. It is often allowed to serve as a guide to the higher, purer, love, and it can at least accomplish what haughtiness and severity could never effect. (II, 88).

When Annie runs away from the refuge, Ernestine blames herself because she has paid more attention to Hugh than to the friendless girl:

She knew that Annie loved her, and she remembered how Thorold had warned her, that a human affection was almost the only influence which could be brought to bear on a heart still dead to the love of God: had she not neglected too long to use her power over that wayward soul? (II, 115)
Thus, human love, charity, is the nearest thing on earth to God.

When she once again finds Annie, she devotes herself entirely to caring for the girl's physical and spiritual welfare until the girl meets her rapidly approaching death. Because of the image of God's love which Ernestine provides, Annie does come to have faith before she dies. When she does finally face the enormity of her sinfulness, she takes refuge in Ernestine's words: "His love is greater than your sin, Annie" (II, 196).

But if "God is love" (II, 61) and if the sinner would be forgiven by God, she must learn to love selflessly as do God and His emissary on earth, the humane Christian. Annie has been seduced and violated; thus, the love that is asked of her is the same as that which she is soon to ask of God--she must be willing to forgive the seducer who made her what she is. Only after a great struggle is she able to do so, but with her dying breath she forgives him.

Simultaneously, Ernestine learns that Annie's seducer is Hugh Lingard, her own fiance and George Courtenay's friend. ¹⁰

¹⁰In an 1850 letter to Charles Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell tells the true story of a prison surgeon called in to attend a sixteen-year-old prostitute who was what she was because he had originally seduced her. His shock at recognition cost him his job, and a very similar scene occurs in Hidden Depths. Letter included in Letters From Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1841-1865, ed. with an Introduction by Edgar Johnson (London, 1955), pp. 161-162.
Thus, the humane Christian has no temporal reward for her charity; on the contrary she loses everything in the world to which she has clung, and she feels that she has "died with Annie--died for ever to the sweet life of the past, with its love and hope and joy, and as if the whole earth would henceforth be for her cold and dark as the grave, whither that dead form must descend" (II, 204).

But Ernestine does not go unrewarded, for she finds, as did Carlyle, that duty here on earth opens the door to a higher reality and that her religion of duty, of charity, is the means to save the savior of souls as well as the sinner:

The one impulse of loving pity, of active, unselfish charity, which had led her into this search for a lost sinner, was doing more to teach her the knowledge of God, and the truth of God, and the real nature of that atonement once made for the sins of this world, than all the theological instruction she had received from external sources in the whole course of her life. (I, 196)

Although Hidden Depths is concerned with the social problem of prostitutes, concerned especially with the seductions that the world turns its head from, it is more concerned with the charity of the Christian, the human love through which the sinner will come to see an image of divine love and by the exercise of which the humanitarian himself will come to a greater understanding of
God. Thus, a final summation of Miss Skene's Christianity might be the following statement concerning Ernestine: "In seeking Christ's lost little one she had found at every step the sinless Christ Himself" (II, 157). The greater concern here is not the saved; it is the savior. The reward of Ernestine's Christianity, no doubt the same as Frank Fenwick's but here more emphasized, is a spiritual reward suggested by Annie Brook's evaluation of Ernestine: "Oh, my dear lady, you are like an angel from heaven to me" (II, 169)! Obviously, Ernestine's capacity to love even the most outcast of sinners, and not just the children of Dr. Granby's infant-school, is the means by which she is to one day be an actual angel in heaven, for fundamental to all theories of a religion of duty, as I have already pointed out, is the idea that there are "eternal results from temporal deeds" (I, 127).

The extent of those eternal results is depicted in Mrs. Houstoun's "Recommended to Mercy", for in that novel the prostitute is also the reformer of prostitutes. As in the two other novels looked at in this chapter, the true Christian's efforts are to do her duty to God by doing her duty to man; but in "Recommended to Mercy" Mrs. Houstoun, as it were, takes one aspect emphasized by Trollope and one emphasized by Miss Skene.
As in The Vicar of Bullhampton, Mrs. Houstoun's characters work to effect temporal ends and to improve the physical existences of those for whom they are concerned. On the other hand, in Mrs. Houstoun's novel the Christian's own reward is the spiritual reward promised Ernestine in Hidden Depths. In "Recommended to Mercy", then, more so than in either of the other novels, one's capacity for love on earth has both an earthly and a heavenly reward.

By the cruelty of women around her and their malicious gossiping about her, Helen Vaughan becomes the mistress of Philip Thornleigh. The two live together for many years in loving harmony, and Philip thinks of his mistress as "the sweet but fallen angel of the house." ¹¹ Thus, early in the novel Mrs. Houstoun approves a relationship based on love and selflessness, a union, in short, determined by conduct rather than creed, love rather than law. Like the Evangelically conceived prostitute, Helen accepts her role and does not worry about her sin. Therefore, before she can do anything efficacious, she must undergo a conversion.

When Thornleigh is on his deathbed, Helen finally remembers her long-forgotten religious obligations, duties she conceives of almost solely in terms of moral conduct. When Philip makes his mistress his heir, Helen vows to repair her life by her conduct, by using the legacy to help reform the courtesans who make up London's demimonde. Aware that the lack of charity in the world originally drove her into sin, Helen determines to offer charity to a class traditionally denied it altogether (222).

Thus, like the Vicar of Bullhampton, Helen seeks to change the hearts of the prostitutes less for the salvation of their souls than for the opportunity to restore them to their places in this world (301). The prostitutes themselves see in Mrs. Vaughan a hope for this world, a hope "that since there had been found one being, kind and (as they felt) good, who did not disdain to have fellowship with the repentant ones, her example might be followed by others, and more might in time be found willing to deal mercifully with them" (432). One is inclined to consider Mrs. Houstoun opportunistic in her choice of prostitutes to be reformed. In the early sixties the demimonde became a widely noted English phenomenon (in this novel Skittles becomes Croquet, the leader among the whores), but this class, the elite among prostitutes, would seemingly be least interested in renouncing
their ill-gotten but enjoyable gains. Mrs. Houstoun takes
character types of the demimonde but attributes to her whores
the sentiments of the down and out prostitute. Thus, Mrs.
Vaughan hopes that "some at least among them may be not only
good but happy women yet" (434).

Because Helen's goal is primarily social, her method of
operation concerns itself less with faith and hope than with
charity. She tells Rhoda Mason, a courtesan, that although
they can only hope in God's mercy, there is yet something to do
before the dying prostitute dies. If Rhoda wishes to do the will
of God, says Mrs. Vaughan, she must take care of her earthly
duties. Mrs. Vaughan says to the girl, "It is of your earthly
father of whom I now must speak to you" (323-324), and her
emphasis on the girl's earthly father rather than on her heavenly
father seems to represent Mrs. Houstoun's overall attitude.
The existing system of penitential reformatories, enjoins Helen,
have proven ineffective in coping with the problem of prostitution
because the founders of the institutions, although their intentions
are the best, "seem to expect that a miracle will follow on their
efforts, forgetting that the age of miracles is past" (297). And
the best examples in the novel of real Christians are five nuns
of the Order of Mercy: "Women they are, pure in spirit as in
body, who, not shutting themselves from the world in the dark austerities of a cloister, not trusting only in barren prayers for mercy from on High, are doing their Father's work on earth" (310). Like that of Helen herself, the "Father's work" to which so many orders of nuns devoted themselves during the nineteenth century was the reclamation of prostitutes, but Helen's work, unlike that of the nuns, is comprised almost entirely of charity.

As in Hidden Depths, faith is a deemphasized virtue. Indeed, the character who seems, most consistently, to voice the author's views is Arthur Brandreth, an agnostic. To Brandreth, as to Helen, earthly existence is the only state about which anything might be known. All men, argues Brandreth, need the support of hope, but hope for something in this life rather than for something beyond (122). The universe is just, says the agnostic, and the failure of a man to do his earthly duty to his fellow men brings down upon him earthly punishment. This we know; of any other punishment we can only guess (118). Although he is unable to make any assertions about God, Arthur does conceive the idea that "He who endeavours to do his duty to his neighbour has (according to my idea) the surest likelihood of doing his duty to his God" (354). Ultimately his creed is summed up in a quotation he borrows from Pope. Arthur has no faith in God, he says, but
he is sure that "'He can't be wrong whose life is in the right'" (353).

The author's approbation of Brandreth's humanitarian creed and of the work he does to aid Mrs. Vaughan's reforming activities is determinable from the response he elicits in Alice Mainwaring. The girl, not one of the prostitutes, is engaged to Mr. Herbert, a clergyman of the Anglican Church, with whom she falls in love when, during service, his song rises up: "The girl's heart rose with it, and love, and the religious enthusiasm of the moment mingled together in its aspirations" (100). Alice's ultimate rejection of Herbert, a man of faith but very little charity, in favor of the charitable agnostic is a pattern for the novelist's rejection of a traditional creed of faith in favor of one in which love is turned into charity towards others.

If Brandreth's reward for his charity is personal, temporal love, Helen's is decidedly spiritual. Although her work, charity, is carried on at the human level, it is approved in terms of religious evaluation. The reformed prostitute is said to devote herself to "the blessed woman's work of charity and mercy" (294), and because she serves as 'a connecting link' between 'the 'good' world and the bad,' she is referred to as "blessed" (267). When the matriarchs of society begrudgingly condescend to visit and
observe the charitable institution founded by a fallen woman, they are impressed, in spite of themselves, by the claims of the courtesans regarding Helen as they tour. The matrons hear "many a fervent whisper of 'God bless her!' rising from that untutored crowd" (449). As Annie Brook mouths the religious approbation of Ernestine, both the narrator and the fallen women of the home suggest that Helen Vaughan's actions are approved in Heaven, that from her temporal deeds there are to come spiritual rewards.

In the Christian humanitarian tradition, love is the most important virtue and is the only real religious doctrine. The true Christians of the nineteenth century sought to practice their religion through charity. The position of the prostitute as the most despised of sinners, along with the assumption that she was miserable in her trade, led many Christians to try to love their God by loving these outcast and tarnished images of woman created in the likeness of one whom Christ forgave. The suffering they were willing to undergo for others became a kind of measure for the efficacy of their "worship." The reformers of all three novels considered in this chapter have in common the desire to serve God by serving man. Frank Fenwick's
emphasis is predominantly social, the goal he seeks temporal, and the acceptability of his offering merely implied. Ernestine Courtenay seeks a spiritual end through temporal means, seeks to save souls by offering them the pattern of Christ's love. In so doing, however, she comes to understand that in working for man she is working for her own salvation. Finally, Helen Vaughan wins spiritual approbation for her temporal work. The extent to which love, then, can be believed to be religious worship or offering is attested to by the fact that it offsets Helen's prostitution. From Nancy and Esther on, the dualistically portrayed prostitute has been found capable of love that is selfless and meaningful, love that is distinct from the lust of her trade. In "Recommended to Mercy" this love is equated with the spiritually efficacious charity of the religion of duty. Both types of love are pleasing in the sight of the God who is love. Only one further step will be required to reconcile the two poles of the dualism that dominates the descriptions of prostitutes in mid-Victorian England.
CHAPTER VIII

DIVINE IMMANENCE AND THE NEW IMAGE

If the preceding chapters have shown anything about the nineteenth century, it is that the Victorian age universally agreed on the prostitute's capacity for spiritual love. For the Evangelicals, she must reform before she is able to love God, but the very act of undergoing a rigorous process of reformation manifests the highest and noblest love of God. Thus, Mary Smith is actually pleased that she became a prostitute, for had she not, she argues, she never would have come to love God as she does. In socially oriented fiction, the prostitute does not even have to reform. Humanitarian dualism condemned her physical sin but kept untainted her spiritual nature which retained the ability to love, to act charitably. Esther prevents Mary Barton's ruin, and Nancy saves Oliver from Monks and Fagin. Edith Dombey sacrifices herself for Florence Dombey, and Lady Glencora contemplates her own disgrace as a means by which to free her husband to marry again. And in the tradition of the religion of duty, the prostitute, in order to be forgiven by God for her prostitution of love, must learn to love selflessly her fellow
creatures. Annie Brook, for example, forgives Hugh Lingard as her sister forgives George Courtenay, and Helen Vaughan turns her love to charity by which courtesans of the demimonde are reformed.

But as traditional Christianity ceased to be the widely accepted moral authority it had been, man turned more and more to himself to find that which he thought to be divine. To use the set of terms adopted by Hoxie N. Fairchild, what was formerly the "divine transcendence" became, for the "subjectivists," the "divine immanence." Man sought the divine that was in man. And because the divine image consists of mercy, pity, peace, and love, in other words, charitable love, the image-become-immanence is manifested by man in the form of love. To borrow again from Fairchild, "God is Love" became "Love is God." Man's capacity for love became his capacity to participate in the divine, and, as we have seen, the prostitute had such a capacity.

\[^{1}\text{1830-1880: Christianity and Romanticism in the Victorian Era, in Religious Trends in English Poetry}\ (\text{New York, 1957}), IV, 64, 233.\]
\[^{2}\text{Ibid.}, IV, 6.\]
The rejection of traditional Christianity in favor of a belief in divine immanence paved the way for a concomitant acceptance of a romantic evaluation of sexual love. If traditional Christians, Evangelicals and humanitarians alike, acknowledged the whore's capacity for spiritual love, they despised and rejected her polluted sexual love. Mary Smith, for example, must die to avoid getting married, and Helen Vaughan can expect no earthly reward similar to that accorded Arthur Brandreth, the agnostic in "Recommended to Mercy" whose charity earns the love of Alice Mainwaring. But romanticism's emphasis on the free expression of the total personality, including the sexual, Blake's assumption, for example, that the harlot's curse and venereal disease are products of "mind-forg'd manacles" of repression—ushered in a change in attitude towards physical love, a change which could be gradually more accepted as the force of traditional Christianity's "Thou Shalt Nots" lessened.

The romantic conception was essentially monistic, but whereas the Evangelicals condemned the monistic prostitute, late Victorians approved the woman capable of both sexual and

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spiritual love. Because man's capacity for love came to be thought of as divine, his sexuality came to be, not something foul and suggestive of a depraved nature, but an externalization of the divine immanence.

In the preceding chapter, the following summary of Ernestine Courtenay's spiritual development was quoted: "In seeking Christ's lost little one she had found at every step the sinless Christ Himself." In the novels treated in the present chapter, the same phenomenon is repeated; but in these novels when divine and Christ-like love is discovered, it is found in the person capable of total love, the prostitute. Divine immanence, then, is truly in the lost little one rather than in any external divinity.

Of the three novels, George Gissing's *The Unclassed* (1884) depicts simply the conflict within a man who must choose between two women, one purely spiritual and one who is both physical and spiritual. Although Gissing's terminology does not actually suggest that Ida Starr, the prostitute, is divine, his rejection of pure spirituality prefigures an acceptance of the prostitute's divinity that is to be found in the other two novels, both by Wilkie Collins.

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Involved in this new acceptance is an utter rejection of all dualism. A dualistic split between the prostitute's trade and her nature can exist only so long as the prostitute remains a human and a woman. But when she comes to be thought of as more than just another person, when she becomes a personal ideal because of her capacity for total expression and love to the fullest, dualism must be replaced by monism. Thus, the prostitutes treated in the present chapter undergo a conversion experience similar to those of Eleanor B____ and Mary Smith. The result of this conversion is less a renunciation than a reintegration of the two halves of the personality.

George Gissing's The Unclassed depicts Osmond Waymark's search for the ideal woman. His quest is predominantly secular, the only specifically religious overtones occurring in relation to the prostitute's conversion, a secular experience but employing religious imagery. The choice of ideals with which Waymark is faced is between pure spirituality--the unanimous choice of the mid-Victorians who created a dualism in order to get rid of the physical--and a combination of the spiritual and physical, the latter quality revealed primarily through Ida Starr's prostitution.
Ida becomes a prostitute after her mother, a prostitute before her, dies and leaves her daughter alone in the world. Ida is well fitted for the profession she enters, for even as a little child she manifests a "passionate" nature. And physical passion is her hallmark. Osmond Waymark, just shortly after meeting the prostitute, realizes that "Ida had already a dangerous hold upon him; she possessed his senses, and set him on fire with passionate imaginings" (111). Ida knows that her attractive force is physical (190), and she employs that force in order to elicit a response in Waymark. The first time that he ever shakes hands with her "Waymark felt his pulses throb at the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand" (109). Thus, the passionate and physical Ida Starr is a far cry from the frail Catherine Gray who was dismissed as Lord William's mistress because she spent both day and night crying over her lost virtue.

Ida, however, is not without nobility, not without the higher instincts that have been regularly attributed to the dualistic prostitute for several decades. Early in the novel the narrator remarks that Ida's character "was a remarkable one, and displayed a strength which might eventually operate either for

good or evil" (8). She is strong, and before she is left friendless in the world she seems to realize that ultimately her prop and her guidance must come from within herself rather than from some external source (12). As a young girl, she loves her mother "purely and intensely" (23). When she is dismissed from grammar school for hurting a classmate, Ida's only concern is "the pain she knew she was going to cause one who had always cherished her with faultless tenderness--tenderness which it had become her nature to repay with a child's unreflecting devotion" (9). The "one," of course, is the mother who has such hope that her daughter will get an education and use it as a springboard to rise above a bad environment. Ida's capacity for love, for selflessness, is further seen in other relationships presented in the novel. She strikes a classmate who calls her mother "a bad woman" (15), but immediately after the impulsive act, she cries for the cruelty to which her temper drives her (2). After she grows up, Ida befriends the same girl, now a lonely and embittered woman. When Waymark first proposes that Ida meet again the classmate, Ida's instinctual passion responds with momentary "bitter resentment" (174), but this passion is immediately regulated by charity, and she is soon willing "to bury the past in forgiveness" (174).
After her conversion and return to the world of respectability, Ida lives with, and makes herself a favorite of, her elderly grandfather. A callous realtor grown rich through years of renting slum housing to the impoverished of London, his callousness is soon softened by his affectionate granddaughter. Her higher nature is fully depicted by her charitable work to correct the deplorable condition of these slums. A product of poverty, she feels an instinctive compassion for the struggling masses. Her first labor in their behalf is to organize a garden party for some of the young girls of the slum. A highly successful party and Ida's promise that there will soon be another gives meaning to lives heretofore meaningless: "For the first time in their lives the children of Litany Lane and Elm Court had something to look forward to!" (275). To the children, the lady who brings them to the party and who befriends them is nothing less than an "angel" (273), and Gissing is obviously employing a somewhat traditional evaluative term though in a totally secular context to suggest the kind of approbation his character is capable of eliciting. When Ida inherits her grandfather's slum property and his money, she sets about immediately to spend large sums of money to improve the living conditions in Litany Lane.
Her desire to spend money on charity is but a single manifestation of a tendency Ida possesses throughout The Unclassed. In spite of her profession, she is anti-material. Waymark first meets her when he offers his last few pennies to a starving whore just as Ida is about to do the same for her sister in sin. According to Waymark such generosity makes Ida "one out of a thousand" (85). The extent to which Ida has been forced in order to support herself makes her scornful of money. When Waymark curses his own lack of money, she laughs derisively at him, and her eyes have in them "a strange wonder, sad at first, then full of scorn, of indignation" (143). Thus, Ida Starr is firmly in the tradition of the Victorian fictional prostitute, selfless, capable of love, and not particularly fond of the material values to which her profession is devoted. She transcends the type, however, in her strength of character. While a prostitute, she is never weak; she never falls on anyone for aid or help but remains always self-sufficient and self-assured. She is a very strong, very appealing character.

The other woman to whom Waymark is attracted is Maud Enderby, a good woman in a very different sense from Ida. Maud is the product of the religious training of her spinster aunt, a rigid and sour Puritan. The girl grows to be a beautiful woman
who rejects her own beauty and anything else in life that gives
pleasure. "In the true Christian," says Aunt Bygrave,

every enjoyment which comes from the body is a sin.
If you feel you like this or that, it is a sign that you
must renounce it, give it up. If you feel fond of life,
you must force yourself to hate it; for life is sin.
Life is given to us that we may conquer ourselves.

Many pleasures would seem to be innocent, but even
these it is better to renounce, since for that purpose
does every pleasure exist. I speak of the pleasures
of the world. One joy there is which we may and must
pursue, the joy of sacrifice. The more the body
suffers, the greater should be the delight of the soul.

Maud is greatly influenced by this doctrine, but she is forced to
live in the world, forced to assume positions as a teacher and
later as a governess. Thus, she remains a misfit never really
comfortable in a world which repels her. She does not belong,
for she is a "being from a higher world" (83). As she comes to
know Waymark, she reveals herself to him, and her "pure and
touching spirituality" (222) strikes a responsive chord in the
breast of the young idealist. But when Waymark proposes
marriage to her, Maud is confronted with a problem, for re-
lationship is pleasurable and marriage involves bodily pleasure.
Fear of this pleasure torments the very spiritual girl, and she
retreats further and further from the world. She falls back
more and more upon Aunt Bygrave. She also withdraws into the world of literature, into Rossetti's poems: "These gave her much help in restoring her mind to quietness. Their perfect beauty entranced her, and the rapturous purity of ideal passion, the mystic delicacies of emotion, which made every verse gleam like a star, held her for the time high above that gloomy cloud-land of her being, rife with weird shapes and muffled voices" (217). She finds solace and peace when she wanders into a Catholic Church that could be named only for the Virgin Mary--Our Lady of the Rosary (218).

When she finally determines to break out of the spiritual prison she has built for herself, when she is on the verge of her own conversion experience, Maud writes a long passionate letter to Waymark. It contains "burning words" (266) which reveal that the "half-brotherly love" (266) modestly offered by Waymark to date is no longer enough, that it is "like a single drop of water to one dying of thirst; she cried to him for a deeper draught of the joy of life" (266). But when she pauses in her writing and goes downstairs, she sees her mother making love to a visitor in the house. Repulsed by the joy of life, she returns to her room where the letter she is writing appears "as a proof of contagion which had seized her own nature" (267). After a time of "wild,
wordless prayer" (267), she writes a new letter to Waymark which she concludes, "I am always with you in spirit, and in the spirit I love you; God help me to keep my love pure" (269). Thus, as Ida Starr is a noble but sensual prostitute, Maud Enderby is an equally noble but solely spiritual person. Between them Waymark must choose.

For as long as Ida is a prostitute, she is depicted dualistically. Her spiritual nature does not acquiesce in her physical trade. She is a woman who, "knowing every darkest secret of life, keeps yet a pure mind" (131). But while she continues to ply her trade, she lacks the capacity for total commitment of self, for physical and spiritual are at odds with each other. Her prostitution is not condemned in religious terms for anything such as sinfulness but is condemned because it is a physical giving without corresponding spiritual giving. She meets Waymark precisely at a time when she is beginning to sense the inadequacy of purely physical relationship. She seeks spiritual companionship in Waymark whom she asks to be her "friend" (91). When she feels the incompleteness of this new relationship, incomplete because it is solely spiritual, she undergoes her conversion in which she renounces her physical trade so that she might be capable of offering spiritual and physical love that is worthy to
Waymark. She goes away for a time, walks along the beach in an easterly direction (144), takes off her clothing and immerses her nude body in the midnight sea (145). But Ida's baptism is purely secular for an equally secular purpose: human love.

There is no hint in The Unclassed of divine immanence; love is the highest human value, but it is no more. Thus, the love of Waymark that she longs for leads to a conversion by which she can return love for love. When she reflects upon her conversion, she knows that she has become what she is because of that desire:

It is no arrogance to say that I am become a pure woman; not my own merits, but love of you has made me so. I love you as a woman loves only once; if you asked me to give up my life to prove it, I am capable of doing no less a thing than that. Flesh and spirit I lay before you—all yours; do you still think the offering unworthy? (292)

Of greater consequence than Ida's conversion is Waymark's conflict between Ida and Maud. Waymark is aware of the tension within him between spiritual ideals and animal desires long before he meets either Ida Starr or Maud Enderby. At times he appears to be a pure sensualist: "We have not been content," he says, "to live in the simple happiness of our senses" (130). He acknowledges that he could fall "desperately in love with a girl
who hadn't an idea in her head, and didn't know her letters.

All I should ask would be passion in return" (94). At other times, however, Waymark is aware that his demand for passion is not the highest ideal. He tells Maud of his constant desire to give himself up wholly to his "instincts of passion and delight," but he acknowledges further that "I may change; I may perhaps some day attain rest in an absolute ideal. If I do, it will be through the help of one who shall become to me that ideal personified, who shall embody all the purer elements of my nature, and speak to me as with the voice of my own soul" (225-226). Clearly, he sees this spiritual ideal in Maud.

Whether he is to choose a physical ideal or one that is spiritual, Waymark believes that the ideal will be important, not for itself, but for his art:

Only as artistic material has human life any significance. .. Life for its own sake?--no; I would drink a pint of laudanum to-night. But life as the source of splendid pictures, inexhaustible material for effects--that can reconcile me to existence, and that only. It is a delight followed by no bitter after-taste, and the only such delight I know. (117)

Waymark eventually realizes, however, that his desire for Ida, because it is not mere physical lust, because Ida has made herself something worthy to be loved both physically and
spiritually, is meaningful in and for itself and not just for art:

"His enthusiasm for art was falling away; as a faith it had failed him in his hour of need. In its stead another faith had come to him, a faith which he felt to be all-powerful, and the sole stay of a man's life amid the shifting shadows of intellectual creeds" (270). This other faith is love, love as represented to Waymark by Ida Starr, love which at its highest level involves a total commitment of self, both body and soul, to another. What Waymark finally comes to realize about love is revealed by the narrator very early in The Unclassed. A chance remark applied to Ida's grandfather is equally applicable to Waymark, for both characters are "incapable as yet of understanding that love must and will be its own reward" (39). Both Waymark and Mr. Woodstock, the grandfather, do come to understand this mystery of love, and both learn it from Ida Starr, the converted prostitute for whom love is total giving. Only after much spiritual agony can Waymark recognize in Ida "an ideal . . . The noblest and sweetest woman I have known, or shall know, on earth" (309).

When the prostitute's conversion reconciles the spiritual and physical aspects of her nature, she becomes capable of offering to Waymark meaning in life, and she gives him an ideal higher than either of his former fragmentary ideals. Maud's cold
spirituality is for her a dead end. Her only recourse when she is confronted with life is retreat into Roman Catholicism and entrance into the religious, celibate non-life where she can exist out of a world of which she is not a part. But unlike Mrs. Houstoun's nuns, Maud remains uncommitted to man and therefore only half alive. On the other hand, just as sex leads to procreation, spirituality and passion lead to meaningful existence that is fully human. Through Waymark's love for her, Ida rises above the level of a mere prostitute to something better, to an "angel" working in the world of which she is truly a part. Furthermore, her sexuality leads her to a meaningful relationship with Waymark, and he finds in her physical and spiritual fulfillment. Ironically, even though Waymark does learn that love exists for the sake of love, his earlier opinion is shown to be not altogether wrong, for he comes to find that without love, without Ida, he is "dormant" (290) as an artist no less than as a human being. Separated from her, he is incapable of giving anything to his art, incapable of giving birth, as it were, to anything of value in any realm. When he comes back to Ida he comes back to life and becomes once again artistically productive.

Thirteen years before Gissing wrote The Unclassed, Wilkie Collins developed a relationship between a prostitute and a
reformer in similar fashion in *The New Magdalen* (1873). Collins' novel is significant, however, because the reformer is an ordained minister in the Church of England, because his response to the new Magdalen is quite specifically sexual, and because Julian Gray's response to a prostitute suggests that he finds in this outcast the divine immanence.

Mercy Merrick is necessarily a totally blameless prostitute. While still a child, she is abandoned by her parents, falsely accused of adultery in the house where she works as a servant, and driven out to earn an inadequate income as a "slop" worker. When she faints from hunger, she is raped and delivered to a brothel. Innocent of all wrong, Mercy becomes, through necessity, an equally blameless prostitute. Through the treachery of a vicious woman, Mercy is convicted of stealing, yet one more crime of which she is innocent. While serving part of her sentence in a refuge, she hears a sermon by Julian Gray, the clergyman, and determines to live virtuously. "As for me," she explains, "he touched my heart as no man has touched it before or since. The hard despair melted in me at the sound

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6 Wilkie Collins, *The New Magdalen* (New York, 1873), chapter XXVII *passim*. 
of his voice; the weary round of my life showed its nobler side
again while he spoke. From that time I have accepted my hard
lot, I have been a patient woman" (22). There is no mention
here of any response to Gray's text, for Mercy responds not to
the Word but to the words, to the voice and the man.

Mercy's fall and consequent rise are relegated practically
to a single chapter in The New Magdalen. The major portion of
the novel grows out of circumstances whereby Mercy is given
an opportunity to assume the name, the role, and the honest
character of a woman who is apparently killed by shrapnel during
the Franco-Prussian War. This impersonation represents to
Mercy the only possible way back into the world of self-righteous
Evangelical morality. Thus, she becomes Grace Roseberry,
the reader and companion to England's Lady Janet Roy, and
eventually the fiancée of Horace Holmcroft.

In spite of the improvement in her life by virtue of her
new position, Mercy remains unhappy, for she is all too aware
that she is guilty of deceit (52). She is particularly distressed
by knowing that she has earned the love of both Horace and Lady
Janet, who makes Mercy her adopted daughter, by false pretenses.
She is guilty of having "cheated them out of their love" (148) just
as the prostitute falsifies love. As was her original prostitution,
her impersonation is a physical falsification at which her spirit recoils. Even though her spiritual response to both friends is sincere, it is at odds with her physical deceit. Thus, Mercy needs to undergo conversion in order to reintegrate the physical and spiritual aspects of her nature, in order to love fully as a person must love.

The opportunity for conversion offers itself when the real Grace Roseberry appears accompanied by Lady Janet's nephew, the same Julian Gray Mercy had so admired at a distance. Thus, Mercy is faced with a conflict. If she confesses to her fraud and is turned out, a life of utter hopelessness awaits her. Grace Roseberry's viciousness offers her a further temptation for pursuing her impersonation, for the real Grace could never win the heart of Lady Janet as has the kind and loving Mercy. The girl must choose between deceit and a consequently happy and carefree life on the one hand, and justice with its consequent hopelessness on the other. Interestingly, Mercy acknowledges no responsibility to God in making her choice; she is aware only of the legitimate claims of the vicious Grace. The temptation to choose material comfort is presented as almost too attractive to refuse when the only obligation is to a petty, cruel woman.
Julian Gray provides Mercy with the strength she needs to renounce her ill-gotten position, her engagement, and the love that she has received through deceit. According to Collins' biographer, his "aversion to religion—all religions—grew more settled throughout his life. In his stories almost no clergyman or devout person is presented without ridicule."

But Julian Gray is a man before he is a clergyman, and in spite of his pretense of orthodoxy, his religion is clearly subjective. He describes his creed:

I try to love my neighbour as myself. . . . The true Christian virtue is the virtue which never despairs of a fellow-creature. The true Christian faith believes in Man as well as in God. Frail and fallen as we are, we can rise on wings of repentance from earth to heaven. Humanity is sacred. Humanity has its immortal destiny. (158)

Thus, love, the cornerstone of Gray's creed, is the virtue which he will offer to Mercy who has abused love through both prostitution and deceit. As his charity will bring about Mercy's conversion, the object of that love will then be capable of total love.

Mercy seeks not Julian's clerical comfort for her difficult confession, but rather his manly strength, the human strength

\[7\text{Nuel Pharr Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana, Ill., 1956), p. 19.}\]
she lacks in time of crisis. When Grace Roseberry mercilessly insults the struggling penitent, Mercy wavers in her intention to make reparation for her deception, but "Julian's influence still made itself felt" (179). Tempted to persist in her deceit, Mercy cannot ignore the claims of justice, not the justice of God but that of man for his fellow man, and again Julian offers her strength. "The steady inner light that he had seen in [her eyes] once already shone in them again, brighter and purer than before. The conscience that he had fortified, the soul that he had saved, looked at him and said, Doubt us no more" (197)! Fortified by his presence and his comfort, Mercy finally makes reparation through confession. Horace Holmcroft bitterly breaks off the engagement, and Lady Janet, stung less by Mercy's deceit than by her refusal to persist in that deceit for the sake of the old woman's love, orders the penitent to "Go back to the Refuge" (297). Thus, Mercy's selflessness in the cause of the vile Grace deprives her of everything she has and leaves her back where she was at the beginning of the novel but without even the nursing job that had earned the respect and love of the wounded men for the woman they called an "angel" (34). Her conversion has given her only the potential for total love by adding the capacity for spiritual love unsullied by deceit to the prostitute's capacity
for sexual love.

As Mercy responds to the charity of Julian, so he responds to her; but his response is physical first and spiritual only secondarily. After seeing Mercy but once and talking to her only briefly, he confesses that he has fallen in love at first sight, that "She has made herself a part of myself" (126). At their second meeting Julian thinks "If I look at her again... I shall fall at her feet and own that I am in love with her" (152)! The fear of doing so, however, does not prevent him from watching her and responding to her physical beauty (153). At the time of her confession, Mercy asks Julian for her hand, the support of his touch. The handclasp gives her spiritual strength but produces in him a decidedly physical response:

The soft clasp of her fingers, clinging round his, roused his senses, fired his passion for her, swept out of his mind the pure aspirations which had filled it but a moment before, paralyzed his perception when it was just penetrating the mystery of her disturbed manner and her strange words. All the man in him trembled under the rapture of her touch. (163-164)

And as "he [tastes] to the full the delicious joy of looking at her" (164), he forces from his mind the fact that the girl is engaged to another man. Although he helps Mercy spiritually, the response she elicits in him is physical. In a sense, Mercy
converts him, as he does her, by adding to his capacity for
spiritual love—humane charity—the capacity for sexual love
by virtue of his response to her.

When Mercy confesses her deception to Horace and Lady
Janet and is thereby converted, Julian refers to her as a "Beautiful
purified soul" (285). Her beautiful soul corresponds to her
beautiful physical nature to which Julian originally and immediately
responded. The pride Julian takes in the total person and the
love he bears for that person are reflected in the smile on his
face. Lady Janet's servants interpret the smile as suggesting
that Julian is "in a fair way of preferment in the Church" (286).
This, of course, is precisely the point. If humanity is sacred,
the church of the religion of man becomes the body containing
and reflecting the spirit. Julian confirms the servants' guess
by resigning his curacy in the Church of England, in which
divinity is transcendent. He eventually wins the hand of Mercy,
the church of divine immanence.

According to Miss Patricia Thomson, the Victorian reading
public was shocked by *The New Magdalen's* avowal of "the
possibility of remaining chaste in spirit and soul after the body
had been prostituted. But as we have seen, such an avowal was by no means new. It was as old as the humanitarianistically conceived prostitute. What was shocking was the implication that Mercy Merrick, a prostitute, participated in the divine immanence, that her love could be included in the statement "Love is God."

Mercy and Julian marry and face together "the unknown future" (325), and although it may be unknown, it is certainly earthly, for the new religion of man finds divinity in the here and now, divinity that comes through mutual love. Julian's charity is a sign of his spiritual love, and Mercy brings out physical love in him. Precisely because she is a prostitute she is capable of physical love but needs only the conversion to add spiritual love to the physical and become a total woman capable of giving total love to a man.

The ideal ultimately espoused by Claude Amelius Golden-heart, leading character of Wilkie Collins' The Fallen Leaves (1886) is basically the same as in The New Magdalen, but the evaluation is more specific. On a ship travelling from America to England Amelius describes the religious sect of which he is a

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member, the "Primitive Christian Socialists"\(^9\) whose principles are located "in the spirit of the New Testament--not in the letter" (32).

We find, in the spirit of the book, the most simple and most perfect system of religion and morality that humanity has ever received--and with that we are content. To reverence God; and to love our neighbor as ourselves: if we had only those two commandments to guide us, we should have enough. The whole collection of Doctrines (as they are called) we reject at once, without stopping to discuss them. (32)

Amelius exemplifies his religion, a belief simply in universal love, when a passenger attempts to shoot a "weary little land-bird" (24) who pauses to rest on the ship. Grabbing the gun from the would-be mariner's hands, Amelius's castigation of the inhumane passenger even echoes Coleridge: "You wretch! would you kill the poor weary bird that trusts our hospitality, and only asks us to give it a rest? The little harmless thing is as much one of God's creatures as you are" (24).

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In London Amelius encounters Simple Sally, a sixteen-year-old prostitute, but a more sinless prostitute it would be difficult to imagine. She does not give spiritual assent to her physical degradation simply because she is mentally deficient. She has not chosen the life of a prostitute, but because she is both adolescent and incompetent, she is taken advantage of by a "wild beast on two legs" (188) who sends her out to the streets to make money by prostitution and who beats her when she fails to bring home enough to keep him in liquor. Because Sally knows no better, she automatically complies with his orders, and there is no way for her to escape his clutches. In her deficient state, she hardly knows that she should escape. Thus, Sally's spiritual qualities are as yet undeveloped just as the sexual capacity remains undeveloped in the adolescent girl not yet a woman. And in the new monism, the girl's lack of spiritual development is imaged in her physical appearance. In spite of starvation, frequent beatings which leave her scarred, poverty and filth, the innocence of the undeveloped child remains visible:

The lost creature had, to all appearance, barely passed the boundary between childhood and girlhood—she could hardly be more than fifteen or sixteen years old. Her eyes, of the purest and loveliest blue, rested on Amelius with a vacantly patient look, like the eyes of a suffering child. . . . She was little and thin; her worn and scanty
clothing shower her frail youthful figure still waiting for its perfection of growth. . . . But for the words in which she had accosted him, it would have been impossible to associate her with the lamentable life that she led. The appearance of the girl was artlessly virginal and innocent; she looked as if she had passed through the contamination of the streets without being touched by it, without fearing it, or feeling it, or understanding it. Robed in pure white, with her gentle eyes raised to heaven, a painter might have shown her on his canvas as a saint or an angel, and the critical world would have said, Here is the true ideal—Raphael himself might have painted this. (185-186)

When Amelius takes her home and offers her protection from the "beast" and a bed to sleep in, the simple child is surprised that her protector does not wish to go to bed with her; but she voices her surprise without "the faintest suggestion of immodesty," without anything "that the most profligate man living could have interpreted impurely" (193). Later, when the lonely and disheartened Amelius longs for the comfort and succor of the little dog and the fawn he raised when a boy, he is comforted by Sally, "the child-victim of cold and hunger, still only feeling her way to womanhood; innocent of all other aspirations, so long as she might fill the place which had once been occupied by the dog and the fawn" (247)! Her innocence makes Sally supremely capable of filling the place of innocent animals who love blindly and instinctively.
Because Sally is in need, the apostle of universal love befriends her and attempts to help the pitiable shell of a human being. His response to her, however, is not a personal response; that is to say, he does not respond to Sally as much as to her need. A bath, clothes, and food remedy Sally's physical defects, and she is soon described as possessing "the beauty of youth" (245). That Collins has an essentially monistic view of Simple Sally is evidenced by the fact that when Amelius takes the girl to a doctor, he learns that her mental deficiency is but a type of spiritual starvation: "The natural growth of her senses--her higher and her lower senses alike--has been stunted, like the natural growth of her body, by starvation, terror, exposure to cold, and other influences inherent in the life that she has led" (205).

The remedy for Sally's condition is spiritual food, i.e., love. Because Amelius freely gives his love, Sally soon develops into an intelligent young woman: "Observing with inexhaustible interest the progress of the mental development in Sally, Amelius was slow to perceive the physical development which was unobtrusively keeping pace with it" (308). Sally's "conversion," then, is not from sin to sinlessness but from adolescence to maturity. The fact that she ceases to practice prostitution
opens the door for her recovery, but because of her complete
dissociation from the profession even while a member, she has
nothing to renounce. Only after she undergoes this "conversion"
and is fully developed both spiritually and physically is she
capable of love in the true sense. Thus, her prostitution is
not degraded love but is non-love, the activity of someone
incapable of loving and consequently incapable of misusing love.

Sally's outgoing nature reveals clearly that the charity
Amelius has bestowed on her has fostered in her a love for him,
a love which remains purely spiritual only so long as Sally
remains a child. She runs away from the refuge in which Amelius
places her because, she says, "I can't live without seeing you;
I've tried till I could try no longer" (247). She tells him that
she loves him and wants in return for her love only to be allowed
to remain his servant and to stay always near him (248). Amelius
makes the girl his unofficial ward and assumes the role of her
teacher, responsible for her intellectual development.

As long as Amelius responds only to Sally's spiritual
innocence and to her physical needs, his response is, in a
sense, impersonal, for he is not responding to the total nature
of the girl. He misses her during the brief period she spends
in the "Home for Friendless Women" (225), and he often thinks of her outgoing and loving nature. But in responding to her spiritually, he responds only to a part of her. When Sally grows into womanhood and when Amelius finally recognizes both a physical and a spiritual aspect to Sally, only then is his response personal. He recognizes the two aspects when the customary good-night kiss between teacher and pupil, between guardian and ward, becomes momentarily a kiss of passion between a man and a woman (318). From this moment on, "their harmless relations towards each other" (308) are potentially something other than harmless.

A theme of The Fallen Leaves, then, is that love is a relationship that is both physical and spiritual. Only when Sally is revealed to have a physical being, pure and womanly, does Amelius understand that she is more than his dog or his fawn whom he can take care of. She is a woman who needs not just charity but human love. She seeks this love in Amelius.

The idea for Simple Sally, who spends a brief period in the "Home for Friendless Women" (200), probably came from Dickens' article "Homes for Homeless Women," (Household Words, VII, 169-175) in which Dickens describes, in "Case number twenty-seven," a prostitute whose circumstances are remarkably similar to Sally's and who received the same therapy recommended for Sally with the same results.
What is so important, however, about the human love Sally seeks is that Collins' imagery makes it clear that this love is the divine immanence. Sally tells Amelius that when she was in a refuge, the matron taught the girls about "Our Father up in Heaven" (203). She confesses that she was a bad girl, for she told the matron, "I don't want him up in Heaven; I want him down here" (203). Her adulation of Amelius makes it clear that from the beginning his charity and kindness help him to become the God that Sally really wants. When Amelius tries to tell her of Heaven, attainable on the hard condition of first paying the debt of death" (306), Sally gives no heed to that Heaven, for, she says, "I have found a kinder Heaven . . . . It is here in the cottage; and Amelius has shown me the way to it" (306). The little cottage becomes an "earthly paradise" (307) clearly because it is the home of Amelius who, because he loves, becomes divine.

Of even greater consequence, however, is that Amelius comes to love Sally. The universal love he manifests from the time he saves the little bird is spiritual love. As such it is not the complete love of a human. Only when Sally grows into a full woman and Amelius responds to the fullness of her womanhood--her sexual and her spiritual natures--does he become fully
capable of love, for the woman to whom he is engaged, Regina Farnaby, is the virgin queen who, like Maud Enderby, rejects passionate love. It is not surprising that the love of a one-time prostitute should take on such significance, for, as we have seen, when the force of Christianity's condemnation of the sexual declines in force, physical love becomes a necessity in any really human relationship, and certainly the prostitute has this capacity. Thus, late in the novel Amelius says of Sally, "Her happiness is more precious to me than words can say. She is sacred to me" (330)! By virtue of her capacity for love, the prostitute, too, embodies the divine immanence, and by 1886 Collins need not content himself with merely implying the value of the prostitute's love.

In the novels discussed in the above pages are several forms of love that serve as a substitute for divine transcendence. In Gissing's The Unclassed Ida Starr represents the highest form of love, and therefore the most meaningful human value, because she is capable of the spiritual love of which the reformed prostitute of the Evangelicals is capable and because she is sensual. The very quality condemned by the same Evangelicals—sensuality—is prized by the man seeking the total woman.
Julian Gray's belief in the divinity of man, divine love that is apprehended through sexual love, leads him to make Mercy Merrick the church he will serve in. Mercy has been a prostitute and is, therefore, capable of physical love. Through her conversion she learns true spiritual love and then offers Julian the total love of a woman. In The Fallen Leaves Simple Sally sees in the charitable Amelius her God on earth because of his humanitarian charity, and he sees the divine in the woman who can love both spiritually and physically rather than in the woman who offers coldly spiritual love without accompanying passion.

The three prostitutes depicted in this chapter are all depicted monistically. Mercy Merrick and Ida Starr reject the dualism that has for half a century been the whore's extenuation. Simple Sally never has a dual nature to reject; from the beginning she is pure and innocent. But to the other two, dualism is disunity, and the only ideal is a noble spirituality revealed by intense sensuality. The evaluation is ironical because this same monism had been a vehicle by which the Evangelicals condemned totally the prostitute. The monism that emerges near the end of the nineteenth century, however, is a product of Romantic assertions regarding the positive value
of physical love, assertions which could not win widespread approbation in a society whose morality was predominantly puritanical. Kingsley's muscular Christianity with its monistic assertion that sexuality imaged ideal passion was, according to Walter E. Houghton, "too outspoken to be quite wholesome." Only after Christianity was "subjectivized" could Victorians heed the claim that sexual love was a part of the divine immanence. Thus a late Victorian approbation of sexuality opens the door for the fictional approbation of a character who had received at best partial extenuation and who had more often received condemnation.

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CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY

This study has described three basic frames of reference for depicting and evaluating the prostitute and the profession of prostitution. The first, the monism of the Evangelicals, came into being as a reaction to the widespread sexual license of the eighteenth century. The Evangelicals over-reacted to sexual sin, condemned prostitution, deduced the prostitute's nature from her profession, and consequently condemned the prostitute. The initial impetus for this kind of character analysis occurred before the Victorian age began, but its force during the age was such that it forms a background for much of the fiction of the age and provides a reason for more. Nor was this concept dead by the end of the age. In The Light That Failed (1891), for example, Dick Heldar rejects his own idea of setting up Bessie as his mistress when he comes to understand "the vicious little housekeeper's folly."¹ Bessie, however, is monistically portrayed and evaluated, and long before Dick ever

¹The Writings in Prose and Verse of Rudyard Kipling (New York, 1898), IX, 289.
realizes it, the reader sees her viciousness and sees it imaged in her prostitution. Thus, her selfish and loveless response to Dick's suggestion is precisely the response expected from this monistically portrayed prostitute. In our own century, W. Somerset Maugham employs a monistic description with an Evangelical evaluation of Mildred, the sexually obsessed, sometime prostitute who is "not a woman who conceived the possibility of compassion, generosity, or kindness." That this concept remained a forceful one is attested to in 1902 by George Bernard Shaw. In the Preface to Mrs Warren's Profession, Shaw rejects this condemnatory monism; but because he does he is forced to defend himself against an outraged public demanding that the play be taken off the stage:

Had my play been entitled Mr Warren's Profession, and Mr Warren been a bookmaker, nobody would have expected me to make him a villain as well. Yet gambling is a vice, and bookmaking an institution, for which there is absolutely nothing to be said. . . . No: had I drawn Mrs Warren as a fiend in human form, the very people who now rebuke me for flattering her would probably be the first to deride me for deducing character logically from occupation instead of observing it accurately in society.  

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2 Of Human Bondage (Garden City, N. Y., 1915), p. 441

Shaw points out that only with regard to sexual sin does the public automatically assume depravity of nature as a concomitant to a profession from which one makes a living, and this is precisely the attitude I have labelled Evangelical.

As conceived by humanitarians, the prostitute was not responsible for the economic conditions or for the middle-class dissipation which drove her to the streets; nor was she responsible for the condemnation of Evangelicals who preached repentance but forced social banishment upon the prostitute. Thus, they amalgamated elements from eighteenth-century English fiction, nineteenth-century French fiction (probably by way of Parent-Duchatelet), and the melodrama of their own age and nation to create the dualistic prostitute whose spiritual life remains always detached from and repulsed by her disgusting physical profession. Humanitarians have their tart but save her too.

They condemn prostitution, but because the prostitute does not acquiesce in forces beyond her control, they exempt her from guilt. This kind of extenuation was perfectly adaptable to environmental naturalism. Thus, Hardy's Tess remains a pure woman in spite of the fact that she becomes Alec d'Urberville's mistress as the only means of feeding her mother and the other children of the Durbyfield family. Similarly Kate Ede, the product of
biological naturalism in George Moore's *A Mummer's Wife*,
is quite blameless of the prostitution to which she is driven by
a physical disease: alcoholism. But even in fiction that does
not have a true naturalistic context, this dualism with its
extenuating circumstances remains a popular idea. Shaw, for
example, is not a naturalist. He wrote *Mrs Warren's Profes-
sion*, he says, "to draw attention to the truth that prostitution
is caused . . . simply by underpaying, undervaluing, and over-
working women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced
to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together." And
Mrs Warren herself claims that she "tried honest work; and I
was slave-driven until I cursed the day I ever heard of honest
work." Thus, the dualistic attitude lingered on into our own
century, became a lucrative area of study for sociologists, and
underwent a change from the predication of social causes to
psychological.

The third description of prostitutes is again monistic,
but it approves precisely that which the Evangelicals had condemned—
sexuality. And it, too, might be said to be related to naturalism

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4 Preface, Complete Plays, III, 3.

5 *Mrs Warren's Profession*, in Complete Plays, III, 104.
but to a kind of romantic naturalism. In an essay entitled "Rossetti and the Religion of Beauty" (1883), Frederick W.H. Myers discusses the importance of love in the modern world, for love, according to Plato, is "'the interpreter and mediator between God and man.'" Female beauty, contends Myers, is the basis for such a theologizing of love:

It is not, indeed, the bereaved lover only who finds in a female figure the ideal recipient of his impulses of adoring love. Of how many creeds has this been the inspiring element! -- from the painter who invokes upon his canvas a Virgin revealed in sleep, to the philosopher who preaches the worship of Humanity in a woman's likeness, to be at once the Mother and the Beloved of all.  

It is, of course, in relation to this worship of humanity that the prostitute became such an important and positively evaluated figure. We saw in the preceding chapter several examples of this worship, and one might also recall John Davidson's "Ballad of a Nun" in which the title character receives the favor of the Virgin Mary when she leaves the convent to "worship sinful man." We also saw in the last chapter a reason

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7 Ibid., p. 213.
for this association of the worship of humanity with the prostitute. She was the woman associated with both physical and spiritual love and capable of loving as a total person in accord with a romantic ideal. And this, it seems to me, is a valid inference from the course of nineteenth-century literature dealing with the prostitute. As people more and more came to believe that sex was "the allegory of Love in the physical world," they came increasingly to consider the prostitute capable of the highest love.

This tendency to analogize the physical and the spiritual and to evaluate both as good is contrary to the implied beliefs (if not the doctrines) of a traditional Christianity capable of producing, for example, the mortification of the flesh dictated by the Benedictine Rule. Thus, the elevation of sex and the prostitute accompanied the late-century decline of Christianity. And that which came to be used (whether believed in or not) as a substitute context is implied in the passage quoted above by Myers. For "the Mother and Beloved of all" is a figure labelled by G. Rattray Taylor as a prostitute. She is no less than the

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"great Mother Goddess, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature"\textsuperscript{10} who was worshipped and adored throughout Asia in a variety of ceremonies all of which had in common some form of prostitution. As Christianity declined in the nineteenth century, people turned to past cultures for values, beliefs, and forms. The religion of Claude Amelius Goldenheart may be Christian, but one should not lose sight of the fact that it is also "Primitive."\textsuperscript{11} Similarly, Collins' penchant for meaningful names—Mercy Merrick, Magdalen Vanstone (No Name, 1863)—leads him to give the name Lydia to one of his scheming women trying to make a wealthy marriage (Armadale, 1866). He apparently adopted the name because even into Christian times religious prostitution persisted in the Asian kingdom of that name.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, as late Victorians came increasingly to celebrate "the reproductive energies of nature," one of the few things left to celebrate in a world more and more thought of as one vast unreal city of dreadful night, they came to elevate the prostitute with her century old ties with religious worship.


\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.
If Blake's youthful harlot, then, prophesies doom at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one hundred years later there are three prostitutes, the condemned whore of the Evangelicals, the extenuated victim of the humanitarians, and the new prostitute, the "priestess" of romantic naturalism, her from whose lips the secret names of the immortals, and of the things near their hearts, are about to come, that the immortals may come again into the world. Bow down, and understand that when they are about to overthrow the things that are to-day and bring the things that were yesterday, they have no one to help them, but one whom the things that are to-day have cast out. Bow down and very low, for they have chosen for their priestess this woman in whose heart all follies have gathered, and in whose body all desires have awaked; this woman who has been driven out of Time and has lain upon the bosom of Eternity. 12

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