To José Carlos for bringing love, joy and light to my life.

HE SOLICITADO PERMISO, PERO NO CREO QUE ME LO DEN

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Introduction: Prostitution and Victorian Cambridge

When I started thinking about the possibility of writing a book on prostitution and the different institutions in Cambridge that were established to control and contain the spread of crime and immorality associated with it, James Smith's monograph *Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (2008) came to my mind. In this book, he covers the history of the Catholic Magdalene asylums in Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries based on archival research in the first part, but in the second part he deals with the cultural representations of these places of confinement for women. The focus is placed on plays and fiction, visual representations like film, and monuments, memorials and art installations dedicated to the Irish Magdalenes. Nevertheless, it was this idea of an architecture of containment that caught my mind. Only some historians like Frances Finnegan or Linda Mahood have tried to encompass the nineteenth century architecture of containment of 'fallen women' in places like York or Scotland. In particular, Frances Finnegan's *Poverty and Prostitution: A Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York* (1979) was the first attempt to do that kind of analysis discussing aspects such as prostitutes and their clients, brothels, prostitutes' lives -- touching on drink, destitution and disease --, and their rescue and reform in the York Penitentiary. On the other hand, Linda Mahood's *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century* (1990) deals with similar aspects of prostitution in Scotland but also analyses the Glasgow system as veiled regulation, establishing parallelisms with the application of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s in England.

Therefore, I am indebted to Smith, as the title of my book *Town and Gown Prostitution: Cambridge's Architecture of Containment of Sexual Deviance* suggests. My aim is to cover some aspects of prostitution in Cambridge in the Victorian period together with all the institutions that dealt with the issue at the time. There is no other similar attempt focusing the analysis on Cambridge in the nineteenth century, taking into consideration the peculiarities of a city which was divided into town and gown for many social and political concerns, including the regulation of prostitution. In this sense, the book discusses the singularity of a city divided into two jurisdictions that co-existed – not always in a peaceful manner – in the first chapter together with some characteristics of the trade and the women who lived on it both in town and gown. The second chapter is devoted to the study of archival materials connected with the Spinning House, Cambridge

University Prison for 'fallen women' as well as with the analysis of two case studies. The succeeding chapters will be focused on two town institutions also involved in the containment of sexual deviance: the Cambridge Poor-Law Union and the Cambridge town and county gaols and the presence of 'fallen women' and prostitutes in them. In the case of the Mill Road Workhouse, many of these women received treatment for disease or were assisted in labour in the Infirmary of the Institution. Finally, in the last chapter, the role of the Cambridge Female Refuge in the reform of 'fallen women' in the Victorian period will be discussed, paying attention to the connections with the University and the Church of England and other charity organisations. The overall objective will be to establish the links that existed among these town and gown institutions that contributed to the architecture of containment of sexual deviance in Cambridge, creating a middle-class network that tried to regulate the sexual lives of University students and the poor.

Town and Gown

Cambridge has been traditionally divided into town and gown since the University established there in the early thirteenth century. However, the two parts of the city have been in close contact with each other and have had continuous conflicts and confrontations during their coexistence till today.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Oxford was the only University in Britain. Due to a conflict between many Oxford scholars and townsmen in 1209, the former fled to other parts of the country like Reading or Cambridge. At the start, there were no colleges, and the lectures were given in various places like St Bene't's Church. Most scholars lived in hostels that later became colleges after obtaining endowments from rich benefactors. These were kings and queens as well as bishops and rich widows. Hostels were similar to boarding houses and by 1280, there were about thirty of them; there was a master, but it was difficult to impose discipline on students who were boys of fourteen or fifteen years of age, so for University members it was important to establish colleges with their rules and statutes. The first college was St Peter's House, founded by the Bishop of Ely, Hugh Balsham, in 1284. In the next 100 years, eight more colleges were founded in succession. Later, King's College was founded by Henry VI in 1441, and Queen's College by his wife Margaret of Anjou in 1448.[1]

[1] Stephanie Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 26-8.

When the University established there, Cambridge was a busy market town and inland port defended by a castle and was famous for celebrating one of the biggest fairs in Europe known as the Stourbridge Fair on the banks of the river Cam. By medieval times, the town had its own law courts and elected mayor. Cambridge has always been associated with the Fens, a flooded and marshy area with many islands like Ely. Cambridge was on the fen-edge and river trade was essential, with goods transported from and to the city by boat. Local produce was traded, including fish, eels and sedge to the north of the fens, and wheat and barley to the south.[2]

In Tudor times the University grew exponentially with many new colleges built, Trinity being among them. The sixteenth century was an especially important period with the Reformation and the country becoming Protestant. These colleges were occupying all the riverside area, and they had a significant role in national events, with gentlemanly students coming to them for the first time. However, during the seventeenth century there was turmoil in the country and Cambridge was seriously affected by the Civil War and the break between Parliament and the King. Oliver Cromwell had been the MP for Cambridge to then become Lord Protector, and the Parliamentarian Army established their headquarters there. With the restoration of monarchy, peace and prosperity returned to the city and the University with a golden age of science and architecture.[3]

Thus, by the beginning of the nineteenth century Cambridge had a population of about 10,000 people of which about 10% were members of the University. The traditional division of town and gown continued with both communities depending on each other. The town community consisted of working-class people, many of them employed by the University; the University community was made up of men who were a middle-class group. Market Square with Great St Mary's, the University Church, was the heart of Cambridge, crisscrossed by streets shared by both town and gown during the day; during the night, it was a contested place, with poor light and pollution in passageways.[4]

By the Victorian period and about 1843, the population was 25,000 people, including undergraduates. After the Enclosure Acts of 1801 and 1807, some new building was taking place in areas that had been open fields, although there was still countryside surrounding the town. There were no houses or buildings beyond the top of Castle Street

[2] Ibid., 4-5.
[3] Ibid., 32, 44.
[4] Janet Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls: Cambridge University's Distinctive Policing of Prostitution, 1823-1894', *Urban History* 39, no. 3 (2012): 456-7.

and only a few houses were being erected in the Chesterton area. Similarly, New Town was growing after 1810, and the Mill Road area after 1845, but Romsey Town was not fully developed till after 1879. The Barnwell district also grew with numerous poor cottages and insanitary courts, quite common also in the centre of town. By 1883, the population of Cambridge had increased to about 35,000 people, but no houses were built beyond Cavendish College, on the North side of Mill Road or between Petersfield Lodge and the Parochial cemetery. A level crossing and a footbridge were built over Stourbridge Common, where the railway was erected, and by 1891, Cavendish Park was being developed.[5]

As far as the University was concerned, the Victorian period brought with it the Prince Consort as Chancellor in 1847. He was in favour of changes to compete with German universities in science, but many abuses survived. Other British universities were also serious competitors, like the Scottish and, from the early-mid nineteenth century, London; it was necessary to improve the academic standards. Other influential figures included William Whewell, who was Master of Trinity College and became Vice-Chancellor in 1843, and Dr Cartmell of Christ's who was Vice-Chancellor from 1849. Most colleges agreed on reforming their statutes but did almost nothing in the end. The Statute Revision Syndicate was established in 1849, and a Royal Commission was set up in 1850 to enquire into the state of the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin and to enhance adaptation to modern times. Both the Syndicate in 1851 and the Commission's report of 1852 proposed several changes, but the former did not attempt reforms of the examination system; however, the fellow's lot continued to be celibacy and at least a promise to 'take orders' in the Church of England.[6]

Curricular changes intensified in the 1840s when, to the traditional teaching of theology, mathematics, classics and medicine, the teaching of subjects like law, history, engineering, geology, zoology and modern languages was added. Also, a sciences tripos was introduced in 1848, bringing about an important effect on the University. In 1856 the University allowed students from different religious denominations to take degrees, as Jews and Catholics had been excluded from the University since Elizabethan times. As a consequence, the Catholic Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs was begun in

[5] Enid Porter, *Victorian Cambridge: Josiah Chater's Diaries 1844-1884* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1975), xii-xiii.
[6] Elisabeth Leedham-Green, *A Concise History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 148-57.

1887, commemorating former students who had died as martyrs for their beliefs.[7] Nonetheless, other changes came about later. Thus, in 1871 a Bill was passed putting an end to restrictions to all teaching positions, including fellows, university officers, professors and lecturers who were not obliged to be in holy orders, but religious instruction and services remained for the Church of England members. Two further Royal Commissions were established, one to enquire into the finances of Oxford and Cambridge which produced the 1874 Report, and another one on scientific instruction to improve the teaching of science. Specific chairs were created to be attached to particular colleges, and college taxation was imposed.[8]

Although there had been no real obligation to keep celibacy since 1860, it was not until 1882 that fellows were allowed to marry, bringing to an end the monastic life that was encouraged to create strong bonds between college members. This measure was thought necessary for keeping the best teachers and so as not to undermine the University's prestige.[9] With married fellows living outside college with their wives and families, common rooms became less frequented and college affairs less known. Social life before and after marriage was also permitted. In the case of students, most of them lived in lodgings, and those who could afford it lived in college, officially leading a solitary life. However, undergraduates practiced several sports with cricket, tennis and rowing being the favourites, but also athletics, football, hockey, and billiards were played. As a result, competition between colleges was fierce in the practice of these activities.[10]

Regarding women, they began to be admitted to Cambridge University as late as the 1870s. For Victorians, this was quite a drastic change. This happened thanks to the determination of two relevant women in the campaign that took place at the time, Miss Emily Davies and Miss Anne Jemima Clough. Davies opened Girton College for women at Benslow House (Hitchin), where the first five students were admitted in 1869; they then moved to their current location at Girton in 1873, far away from the male colleges. On the other hand, Henry Sidgwick bought and furnished number 74, Regent Street, so that Miss Clough could be installed there with her first five students; in the end, they settled at their current location as Newnham College near the centre of Cambridge. Women could now attend lectures and take final exams, but they were not awarded proper

[7] Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge*, 59-60.
[8] Leedham-Green, *A Concise History*, 160-1.
[9] Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge*, 60.
[10] Leedham-Green, *A Concise History*, 79, 168.

degrees till 1947. They could also gradually have access to laboratories and share them with male students.[11] The University Library flourished and expanded together with residential accommodation, and many laboratories were opened, but despite these changes, many students left Cambridge without an honours degree. Subjects proliferated with a variety of academic groupings at colleges, and clubs were created to share leisure outside the curriculum.

All these transformations that the University suffered throughout the Victorian period were accompanied by major changes in the city and its life at the time. In this sense, Josiah Chater's diaries shed light on family life, work and leisure in Victorian middle-class Cambridge. He was originally from Saffron Walden and established in Cambridge as a businessman opening a drapery shop. He married Agnes Barrett. Their first home was in Chesterton Road; they had fifteen children of whom two died at infancy. The firm had premises in Sidney Street and Fitzwilliam Street, but Josiah changed professions later in life, becoming one of the first chartered accountants in Cambridge. At this stage he took important duties as secretary to the Cambridge Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, the Cambridge Reform Club Building Society, the Cambridge Steam Laundry Company and the Cambridge Street Tramways Company, which changed significantly the shape of the city. He was witness to many momentous events both in town and gown and had an active life in the city participating with his family in many relevant happenings as well as being an active member of numerous associations and organisations.[12]

One of the biggest events in Cambridge was the Coronation Festival which took place on Parker's Piece – a big open green area that still exists today -- in June 1838. Men, women, and children received three pints, one pint, and a half pint of ale respectively for free; joints of meat, loaves of bread and plum pudding for 15,000 people were served to celebrate Queen Victoria's coronation during the previous year. There was also a hot-air balloon display and fireworks after the meal.[13] On 5 July 1847, the Queen and her consort, Prince Albert visited Cambridge when he was appointed Chancellor of the University. This event was celebrated with fireworks and a balloon on Parker's Piece again. But later, the city sadly celebrated his funeral on his death on 14 December 1861, with a service at St Mary the Great. Finally, there were celebrations once more on 2 June

[11] Leedham-Green, *A Concise History*, 176-7; Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge*, 60-1.
[12] Porter, *Victorian Cambridge*, ix-xii.
[13] Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge*, 54-5.

1869 for Queen Victoria's fiftieth birthday with the display of fireworks and illuminations.[14]

Through Josiah Chater's diaries we can learn how middle-class people of the time got involved in associations and charities like the Sunday School at St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, the Young Men's Christian Association whose Cambridge branch was established in 1852 and then moved to bigger premises in Alexandra Street in 1871, the Working Men's College founded in Cambridge in 1857, the Mechanics Institute, the Mutual Improvement Society, the Church of England Young Men's Society, and the Cambridge Building Society and the Penny Savings Bank.[15] Many of these associations had an intellectual and cultural character offering courses and lectures for members, besides doing social and religious work. According to the diaries, middle-class people also attended Church of England sermons and leisure events such as concerts by musical societies like the Cambridge Choral Society and the University Choral Society. They went to beast shows and circuses, visited friends, went to public dinners, to the theatre and charades. Sometimes they also went on holiday and travelled both inside and outside the United Kingdom. Similarly, prominent figures like Charles Dickens or Josephine Butler visited Cambridge on several occasions and their presence amounted to a public event.[16]

Throughout the period, there were negative and positive events. One of the big issues was the opening of the railway between Cambridge and London in 1845 with the passing of the 1844 Act which allowed the Eastern Counties Railway to construct the line. The station was erected outside town on common land, following the University's requirements as the University authorities feared the station would disrupt academic life. The city became a useful stopover for people travelling to London from the north.[17] Other important issues were the implementation of Cambridge street-lighting and gas for private consumers in the late 1860s together with the tramway system starting in 1880 and much used by the people in Cambridge.

On the negative side, there were several floods, gales, and fires during these years, but the most serious event was the arrival of the cholera epidemic in 1848 and 1849. The characteristics of English cholera were severe vomiting and diarrhoea which could result

[14] Porter, *Victorian Cambridge*, 31-2, 95-6, 150.
[15] Ibid., x-xi.
[16] Ibid., 16-7, 125.
[17] Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge*, 56.

in death or disappear in a couple of days. However, an epidemic of the malignant Asiatic cholera reached Cambridge and made evident the awful condition of the sanitation system of most English towns and villages as well as the consequences of drinking contaminated water. Some years before and due to other previous cholera epidemics, the Cambridge Board of Health had been established in 1831. It was composed of the Vice-Chancellor, seven members of the University, the Mayor, seven inhabitants of the town, fourteen surgeons and six physicians. This composition reflects the division of power between town and gown. When the first Public Health Act of 1848 was passed, Cambridge residents signed a petition to implement the Act in the district, but improvements were terribly slow. One-tenth of the inhabitants who paid parish rates for poor relief asked for the establishment of a Local Board of Health in the area. For that purpose, a Superintendent Inspector, William Ranger, was appointed to visit the Borough and 'to make public enquiry and to examine witnesses as to the sewerage, drainage, and supply of water, the state of the burial grounds, the number and sanitary conditions of the inhabitants.' He would also find out about the paving, cleansing and lighting that were taking place according to the Local Acts of Parliament in force within the Borough.[18] By the middle of the nineteenth century, one sixth of the population still lived in unventilated overcrowded dwellings without drainage or water supply, and all the waste was taken to the river; the streets were dirty and mostly unpaved.[19] Thus, after the enquiry, it was decided that the Borough of Cambridge would be constituted as a Local Board of Health and a district under the Public Health Act of 1848 with the appointment of 'clerks, treasurers, collectors, surveyors, and other officers and servants' with powers to defray any part of the expenses out of the General or Special District Rates levied under the Public Health Act or the Local Acts.[20]

Other sad events in Victorian Cambridge that will be discussed further in this book were executions, including public hangings. In this context, Cambridge town and gown developed their system of containment and control of prostitutes and 'fallen women', following the trend of the rest of the country.

Cambridge's 'Nymphs of the Pave'

[18] *Provisional Order for the Application of the Public Health Act, 1848, to the Borough of Cambridge in the County of Cambridge*, 1850 (University Library, GBR/0265/UA/Min.VI.6/12), 1.
[19] Porter, *Victorian Cambridge*, 40-1.
[20] *Provisional Order for the Application of the Public Health Act, 1848*, 2.

In a letter addressed to the Cambridge coroner C.H. Cooper, a prominent figure at the time, and dated 23 September 1853, the following lines can be read:

> Honoured Sir,
> Convinced as I am that you have laid our town under heavy obligations by efforts made to raise it morally and politically, I feel a consequent boldness in calling attention to a very desirable and perfectly attainable better state of things. I refer to public prostitution being impeded or quiet but energetic course might be pursued whereby unfortunates would be effectually hindered from loitering for their sepulchres of shame in our Market Place and streets to the irreparable injury of our young men. […]
> I am honoured Sir,
> Your obedient Servant,
> Civis.[21]

Prostitution was a serious concern for Victorian Cambridge, following the trend of London and the rest of the country. 'The Great Social Evil' was perceived at the local level with the same intensity as at the national one. This preoccupation was directly associated with the debate about purity and sexuality which flourished during the period. The relationship between venereal disease and prostitution became the focus of Parliamentary discussions in the 1850s in relation with the Contagious Diseases Acts that were passed in the 1860s, while divorce cases, sex scandals, incest and pornography caught the public attention together with a number of sexual varieties such as homosexuality.[22] All these represented a threat to the sanctuary of the middle-class family which was the basis of Victorian society and morality. In this sense, the home represented that domestic ideal in contrast with the world of work and business, leading to the theory of the double spheres. Woman's sphere was the home and men's the outside world, and this segregation led to the double standard code of sexuality. This also led to the division of women into two categories, the virtuous and the fallen:

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[21] *Letter 23 September 1853 to Remove Prostitution from Market Place* (Cambridgeshire Archives, CB/2/CL/21/5/73).
[22] Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (Harlow, Pearson: 2012), 28-9.

> Female sexuality was necessarily therefore defined within these social and economic considerations, and it was in this context that the 'double standard' became a sort of mirror image of respectability. […] The lifestyle of the middle-class lady was often purchased at the expense of a large class of servants, often prone to sexual depredations, and an equally vulnerable group of prostitutes.[23]

This definition of female sexuality was situated in the context of an ideology which ascribed the sexual impulse to men and negated it to women, who were attributed with moral strength and spirituality.[24] Thus, chastity, was 'the government of the passions', 'the highest law; and one natural to women'.[25] Male and female sexualities were seen as separate but complementary. This left women's sexuality oriented towards reproduction.

However, sexuality in the working-classes did not always abide by middle-class standards. Industrialisation and urbanisation affected the morals of working-class families and the role of women in them. In many rural areas like Cambridgeshire, courtship habits were ritualised and there could be no break of the informal rules. These traditions were also followed by most of the working-classes, especially those concerning premarital relations for women who would marry the father if found pregnant during betrothal to assure fertility. Among the working poor, common-law partnerships remained quite popular and informal ties were also widely accepted; short-term cohabitation was quite common and formal marriage often the exception. Chastity had a different value for a working-class girl, and many women had to resort to occasional prostitution in times of need after having had some previous sexual experience. The boundaries between sex with men of their own social class and sex for money had to be fluid under economic pressure. Female domestic servants were especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and ended up in prostitution.[26] Thus, in Josiah Chater's Diaries, we find examples of servants in friends' households in Cambridge that got pregnant by their boyfriends and found themselves on the streets with nowhere to go and a baby to keep. This was the case of Hannah, a nursemaid who was working for the Chaters in 1874, but they had more compassion than some of their contemporaries; she died a couple of days after delivery and their parents

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[23] Ibid., 39.
[24] Mary Poovey, 'Speaking of the Body: Mid-Victorian Constructions of Female Desire', in *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourse of Science*, eds. Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller and Sally Shuttleworth (Routledge: London and New York, 1990), 34-5.
[25] Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, 52.
[26] Ibid., 75.

took charge of her corpse for burial and of her baby.[27] Illegitimacy was also quite common and sometimes had awful consequences for young girls. Therefore, in the labouring classes, 'patterns of moral respectability, far from being a simple assimilation of the middle-class norm, were effects of specific class experiences and a growing sense of class identity.'[28]

Consequently, although accepted by their own peers, Victorian prostitutes did not conform to the rules of decency and respectable behaviour expected in women and showed no fear of middle-class figures of authority. Assertiveness and independence became characteristics necessary to working-class women who invaded the public sphere.[29] All this led to the spread of geographies of regulation throughout the country which reproduced wide-spread ideas about moral order and identity. Consequently, female sex-work was regulated by the police and other community groups, which in the case of Cambridge had the University at the core of the system. In any case, this architecture of containment of female sexuality reproduced the assumptions of a patriarchal and heteronormative society.[30]

As stated in other parts of this book, Cambridge prostitution was under the control of two regulatory forces: the University proctors who were clergymen belonging to colleges and who were assisted by their own constables known as 'bulldogs' and, secondly, the borough police force. The first ones began to patrol all the areas pertaining to the University of Cambridge when, after centuries of 'nightly watch' which was the responsibility of parishes, the Vice-Chancellor promoted the Act for the Better Preservation of Peace and Good Order in the Universities of England in 1825; their role was to protect undergraduates from prostitutes accosting them on the streets surrounding the University buildings and to keep order by controlling these women in the University precincts. The borough police began to act under the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 in collaboration with the magistrates when, in 1836, a Watch Committee was established to patrol the areas that belonged to the city of Cambridge. This intensified the long-existing breach between town and gown.[31] There were continuous confrontations between

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[27] Porter, *Victorian Cambridge*, 117-8.
[28] Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, 91.
[29] Catherine Lee, *Policing Prostitution, 1856-1886: Deviance, Surveillance and Morality* (London, Routledge: 2015), 51.
[30] Philip Howell, David Beckingham and Francesca Moore, 'Managed Zones for Sex Workers in Liverpool: Contemporary Proposals, Victorian Parallels', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers New Series*, 33, no. 2 (2008): 234.
[31] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 458-9.

the two over control of prostitutes, as townspeople resented the powers of the University proctors and rescued women on many occasions. One of these occasions was described by Josiah Chater in his diaries in the following way: 'There was a great row in the street this evening with the Proctors. They had taken up some girl, but the townsmen had rescued her and were hooting the Proctors.'[32]

Cambridge and its University had attracted many women from rural areas and other parts of the country to work as prostitutes because of the growing undergraduate population who felt tempted by the pleasures outside the college walls. There was a zone of tolerance where brothels were integrated and, although regularly inspected, tolerated both by the proctors and the police. This was the working-class area known as Barnwell, which lay to the east of the town of Cambridge. There are University archives which contain a list of brothels and houses of ill fame that were known to proctors. Those in Barnwell were at the head of the business in Victorian Cambridge, but also other premises could be found in impoverished areas in the town like Castle End, the New Town and eastern Cambridge. The places in town where women prostitutes advertised their services were major promenades like King's Parade, Trinity Street, and Trumpington Street; open spaces like Parker's Piece, Christ's Pieces and Midsummer Common; or dark marginal areas like Jesus Lane and King Street. But students and their female partners could be found coupling in alleyways, parks and fields, and the Backs of Colleges.[33] Students and prostitutes could occasionally be found in bed in brothels and lodging houses in the centre of town. It seems that it was not common for the students to resort to brothels and lodging houses in Barnwell because of the long distance between King's Parade and Wellington Road, the best-known and most popular street in this working-class neighbourhood for its market of vice. What was most probable is that Barnwell, which lay beyond Parker's Piece and close to the New Market Road, catered for a working-class demand. The ancient village of Barnwell had for centuries served Cambridge town dwellers for their leisure connected with prostitution and drinking, and this was the part of town which was under the surveillance of the borough police.[34]

A similar pattern can be found in Oxford with prostitution regulated by University proctors in charge of a 'night watch' in its premises and surrounding areas. Oxford was

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[32] Porter, *Victorian Cambridge*, 31.
[33] Philip Howell, 'A Private Contagious Diseases Act: Prostitution and Public Space in Victorian Cambridge', *Journal of Historical Geography* 26, no. 3 (2000): 381-3.
[34] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 454, 459.

also an attractive place for women because of its huge population of undergraduates, but there were other areas outside the University premises like Woodstock, Witney and Abingdon that catered for male working-class demand and were inspected by the police. Similarly, parks and alleyways were the frequent locations for exchange between prostitutes and their clients, although there were also brothels and houses of accommodation.[35]

Following the pattern for the rest of the country and according to the Spinning House *Committal Books*, most suspected prostitutes in the years 1823-1894 were in their late teens, (seventeen-nineteen years old), although the numbers were equally high for those who were fifteen and sixteen and those who were twenty years old and over. The numbers for those who were between twelve and fourteen years of age were smaller, and also for those in their late twenties and thirties. There are no registers for women over thirty-nine, except for a woman who was fifty-five.[36] This age-range suggests that prostitution in Cambridge stopped being a common occupation for working-class women when they reached a mature age, following the pattern of the rest of the country. Their parents belonged to the labouring and artisan classes; their mothers were charwomen, laundresses, servants and dressmakers; and their fathers were labourers, gardeners or artisans, but many of them worked as college servants. Most women came from disrupted family backgrounds, and many of them remained on the streets for a number of years and in carceral institutions. They had similar patterns to Victorian female criminals who had committed petty crimes and had received short sentences.[37] They not only exchanged sex for money, but also for alcoholic refreshments; at the same time many prostitutes robbed their clients taking advantage of the men's vulnerable situation, adding to their income by luring their clients with the promise of sex.[38]

In this context, Judith Butler's ideas about the body and its social dimension become relevant and give sense to the Victorian predicament concerning prostitutes and 'fallen women':

> The body implies mortality, vulnerability, and agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others but also to touch and to violence… The body has its inevitably

[35] Arthur J. Engel, '"Immoral Intentions": The University of Oxford and the Problem of Prostitution', *Victorian Studies*, Autumn Issue (1979): 84-91.
[36] Howell, 'A Private Contagious Diseases Act', 387.
[37] Ibid., 388-90.
[38] Lee, *Policing Prostitution*, 12.

> public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears the imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life…[39]

Prostitutes had always been seen as a menace, as the embodiments of immorality, vice and disease in Victorian society. They were vessels which transmitted contagion and promiscuity to the decent population. Their representation in all the social discourses of the time sanctioned this view of their bodies and left in them this stigma of social alienation.

[39] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 26.

Chapter 2

Suppressing Vice: Cambridge University Spinning House

The Origins and Running of Cambridge University Female Prison

The origins of the Spinning House go back to the seventeenth century when on 30 July 1628 Thomas Hobson established Hobson's Charity 'by indenture of feoffment' and 'with livery seisin endorsed, inrolled in Chancery'.[40] It was created as an organisation to be administered by the University and the Town of Cambridge to help their poor. The idea was to provide people in need with a place where they would be instructed in some trade or occupation to be able to have a job in some honest calling. He established a Trust for his properties in the parish of St Andrew where his heirs and 'assigns' with the assistance of the University and Town -- with the Chancellor and the Mayor at their heads -- would build one or more houses to be the setting for some poor people of Cambridge to work. Also, a house of correction would be built to contain 'unruly and stubborn rogues, beggars and other poor persons, who should refuse to work.' There was a clause 'of re-entry to the grantor and his heirs' in case the premises were not employed for that aim.[41]

Hobson, by a codicil made to his will on 1 January 1630 proved by the Prerogative Court, gave to the Mayor, bailiffs and burgesses the amount of £100 to purchase lands and tenements so that with their yearly rent they could maintain the house of correction and workhouse and the poor working there for good. Similarly, an amount of £500 which was remnant of a collection for relieving the poor of Cambridge during a pestilence of 1631, would be employed to erect and furnish the workhouse and the house of correction. At the same time, stock would be provided for the workhouse if the petition to the King by the Vice-Chancellor, Mayor, heads of colleges and aldermen was granted. Later, in 1813, John Bowtell left a legacy to the Charity of £500 stock, three per cent Bank Annuities, for good so that with its interest and dividends the trustees of the workhouse would appoint poor boys of the town as apprentices to learn a trade and make a comfortable living. In 1788 a gaol had been erected on a plot of land belonging to the

[40] *Borough of Cambridge. Papers Relating to the Hobson's Workhouse Trust. Extract from the Thirty-First Report of the Commissioners for Enquiries Concerning Charities. [1836]* (Cambridgeshire Archives, CB/10/2/1/3/1), 1.
[41] Ibid., 1.

charity beside the Spinning House, which was demolished and rebuilt in 1830 with a contribution of £100 given by the trustees and coming from the funds of the charity.[42]

According to the *1836 Report*, the workhouse, also known as the Spinning House, was a large building in good state with capacity for about sixty people. It was also used in part as a house of correction and was managed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Mayor with the trustees acting under their directions. This is again proof of the peculiar situation of Cambridge, only shared by Oxford, where the city was organised into town and gown. These two jurisdictions had independent power over their areas, but at the same time collaborated in the control and containment of the poor and the 'deviant.' The 'deviant' were those who did not conform with middle and upper-class ideas about respectability and decency. Since 1732, the Spinning House had been provided with wool for combers and spinning and weaving work for the spinners and weavers and poor of the town who wished to work on the premises to make a living. The House of Correction would serve to punish and put to work disorderly people. By 1807, wool and flax and other materials were kept in the Spinning House for the poor to work, and since 1822, some money was invested by the parishes to put out apprentices.[43]

Before 1807, the Spinning House had been put to use as

> a receptacle for profligate and disorderly women and common prostitutes, committed by the Vice-Chancellor, particularly when afflicted with disease, their maintenance being paid by the university. It was also used for the reception of persons sent from the Mendicity Society of Cambridge so long as it existed; and vagrants not belonging to the town or university, were sent there, relieved and discharged. Those committed by the Mayor and magistrates were kept there for one night, and forwarded to their parishes in the morning, the expense of their maintenance being defrayed out of the town rates.[44]

From this extract we can assume that the main occupants of the Spinning House were prostitutes, on many occasions affected by venereal disease, and under the charge of the University authorities. The category of 'common prostitute' was blurred as we have seen, and applicable to any working-class woman who was found loitering on the streets

[42] Ibid., 1-3.
[43] Ibid., 4.
[44] Ibid., 4.

accused of disorderly behavior or of committing petty crimes associated with prostitution. In the same fashion, a woman could resort to the trade on a permanent or a temporary basis, depending on her personal or economic circumstances.[45] After 1807, the premises were used with the same aims, but the inmates were not doing any kind of job.

In the year 1852, another major change took place: there was a division of the Spinning House, so that one part belonged to the University and the other to the town. The portion of the Spinning House to be used by the University continued being a House of Correction 'for the reception and confinement of common women and prostitutes apprehended by the Proctors of the University in exercise of the powers and according to the usage and practice now lawfully exercised.'[46]

Its management would be in the hands of the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University which would appoint its own officers and servants. The other portion of the Spinning House belonging to the Town of Cambridge would be used as a lock-up house and police station under the management of the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses and run by officers and servants appointed by them. Each owner would be responsible for the reforms and maintenance required in their own portions. Similarly, trustees for the charity from both the University and the Council of the Borough would be appointed together with governors. Therefore, the charity would comprise fourteen governors, seven from the University and another seven from the town: on the one hand, the Vice-Chancellor and six members of the Senate; on the other, the Mayor and six members of the Council. They would celebrate separate annual meetings once a year and another general meeting celebrated jointly every two years. Finally, the governors would appoint a Clerk and Treasurer nearly always the same person with an annual salary of no more than £25 a year. The residue of the rents and income of the trust would be employed in donations to schools for the education of poor boys and girls in the University and town area or any close parish, or to apprentice poor girls and boys in working-class occupations. Both the University and the town would appoint one apprentice each for a four-year apprenticeship to learn a trade on which to live.[47]

As far as the functioning and inmates of the Spinning House as the University Female Prison was concerned, two kinds of archival information have survived: *the Rules*

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[45] Linda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (London: Blackwell, 1988), 94-5.
[46] *Scheme for Hobson's Trust Approved by Chancery 4 August 1852* (Cambridgeshire Archives, CB/10/2/1/3/6), 5.
[47] Ibid., 5-9, 12-3.

and Regulations for 1849 and 1854, and the *Committal Books* for the period 1823 to 1894. These primary sources can give us a quite wide approach to the way in which the Institution was run and prostitutes treated within its walls. What first called my attention powerfully is the fact that by a close reading of them, one can find extraordinary and numerous coincidences between the Spinning House and other institutions of the period for the reform and rescue of 'fallen women', such as the Cambridge Female Refuge, especially during the Victorian period.

Illustration 1

Four Mounted Photographs of Cambridge Spinning House (Police Station) c. 1890, Cambridgeshire Archives, 1360/CB/9/49.

If a woman in the University areas was accompanying a student or was drunk and behaving in a disorderly way, she would be taken by a proctor and his constables to the Spinning House where she would spend the night. She would be received by the Warden or Keeper and then taken to a small cell to spend the night. The cells 'had whitewashed walls, a fireplace, a single barred window and an iron bedstead with mattress and blankets.' The following morning, she would be taken before the Vice-Chancellor's Court and the proctor 'to be charged and sentenced' with 'no right of appeal.'[48] The prisoner would be given a number, her personal and family details would be recorded, and her subsequent arrests and sentences would be added to the *Committal Book*.

The *Rules for the Government of the Spinning House* of 1849 were a set of fifteen rules which regulated the lives of women prisoners in the University gaol. According to them, inmates were obliged to have a bath and were examined by the Surgeon, to check their health and probably to discern if they were venereally diseased, and then were given a uniform. They were thus deprived of their own identities and subjugated to the moral power of the University of Cambridge. The fact that they were examined by the Surgeon is revealing in the sense that it was women and not men that were considered to carry with them the seeds of immorality, being their bodies seen as vessels of contagion. Prisoners would sleep in different cells, cells were locked during the night, provisions and liquor were forbidden, and they had to stick to the prescribed dietary. Light occupations would be provided for the prisoners who would be given some allowance in return for

[48] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 460.

their work after their release. Issues like the visits of friends and relations, religious instruction, the role of the Matron, the Medical Officer and the Chaplain, and acts of insubordination and their consequences were also the focus of these rules.[49] All of them would be further developed in the *Rules and Regulations* of 1854.

The Dietary for Prisoners confined in the Spinning House, Cambridge for 1849 was the following:

BREAKFAST, 6 oz bread, daily,
2oz. Tea, 7 oz. Sugar, and 1 ½ pint milk, weekly
DINNER, 5 oz cooked meat,
5 oz. Bread or ¾ lb. Potatoes
For 4 days in the week
1 ½ pint Soup, 5 oz. Bread, if more than 3 Prisoners
12 oz. Suet Pudding, if less than 4 Prisoners
For 3 days in the week
SUPPER, 6 oz. Bread, 1 oz. Cheese, daily.[50]

This diet is similar to the diets you can find in other institutions for the confinement of men and women who had committed a crime and been sent to prison. Also, other institutions for the reform of 'fallen women' like penitentiaries, homes or asylums had similar diets. Even charity hospitals shared the same kind of food for their patients with variations that included gruel or broth.[51] The diet was very poor, and the variety of food was limited, with no fish, vegetables or fruit included in the menu. Changes could only be made under the Surgeon's instructions.

The *Rules and Regulations for the Inmates; Dietary; Cambridge Spinning House* of 1854 are organised around four main figures: the Matron, the Chaplain, the Medical Officer and the Inmates. This organisation reveals existing Victorian discourses concerning the division of society into male and female spheres, so that male power was in the hands of the governors of the Institution and male officers, and female power was exerted by the Matron. These rules were hung up in every cell and were read to every

[49] *Rules for the Government of the Spinning House 1849* (Cambridge University Library, Cam.a.500.5).
[50] *The Dietary for Prisoners confined in the Spinning House, Cambridge 1849* (Cambridge University Library, Cam.a.500.5).
[51] Maria Isabel Romero-Ruiz, *The London Lock Hospital in the Nineteenth Century: Gender, Sexuality and Social Reform* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 64, 138.

prisoner on her committal. It attracts attention that, as rules for a house of correction, they were certified by the Prime Minister of the day, Lord Palmerston.

The Matron is an essential figure in the Spinning House as in all other institutions in which women were confined. The home organisation that most of these places reflected explains why these women had a role model to fulfil for the inmates. The Matron had to reside on the premises and could not leave the place without permission. She oversaw the general superintendence of the House and the women prisoners. Following the tendencies of the time, the Matron was also in charge of the 'employment and industrial training of the inmates.' Similarly, she was expected to contribute to their reformation, respecting and making respect the rules of the prison, and most importantly, 'she shall exercise her authority with firmness, temper and humanity; and abstain from all language and remarks calculated to irritate an Inmate'. In the same vein, 'she shall on all occasions be ready to receive and investigate any complaint and attend to every application from an Inmate'.[52] Significantly, the way in which the Matron had to do her job reveals the protection that these rules tried to offer to women prisoners, despite the harsh way in which they were treated on many occasions.

We can presume that the Matron of the Spinning House shared common features with those in other institutions for the confinement of prostitutes and 'fallen women', like asylums or penitentiaries, or even lock hospitals. She must have been a middle-aged woman, with a strong character to deal with this kind of prisoner, exerting a moral influence over them but instilling discipline and order at the same time. Most of them were widows or single women, free of other responsibilities that might have lessened their commitment to the institution. She had to be a respectable member of society and a devoted Anglican, so that she could help the Chaplain in the religious instruction of the prisoners.[53]

The Matron of the Spinning House had also other important duties like the inspection of the house and its cells for cleanliness, and for security to prevent any escape by an inmate; she would control visits and the punishment of girls; she would report cases of ill inmates and keep a record of them in the house, working in collaboration with the Chaplain and Medical Officer for physical and mental health of the women prisoners, paying special attention to infectious diseases; she would report the death of an inmate to

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[52] *Cambridge Spinning House. Rules and Regulations 1854* (Cambridge University Library, Broadsides.B.85.1).
[53] Romero-Ruiz, *The London Lock Hospital*, 63.

a Governor and the Coroner of the Borough as well as to the relations if known; she would keep an *Inmates' Property Book*, a *Journal* with any incidences of relevance in the house and a *Misconduct Book* for inmates; she would inspect the letters that inmates received and control the women prisoners when two or more of them were together. Finally, she had power to give instructions to an Assistant Matron under her charge regarding her duties and employment.[54]

The religious discourse was an important element in the construction of the aims and ethics of these places of confinement for women. They were shared by workhouses, hospitals, asylums and other similar institutions of the time. In this sense the role of the Chaplain was imperative in aspects such as the morning service, the sermons on Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday, the prayers, or the reading of the Scripture. Like the Matron, he had to visit the women in their cells to check 'their progress in moral and religious instruction'; he also had to keep a *Journal* of everyday occurrences and a *Character-Book* with information about the women, producing an *Annual Report* for the governors.[55] One can guess that his most important aim in the Spinning House was the reformation of 'fallen women' for their salvation. In an Evangelical fashion that was also conspicuous in the Cambridge Female Refuge, he would emphasise the idea of atonement by the women and forgiveness by God in the prostitutes as victims of social discrimination; but punishment remained equally important in these places of detention.[56]

The medical discourse had also a vital role in the construction of this structure of containment. In this sense, among the Medical Officer's obligations were to visit the place three times a week and see the inmates, to keep a *Journal* with observations about the performance of his duties, and to inspect every part of the house to control any matter that might affect the health of the women, like warmth, ventilation, cleanliness, drainage, clothing or provisions. Especially relevant is the fact that he had to examine every inmate on committal and on discharge, recording their names, ages and state of health. He would also inspect every sick inmate and would order a treatment for her, including medicines and diet. The Medical Officer would prescribe exercise for every inmate under his

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[54] *Cambridge Spinning House. Rules and Regulations 1854* (Cambridge University Library, Broadsides.B.85.1).
[55] Ibid.
[56] Romero-Ruiz, *The London Lock Hospital*, 61.

supervision, taking care of her mental and physical wellbeing. He would report annually to the governors of the Spinning House.[57]

The Cambridge Female Prison, like penitentiaries and asylums throughout the country, instructed women in submissiveness and middle-class values, accepting the power and control of the Chaplain, the Medical Officer and the Matron. These were all set up as instances of respectable patriarchal behaviour. They would keep prisoners healthy and busy and would provide them with religious ideas aimed at their moral reform.[58]

Concerning the rules for the Inmates, two aspects call the historian's attention both in the *Rules* of 1849 and 1854, namely, the visits of friends and family, and the disobedience of norms. In the case of visits, there are some discrepancies between the two sets of rules: while in the *1849 Rules* the prisoners were allowed to see their friends and relations at reasonable times as long as improper communication between persons of different sexes was avoided, in the *1854 Rules* prisoners were not allowed to see friends without written permission by the Vice-Chancellor or some other Governor. If permission was given, it had to be done in the presence of the Matron or any other Officer of the House for no longer than a quarter of an hour. External influence was considered evil for the prisoner and was avoided for the benefit of her reformation.[59]

Even more inherent to the nature of these institutions was the occurrence of acts of insubordination and violence or others described as 'improper behaviour or conversation, absence from Divine Worship without leave, or irreverent behaviour during the performance of it' in the first set of rules. To these were then added in 1854: disobedience to the Matron or any other Officer, treating with disrespect any Servant or visiting person, being idle or negligent, having indecent or immoral language or conduct, the use of provoking or abusive words, having contact or conversation with other inmates without permission, making noise, moving from the areas where they were allowed to stay, damaging anything in the house, etc. The Matron was the one to examine the offences and decide on the punishment that might consist of 'being closely or otherwise confined in a dark or light cell, or by being fed on bread and water, or by both such

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[57] *Cambridge Spinning House. Rules and Regulations, 1854* (Cambridge University Library, Broadsides.B.85.1).
[58] Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 221.
[59] *Cambridge Spinning House. Rules and Regulations 1854* (Cambridge University Library, Broadsides.B.85.1).

punishments for any term not exceeding three days.' In contrast, those women who had a record of good conduct could be selected by the Matron to help in the kitchen, the stores or in cleaning the house.[60]

Lastly, a dietary was added to the *Rules of 1854* in the following terms:

DIETARY
FOR
PERSONS CONFINED IN THE SPINNING-HOUSE, CAMBRIDGE,
FOR PERIODS NOT EXCEEDING ONE MONTH.

BREAKFAST

6 oz. Bread, daily.

2 oz. Tea, 7 oz. Sugar, and 1 ½ pint of milk, weekly.

DINNER, 5 oz. cooked meat,

6 oz. Bread and ½ lb. Potatoes

for 4 days in the week

1 ½ pint Soup, 6 oz. bread, if more than three inmates

12 oz. suet pudding, if less than 4 inmates

for 3 days in the week

SUPPER, 6 oz. Bread, or 1 pint of Oatmeal Gruel, daily.[61]

The most remarkable difference from the *Dietary* for 1849 is the absence of cheese and the addition of oatmeal gruel. It was a diet that hardly satisfied the minimum needs to live above the limits of pure survival.

Although these regulations had been designed to disempower inmates and avoid acts of resistance, many found ways to exert agency through refractory behaviour expressed by disobeying rules and causing disruption in the house. Another way of subverting power was inciting other inmates to act against the norms.[62] The women prisoners were considered deviant, promiscuous and riotous and the perception of their lives of sin was biased by middle-class standards. Bodily inscriptions were the outward manifestation of transgressive interiorities which, in the case of women, signified lack of

[60] Ibid.
[61] *Dietary for Persons Confined in the Spinning-House, Cambridge, for Periods not Exceeding One Month 1854* (Cambridge University Library, Broadsides.B.85.1).
[62] Kevin Siena, *Venereal Disease Hospitals and the Urban Poor: London's Foul Wards 1600-1800* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 122-3, 130.

respectability through the appearance of the 'Other.' Working-class women's bodies were thus seen as the sites of difference, so 'monstrous' additions to their appearance signalised them as vessels of promiscuity and contagion.[63]

The *Spinning House Committal Books* contain records of 1,550 girls which cover entries for 6,300 arrests. The first *Committal Book* covers the period between 1823 and 1836, the second covers the years 1836 to 1850, and the third the years between 1850 and 1894. They show that women were given an identification number upon arrival. Information was recorded about their names, ages, parish of origin, parents or friends, their last situation, the date of apprehension, current residence, by whom they were apprehended, the charge, the punishment, and some remarks. Most apprehended women were girls in their teens, their ages ranging between fifteen and twenty-five, although some of them were even younger than that. The prostitutes arrested by the borough police were older. Arrests took place in the evening and the women who came to the female prison for the first time were 'admonished and discharged' the next morning after having been brought before the Vice-Chancellor's Court. The punishment could vary between one or more days and weeks, but never more than four. Only one third of the registered women arrested by proctors had been imprisoned four times or more, and the rest only once. For those who had been imprisoned more than once, the sentences could be gradually increased starting with one week detention.[64] Janet Oswald argues that the punishment of the girls depended mainly on three factors: the date, as sentences had been longer in earlier years; their behaviour and individual record; and the proctor's personal attitude and view on the matter.[65]

We can hear the women's voices through these narratives of their lives, although we can presume that they often lied in many aspects to give an image of themselves that would best suit middle-class expectations or just as acts of rebellion. So, sentences referring to the women such as 'gave a false address' or 'gave a false name' sometimes appeared in the remarks. There were some prisoners who 'just refused to give any account.' Charges were usually 'streetwalking', 'in company of a student', 'talking with a gowns man', 'criminal conversation', 'walking and talking to undergraduates', or

[63] Heidi Rimke, 'Constituting Transgressive Interiorities: Nineteenth Century Readings of Morally Mad Bodies' in *Violence and the Body: Race, Gender and the State*, ed. Arturi J. Aldama (Bloomington, IN, USA: Indiana University Press, 2003), 250-5.
[64] *Spinning House Committal Books 1-3* (Cambridge University Library, University/T.VIII).
[65] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 462-3.

'found on the streets'.[66] In other words, women were detained on the presumption of being prostitutes, but charges could only be made under the terms of the Vagrancy Act 1824, discussed later in this chapter, as prostitution was not a crime in itself. Therefore, these interviews might not always be accurate, but we can obtain a general picture of the prisoners and their backgrounds for our analysis.

As already stated in this book and regarding their parents' occupations and their own situations, the archives tell as that most fathers were labourers or artisans. The mothers were dressmakers, laundresses, and servants in most cases, the same as the girls themselves. Their occupations reveal once more the same range of trades that have been continually shown as typical of the working-classes. Servants were especially numerous in Cambridge and only seven girls admitted to being 'common prostitutes' in the *Committal Books*.[67] Therefore, similar patterns to those found in other institutions for the reform and control of 'fallen women' are continuously repeated in these entries.

Their origin, when known – only 2/3 of the girls gave their parishes of origin --, 1/3 came from the town of Cambridge, particularly from Castle Hill and the medieval city, and the other 1/3 from surrounding areas like Newmarket or towns and villages across the fens, but rarely beyond East Anglia or the Home Counties. As to their place of residence, when given, places like Castle End, Wellington Row, Fitzroy Street, Falcon Yard, Petty Cury or addresses in Barnwell were recorded in the entries. Most girls were detained by the proctors in the areas surrounding the centre of town, like the Backs and Parker's Piece or the Market Square area, although sometimes they were caught in the students' rooms or in 'receiving houses' in central Cambridge. The borough police and the University proctors were familiar with the brothels and lodging-houses outside the University area, and more than one undergraduate would be taken to Barnwell by the women on the streets. Once they were arrested, they were taken by the proctor and his constables ('bulldogs') to the Spinning House in St Andrew's Street.[68] The proctor's and bulldogs' job was not an easy or pleasant one, as some of the girls behaved in a violent way, as we can see in the description of the inmates' behaviour in the remarks: 'very violent', 'used very bad language', 'resisted the men', 'tried to escape after her apprehension', 'gave a great deal of trouble' or 'behaved very badly'.[69]

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[66] *Spinning House Committal Books 1-3* (Cambridge University Library, University/T.VIII).
[67] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 465.
[68] Ibid., 461, 463.
[69] *Spinning House Committal Books 1-3* (Cambridge University Library, University/T.VIII).

Some of them knew that they could be treated for venereal disease in the Spinning House and went voluntarily for that purpose there. As far as reform was concerned, I agree with Oswald that the inmates were not given any education or training for future jobs and that their manners and language were not the most desirable.[70] However, she also states that they were idle and grouped together in the dayroom but, from the information contained in the archives, we know that they also had some duties and did some tasks to keep them busy. Also, they were religiously and morally instructed by the Matron and Chaplain, although maybe the reality was that they did not receive that close and constant monitoring from the officers of the Institution.

An instance of collaboration between town and gown in the control of prostitution was that between the Spinning House and the Cambridge Town Gaol. Although this prison was under the control of the town and its Mayor, between 8 November 1853 and 25 February 1854, a total of thirty-two women who had been committed by the University Vice-Chancellor and taken to the Spinning House were recorded. They had probably committed some petty theft to have been included in the register of this gaol. The *Journal of Prisoners* was kept by the Governor at the time, Mr. John Odis, and contained 175 entries for women prisoners who were prostitutes between 1 October 1850 and 26 September 1859. In the entries for prisoners, information about the date of committal, age, offence, date of trial, prosecutor, and sentence was included together with some other remarks. In some cases, the prisoner's nationality was stated, which is significant. This implies that not all the prostitutes were English, but also from other parts of Britain and overseas, mainly Europe. In most cases, women were defined as drunk and disorderly, sometimes as incorrigible, and were mostly accused of stealing. In the case of Spinning House women, they were defined as 'common streetwalkers.'[71] Their ages are also significant, as the table shows[72]:

Ages	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Number of women	1	1	8	8	4	5	2	1	1	1

[70] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 466.
[71] *Cambridge Town Gaol Journal of Prisoners 1 October 1850-26 September 1859* (Cambridgeshire Archives, 1271/05/02).
[72] Ibid.

From this table, we can see that most prostitutes in the Spinning House in the middle of the nineteenth century were in their late teens, some in their early twenties, and only a few older than that. The fact that there was a prisoner aged sixteen is relevant to the preoccupation about juvenile prostitution and the age of consent that would become the matter of public debate in the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially in the 1880s with the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885.[73] Still, the age of sexual initiation and the entry into the world of prostitution was quite young, and these women were identified as idle and disorderly.

Another relevant source for the analysis of the Spinning House as an institution for the containment and control of 'deviant' women was the *Census*. The blank census forms were distributed by enumerators so that householders would complete them, and the same enumerators would retrieve them a few days later. When you look at the *Census* looking for prostitutes, it can be a difficult task. Prostitutes were not always described as such and besides their names their occupation was left blank, or a euphemism would be employed, such as dressmaker, milliner, seamstress, etc. On other occasions they would appear as supporting themselves by their own means or on their own account. Similarly, they would sometimes give false names, ages, and origins.[74]

In the *1851 Census for the Ancient Counties of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, in the Parish of St Andrew the Great*, a total of sixteen women were recorded as prostitutes living in the Spinning House. Only information about their name, age, marital status, profession, and place of origin was recorded, but again their ages vary between eighteen and twenty-one, with the exception of two women of twenty-five and twenty-nine. Most of them were single. It is relevant that their profession is stated as 'prostitute' when in most cases the women themselves did not admit their condition.[75] The next table shows the ages and marital status of the prostitutes in the Spinning House during the year 1851[76]:

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[73] The age of consent for boys and girls was risen to sixteen after the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. In the same Act, homosexuality was penalised for the first time in England, but not lesbianism. Also, prostitutes had to ply their trade on their own, making them more vulnerable and dependent on pimps. Finally, brothels came under the scrutiny and control of the police. See Paula Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 156, 168-9.

[74] Patrick A. Dunae, 'Sex, Charades, and Census Records: Locating Female Sex Trade Workers in a Victorian City', *Social History* 42, no. 84 (2009): 269, 276, 285.

[75] *A Transcription of the 1851 Census for the Ancient Counties of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, in the Parish of St Andrew the Great* (Cambridgeshire Archives, HO 107/1760 596A).

[76] Ibid.

Ages	17	18	19	20	21	25	29
Number of women	2	8	1	1	2	1	1
Married	1						
Unmarried	15						

Only one of the women was married: Sarah Underwood, who was twenty-nine in 1851. Married women occasionally resorted to prostitution in difficult times to keep their families, and probably this explains that this woman was remarkably older than the others.

In the *Census for 1861*, we only find records for two women in the Spinning House, both unmarried: Agnes Johnston, the Matron aged forty-five, and Elizabeth Dunlop, the Under Matron aged twenty-six. There is no allusion to any women prisoners or to any other male or female officers of the institution.[77] In the *Census for 1871*, for 41, St Andrew's Street, the records show the name of the same Matron, Agnes Johnston, but a new Under Matron, Agnes Gray, is recorded together with two prostitutes: Elizabeth Marsh, aged twenty-three and Elizabeth Thurston, aged seventeen, both described as single and with 'no occupation'.[78] The numbers of prostitutes registered in the Census of 1861 and 1871 as living in the Spinning House decreases substantially in comparison with the year 1851. This proves that the proctors' activities in relation to the detention of 'fallen women' in the University area in the second half of the nineteenth century clearly diminished together with the acceptance of their work by the citizens of Cambridge, as we shall see.

Death in the Spinning House: Elizabeth Howe's Case

As stated above, in this University prison, women were detained sometimes under insalubrious conditions which, on some occasions, ended in the premature death of some of the inmates. In particular, I am going to focus this section on one case study: the death of Elizabeth Howe, a prisoner in the Spinning House in 1846. From the testimonies upon

[77] *1861 Census, Cambridge, St Andrew the Great* (Cambridgeshire Archives, RG9/1026/1).
[78] *A Transcription of the 1871 Census, Cambridge, St Andrew the Great* (Cambridgeshire Archives, RG10/1589/1).

oath of a number of witnesses, including the keeper, surgeon, and the family, neighbours and friends of the deceased, together with the depositions of the coroner and the verdict of the Jury at the end of the enquiry, a number of issues concerning the treatment of Cambridge prostitutes by University authorities can be discerned. Also, the dreadful consequences of the system and the involvement of various social agents can be discussed through the close reading and analysis of these primary sources.

Elizabeth Howe was a young woman of nineteen, originally from Fullbourn, whose father was a labourer. She had worked as a servant before becoming a prostitute in Cambridge. Her family antecedents had very much in common with those of other girls who had also been detained in the Spinning House. For example, she had a sister who was a milliner apprenticed to a Miss Canham, but no information is given about her mother's occupation. This information was gathered in the *Committal Book* which was kept by the keeper of the Institution with entries for all the cases. We know from that book that Elizabeth had been apprehended on several occasions, particularly on 12 May 1844, 31 October 1844, 12 March 1846, 9 May 1846 and 6 November 1846. She was admonished and discharged several times, but also kept a couple of times for a week as a punishment for 'streetwalking'. At the time of Elizabeth Howe, the Vice-Chancellor was Mr. Phillpott. She died on 1 December 1846 of rheumatic fever and an enquiry was conducted by the coroner of the borough, Mr. Charles Henry Cooper, with several witnesses giving evidence about the case and a Jury that gave a verdict concerning the fate of this woman.

Elizabeth Howe, our case study, was given number 558 when she first entered the Spinning House; she was taken for the fifth time to the University prison by the Proctor, the Reverend William Towler Kingsley of Sidney Sussex College and his men, the officers Mr. Dodd, Mr. Goodwin, Mr. Eddleston, and Mr. Humphry. At the time of her arrest, the evening of the 6 November 1846, she was in the company of another girl, Harriet King, who also lived in Union Road. They were both sent to the Spinning House on a charge of streetwalking in Holborn Street. Elizabeth was admonished and discharged on the promise of going home to Fullbourn, and Harriet was sentenced to one week's imprisonment. King objected, but Elizabeth just accepted her detention quietly. Because of her dying on 1 December 1846 only a few weeks after her night of confinement in the Spinning House, an investigation was conducted by the borough coroner on 3 and 4 December 1846. During the enquiry, many witnesses gave their versions of what had

happened, and her corpse was examined post-mortem by the surgeon Charles Newby who had also attended and visited the woman up to the time of her death.

All the depositions started in the same way:

> Borough of Cambridge
> In the County of Cambridge
>
> The information of ---------- of ----------, touching upon the death of Elizabeth Howe, taken upon oath at the Borough aforesaid, on the third/fourth day of December in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and forty-six, before Charles Henry Cooper, Gentleman, Coroner of our Sovereign Lady the Queen for the said Borough, on an Inquisition then and there taken on view of the body of the said Elizabeth Howe then and there lying dead.[79]

Also, they all finished in the same way, that is,

> Signed
> Taken upon oath the day and year aforementioned before me
> H. Cooper, Coroner.[80]

The signature was a cross on many occasions as many of the witnesses were illiterate.

Of special relevance are the testimonies of the Surgeon, her lodger, the keeper of the Spinning House, the servant of the Spinning House and the Proctor. Similarly, her mother, some other girls and Harriet King herself gave their testimonies, some of which were not free of certain contradictions. The members of the Jury participated in the enquiry after having visited the Spinning House building to check the conditions of its installations.

The information given by the Proctor is very enlightening concerning the description of the facts of the day of the arrest, and he supported his action and that of his men based on the University Statutes. However, the surgeon's deposition is much more revealing concerning the state in which Elizabeth Howe left the Spinning House, and the treatment and evolution of the illness that led her to her death of a severe attack of

[79] *Cambridge Borough Coroner: Depositions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, CB/Co/P11/36).
[80] Ibid.

rheumatic fever. Her symptoms were very clear: 'she could not move either her arms or legs without causing excruciating pain. Her tongue was much coated; pulse 120 in a minute; great prostration of strength; excessive thirst; hot and dry skin, and a scanty secretion of urine, which was high coloured with bowels costive'.[81]

She herself told the surgeon that she had caught that severe cold after she had been in the Spinning House and had slept in a damp bed. She received the usual treatment but got worse every day. The surgeon visited her on several occasions, sometimes twice a day, and he affirmed that three days before her death, she became delirious. He himself carried out the autopsy which revealed that her uterus contained a foetus, but he did not find any external marks of violence.

Her mother Eliza Green had stated during her deposition that her daughter had been staying with her family in Fullbourn during the summer but had then returned to Cambridge on the 2nd of November. She also affirmed that her daughter was ill at times when she was with them, but that when she left, she was in good health. Her lodger, Mary Ann Rose of Union Row, similarly stated that she was well when she first came back to her lodgings, but that on the morning of 7 of November she came to the house feeling very ill and never left the house after that. She was the one who called the surgeon, Mr. Newby.

All the girls who gave their depositions concerning the case and who coincided with Elizabeth during the night and morning she had been in the Spinning House before her death spoke about the place on the same terms. Their names were Eliza Green, Eliza Wright, Alice Walsh, Emma Burcham, Emma Osborne and Eliza Cook. All of them described the cells as being damp and cold, with no fire, with a window that sometimes was opened, a mattress and two or three blankets, no chamber pot, and no drinks. All of them complained of getting ill with a cold and sore throat from sleeping in a damp bed. Concerning the food, the University allowed a diet of 7d a day per prisoner, breakfast consisting in ½ a quarter loaf and two pennyworth of butter. Those girls who had money could obtain a better meal from the keeper.

In this sense, prostitutes and in particular women in the Spinning House were vulnerable and their precarious lives were examined under the scrutinising view of University authorities. According to Butler, as social and political individuals, we are continuously engaged in power relations, our bodies being controlled and undone by

[81] Ibid.

others. This is something that was happening inside institutions for the reform and confinement of 'fallen women'. Groups outside the norm are especially vulnerable and more exposed to violence. Their lives are less worthy and their recognition in the public sphere is negated. 'Deviant' working-class women whose humanity was denied in Victorian middle-class discourses were the victims of these power regimes.[82]

However, these depositions are some of the very few examples in which we can hear something like the women prisoners' voices. The testimony of Harriet King is of special relevance. She shared the cell on the night of the 6 of November with Elizabeth Howe, and she described the place in the following words:

> We had a light but no fire. There was a night convenience in the room. There were blankets and a rug on the bed. The bed was very cold. We felt it more [sic] we had been some little time. I did not take my clothes off but the deceased did. She complained much of cold during the night. The window was open but we could not fasten it. I caught a bad cold there. I was in the Spinning House a week and was ill all that time. The deceased had no breakfast in the morning. I am positive of that.[83]

This amounted to some kind of contradiction with the servant, Eliza Patten, and with the warden, Edward Wilson, at the Spinning House, although the servant admitted that Elizabeth was not drunk when she was taken to the University prison. During their depositions, they affirmed that Elizabeth Howe had had her breakfast on the morning of 7 December 1846; she had been given tea and sugar, and bread and butter. According to them, she complained of having a very bad cold, and Mr. Wilson admitted that there was no fireplace in the bedroom, although the window was not broken. Miss Patten, however, stated that she was 'quite sure the bed in which Elizabeth Howe slept was not damp'. In her words 'we have not a damp bed in the House. I air the beds with a pan of coals when they have not been slept in for a night or two'.[84] It is clear from her words that she did not want her work to be questioned as a servant of the Spinning House.

In the same fashion, the members of the Jury visited the Spinning House on 3 December 1846, and one of them, Lionel Branton, hairdresser of Fitzroy Street, gave his

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[82] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 34.
[83] *Cambridge Borough Coroner: Depositions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, CB/Co/P11/36).
[84] Ibid.

deposition on the following day. The jurymen themselves checked that the two beds, the blankets, the rug or quilt and even the walls were very damp in the cell where Elizabeth Howe had slept. All the cells that they visited (three in total) had the small glass square in the window broken and 'the iron shutters could not be shut close, so that there was a great draught admitted which comes direct on the head of the bed'.[85]

After the inquest was finished, and with the verdict of the Jury, most of the social agents involved in the enquiry, with the sole exception of the keeper and the servant in the Spinning House, showed their preoccupation and even rejection of a system which treated women in an unfair way. These social agents came from different social strata, but they all agreed in repudiating a university system with Statutes that allowed women to be detained, merely for loitering on the streets at night. They were on their own or in the company of students, but there was no proof of having committed any crime against the law of the country. They did not even have the right of defence, making them even more vulnerable. Violence against vulnerable populations can be exerted through omission.[86] The Jury also manifested their abhorrence about the insalubrious conditions in which women were kept in the Spinning House. Here is their verdict:

> They find that Elizabeth Howe died of rheumatic fever, caused by a violent cold caught at the Spinning House, on the night of the sixth of November; she having been conveyed thither in the custody of William Towler Kingsley, Proctor of the University, and confined for that night in a cold and damp cell, from the effects of which she died.
>
> The Jury cannot separate without expressing their abhorrence of a system which sanctions the apprehension of females when not offending against the general law of the land and confining them in a gaol unfit for the worst of felons.
>
> The Jury also request the coroner to forward the whole of the proceedings to the Secretary of State for the Home Department.[87]

The Coroner, Henry Cooper, did as the Jury had asked. He sent a letter with the proceedings to the Secretary of State at the Home Office, Sir George Grey Bart, and gave his support to the verdict, asking him to intervene in the situation addressing the

[85] Ibid.
[86] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 34.
[87] *Cambridge Borough Coroner: Depositions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, CB/Co/P11/36).

University Vice-Chancellor. Contradictions between girls' testimonies which described the reality of the place and the servants in the institution's testimonies reveal that the conditions established that the regulations set out in the *Rules for the Governing of the Spinning House* were not being kept.

This case thus illustrates once more the discriminatory situation of women in relation to their male counterparts, i.e., here, Cambridge undergraduates. Probably some of the girls arrested were not prostitutes, and, as working-class women, they were the victims of the prejudices and the double morality of the period. They were seen as a danger to public space and to university men, and the proctorial system worked to domesticate this environment, interfering with these women's rights. Therefore, this is a case where the disciplinary power of specific regimes is imposing surveillance and incarceration on a particular group of individuals. In this way, they endorse the double-standard of morality and the division of private-public spheres that were in force throughout the Victorian period regarding the sexes.

The Last Years: The Cases of Beatrice Cooper and Daisy Hopkins

Taking the depositions at the Chancellor's Court of 28 May 1892 in the case of Beatrice Cooper and the legal papers of the case of Daisy Hopkins during 1891-2 as a starting point, this last section aims to address issues of vulnerability connected with the regulation and policing of women's behaviour in the areas of the city belonging to the University or in the adjoining areas at the end of the Victorian period and just immediately before the closure of the Spinning House.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century the University of Cambridge still had its own system of regulation based on its Statutes regarding prostitution and other crimes committed in its precincts and surrounding areas. Furthermore, and as already noted, Cambridge was divided between town and gown, town including some neighbourhoods where the poorest people lived in very hard conditions. In contrast, gown was associated with colleges where students from wealthy families lived, often attended by their own servants.[88] As noted above, both 'Town' and 'Gown' had their own jurisdictions and, in the case of the University, its own police system with proctors and constables known as 'bulldogs' and the Chancellor's Court. At the same time, the University had its own female prison, the Spinning House, making the system completely independent from city

[88]Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge*, 58.

government. This system made the lives of poor women -- and especially of prostitutes -- particularly vulnerable to the control and abuse of male middle-class authority. Under the text of the Vagrancy Act 1824, any woman found loitering around on the streets or behaving in a riotous way could be detained under the suspicion of being a prostitute by University police. Then she would be taken to the Chancellor's Court to be judged and sentenced to a term of imprisonment in the Spinning House just by the testimony of male witnesses.

This situation of discrimination can be ascertained via an analysis of Beatrice Cooper's case, on 28 May 1892 before the Chancellor's Court. The charge was 'that the accused person is a common prostitute and so reflected of evil [sic] contrary to the Charter and to the Statutes of the University in that case made and provided'. The plea was 'Not Guilty'.[89]

The University of Cambridge had been given Royal Charters since the beginning of the thirteenth century. In 1561 during the reign of Elizabeth I, the Institution had been granted a charter that increased its power to detain and confine women suspected of being prostitutes. Later, in 1603, King James I had given the University the right to have its own prison.[90] This meant that authority was in male hands, and poor women who either worked in decent occupations or resorted to prostitution on a regular or a temporary basis to keep themselves and their families were in a position of vulnerability. Victorian Cambridge was an isolated town with the river Cam as a natural boundary and surrounded by countryside and other towns and villages. Market Square was the neuralgic meeting-point for the people with its adjacent University Church. The University was so powerful that it restrained the economic and political life of the city to such an extent that the rivalry between town and gown already mentioned persisted and even increased throughout the years leading to open confrontations in the Victorian period. Theatres, markets and fairs together with alehouses and other similar establishments depended on the Vice-Chancellor's authority to have a license.[91]

According to the Statutes, the University supreme authority was the Chancellor who was annually elected till the sixteenth century when Bishop John Fisher was in office for more than thirty years. After that, this position was usually in the hands of a

[89] *28th May 1892, The Chancellor's Court, Case of Beatrice Cooper, Depositions* (Cambridge University Library, MSUniversity/VCCt.I.123).
[90] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 454.
[91] Ibid., 456.

distinguished outsider, leaving the Vice-Chancellor as the one who really became the head of affairs as the senior resident member of the University.[92] The Vice-Chacellor's Court and the *Sex Viri* – which was also a Court of Appeal and a Court of First Instance for offences and misconduct -- was made up of six members elected for two years with jurisdiction over University staff. By then, another court named the Court of Discipline had jurisdiction over students and was composed of the Vice-Chancellor and six Heads of Colleges.[93]

However, there had always been rivalry between the University and the town authorities about controlling the streets of the city. Parishes in Cambridge had been responsible for the traditional 'night-watch', but the system was not working as expected. As a result, with the passing of the 1825 Act for the Better Preservation of Peace and Good Order in the Universities of England, the Vice-Chancellor decided to appoint his own special constables to keep order in the streets surrounding the University buildings. Later, in 1835, to make the situation even more complicated, the Municipal Corporations Act was passed, making it possible for the town 'Watch Committee' to establish a borough police force in 1836. Therefore, the new police force and the borough magistrates competed once more with the University Court and police to regulate disorderly behaviour. Some twenty years later the Report by the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the State and Revenues of the University and Colleges of Cambridge led to an Act of Parliament in 1856 that restricted some of the Vice-Chancellor's privileges and taxes but did not finish with his power to arrest women and confine them if 'suspected of evil'. In those areas of town which did not belong to the University 'precincts' like Barnwell, women were arrested by the borough police, although they could not be charged with prostitution.[94]

The 1824 Vagrancy Act put an end to prostitution being considered a criminal offence. With the new legislation, only women who behaved 'in a riotous or indecent Manner' could be arrested, and this Act allowed any Justice of the Peace 'to commit such Offender (being thereof convicted before him by his own View, or by the Confession of such Offender, or by the Evidence on Oath of One or more credible Witness or Witnesses) to the House of Correction, there to be kept to hard Labour for any Time not exceeding

[92] H.P. Stokes, *Ceremonies of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 1, 6.
[93] Ibid., 64-5.
[94] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 457-9.

One Calendar Month'.[95] In other words, prostitutes could be taken to the town Gaol for a period of time of between one day and one month, and there subjected to hard labour if the offence committed was street disorder or indecent behaviour. This Act also contained sections that punished obscenity, and husbands who deserted their wives and children, making of them a charge on the town or parish. It is quite significant, though, that conviction was made at the magistrate's discretion or on the veracity of the testimony given by witnesses, leaving women in a situation of defencelessness.

It was therefore the Vice-Chancellor's Court's duty, if the offence was committed in the University area, 'to examine suspected prostitutes, to hear their accounts, to register their names, and to order a medical inspection if warranted'.[96] The University had a whole system of containment of immorality and prostitution based on a triangular structure: the Vice-Chancellor's Court where the cases were heard, the proctorial system, which was the University police, and the Spinning House on St Andrew's Street, which was the female prison. However, I agree with Oswald in that there is no clear evidence from the archives that all the women who spent the night before being taken to the Vice-Chancellor's Court were examined by a surgeon. Consequently, the whole system was not, as Philip Howell argues, a reflection of the regulations implemented in 'military towns' after the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s and discussed elsewhere in this book. Nonetheless, it is true that both Oxford and Cambridge had always had a special situation in relation to the rest of the U.K., keeping very old privileges that allowed them to regulate the lives of academics and students under their jurisdiction. This obviously included the control of their morals and sexual lives with the cleaning of 'dangerous' women from the streets adjoining the University.

Prostitution was a major concern for University authorities and the keeping of undergraduates' morals one of their main objectives. As argued elsewhere, the trade had been considered a 'social evil' by Victorians, and the 'common prostitute' with her exchange of sex for money represented a moral and physical threat in the form of venereal disease. She was perceived as a form of 'dangerous sexuality' which, at the same time, was necessary to contain and satisfy men's natural sexual drives.[97] The number of students at Cambridge increased significantly from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and most of them led a dissipated life 'dining, drinking, hunting, shooting and

[95] legislation.gov.uk., 'Vagrancy Act 1824'.
[96] Howell, 'A Private Contagious Diseases Act', 378.
[97] Ibid., 376.

gambling at the Newmarket races'.[98] An active sexual life was also part of their outrageous activities, so students represented a very attractive market for prostitutes in the city.

The proctorial system was mainly concerned with public surveillance. Proctors were University officers who held a number of prominent functions but 'they also patrolled the streets to repress disturbances and exercised jurisdiction over improper persons'; they also had 'the right to enter licensed premises and places of public entertainment' and 'the power of fining undergraduates for the infringing of certain regulations'.[99] There were senior and junior proctors and even pro-proctors who had their own agents known as 'bulldogs' as already stated. They were clergymen and college fellows appointed by rotation:

> The nomination of the Proctors is vested in the Colleges. In every year two Colleges nominate persons for Proctors in the orders prescribed in a fifty years' cycle. If a vacancy occurs during the year, Trinity Hall (which was not included in the order established in the year 1514) nominates and presents a person for election.[100]

Proctors had the duty to patrol the streets of the centre of town after dark in search of prostitutes and undergraduates to regulate their moral and sexual behaviour. They also visited a number of 'receiving houses' in the centre of the old town where prostitutes would take undergraduates.[101]

As already pointed out, the Oxford system was very similar. Prostitution was a pressing matter in this city during the Victorian period as well. As Cambridge, Oxford's Vice-Chancellor had his own court with powers to arrest and sentence criminals and streetwalkers who would be sent to the town gaol. Like in Cambridge, there were numerous confrontations between the city and the University authorities, and in 1826 they reached an agreement. This consisted in the University paying 10d per day to the town for every woman kept in prison by the Vice-Chancellor. During the first night of detention, women were confined in the Clarendon building before being taken to the

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[98] Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge*, 58.
[99] Stokes, *Ceremonies*, 14.
[100] Ibid., 16.
[101] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 464.

University magistrate the following morning. Another issue was the matter of surveillance: the University proctors would be in charge of the 'night-watch', patrolling the streets of Oxford from 9 pm to 4 am, and the city police would do the same job during the day under the Vagrancy Act 1824. The latter could only detain women for drunkenness, public disorder or public indecency, sometimes for theft. This arrangement led to less committals and more dismissals so that the University could avoid expenses, as it was not clear that imprisonment could be a deterrent for women to stop recidivism.[102]

Oxford had also brothels and 'houses of ill fame' where proctors could enter to find undergraduates and prostitutes if there was a suspicion that some kind of transaction was taking place. Their treatment of undergraduates if caught with streetwalkers could be very harsh, with the possibility of students being rusticated for one or more terms, or even to be sent down permanently. Other times, punishment could be more lenient, with 'gating', that is, with a student being confined within the college gates after dark for a period of time in proportion to the importance of his misconduct. However, the punishment of undergraduates became more and more infrequent as Oxford prostitutes would avoid the streets after 9 pm, and students would visit neighbouring towns for their sexual adventures to avoid proctors.[103]

The case of Beatrice Cooper was one of a number at a time when the prerogatives of the University of Cambridge had been questioned for some decades and were being discussed in newspapers and among the local population. From the 1850s important changes had taken place in the city with a new layout of the old town after the fire of 1849. An emerging middle-class began to have a prominent role in the city economy and more jobs were available for working-class women thanks to this development.[104] As a result, the number of women taken to the Spinning House in the 1860s and 1870s diminished substantially, although Howell argues that there was a flurry in the late 1860s and 1870s because of the implementation of the Contagious Diseases Acts.[105] Between 1880 and 1890 the number of women detained diminished to about five a year.

The trial before the Vice-Chancellor's Court of Beatrice Cooper of Abbey Walk on 28 May 1892 was based on the testimony by oath of witnesses belonging to the University and the borough police. The charges were presented by the pro-proctor Herbert

[102] Engel, '"Immoral Intentions"', 80-3.
[103] Ibid., 91-4.
[104] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 468-9.
[105] Howell, 'A Private Contagious Diseases Act', 394.

George Fuller of Peterhouse College and his constables Charles Saint of 15, Park Street, Alfred Newell of Lethfield House Park Terrace, and Frederick Wallman of Garden Walk, Victoria Road, Chesterton. The depositions were supported by the evidence of two members of the borough police, Sergeant George Parmenter and police constable No. 26 James Sword.

My argument in the close analysis of the depositions of all these witnesses is that Victorian working-class women were in a position of vulnerability in relation to the University regulation system and were victims of the abuse of authority on the part of town and especially gown authorities. In this context, Butler's theories about vulnerability can be illuminating for understanding how power is exerted over helpless individuals. In chapter four of *Precarious Life* (2006), Butler discusses Michael Foucault's idea of governmentality and argues the existence of a kind of sovereignty which gives officials power over the lives and even deaths of certain parts of the population. The idea is to justify the law and its enforcement as an instrument for this authority to survive. In this way, the concept of public sphere can be defined by the exclusion of certain topics and certain people.[106] University proctors and their constables wanted to keep the public sphere surrounding the University precincts free from vice and immorality to protect undergraduates, and for that purpose they exerted their power over any working-class woman found on the streets who could be suspected of being a prostitute.

According to the Proctor's testimony, Beatrice Cooper was found on the night of 27 May 1892 in St Andrew's Street, walking away from the post office in company with another girl known for being a 'common prostitute' at about 10 o'clock pm. The Victorian indetermination when talking about streetwalkers is an outstanding feature of all the depositions. As stated before, the concept was never clearly defined and could make reference to any working-class woman who regularly or occasionally resorted to prostitution for a living. The boundaries between 'common prostitute' and 'fallen woman' were not clearly established in the Victorian mind. The proctor affirmed that he had seen the accused in the company of other prostitutes on several occasions, and 'warned her May 5th, 14th and 20th, and told her that if I saw her again, I should correct her. I told her so generally and the last time I told her I would arrest her the next time'.[107] All the

[106] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 101-127.
[107] *28th May 1892, The Chancellor's Court, Case of Beatrice Cooper, Depositions* (Cambridge University Library, MSUniversity/VCCt.I.123).

depositions coincided in that that night she was particularly violent and that was the reason why she was arrested.

Furthermore, the Proctor alleged that on the night of 13 May 1892, when in the middle of Corn Exchange Street, he could hear female voices. Then, when he arrived at Downing Street, he found a group of two men and two girls, Beatrice and another one called Florence. His constables also gave the same evidence. At the time, many of these women could be a nuisance to students, chasing them, touching them, pulling their gowns, disrupting their walks around town; they exhibited themselves in the streets, often in a state of drunkenness, making noise and causing trouble. According to Howell, 'On the one hand, such women introduced an unwanted "public element" into the promenades of "private" men, their wives and families; on the other, they were dangerous "privateers" who made a mockery and a danger of public space'.[108] The authorities' role was to clean the public sphere of these contaminant elements.

All of the witnesses talked about the women's behaviour in similar words, like Constable Fuller who declared: 'When I have seen her in the streets, I have not seen her misconduct herself nor soliciting men but loitering up and down and I had no doubt she was there for the purpose of prostitution'.[109] Another constable, Alfred Newell, also stated: 'She has been shouting on the streets or has been disorderly. I cannot say that I have seen her accosting men on the streets'.[110] Also, the two officers of the borough police based their testimonies on personal opinion with statements like 'I had no doubt she was in the streets for the purpose of prostitution. I had not seen anything more than that and she was loitering and in company with other women', or 'I judge her to be a prostitute from her associates and from her common behaviour'.[111] The vulnerability of these women becomes evident, as well as the lack of strength of the arguments presented by the University and town police. There was no proof of prostitution happening, just the fact that she was in the company of other prostitutes. But the male witnesses take this for granted, abusing their authority over the woman. This was probably because prostitutes could only be arrested under the 1824 Vagrancy Act, accused of being noisy and misconducting themselves.

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[108] Howell, 'A Private Contagious Diseases Act', 382-3.
[109] *28th May 1892, The Chancellor's Court, Case of Beatrice Cooper, Depositions* (Cambridge University Library, MSUniversity/VCCt.I.123).
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

The area of town where Beatrice Cooper was seen by the proctor and his constables was almost the same on every occasion: St Andrew's Street and Corn Exchange Street, located to the south-east of Downing Street, both situated at the very heart of Cambridge's old town, and at a short distance from Market Square. This was an area where proctors and their constables used to patrol the streets to clean them from vice and disorder. As can be seen in the testimonies, these women used to walk the streets in couples, possibly with the intention of finding protection in each other's company. They were independent of pimps throughout most of the Victorian period, showing a strong group solidarity.[112] Another important aspect is the lack of responsibility on the part of their male partners, reinforcing the double standard of sexuality promoted during the Victorian period. This circumstance could obviously lead to more than one situation in which working-class women could be taken for streetwalkers making their vulnerability evident.

Beatrice Cooper did not call any witness when asked. She just declared that she had called for her father that morning but did not make any statement. She was found guilty and sentenced to one week's imprisonment in the Spinning house.

Another example of the abuse of authority with consequences for the University which contributed to bring to an end the proctorial role in controlling prostitution was the case of Daisy Hopkins in 1891. This seventeen-year-old girl was arrested by Rev. Frederick Wallis, Proctor of Caius College at the time, on 2 December, on a charge of having been walking with a member of the University. She was convicted and sent to the Spinning House by order of the Vice-Chancellor where she would remain for fourteen days. A few days later, the Lord Chief of Justice, Lord Coleridge, in the Court of the Queen's Bench, ordered her release on two legal arguments: on the one hand, there was no proof that she was committing a crime as she could be in the company of any male relative or friend; on the other hand, she had not been given the right to plead the charge as was her right, under the Criminal Law of the Kingdom. The University's argument was that the Vice-Chancellor and his Court had had the right by Charter and Statute of Queen Elizabeth I to detain and convict any woman on the streets under that accusation. Hence, the words in the charge sheet 'walking with an undergraduate' were synonymous with 'immoral character' and 'immoral conduct'.[113]

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[112] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 25-7.

[113] *Legal Papers in the Case of Daisy Hopkins, with Assorted News Cuttings* (Cambridge University Library, (University T.VIII.1.4.).

Her argument in bringing a lawsuit against Rev. Wallis was the fact that she had been 'imprisoned in the said Spinning House for a long space of time', been 'deprived of her clothes and forced to wear others of an inferior description and to be sequestered in an unwholesome place of confinement and forced to execute menial and hard labour'. As a result of this she became sick and suffered ill health, claiming as damages for the alleged wrongs the sum of £500.[114]

This new case, together with the possibility of young women being accused by University proctors of being 'common prostitutes' or having 'immoral purposes', provoked public uproar. The news circulated in newspapers not only at local, but also at national level. Possibilities of mistaken identity, of confusing working-class females with 'fallen women', were high, and the University's powers questioned, with local people showing resentment against proctors. This hostile feeling towards the University that started in the 1850s may be the reason why the number of women arrested diminished during that decade and throughout the 1860s and 1870s, so that between 1880 and 1890 there were hardly any arrests.

This happened at a time at the end of the nineteenth century when the Spinning House was very close to its closure under the resolution of the Syndicate – the executive body of the University --. When in 1894 an Act of Parliament was passed to coordinate the work of proctors and town police in the control of 'loose women', trials had to take place before borough magistrates, bringing an end to the Vice-Chancellor's jurisdiction over them. The Spinning House building was demolished in 1901 and transformed into a police station.[115]

To conclude, throughout this chapter we have seen how Cambridge in Victorian times was a place where the University and its police had control over the town areas where prostitutes and working-class women moved about for their business. This made them vulnerable to male and middle-class authority, exerted through the University proctors and 'bulldogs' and the borough police. The University had powers to detain women suspected of being prostitutes and take them to the Vice-Chancellor's court where after an unfair trial -- as they did not have the support of a counsel for the defence and evidence was given by opinion more than facts -- they could be sentenced to a period of imprisonment in the Spinning House, Cambridge University female house of correction.

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Oswald, 'The Spinning House Girls', 469.

All this was symptomatic of a city regime based on surveillance and incarceration which claimed to contain the geography of vice in the city and the University. Furthermore, the Spinning House regulations do not show much difference from those of other voluntary institutions for confinement during the period. The aim behind these rules was to control and contain the behaviour of prostitute prisoners who represented a threat to University order, and to subjugate their identities. The objective was to clean the public space of vice embodied in the figure of the 'common prostitute' and to relegate all illegitimate sexual activity to the private sphere of the brothel or other parts of town like Barnwell, beyond the jurisdiction of the University authorities. In this way, working-class women, but not their undergraduate clients, were made vulnerable as victims of Cambridge's architecture of containment.

Chapter 3

‘Fallen Women’’s Makeshift Economy: The Cambridge Poor-Law Union Workhouse

Prostitutes often resorted to the workhouse in times of need or when there was a shortage of work; also, single mothers or deserted mothers got a foothold in the workhouse as they were provided with help and support when they found themselves and their children with no other place to go. However, all these women were considered ‘fallen women’ according to Victorian standards. Prostitution was identified with loose women, that is, with ‘cohabitees, women in casual relations and mothers of illegitimate children’.[116] We shall see some examples of this when I discuss some cases of women in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union who were deserted women or single mothers. We also know that there were cases of ‘fallen women’ and prostitutes in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union from some of the *Annual Reports* of the Cambridge Female Refuge where we find that the workhouse sent women to the Refuge for their reform and paid their maintenance in the Institution.

Focusing on the notion of ‘fallen women’, it becomes necessary to analyse Victorian concepts such as the double standard of morality that was the base for the theory of the double spheres mentioned elsewhere in this book. According to this, there was a separation between the private and the public: the private sphere was associated with domestic virtues and was the domain of women; the public sphere was associated with men and the presence of vice and moral danger. This ideology determined gender divisions and sexual attitudes. However, from the 1860s several movements and organisations began agitating for a single code of morality.[117]

Although traditionally social historians have affirmed that according to Victorians women did not possess sexual feelings and middle-class society saw marriage as the only venue for sex with the purpose of procreation, this stance has been recently contested by some scholars. The latter see Victorian marriage as a consensual relationship where sexual expression and love had an important part, giving the couple a sense of companionship. In their view, the differences between male and female sexualities were ascribed to women’s passion being of a spiritual nature. In contrast, male sexuality was

[116] Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, 105.
[117] Ibid., 100-1.

seen as a natural impulse that could be controlled by women's spiritual love. But at the same time, the sexual instinct could be dangerous and evil if abuses leading to excess were committed. Therefore, sexuality had to be contained and regulated, avoiding a whole range of sexual feelings and acts, making moderation advisable. In this way, chaos and moral decline could be avoided.[118]

This chaos and moral decline were especially attributed to working-class women and prostitutes who invaded the public sphere showing independence and self-assertiveness. This representation of the prostitute tended to strengthen bourgeois hegemony. Thanks to this, the middle-class could manage other social problems while keeping their position of moral superiority by imposing their sexual values on the working poor. Poverty, immorality, and disease were ascribed to the labouring classes, and were the excuse for middle-class intervention. These moralistic assumptions were the pretext for imposing discipline, cleanliness, and monogamy on the poor.[119] This rationale was behind the functioning of workhouses all over the country throughout the nineteenth century and was reflected in the running of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union, as we shall see.

The first Poor Law of 1601 had been passed by the Elizabethan Parliament to provide the poor of the country with relief in what was the first welfare system. The Act was the result of a series of Poor Acts enacted in 1572, 1576 and 1597 which determined the treatment of the poor in England and Wales. With this Act the burden of supporting the poor was left on the shoulders of parish overseers, and its enforcement was in the hands of the local Justices of the Peace. The idea was to put the poor to work to be useful to the community and to provide them with a place to live and materials to keep them busy for earning their maintenance. These places were known as poorhouses, alms-houses or houses of industry; the word 'workhouse' appeared for the first time in 1652, but it was not until the nineteenth century that it replaced the others. The concept was mainly an eighteenth-century phenomenon after the passing of the Poor Relief Act 1722. Those who refused to labour were sent to the town gaol or house of correction, which are the object of analysis in another section of this book.[120] The funds were provided by the

[118] Steven Seidman, 'The Power of Desire and the Danger of Pleasure: Victorian Sexuality Re-considered', *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 47-51.
[119] Poovey, 'Speaking of the Body', 30-1.
[120] Norman Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 15.

money paid by the property-owners who were the ratepayers. This welfare system would last for more than two hundred years until the New Poor Law Act was passed in 1834.[121]

Another important piece of legislation in connection with the provision of the poor was the Settlement Act of 1662, which determined the application of the Elizabethan Poor Law with the removal of paupers from the place where they were living to their places of origin, that is, their parish of legal settlement. That parish could be either their parish of birth or the parish where they had obtained settlement because of apprenticeship, working in the same place for a year or having a rented property for at least £10 a year or the equivalent of 4 shillings a week. Parishes were obliged to take these individuals under their responsibility, unless they were physically impeded; in that case their parish of settlement had to reimburse the other parish for the cost of their relief.[122] This Act underwent several refinements with the amendments of 1692, 1795 and 1846. With the 1692 Act, settlement could also be obtained in other ways such as by paying rates or being a parish officer. Another novelty is that under this Act women could be granted settlement by marriage; legitimate children would belong to the mother's parish of settlement and illegitimate ones belonged to their parish of birth. All this brought as a result that many families were geographically split with members with different settlements. The 1795 Law of Settlement established that paupers would not be removed to their parishes of settlement as long as they did not incur in any expense with the parish, with the exception of pregnant single women; also, removals of sick paupers could be postponed by the Justices of the Peace until they were recovered and could travel. Finally, with the 1846 Amendment Act of Settlement, widows were allowed to stay in the parish of their husbands during the first year after their husbands' deaths.[123] The Cambridge Poor-Law Union had to spend some money occasionally on removing paupers to their parishes of settlement as the return to the Local Government Board, dated 3rd December 1886, shows. In it, we can see that no money was spent on that matter in 1882, but in 1883 the expenditure was £18, in 1884 £10, in 1885 £3 and in 1886 £13. However, there were no expenses under that heading in the years 1895, 1896 and 1897, according to another return dated 22nd May 1897.[124] This probably meant either that there were fluctuations in the

[121] Chris Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse 1730-1840* (Hatfield, Hertfordshire: West Midlands Publications, 2019), 73.
[122] Ibid., 67.
[123] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 18, 21.
[124] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).

number of paupers that had to be removed to their parish of settlement throughout the years, or that issues of settlement diminished towards the end of the century.

Parish overseers were appointed by the local magistrates for a period of one year among those proposed by the parish. However, the institutions were run by governors elected for three years by the ratepayers. Elections were secret and women ratepayers were allowed to vote but not to stand for office; sometimes, overseers were appointed de facto guardians to avoid conflicts. One member of the Board at least had to be a representative from the parish; also, magistrates living in the area could become ex-officio members. In rural areas, boards were effectively very often in the hands of farmers or clergy. Guardians were then organised into committees which dealt with different issues and met quarterly. Neither overseers nor guardians were paid but obtained some abatement towards their rates. Assistant overseers would collect the money from the rates. Both overseers and governors could accept or reject paupers in the poorhouses, but the running of the institution and the management and appointment of staff were in the hands of the guardians. The overseers were in charge of setting the rates, making payment of outdoor relief once a week and cases of bastardy. Again, both overseers and guardians had to attend numerous meetings, to have interviews with applicants for out-relief, to examine paupers, to deal with apprenticeships and to carry out inspections of the poorhouse and lunatic asylums of the parish.[125]

Under these regimes of the Laws of Settlement and the Poor Law of 1601, the fourteen parishes of Cambridge, namely, All Saints, St Andrew the Great, St Andrew the Less, St Benedict's, St. Botolph's, St Clement's, St Edward's, St Giles's, St Mary the Great, St Mary the Less, St. Michael's, St Peter's, Holy Sepulchre and Holy Trinity, ran poorhouses to relieve their poor. With the passing of the 1834 Poor Law Act, the Cambridge Poor-Law Union was established with the fourteen parishes on 2 April 1836 under the supervision of thirty elected members of the Board of Guardians. All the parishes had two representatives with the exception of St Andrew the Less which had four.[126] In 1893, there were thirty-two elected Guardians and eight ex-officio ones, making a total of forty-one, whereas in 1894 there were thirty-three elected members of the Board of Guardians from the different Cambridge parishes. At this stage, most

[125] Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse*, 88, 96-7; Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 64-5.
[126] 'Cambridge, Cambridgeshire'.

parishes had one elected member, except St Andrew the Less with fifteen, St Andrew the Great and St Giles's with three, and All Saints and Holy Trinity with two.[127]

Cambridge Union Workhouse was built a mile away from the city, surrounded by fields to avoid any interference with members of the University or with commercial life. The site was located at 81A, Milton Road, quite close to where the railway station was later built in 1845. The land where it was erected had a cost of £500 and the building was designed by a local architect, John Smith. The premises had capacity to take 250 inmates and were based on the 'square plan', which meant that they had the shape of a cross.[128] This was the most typical workhouse design, with the walls around the workhouse forming a square and the square divided by two-storey buildings with the shape of a cross. There was also an additional wing at the front where a waiting-room, a Board Room and the porter's lodge could be found. There were two other designs for workhouses: the hexagonal shaped, which had six sides a hundred feet long with a Y-shaped building inside that divided the space, and with the space between the arms of the Y divided to include three yards each. The other popular design was a less sophisticated one with a single slab-like block, which was not surrounded by parade grounds but by 'airing yards'.[129]

The other three workhouses in the area were the ones in Linton, Caxton and Saffron Walden. The original plan for the Cambridge Union had two storeys with four courts that included porters' lodges, tramps' cells, bedrooms and offices, master's and matron's rooms, day rooms, dormitories, baths, workshops, chapel, and mortuary. The building also had boys' and girls' schools at each side of the entrance, and male and female infirmaries at the north of the site. There were also a stone room and a mill room, as well as a laundry room and a wash house. With the passing of time, the premises were not big enough for the Cambridge poor and several extensions were made. After the closure of all workhouses in the country in 1930, the building became a county infirmary. Since then, it has been known as Ditchburn Place after Douglas and Doris Ditchburn; they were the Master and Matron between 1934 and 1956 and were widely popular in Cambridge. During the Second World War it was used as an emergency hospital, and they were the first to look after the wounded Dunkirk soldiers and the injured during the

[127] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).
[128] 'Cambridge Union Workhouse, Ditchburn Place'.
[129] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 89-92.

London Blitz. After that, it was re-designed and the site became the Cambridge Maternity Hospital when the NHS was created, and it has been a home for the elderly since 1988.[130]

For the passing of the New Poor Law, a Parliamentary Commission was established that produced a 300-page report drafted by Edwin Chadwick and then written by William Nassau Senior. Its main conclusion was that out-door relief to able-bodied people and their families was to be stopped and be provided in workhouses, with very few exceptions that included the elderly or other 'impotent' poor. Unions had to be created and run by committees made of Guardians of the Poor – thirty in the case of Cambridge, as stated above -- who were elected by the ratepayers. These Unions would be supervised by a Central Board of Commissioners appointed by the government, but who were not responsible to Parliament. With the passing of the Poor Law Board Act in 1847, the Poor Law Commission was replaced by a new body known as the Poor Law Board. This Board was made of four senior ministers, the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord President of the Council, and the Lord Privy Seal. However, the power of the Board was in the hands of the President and his two Secretaries, all or some of whom could be elected to Parliament. Later in 1871, the Poor Law Board was substituted by the Local Government Board for the control of both health and poor relief. Its President was usually a member of the Cabinet, and the position was held by men of importance in the government.[131]

Inmates would have to wear a prison-like uniform and do the hardest and most boring jobs, and families would be split up so that husbands were separated from their wives and their children. Segregation of the sexes and the classification of inmates would become rule in these institutions.[132] Although this idea was based on the 'principle of less eligibility', there was also a hidden sexual discipline. Not only inmates had to find the conditions of the workhouse 'less eligible' than those outside, but the moral control of the workhouse became a potent mechanism to make the poor population 'decent'.[133] Friday mornings was the official time when people would go to the workhouse to ask for relief in the form of money, clothes, or bread.

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[130] 'Cambridge, Cambridgeshire'; 'Cambridge Union Workhouse, Ditchburn Place'; Ian Bent, 'Ditchburn Place, 21a Mill Road: A History', YouTube Video, 18:54, December 15, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSsUA12T9ZE.

[131] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 134-5.

[132] Ibid., 55-6.

[133] Simon Dentith, 'The Shadow of the Workhouse: The Afterlife of a Victorian Institution', *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 20, no. 1-2 (2009): 86.

The three first Poor Law Commissioners –Thomas Frankland Lewis, John Shaw-Lefevre and Captain George Nicholls -- met for the first time in Whitehall Yard and then moved to Somerset House in London. Chadwick was the Secretary to the Commission and had under his rule administrative and clerical staff, although he would have liked to be a Commissioner himself. Lots of poor law documents were produced like diet sheets, suggested salary scales, etc. Also, seventeen (later nineteen) Assistant Commissioners would put together Unions all over the country as there would be one workhouse union within ten miles of a central market town.[134]

During the second year of application of the New Poor Law, the Commissioners were very busy constructing 127 workhouses all over the country, except in the North, and making alterations and enlargements to older buildings in seventy-eight already existing Unions. Each Board of Guardians could decide the design of their union workhouse, but the Commissioners disseminated model plans in their *First and Second Report* designed by an unknown architect whose name was Sampson Kempthorne. He had a Gothic and Italianate style, but his ideas were very functional, keeping the costs to a minimum.[135] Regarding workhouse equipment,

> The basic item of furniture was the cheap, wooden bed, with a flock-filled mattress made of sacking and two or three blankets. Pillows were generally regarded [sic] unnecessary, and sheets, if provided, were of the coarsest kind. Few people enjoyed the luxury of a single bed, and some beds, both single and double, were arranged in two tiers, like bunks in an army barrack room. […] In the male workrooms no seats were provided, and in the dining rooms only the roughest wooden tables and backless benches.[136]

The only decorations on the walls were the lists of regulations and the official diets. There were hardly any books or newspapers, except for Bibles and some 'improving' tracts, and there were no games or toys for children.

Most workhouses were run by a married couple, the Master and the Matron. The Master was the highest authority in the place but was particularly concerned with the male population; the Matron was responsible for the female inmates and children, and for the

[134] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 60, 62-4.
[135] Ibid., 88.
[136] Ibid., 92.

running of the establishment in every aspect related to health and food. They were seen as representing the family model which supposedly imbued the institution. Their salaries were very low, and the work was not always pleasant. They had to work long hours with no holidays and reside in the building. An example of one of these couples were the Hosegoods, Luke and Emma, who ran the Cambridge Poor-Law Union between 1876 and 1913 and were said to be very popular among the inmates.[137]

Other typical officers in workhouses were the Union clerk, the receiving officer, the porter, the nurse, the cook and the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. Other important positions were those of chaplain and medical officer, but most of them served more than one Union or district. However, many of the workhouse tasks were done by the inmates themselves.[138] In the Cambridge Union archives that have survived for the years 1895, 1896, 1897 and 1898, we find that the master of the workhouse, the matron, the cook, the porter, the nurse, the clerk, the chaplain, one or two relieving officers, the assistant relieving officer for vagrants, the collector, the vaccination officer, the workhouse medical officers and other four district medical officers were on the payroll. Their names, salaries and addresses are given. The fact that the chaplain was among the salaried staff of the Union reveals that it was big enough to have a representative of the Church of England in the Institution. The collector was also in charge of keeping a register of births and deaths in the workhouse. The vaccination officer was responsible for the application of the Vaccination Acts for the whole parish.[139] Vaccination had become a hot issue in the country since 1853, when the operation had been made compulsory for babies. Infectious diseases like smallpox had killed many people or left them with serious health consequences for the rest of their lives. However, there was a growing number of people who objected to vaccination as they saw it as unnecessary or dangerous. As a result, there was a huge anti-vaccination movement by the 1890s which made the government allow people to opt out of the vaccination regime. For example, we can find in the archives a return of the Clerk to the Guardians of the number of certificates of conscientious objection given under Section 2 of the Vaccination Act 1898. The form gives a number of 104 children whose parents objected to vaccination in the year 1898.[140]

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[137] Bent, 'Ditchburn Place'.
[138] Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse*, 132-3.
[139] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).
[140] Ibid.

On entering the workhouse, paupers had to give up their own clothes which were taken to a storeroom and wear the workhouse dress, after having been searched and washed. Their hair was also cut and, under the uniforms, women would wear 'under-drawers, a shift and long stockings, with a poke bonnet on their heads, the men thick vests, woollen drawers and socks, with a necker-chief around their throats and, in cold weather, a coarse jacket'.[141]

Workhouse routine was particularly hard and dull. Cambridge Poor-Law Union Rules have not survived, but they must have been very similar to those of the former parish poorhouses. This is the case of St Andrew the Great's rules dating from 1813 that run as follows:

Great St Andrews, August 2nd, 1813

At a Vestry meeting held this day, it was the unanimous opinion that the following Rules be printed and put up in the Poor House.

1. That all persons in the house obey the Master and Mistress or Assistant in all proper commands.
2. That they be diligent at their work.
3. That they work from seven o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock in the evening in Winter, -- and from six o'clock in the morning till six o'clock in the evening in Summer.
4. That they be allowed half an hour at breakfast, and an hour at dinner.
5. That they do not go out without leave, nor permitted to stay longer than the time appointed them.
6. That they clean themselves before breakfast on Sunday mornings and go in time to Church in a regular and decent manner.
7. [Blank]
8. All who conduct themselves properly shall be paid one Half of their earnings as a reward for their industry.
9. That every person shall be in the house by eight O'Clock in the evening from Michaelmas to Lady Day – and nine O'Clock in the evening from Lady Day to Michaelmas.[142]

[141] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 93.
[142] 'Cambridge, Cambridgeshire'.

It can be appreciated that this regime was very similar to life in prisons. In all workhouses, inmates had to work long hours with breaks for meals and little or no recreation except in the yards that were also segregated into male and female. Only the elderly and the sick did not have to work.

Diet was also another determining factor of workhouse life. In 1835, the Poor Law Commissioners published six model 'Dietaries' from which Boards of Guardians could choose one that allegedly best adapted to their inmates. These dietaries were thought for the able-bodied poor, with men receiving 25% more food than women, but in all cases the amount of food was kept to a minimum. Children received a proportion of the adults' food determined locally, and the sick's diets would be determined by the medical officers; the elderly usually had some extra ration. The diet consisted basically of bread, gruel and cheese in all dietaries; vegetables, broth, soup and potatoes were sometimes added.[143] We know that in Poor-Law Unions such as Cambridge, Chesterton and Huntingdon the inmate's diet was based mainly on bread and gruel, potatoes, and suet or rice pudding. To this, soup, cheese, and broth were added, depending on the day of the week. Diets for the elderly, children and the sick could vary.[144] Each Poor-Law Union had the liberty of deciding on their own diet, but almost all of them followed one of the six models that were established by the Poor Law Board, which consisted of between 137 and 182 ounces of solid food a week. This amount was even inferior to that given to prisoners. Workhouses used to weigh food at meals so that paupers received the exact amount according to regulations, and in most cases no cutlery was provided, probably because of the danger of theft or of use as weapons.[145] The General Consolidated Order of 24 July 1847 regarding 'Articles of Food' can be found in the archives and goes as follows:

> NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN
>
> No Pauper is allowed to carry away any Food from the Dining Hall, or to secrete Articles of Food in Boxes or Bags in the Bedroom, such practice being uncleanly, and likely to prove injurious to the health of the Inmates.
>
> All Articles of Food which the Paupers may not consume in the Dining Hall during their meals will be removed by the Officers.

[143] Peter Higginbotham, *The Workhouse Cookbook* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008), 51.
[144] 'Cambridge, Cambridgeshire'.
[145] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 93-4.

BY ORDER.[146]

It can be observed that there was a strict control over the food that was consumed by paupers in the workhouse. There were two basic reasons for this: to avoid the increase in the poor rates and to make life hard for inmates in the workhouse. *The Dietary Tables* for the Cambridge Union of 1911 have survived, together with those for Infants of 1913. They both follow the requirements of the Workhouse Regulations (Dietaries and Accounts) Order of 1900, which probably had many similitudes with those of previous years in the nineteenth century. These dietary tables would be hanging on the walls of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union Dining Hall and had been previously approved at a meeting of the Board of Guardians.

The 1911 Dietary Table for the population of the Cambridge Union was organised into men of different classes, women of different classes, children from three to eight and children from eight to sixteen, the amounts of food being given in ounces. There was a 'plain diet' for Classes 1 and 1A Men (men not employed in work and men employed in work respectively) and for Classes 3 and 3A Women (women not employed in work and women employed in work respectively) which included bread, margarine, tea, porridge, gruel, and sugar for breakfast depending on the day of the week, and additional bread and cheese for Classes 1A and 3A only; bread, vegetables, beef, mutton or pork, bacon, suet pudding, pea or lentil soup in the winter, haricot or barley soup in the summer, cheese and coffee for dinner, also varying according to the day of the week; and bread, margarine, tea, broth, gruel and cheese for supper, alternating according to the day of the week.

The 'infirm diet' for Classes 2 and 2A Men (infirm men not employed in work and infirm men employed in work respectively) and for Classes 4 and 4A Women (infirm women not employed in work and infirm women employed in work respectively) did not differ much from the 'plain diet' except that breakfast did not include porridge, gruel and sugar, dinner could include fish or egg, and supper was reduced to bread, margarine and tea.

Finally, the 'official infirm diet' for Class 2B Men (feeble infirm men) and Class 4B Women (feeble infirm women) was very similar to the 'infirm diet' but did not

[146] *Articles of Food. General Consolidated Order, July 24, 1847* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Wiz 9-11).

contemplate any extra food for any class for breakfast; however, it added cake for supper on a couple of days and extra bread and milk for supper in all cases.

As can be seen, there was a difference between men and women who worked and men and women who did not, the former being given an extra quantity of food, while the amounts of food for men were slightly higher than those for women, independently from their class.

The dietary for Class 5, that is, Children from three to eight covered bread and milk for breakfast and additional cake and biscuits on some days; lunch could include bread, vegetables, cheese, beef, mutton, pork, bacon, fruit pudding, rice pudding, roley poly pudding, meat pudding, egg, pea or lentil soup (only in the winter) haricot or barley soup (only in the summer), and cocoa with milk, some of them alternating during the week; and tea, cocoa, cake and milk for supper depending on the day of the week, except cake which was served every day. The dietary for Class 6, that is, Children between eight and sixteen, also included porridge and sugar for breakfast, the same food for dinner, and bread and margarine were added for supper.[147]

In *The 1913 Dietary for Infants*, we find the diet for those under the age of three years, and meals were organised into breakfast, lunch at 10 am, dinner, tea at 4 pm and supper at 6 pm. They ate bread, milk and sugar for breakfast; milk and biscuits for lunch; potatoes or vegetables, milk pudding, beef tea, meat, eggs and margarine, rotating depending on the day of the week for dinner; and bread, margarine, milk, jam or syrup for tea, changing according to the weekday. They were also given milk for supper. Infants under one year's diet consisted mainly of milk and water until six months old, and only milk from six to twelve months old, with intervals between meals, several feedings a day and night feedings till four months old. These diets were prescribed by the medical officer.[148]

Another interesting aspect of the workhouse diet was the provision of alcoholic drinks for paupers' consumption. In the archives for the Cambridge Poor-Law Union we can find returns for 1891, 1892 and 1893 to the Local Government Board regarding the spirits, wine, and malt liquors consumed when the daily average number of inmates oscillated between 130 and 132. The returns would include the consumption for the Infirmary and the School or any other establishment under the control of the Board of

[147] *The 1911 Dietary Table* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Wiz 9-11).
[148] *The 1913 Dietary for Infants* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Wiz 9-11).

Guardians, but not the quantity and cost of the amount of drinks consumed by the Officers of the workhouse.[149] For instance, we know that the Birmingham Workhouse gave beer to inmates, but patients in the Infirmary were given a reduced portion of ½ pint of beer or were given wine if it had been prescribed by the medical officer, usually raisin wine, although port wine was also sometimes used.[150] It can be presumed that spirits were given to inmates only under very special circumstances, perhaps in cases of severe illness.

Workhouse food was not very popular, and it was not filling or adequate for a healthy diet as can be inferred from the *Dietaries* described above. They were very much criticised and the object of discussion at the social and political level. As already stated, the main aim was to reduce expenditure to a minimum and to make the life of the pauper in the workhouse a humiliating and unpleasant experience. However, in the case of many women who had been abandoned by their husbands, were pregnant and/or single mothers, widows or out of work, the workhouse was the only alternative for their makeshift economy throughout their lives.

Nonetheless, on special occasions like Christmas the diet could be very much improved. In the case of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union, inmates were given beef, plum pudding, and beer on Christmas Day, and they could also enjoy a rest from work. Another special occasion in Cambridge was the celebration of Queen Victoria's coronation in a large open space called Parker's Piece -- an important event described in another chapter of this volume –, when more than 15,000 poor people would be invited to the feast.[151]

Stigma was part of the poor's lot. Most inmates were ashamed of being part of the workhouse population, as it was seen as a dishonour and a disgrace. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'stigma' can be defined as 'A mark of disgrace or infamy; a sign of severe censure or condemnation, regarded as impressed on a person or thing; a 'brand''. Stigma is associated with the process of dehumanisation that can be found in technologies of division that were present in Victorian society in general and workhouse populations in particular. The concept of 'stigma' has connotations of fear and hatred that destroy compassion, hope and social solidarity. The power of stigma resides in the reproduction and distribution of social inequalities, but it is also the site of resistance.[152] We can find the origins of 'stigma' in institutions like the Victorian workhouse, which

[149] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).
[150] Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse*, 47.
[151] 'Ditcburn Place: 1838 Victorian Workhouse'.
[152] Imogen Tyler, *Stigma: The Machinery of Inequality* (London: Zed Books, 2020), 7, 17-8.

proves that it 'was crafted to tutor the public into believing that people living in poverty had chosen their fates, and how the disenfranchisement and distress which have followed in the way of cuts to social provision were deserved'.[153]

According to middle-class and upper-class Victorians, poor people's situation was the result of their behaviour, lack of discipline and shame. Therefore, resistance became part of inmates' reaction to the discipline and routine of the workhouse, and acts of rebellion were controlled with severe punishment. Paupers were not allowed to leave the workhouse without permission, and if they absconded it was considered as theft as they were taking the workhouse clothes with them. Disciplinary matters were in the hands of the Master who used to keep a punishment book to record offences committed by inmates, but for cases of rebellion against the Master's authority or for more serious crimes, inmates would be referred to the magistrates' court and then sent to a house of correction.[154]

In the case of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union, there is a *Pauper Offence Book* that has survived and covers the period between 22 March 1842 and 13 April 1898, thus encompassing most of the Victorian era. Entries for offences were numbered, and the book contained information about the pauper's name, the offence, the date of the offence, the punishment inflicted by the Master or other Officer, the opinion of Guardians thereon as they had to approve the punishment, the punishment ordered by the Board of Guardians, the Master of the Workhouse or the Magistrates, the date of punishment, initials of clerk, and observations. Punishments had to be approved by the Board of Guardians when the Master imposed them. Apart from absconding, the most common offences were refusing to work, fighting, disorderly conduct, damaging property, assaulting an officer or another inmate, refusing to obey orders, threatening and abusing officers and inmates, insolence, striking officers or inmates, swearing, use of bad language, drunkenness or inciting other paupers to revolt. The punishments imposed could vary depending on the severity of the offence; the Master's punishment could be confinement for a number of days in the refractory ward or 'in lockup', bread and water or reduced diet, oakum picking, bone crushing or, in the case of women, removal to the female ward; physical punishment is never mentioned except for whipping. For more serious offences, imprisonment with or without hard labour for a period of time was

[153] Ibid., 28.
[154] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 50-2.

imposed by the Magistrates, although conviction was sometimes in the hands of the Mayor. There are some cases in which the offence was absconding from school, which means that children were also subject to punishments similar to those of adults in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union.[155] However, confinement in a dark room for all children under twelve and corporal punishment for all girls and boys over fourteen was abolished with the General Order of July 1847, but in the case of boys under fourteen, they could be beaten with a rod by the schoolmaster or the Master of the workhouse.[156]

If we focus on the number of women who received some kind of punishment in the years covered by the *Pauper Offence Book*, we can arrive at some interesting conclusions. Women committed similar offences to men and their punishments were also similar, although imprisonment seems to be more common with male inmates. Between 22 March 1842 and 21 June 1860, there are 415 entries for punishments of which seventy-five were for women; between 1861 and 1875, there are 107 entries of which seven were for women; and between 1876 and 1898 there are thirty-two entries of which nine were for women.[157] What these numbers suggest is that either women committed fewer offences than men or that the male population in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union was bigger, as some items in the archives suggest. Besides, the number of offences diminish considerably for the last years recorded in the *Pauper Offence Book,* which suggests that either the inmates' behaviour had improved considerably – which is not very probable – or that the workhouse population had changed towards the end of the nineteenth century. The latter explanation coincides with the tendency for workhouses to become the last place of abode for old people in the last decades of the Victorian period.

Following the government's directions, the Cambridge Union classified inmates in the following way:

> Aged and infirm men
> Able-bodied men and youths over 13
> Youths and boys between 7 and 13
> Aged and infirm women
> Able-bodied women and girls over 16

[155] *Pauper Offence Book. Cambridge Union* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/WIP); 'Cambridge Union Workhouse, Ditchburn Place'.
[156] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 170-1.
[157] *Pauper Offence Book. Cambridge Union* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/WIP).

Girls between 7 and 16

Children under 7[158]

This classification suggests that segregation of the sexes was a prominent feature of Victorian workhouses as also of other institutions like hospitals or prisons. As stated above, this classification is not only concerned with practicality, but also with a sexual discipline that was also an important aspect of the ideology behind the application of the Poor Law. The rationale was to reduce expenses and avoid the increase in the poor rates by exerting control over the reproductive lives of the poor. At the same time, moral values concerned with checking sexual promiscuity in the lower classes were behind the functioning of these prison-like 'bastilles'.[159]

This classification does not include troublesome inmates like lunatics and people with infectious diseases, tramps, or prostitutes. They were an important part of the workhouse population, together with the lame and the blind. Also, men of the militia and the regular army who were retired and their wives and children were provided with indoor or outdoor relief by the parish, with settlement not being applied in these cases.[160] For example, the Cambridge Poor-Law Union gave support to army reserve men, discharged soldiers or militiamen, both with and without pension, and there are returns in the archives as to their numbers and ages in the casual wards for the years 1896 and 1897. In the same fashion, there is a return for 1891 'of the number of paupers in the Workhouse on the 31st of March 1891, who having been Members of a Benefit Society, had then, from any cause ceased to be Members'. The return gives a total number of five men in these circumstances for that year, at the same time as it gives reasons for the situation such as non-payment of contributions, withdrawal, and dismissal, breaking up of the Society, specifying in the latter case the number of years that these men had been Members.[161]

By the end of the nineteenth century, men constituted an important part of the inhabitants of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union. Their numbers, however, were inferior to those of women and children as the return for the 'Number of Persons in receipt of Relief' for 1892 shows.[162] Inmates had to work nine-ten hours a day with only a break of one

[158] 'Ditchburn Place: 1838 Victorian Workhouse'.
[159] Dentith, 'The Shadow of the Workhouse', 85-6.
[160] Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse*, 58.
[161] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).
[162] Ibid.

hour, getting up at 5 am in the summer and 7 am in the winter. Able-bodied men worked as labourers or doing tasks like picking oakum, spreading gravel, and grinding cereals; women had to do housework chores such as sewing and laundry-work, cleaning, or cooking. They also looked after children who had to work from the age of seven, with three hours schooling a day. The elderly and the sick did not have to work.[163]

Many poor infants, children and adolescents were brought up in workhouses, being the victims of a system that punished them because of their parents' neglect and lack of work. They were mixed with adults, surrounded by an environment which was not adequate for their stage in life and exposed to vice or even crime. They even became institutionalised, as they could not leave the place and their schooling also took place within the walls of the institution.[164] Boys and girls had to wear uniforms as well, and there was hardly any recreation, or toys for them to play with. From 1842 and if they were under fifteen, children could take walks and have contact with the local population. Both boys and girls were trained for working-class jobs inside the workhouse. Girls were basically trained to become servants and were taught all domestic duties, including laundry-work and sewing; boys were prepared for semi-skilled jobs, so that the most common professions for them would be the army, shoemaking and tailoring. From 1868, the Poor Law Board allowed Unions to have children boarding out, that is, they could live with foster families. This became a common practice for most orphans and abandoned children by the end of the Victorian period.[165]

For example, the Cambridge Poor-Law Union archives contain a return to the Local Government Board for 1897 concerning payments made by the Board of Guardians for children boarded-out under the Boarding-out Order. The Cambridge Ladies Boarding-out Committee was in charge of monitoring the process. The number of children under this regime in 1897 was thirty-three and the total number of children who had been boarded out so far was 103. Some of them ceased to be under this programme because they had been found a job, being their average age fourteen years. Foster families were given a weekly payment per child together with money for clothing, medical attendance, school fees or other items. Some of them were returned to the Union because of mental or bodily infirmity or any other cause.[166]

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[163] 'Ditchburn Place: 1838 Victorian Workhouse'.
[164] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 165, 167.
[165] Ibid., 183-91.
[166] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).

The elderly population was formed by men and women over sixty. Again, a return sent to the Local Government Board for 1890 shows that old people represented quite a big group in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union, both for indoor and outdoor relief.[167] The following table shows the numbers and ages by gender in the return:

Indoor Relief										Outdoor Relief									
Over 60 and under 65		65 and under 70		70 and under 75		75 and under 80		80 and upwards		Over 60 and under 65		65 and under 70		70 and under 75		75 and under 80		80 and upwards	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
11	6	9	4	10	7	6	5	9	10	4	21	11	35	19	39	14	36	13	41

The numbers for male and female indoor relief for the year 1890 are quite similar, but the numbers for outdoor relief for women are significantly higher, which means that their life expectancy was better than that of old men. Old people had no occupation in the Union, their quarters were not very comfortable, and their diet was not always enough or good quality.[168] Unfortunately, there are no other returns in the archives concerning the elderly population, but this issue of life expectancy leads us to another important aspect of life inside the workhouse: death.

Evidence of death in the Cambridge Union is the existence of a mortuary. Also, the *Register of Deaths* for the period 3 October 1877-29 March 1914 shows that the numbers of deaths were certainly high. The entries give testimony of the deaths of men, women, and children, and even infants. Similarly, they contain information regarding date of death, name, age and, what is more important, the parish chargeable.[169] Death was part of everyday life either because of disease or because of old age in workhouses all over the country. It was the parish's responsibility to meet the expenses, and overseers tried to cut prices for pauper funerals. Not surprisingly, this was not a very popular measure. Certain traditions had to be kept when poor people died in workhouses, and attending the

[167] Ibid.
[168] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 140-1.
[169] *Register of Deaths, 3 October1877-29 March 1914* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/WIb2).

dead and their families was the Master's duty.[170] Funeral expenses included 'fees payable to the church and officials, the cost of the burial place, along with the full panoply of mourning: hearse, coffin, coffin furniture, mourning wear, gloves for the pallbearers, and a wake for neighbours and friends'.[171] Nevertheless, the nineteenth century saw the reduction of funeral expenses to a minimum, in many cases only providing the family of the deceased with a coffin. If the deceased poor was the breadwinner, this also represented a further serious burden on the parish as his wife and children would probably seek relief.

As mentioned above, both the blind and the lame and the mentally deranged were inmates of Victorian workhouses. Workhouses were also places where poor people could obtain medical assistance and were provided with infirmaries and sick and infirm wards. The most frequent disease was consumption, but also the blind and children with ophthalmia had nowhere else to go.[172] There were also venereal wards for male and female patients – also known as 'salivation wards' -- in some workhouses. There, men and women with venereal disease would be treated for their complaints with mercury and other remedies that were not efficient in curing syphilis. They had to be kept isolated from other inmates because of the infectious character of the disease, which also carried the connotation of immorality associated with sexual promiscuity.[173] However, we cannot find any reference to venereal wards in the archives for the Cambridge Poor-Law Union, although many of the poor women applying for relief presumably suffered from some venereal complaint.

A return dated 9th June 1896 to the Local Government Board as to the number of persons occupying the wards for the sick, records that there were six inmates who were sick and bedridden and two who were aged and infirm only. They were under the care of a nurse and a woman who was also employed as night nurse.[174] We know from the *Annual Reports* that some of the patients were 'fallen women' sent by the Cambridge Female Refuge because they were ill (presumably with venereal disease in some cases). An outstanding feature was the poor quality of nursing, as most workhouse nurses were coarse old women who were heavy drinkers – probably a cliché in some instances -- and had little knowledge of the profession. Some of these nurses were workhouse female

[170] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 148-9.
[171] Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse*, 156-8.
[172] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 198.
[173] Ibid., 142-3.
[174] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).

inmates who did the job as part of their tasks in the Institution. But in 1897, the Local Government Board put an end to pauper nurses, although many of them continued working as 'helpers'. Another important advance was that from 1867 Unions had to pay for the drugs and not the doctors.[175] Medical officers were on the payroll of the workhouse in Mill Road and among their duties were to visit wards twice a day, to check cleanliness, ventilation, and discipline in them and to examine the poor on admission. It was important to stop the spread of contagious diseases, so this examination would take place in the probationary ward.[176] We know from the return as to the nursing staff employed by the Guardians in the Infirmary of the Cambridge Union dated 4 February 1895 that there was just one general nurse whose salary was £25 per annum. The average number of patients under her care was thirty-five, and there were no assistant nurses or trained nurses. In the same return we read that there were 376 certified lunatics in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union, including those in the Infirmary, of whom the average in the house was 160, thirty-five of them in the Infirmary.[177]

The procedure of certifying lunacy carried out by medical officers changed throughout the nineteenth century with the Lunacy Acts that were passed. The same medical officers would determine if the insane would remain in the workhouse or would be sent to a lunatic asylum. Madness was a national concern that had no association with class. In contrast with the rest of the workhouse population, lunatics evoked sympathy in guardians and overseers and their condition was not seen as their own fault. People with mental diseases such as melancholia or even senile dementia or under the categories of lunatic, idiot or imbecile ended in the workhouse, except if they were dangerous or curable, in which case they would be sent to the lunatic asylum, which also depended on the parish. Epileptics were under the category of lunacy as well and were counted among the workhouse inmates. But the reality was that in many instances families took charge of their mentally ill.[178]

Casual wards were another relevant feature of Victorian workhouses. Both men and women applied for admission, and most of them were beggars and vagrants. They sought a bed and a meal in return for the hardest work. The 'principle of less eligibility' was severely applied in the case of casuals, making the conditions in the ward even worse

[175] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 201, 207-9.
[176] Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse*, 97-8.
[177] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).
[178] Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse*, 195-9.

than in the rest of the workhouse. No proper bedding and heating were provided and the meals on offer were very poor. In the Cambridge Poor-Law Union new buildings were added to the front of the Institution in Mill Road in 1879 to house tramps who had nowhere else to go. They had to queue to be admitted about 6 pm, and then they had to bathe and wear the night clothes they were given before being offered a meal. After breakfast the following morning, they spent four hours breaking stone, not being allowed to return for several days.[179] The Cambridge Union archives contain a return to the Local Government Board dated 24th June 1895 as to the number of vagrants relieved in the years between 1890 and 1895, given via the following table[180]:

On the night of the:	Number of Vagrants Relieved			
	Adults		Children under 16 years of Age	TOTAL
	Male	Female		
1st July 1890	4	1		5
1st January 1891	12	2	1	15
1st July 1891	4			4
1st January 1892	14	2		16
1at July 1892	5			5
1st January 1893	11			11
1st July 1893	17		1	18
1st January 1894	4		3	7
1st July 1894	5			5
1st January 1895	11			11

[179] 'Cambridge Union Workhouse, 4 Ditchburn Place'.
[180] *Miscellaneous Returns to Local Government Board* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Ax16).

The numbers in the table make clear that adult men represented the biggest proportion of casuals in the Union if we compare them with those of adult women. Nevertheless, the most striking figures are those of vagrant children under sixteen who seem to be also the inmates of Cambridge Poor-Law Union casual wards during this period in the nineteenth century. They were probably abandoned children and their lives must have been very hard.

Another interesting return to the Local Government Board is the one about the application of the Casual Paupers Regulation Order of 1892. The return was sent on 21st February 1895 and shows how far the provisions of the Order were enforced in the Cambridge Union. Very useful information is provided: we know that searching on admission, bathing and change and disinfection of clothing happened; paupers were detained for two nights and those admitted more than once were detained for four nights, but since 28th November 1894 'they have only been detained one night in consequence of the numbers sometimes being too large to be accommodated'. They had to resort to associated wards for them, as their numbers oscillated between thirty and fifty-one. The diet for males and females over fifteen years of age was mainly bread and some cheese and gruel both for supper and breakfast; soup was added to the diet for children. Regarding work, the task for men was either granite breaking or picking oakum; the tasks for women were scrubbing, washing, and cleaning or oakum picking as well. An important issue was segregation for sleeping accommodation, as the return states: 'The Guardians have now under their consideration the question of providing separate sleeping cells or compartments for the casual paupers'. There were separate cells and beds for casuals, but, significantly, mothers and their infants or children were allowed to sleep together. This reveals the fact that single mothers, abandoned women and widows were part of the casual population of the Union.[181]

On many occasions the workhouse became a necessity rather than a place of temporary relief for women. At difficult times because of unemployment or because of the need for medical assistance in cases of illness (venereal disease) or pregnancy, the workhouse represented the only possibility for survival for many women, among whom there were many prostitutes. As already stated, prostitution was part of many working-class women's makeshift economy and was usually a transient occupation. According to Catherine Lee, it was the pressure of the workhouse relief that pushed women to work as

[181] Ibid.

prostitutes.[182] Women constituted the second biggest group in workhouses after the elderly; their moral character was quite often assumed to be 'low' and in the first years of the New Poor Law some workhouses had special wards for them – known as canary wards – and made them wear yellow uniforms, although this practice was finished in 1839. In the female wards of Unions young girls were mixed with depraved women, who were known for being noisy and badly-behaved.[183]

Pregnant women sought shelter in the workhouse, although some of them had access to the parish midwife. Thanks to the *Annual Reports* of the Cambridge Female Refuge we know that they sent pregnant women to the Cambridge Poor-Law Union to receive some assistance, especially when they were close to labour. Maternity and midwifery were the concerns of both the parish and the Union. Women whose pregnancies were seen as very advanced were accepted into the workhouse, especially if their husbands had abandoned them or if they were single mothers. However, after labour and a successful childbirth, the parish's responsibility continued for both the mother and her child for quite a few months. Consequently, the mother and the baby shared the same accommodation until the latter was at least three years old.[184] We know that there were babies and infants in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union from the *Dietaries* discussed above. We know that infants under one year of age were given milk, but there is no allusion to breastfeeding or weaning, although poor mothers would probably try to breastfeed their babies to avoid new pregnancies. Nonetheless, this should not be the case in workhouses where segregation of the sexes was aimed at avoiding immorality and promiscuity.

Illegitimate births provoked disapproval among overseers and boards of guardians as single mothers were considered 'fallen women' and the personification of immorality. They represented a threat of contamination for other women and were often treated in a harsher way than other inmates. They were in a difficult position as the mother of 'an illegitimate child no longer had any personal redress against the man concerned, and the parish could only obtain a maintenance order against him at Quarter Sessions, instead of, as in the past, from any two magistrates'.[185] And what is more, she had much more difficulty in succeeding as she had to give corroborative proof of her accusation. In the Cambridge Poor-Law Union *Register of Births* for the period between 1 April 1866 and

[182] Lee, *Policing Prostitution,* 23-6.
[183] Longmate, *The Workhouse*,156-7, 159-61.
[184] Upton, *The Birmingham Parish Workhouse*,145-6.
[185] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, 70.

2 July 1913, we find many instances of illegitimate births in the workhouse. The *Register* contains entries with information about the date of birth, gender, parents' names or mother's name, mother's parish of origin, date and place of baptism, the baby's name, and a section on 'Remarks'. It is here that we can often read the word 'illegitimate'.[186]

Unions were allowed to seek affiliation orders against the fathers of illegitimate children being beneficiaries of poor relief within their walls. There is an example in the Cambridgeshire archives of a young girl of fourteen, Emily King, who had been abandoned by her parents and had been in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union since 1894. She was the illegitimate child of Alice King, a single mother that later married Edward Taylor. Her parents' whereabouts were unknown, and she had never lived three years in one place without interruption. Only her grandmother's address was known, as she lived in Malta Road in Cambridge. Emily's last occupation was servant, which meant that she had started work at an early age but was unemployed at that stage.[187]

Also, abandoned wives and mothers were an important part of the workhouse population. There are several examples of cases of this kind in the archives of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union. Most of them were women with children who had been deserted by their husbands and sought relief for them and their families; however, it was not that frequent to find cases of wives without children left to their fate by their husbands. For example, we know from the archives that Mary Ann Rowee who became an inmate of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union on the 13th of October 1888 after John Rowee left her, did not have any children.[188] The Cambridge Union could take proceedings against husbands, who were accused of the desertion of their wives and children. In a few instances no wife is mentioned, which might mean that she was dead or her whereabouts were not known. A relieving officer would oversee those proceedings on behalf of the Board of Guardians who would take that decision during one of their fortnightly meetings, as it is reflected in the minutes that have survived. Evidence was then gathered to support the case, and the Guardians of the Poor of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union would certify that both the wife and the children were chargeable to the 'common fund' of the Union. Several examples of such cases can be found in the archives: one of the earliest is that of David Gawthrop in 1869 who had left his wife Elizabeth and his four children, Elizabeth (nine years old), Frederick (two), Joseph (one) and an infant -- its name was not stated --

[186] *Register of Births 1 April 1866-2 July 1913* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/WIb1).
[187] *Administration: Prosecutions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Az21).
[188] *Administration: Prosecutions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Az15).

(one week old).[189] Later instances were Colin Arthur Betson who was prosecuted in 1891 for leaving his wife Eliza Betson and his six children: Edward (ten years old), Alice (seven), Colin Arthur (five), Henry (three), Thomas (one) and Albert (1 month old); Elijah Pink who deserted his two children Rose (seven) and Ethel (three) in 1890; Thomas James Field who abandoned his wife and two children Emma Eliza (seven) and Florence Alice (three) in 1892; Frederick Newman who deserted his three children William (aged eleven), Frederick (eight) and Charles (six) in 1890[190]; and Edward Piddock who was accused in 1892 of running away leaving his wife and four children to become chargeable to the 'common fund' of the Cambridge Poor-Law Union.[191]

Finally, in connection with the issue of settlement, we find an instance in the archives of a 'fallen woman' who was accused of perjury at the Cambridge Assizes on 22 July 1857. Elizabeth Smith and her illegitimate child Alfred, who was nine years old, were receiving indoor relief in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union, but it was proved during the Assizes that her parish of settlement was Brandon, in the county of Suffolk. As it was proved by the examination of witnesses upon oath, no parish in the Cambridge Poor-Law Union was her parish of legal settlement, so the Justices of the Peace ordered that Elizabeth and her child be removed to their parish of legal settlement in Brandon, Suffolk.[192] Cases such as this demonstrate that women were in situations of difficulty and extreme poverty that either made them lie about their legal settlement and that of their children, or were professional cheaters who tried to make the most of the system in times of need.

As has been discussed throughout this chapter, the Cambridge Poor-Law Union was another institution in Cambridge that formed part of the city's architecture of containment of immorality, giving support to the social discourses that wanted to eradicate the spread of vice among the poor. With its system of segregation of the sexes and its role in providing shelter to the women who were under the category of 'the fallen' because of being prostitutes or single mothers of illegitimate children, the workhouse contributed to the aim of containing the undeserving poor. These women were asked in return to do tasks traditionally ascribed to working-class women such as cleaning, cooking, or washing, but their diet was slightly inferior to that of men. Only girls were

[189] *Administration: Prosecutions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Az20B).
[190] *Administration: Prosecutions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Az15).
[191] *Administration: Prosecutions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Az17).
[192] *Administration: Prosecutions* (Cambridgeshire Archives, G/C/Az18).

provided with some schooling, but they were mixed in the same wards with other women who were hardened because of their experiences in life and were not good examples to follow. Like many other institutions in the area such as the Cambridge prisons, the Spinning House, or the Female Refuge, they trained their inmates to do typical working-class jobs like servants and laundresses, keeping them in their place in society. Women in the Cambridge Union Workhouse often committed offences like disobeying orders, quarrelling, using bad language, or absconding and were punished by the Master, but when they committed crimes like assaulting inmates or officers or destroying property, they were sent to prison by the Cambridge magistrates. They represented an important population in the workhouse and the Poor-Law Union was often part of their makeshift economy.

Chapter 4

Prostitutes' crimes and petty offences: The Cambridge Gaols

Cambridge prisons in the Victorian period were part of the architecture of containment of prostitution. In what follows, the penitentiary system in the nineteenth century will be discussed so as to ascertain the role it played in containing immorality and the task of keeping the public spaces of town and gown clear of disorder and vice.

From 1700 to 1900, the British penitentiary system stopped punishing convicts' bodies with hanging, branding, and whipping, and moved to a system of confinement and hard labour on the one hand and forced labour and exile in the colonies on the other, with the aim to reform criminals. The system was organised around county gaols, Bridewells – also known as houses of correction -- and hulks.

Houses of correction or Bridewells had their origins in Elizabethan times and were intended to discipline 'the idle poor', that is, unemployed and wandering labourers, but later they became depots for convicts awaiting trial, men and women sentenced to capital punishment or transportation waiting for their sentences to be carried out, undischarged debtors as well as a significant number of prisoners serving sentences for petty crimes who would then be released. The conditions in these prisons were appalling, and prisoners were surrounded by dirt and squalor.[193] Death sentences were carried out inside. County gaols were similar to Bridewells and were established for the confinement of short-term offenders like debtors, vagrants or prostitutes. Hulks were old demasted ex-warships moored in the Thames or on the coast in the south of the country, used as prisons for unwanted male convicts whose sentences to transportation had been commuted. These men were put to work dredging harbours and rivers, and the conditions on board were most degrading; young and old prisoners were crammed together in large unhealthy cells with no opportunities for instruction or reform.[194]

Prison maintenance was unpopular with taxpayers. Transportation was a penal system adopted by the central government in London from 1718. It evolved out of the procedures to transport more serious criminals to the colonies. At the beginning it was a substitute for death, which was the common sentence for a huge number of offences until 1861 when it was abolished except for cases of murder and high treason. Without

[193] Philip Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 3.
[194] Ernest Teagarden, 'A Victorian Prison Experiment', *Journal of Social History* 2, no. 4 (1969): 357-8.

following a fair selective process, some convicts were pardoned and sent to the colonies for the rest of their lives. Initially they were taken to North America, to places like Maryland and Virginia, where about 70,000 convict men, women and children were transported by independent parties and made indentured servants for a period of seven or fourteen years. However, after the beginning of the American War of Independence in 1775, they were sent to places like Bermuda, Gibraltar or Australia. Minor offenders could also be sent to the penal colonies for shorter periods of time and after fulfilling their sentences could remain in the colonies as free citizens once granted a 'ticket of leave'.[195]

During the years between 1776 and 1868, when transportation to Australia was brought to an end, more than 163,000 criminals from Britain and Ireland were sent there, although it continued in other parts of the British Empire -- but not from Britain -- until 1939. Convicts were sent to Tasmania (known as Van Diemen's Land at the time), New South Wales, Queensland, Norfolk Island and Western Australia. Convicts suffered flogging and other forms of physical punishment, but then were released and many of them could benefit from job opportunities in crop- and sheep-farming; some of them could even own their own land, although the shortage of women made it difficult for them to establish families. They were also involved in frontier conflicts with the Aboriginal population who were dispossessed of their land.[196]

In this context, the central government began to become involved in the running of British prisons with the passing of the 1835 Prisons Act which tried to make the penitentiary system uniform throughout the country, appointing inspectors who would visit the prisons and report to the Secretary of State. The process would be completed with the 1877 Prisons Act which transferred the control of all the prisons in the United Kingdom to central government, putting an end to the uncoordinated and incoherent nature of the prison system, as many gaols were operated by local authorities with variable standards.[197] At the same time, there were changes in the way prisoners were treated inside the institutions according to two different schools of thought: 'the separate system' and 'the silent system'. The 'separate system' had been an experimental method at the Eastern Penitentiary in Pennsylvania, and the 'silent system' another experimental method at Auburn Penitentiary in New York. William Crawford, an Inspector of English

[195] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 5.
[196] L. Allwork, R. Shoemaker, and T. Hitchcock, *Criminal Lives 1780-1925.*
[197] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 5-6, 35.

Prisons under the 1835 Act, was sent to America in 1836 as an observer to compare the two systems.[198]

The 'separate' school of thought situated prisoners in individual cells holding them in strict solitary confinement. The idea was to bring reform to prisoners through prayer, solitude, and simple work with the help of upright religious attendants. This meant the construction of new buildings and the employment of many men and women to make the system work. In contrast, the 'silent' school promoted solitude at night, but communal work and worship during the day in strictly enforced silence. The British penitentiary system adopted elements of both schools, combining separation and silent association.[199] With this regime, 'the new model prison' was born and Pentonville Prison was built to test the new model. However, there were some fears about how this regime would affect the mental health of prisoners. Pentonville was a place of provisional confinement for eighteen months for prisoners aged between eighteen and thirty-five who had been sentenced to transportation to Tasmania for no more than fifteen years; they received secular and religious instruction with a curriculum of both academic and vocational education which included reading, writing, arithmetic and a trade or craft before leaving for their final destination.[200] But after the experiment, Parliament approved the construction of new prisons or the remodelling of the existing ones on the Pentonville model to accommodate about 5,500 prisoners, so that most present-day English prisons were built in the 1840s.[201] A strict regime of hard labour, discipline and forced repentance was to be followed where silence was imposed on inmates even when doing exercise, connecting the ideal penitentiary with the design of the 'Panopticon' conceived by the utilitarian philosopher Benjamin Bentham in the 1780s. Although the Panopticon was never built, it endorsed the principles of constant surveillance and hard labour with its rationale, which was reflected in some London prisons like Cold Bath Fields House of Correction (1794), Millbank Prison (1816), Pentonville Prison (1842) and Holloway Prison (1850).[202]

Before analysing in some depth the types of prison associated with the Cambridge town and county gaols and their role in the confinement of women, and particularly of prostitutes in the Victorian period, some attention must be paid to the court system and

[198] Teagarden, 'A Victorian Prison Experiment', 358.
[199] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 6.
[200] Teagarden, 'A Victorian Prison Experiment', 362.
[201] Ibid., 364.
[202] Allwork, Shoemaker, and Hitchcock, *Criminal Lives*, 6-7.

the sentencing connected with different kinds of crimes. Men and women charged with a petty criminal offence were tried at a local level by a Justice of the Peace at the Petty Sessions held once a month or at the Quarter Sessions that took place four times a year, that is, at Epiphany, Easter, Midsummer and Michaelmas. On the other hand, those who were charged with more serious offences like murder, rape, or burglary, were remitted to the Assizes. The country was divided into regional circuits that were visited by royal justices two or three times a year to hear the most serious criminal cases. Offenders awaiting trial were remanded in custody and kept in gaol. Men and women accused of petty crimes were known as prisoners and were sent to local gaols; those convicted of felonies, that is, serious criminal offences involving violence, were sentenced to penal servitude (imprisonment with hard labour) and sent to a convict prison with sentences that varied between three or four years for a first offence and seven years for subsequent offences. Yet, convicts had the possibility of earning remission for good behaviour, whereas remission was not given to local prisoners till 1898; before that date, they had to stay in gaol for up to the maximum two-year sentence that was the legal time of detention for petty criminals.[203]

In the case of crimes committed in London, the first step was the detention of the suspect either by the victim of the crime, by a passer-by or by a police constable after the Metropolitan Police was established in 1829; then he/she would be taken to the Old Bailey, which was renamed the Central Criminal Court in 1834, where trials for London and the London area took place. These trials were very short and did not involve legal counsel since the defendants themselves had to plead their own case; they were public, and reports were regularly released in the Old Bailey *Proceedings*.[204]

Convict prisons were the places where men and women who had committed serious offences were kept confined for a minimum sentence of six calendar months. Men and women worked in different trades and wore a uniform. Penal servitude consisted in tasks like bone-breaking, stone-breaking or cart-labour with one hour exercise in the yard. Hard labour had to be penal and productive, and other activities in which prisoners got involved were public works, cultivation of moorland or work in the docks. Women would do housework and laundry work. Billets were very much sought for in the case of certain occupations connected with particular 'house-keeping posts' such as kitchen work or

[203] Michelle Higgs, *Prison Life in Victorian England* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2013), 21-30.
[204] Allwork, Shoemaker, and Hitchcock, *Criminal Lives*, 2.

assistance as a nurse in the prison infirmary.[205] Convicts slept and ate their meals in silence in their cells. Convicts used to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning, they cleaned and tidied their cells, washed themselves and had breakfast at 6 o'clock, went to chapel at 6.30 for morning prayers, and started work at 7 o'clock. At 12 o'clock they had dinner and went back to work at 1.15 pm until 5.30 pm, when they had supper after attending divine service to finally go to bed at 8 pm. In theory at least, emphasis was put on the reform of the prisoner, and inmates were allowed to read books and receive instruction.[206]

County prisons were recipients of low-grade felons who had committed crimes such as poaching, petty thefts, affray or vagrancy and served sentences of one calendar month or less. Upon entrance, the janitor in the gate lodge would note their names and the time. Prisoners' identities were hard to establish as they used to give false names for two reasons: to avoid charges for other offences they might have committed and to dodge severe sentences if they had other previous convictions. Personal items were taken from prisoners and entered into a *Property Book* by warders, and they had to undress to be searched and have a bath, wearing after that the prison dress for the first time. Then, medical examination came, which meant a perfunctory physical inspection with weighing and measuring in most cases, to then be declared fit for hard labour or light labour, the hospital or the observation cell. Finally, the prisoner's hair was cut, and he was given a number and told about the prison rules.[207] Once in the prison building, prisoners could see a large hall with rows of cells on all sides, above and below, and tiers of landings. There were cards with information about prisoners in each cell's conduit for the staff. Inside the cells, a plank-bed, bed clothes and a towel could be found as well as tins for washing and eating. Prisoners had to do jobs like scrubbing floors, brushing or dusting, and terrible tasks as punishment like picking oakum or walking on the treadwheel. Visits were allowed, but with warders in the middle, to keep the distance between prisoners and visitors. The scaffold was in the prison yard, and there would also be a punishment room with a cat-o'-nine-tails, several types of irons, and a couple of birch rods, especially for boys. The room with the clerk's department was another important part of the building which, later in the century, displayed the photographs with the hands and faces of convicted prisoners. Escapes from county gaols were not very common but malingering

[205] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 121-43.
[206] Neil R. Storey, *Prisons and Prisoners in Victorian England* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2010), 261-300.
[207] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 11-23.

among prisoners to avoid work was thought to be fairly frequent.[208] However, Victorian prisoners had daily medical care available, and the prison hospital treated serious cases of disease.

Corporal punishment gradually disappeared after having been an important part of the pre-modern judiciary system when the infliction of pain was thought to be the most efficient way to achieve deterrence and retribution. Punishment was carried out in public to serve a disciplinary function for society and to prevent crime. The death penalty also diminished in importance progressively, being quite common till the 1790s and primarily carried out by hanging. It was also a public event, but over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was substituted by imprisonment and transportation.[209] New ideas about the brutalising effects of public executions on the spectators and about their encouragement to commit crimes began to circulate and prisoners were not allowed to watch hangings, although it was compulsory for them to attend floggings. Hangings were little by little relegated only to cases of murder, and the passing of the Capital Punishment Act of 1868 put an end to public executions, which took place behind closed doors. Only trials were still opened to the public.[210] In Josiah Chater's diaries, we can find an example of a public execution taking place in Cambridge. In particular, he talks about the public hanging of Elias Lucas and Mary Reader for the murder of Mary's sister at the Castle Hill Gaol on 13 April 1850. The last public execution on Castle Hill in Cambridge was that of John Green, which took place in 1864, but even after the 1868 Act people 'gathered in large crowds, on those grim occasions, hoping for a sight of the black flag being hoisted, and to hear the solemn tolling of the execution bell'.[211] Later, he makes reference to the private execution of Robert Browning, a 25-year-old tailor of Bradmore Street, in the Town Gaol in Gonville Place, overlooking Parker's Piece. He was convicted of murder at the Norwich Assizes for attacking his companion Emma Rolfe with a razor. The hanging happened at the Gaol on 14 December 1878, despite the appeal for the sentence to be reprieved.[212]

As stated above, education and instruction were part of the prison regime. Among the working poor, reading was taught before writing, so many of them were semi-literate. They received education in day-schools and religiously supported institutions. Victorian

[208] Storey, *Prisons and Prisoners*, 245-60.
[209] Allwork, Shoemaker, and Hitchcock, *Criminal Lives*, 2.
[210] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 234, 240-1.
[211] Porter, *Victorian Cambridge*, 64.
[212] Ibid. 164.

prisons used to keep a record of prisoners' levels of reading and writing, so that they were classified into various categories: those who could read and write, those who were illiterate, those who could only read, and those who could read and write imperfectly. Chaplains were in charge of collecting data through specific tests or just verbal answers to ascertain their level of literacy. Nonetheless, from the beginning of the Victorian era, the literacy rates began to increase until the passing of Forster's Education Act in 1870. Despite the evidence of economic need, a connection based on moral reasons was established between illiteracy and crime among the working poor for whom petty offences were a means of survival.[213] Prisons had schools run by masters with the assistance of chaplains as well as libraries. Religious instruction and services were also another important part of the prison routine. The role of the prison chaplain was 'to educate the ignorant and to bring the wicked to repentance and salvation by personal appeal and admonition, by precept and example, and by the systematic exposition of the gospels'.[214] People believed that religious ignorance was at the root of crime.[215] This exposition of the gospel was carried out by leaving books of religious literature in the cells, by personal visitation and by divine service with its hymns and sermons.

The prison diet was another relevant aspect of prison life. Prisoners should be kept strong, but administrators believed that the conditions in the prison should be worse than those of the standard working-class people with a low income. Thus, diets were poor to such a degree that in 1843 the government suggested dietaries for different kinds of prisoners and recommended that diets should not be part of the punishment.[216] The table that follows shows the dietaries established for county and borough gaols in 1843[217]:

Dietaries of County and Borough Gaols 1843								
	Without hard labour				With hard labour			
	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5
Sentenced to	Less than 7 days	More than 7 days, and not more	More than 21 days and not more	More than 4 months	More than 7 days, and not more	More than 21 days and not more	More than 6 weeks and not more	More than 4 months

[213] Rosalind Crone, 'Reappraising Victorian Literacy through Prison Records', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 15, no. 4 (2010): 3-9.
[214] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 99.
[215] Crone, 'Reappraising Victorian Literacy', 31.
[216] Kenneth J. Carpenter, 'Nutritional Studies in Victorian Prisons', *History of Nutrition* 136 (2006): 1-3.
[217] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 150.

		than 21 days	than 4 months		than 21 days	than 6 weeks	than 4 months	
Bread	112 ozs	168 ozs	140 ozs	168 ozs	168 ozs	140 ozs	168 ozs	124 ozs
Potatoes	-	-	64 ozs	32 ozs	-	64 ozs	32 ozs	112 ozs
Meat	-	-	6 ozs	12 ozs	-	6 ozs	12 ozs	16 ozs
Total solid food	112 ozs	168 ozs	210 ozs	212 ozs	168 ozs	210 ozs	212 ozs	282 ozs
Soup	-	-	2 pints	3 pints	1 pint	2 pints	3 pints	3 pints
Gruel	14 pints	14 pints	14 pints	14 pints	14 pints	14 pints	14 pints	11 pints
Cocoa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 pints
Total liquid food	14 pints	14 pints	16 pints	17 pints	15 pints	16 pints	17 pints	17 pints

However, it was almost impossible for authorities to establish various levels of diet that would answer to the dietary demands of various groups of people with their own characteristics depending on age, size, gender and metabolism. But nutritional questions were anyway a new field for governments during that period.[218] Meals were given to prisoners through a trapdoor and had to be eaten in their cells. There were many complaints about prison meals, as many prisoners felt hungry, and many diseases associated with the prison diet spread. There was flexibility in individual cases only at the medical officer's discretion; only royal occasions allowed for extra food.[219]

In this context, between 1837 and 1901 there were about fifteen million receptions into prisons of England and Wales, including men, women, and children. Some of them were on remand and never returned; others were convicted of criminal offences or misdemeanours; some of them were sent to gaol because of not paying fines; some of them made the trip several times, but most of them were committed for just a few days and four out of five sentences were for less than a calendar month. [220] In the case of Cambridge gaols the situation reflected this state of affairs; they were local prisons to which petty criminals were committed, with prostitutes being among them.

In the Cambridgeshire archives, records of Cambridge Prison (formerly Cambridge County Gaol) and Cambridge Town Gaol are kept. These included a receiving book, a register or *Journal* of prisoners, nominal registers, photographic records, register

[218] Carpenter, 'Nutritional Studies', 7.
[219] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 153-5, 165.
[220] Ibid., 52.

of executions, and register of prison officers, but not all of them cover the Victorian period or include information about female prisoners.

The Norman castle on Castle Hill in Cambridge had been used as a gaol from at least the mid-14th century. Before 1601 a bridewell was made from the old Castle barracks. The increasing number of bridewell inmates and the shortage of solitary cells led to demands for a new gaol. Cambridge Prison was built as the County Gaol for Cambridgeshire (not including the Isle of Ely) in 1803. It was substantially modified and extended in the late 1860s. Cambridge was granted the right to its own gaol in 1224. By the sixteenth century, prisoners were being kept in a building known as the Tollbooth, situated next to the Guildhall. This was replaced in 1790 by a second gaol, built in St Andrew's Street behind Hobson's Spinning House. In 1829 this was in turn replaced by a gaol on the south-east side of Parker's Piece. In 1878, as a result of reform under the Prison Act 1877, the Town Gaol was pulled down and all prisoners were sent to the County Gaol. Cambridge Prison closed to women in 1914 and to men in June 1916. Thereafter prisoners were sent to Bedford. Between about 1920 and 1928, the building was used as an out-store of the Public Record Office. Cambridgeshire County Council then purchased the site. The building was demolished in 1928-9 and the present Shire Hall erected in 1931-2 re-using bricks from the prison.[221]

Illustration 2

Longitudinal Section of the Wing for the Bridewell Women and Women Felons, Cambridge Gaol, Cambridgeshire Archives, R55/26/11/10.

Focusing on female prisoners, their presence in the criminal justice system had diminished considerably since the late seventeenth century and that tendency continued till the end of the nineteenth century. Women committed to prison for petty crimes were perceived as ‘deviant’ and offensive, and as distancing themselves from what was seen the natural condition of the female sex, i.e. modesty and decency.[222] These features of character were assumed to be translated into physical traits, according to the tenets of criminal anthropology that was developing in the Victorian period. In the words of one governor of Dartmoor Prison:

[221] ‘Cambridge Borough Gaol and House of Correction’; ‘Cambridge Town Gaol’; ‘Prison on Castle Hill’.
[222] Crone, ‘Reappraising Victorian Literacy’, 14.

> The hair and eyes of female criminals are usually darker than those of honest women. […] General testimony says that prostitutes are very insensible to pain, a fact to be surmised from the readiness with which they allow themselves to be wounded, to be cauterized for certain diseases, and to undergo surgical operations. […] The voices of prostitutes are frequently deep and coarse.[223]

Some of these women became 'hardened habituals', defined as multiple offenders with more than ten convictions, more frequently than men. Those who became regulars were not afraid of imprisonment and perfectly knew prison routines; for some of them the prison was their home and was part of what we might call their economies of makeshift. The preference at the time was to have separate prisons for males and females, or at least separate buildings. Female prisoners' hair could not be cut without their permission, unless for hygienic reasons. The prostitute was the typical woman prisoner who was sentenced for having committed a petty crime like theft, public disorder, or drunkenness. More serious offences connected with women were infanticide (especially in the case of unmarried mothers) and murder. Similarly, 'breaking out' was quite common in female convict prisons as a way of behaving in a riotous manner as a form of protest. The physical punishment of women was not allowed, and physical restraint was hardly used against them. The usual punishment for refractory female prisoners was isolation in a dark cell for a short period of time and restriction of diet, which only happened occasionally.[224] By the 1860s, women sentenced to hard labour were no longer put on the treadwheel or the heavy crank like men were, but did other jobs like scrubbing and cleaning the prison, ten hours of laundry-work being the commonest task.[225] They were also in charge of work in the kitchen, needlework or work as nurses in the female hospital (always supervised by a hospital warder).

Female prisons had nurseries for the women's babies and infants. Those who gave birth in prison could keep their babies for as long as they were breastfeeding them, sometimes until they finished their sentences, but children were not often kept in the gaol for more than a year, unless in special situations. It was feared that children could be the victims of their mothers' 'bad influence' if they stayed in their company for long periods of time, later becoming criminals themselves. When mothers had older children, they

[223] Quoted in Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 79.
[224] Higgs, *Prison Life*, 355-70.
[225] Lee, *Policing Prostitution*,130.

were sent to the parish workhouse or union for the time the sentences lasted, but after the Industrial School Act of 1866 children under fourteen would be sent to an industrial school, which meant that the relationship between them would very likely be broken. Only a small number of women prisoners had the opportunity of receiving instruction. In the Victorian period, prisons established Ladies Committees so that upper- and middle-class women could visit female prisoners for religious purposes in their cells or privately in special rooms. In the same fashion, refuges for female ex-convicts were created by different societies to receive them after being released for good behaviour.[226]

Female prisoners were under the control of female staff in most cases. The Matron of the prison had the same responsibilities as the Governor but was under his supervision. She would have several female warders at her command. She lived in prison and could not be absent without permission and always appointing a deputy matron in charge. Among her duties were to keep all the keys for the locks of female wards, cells, and yards; to accompany the women prisoners in chapel; to inspect the female section of the building daily; and to keep a record of everything of importance that happened and of punishments imposed on women prisoners. Female warders were supposed to be able to establish relationships of loyalty and trust with prisoners, and to be models of exemplary feminine behaviour, promoting good temper and showing compassion to them. However, they had to work long hours and there were some female warders who were drunkards or whose behaviour left much to be desired.[227]

In the case of the Cambridge Gaols in the Victorian period, we find records of female prisoners in only some of the archives. For example, in the *Cambridge County Gaol Register of Prisoners* (1 April 1893 to 26 March 1914), we find entries for women only for the period between 2 September 1893 and 13 August 1897. From the last date till the end of 1901 there are no records for women. All the women are prostitutes and are given numbers to identify them. These nominal registers include information about their offences, date and place of committal, ages, sentences, and physical features such as height, colour of hair, profession, education, religious confession, place of origin, and date and place of conviction. The most common offences were riotous behaviour, damage to property, drunkenness, obscene language, assaulting and threatening people, indecent behaviour, theft, soliciting, or simply being identified as a common prostitute. There was just one case, Florence Hume, whose occupation was the running of premises for the

[226] Higgs, *Prison Life*, 370-88.
[227] Ibid., 493-510.

purposes of prostitution. Short periods of hard labour and occasional fines were the usual punishment. Some of them remained in the trade for quite a good number of years, but most were young, in their late teens or early twenties and thirties. In the cases where ages were given, they went as follows[228]:

Ages	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	30	31	41	43
Numbers	1	1	3	3	1	2	4	1	2	1	1	1

The other register of prisoners for the County Gaol covers the period between 13 June 1885 and 31 December 1887, including the same information for female offenders. There are only six entries – all of them of prostitutes -- with ages varying from twenty, twenty-two, twenty-three, and twenty-five to thirty-six and forty. Their offences were: indecent behaviour, resisting the police, use of obscene language, riotous and disorderly conduct, and stealing. The most common punishment was short periods of hard labour and sometimes fines.[229] Therefore, we can appreciate common patterns for female prisoners in the last part of the Victorian period.

As far as the Cambridge Town Gaol is concerned, we find only one *Journal of Prisoners* which covers the period between 1 October 1850 and 26 September 1859 under Governor John Odis. This volume contains records for both male and female prisoners, including the following information: date, number, age, offence, by whom committed to gaol, date of trial, sentence, and some other details. Most of the women had been committed by the Mayor, with the exception of thirty-two female offenders who were committed by the Vice-Chancellor in the period between 8 November 1853 and 25 February 1854, and then sent to the Spinning House after being sentenced, as is further discussed in the chapter devoted to this Institution. The most common offences were stealing, drunkenness, riotous behaviour, assaulting or threatening people, using obscene language, being idle and disorderly, being a vagabond, default of sureties, County Court debtor, damage to property, letting premises or soliciting. There was one case of a woman, Martha Naylor, leaving her child chargeable to the Linton Union; there were a few cases described as 'accessory to the above felony', which meant that they had been accused of

[228] *Cambridge County Gaol Register of Prisoners, 1 April 1893-26 March 1914* (Cambridgeshire Archives, 1271/01/05).
[229] *Cambridge County Gaol Register of Prisoners, 13 June 1885-31 December 1887* (Cambridgeshire Archives, 1271/01/01).

collaborating with other offenders who had also been sentenced to gaol. There was another case of a woman, Mary Ann Peters, who had been condemned to fourteen days hard labour or paying £1/0/6 for damage caused to the Spinning House. They suffered short sentences of hard labour or sometimes paid fines, although some of them were discharged. Their ages are shown in the following table[230]:

Ages	Numbers
15	2
16	8
17	8
18	17
19	16
20	15
21	13
22	13
23	8
24	6
25	4
26	8
27	6
28	3
29	6
30	11
31	4
32	3
33	6
34	2
35	1
38	3
39	2
40	1

[230] *Cambridge Town Gaol Journal of Prisoners, 1 October 1850-26 September 1859* (Cambridgeshire Archives, 1271/05/02).

45	1
50	1
70	1

Some useful information can be obtained from this table: most prostitutes were in their late teens or early twenties, but it was not uncommon for them to start working in the trade earlier and to remain in the job till their late twenties, thirties and forties, with two outstanding cases of women convicted at the ages of fifty and seventy respectively.

Release was the last stage in the life of a prisoner. When it was close, male prisoners were allowed to grow their hair and were given a suit. In the case of life-sentence prisoners, they might be released after twenty years of imprisonment. There were charities which helped prisoners to start a new life, although they received gratuities from the government upon release. In the case of women prisoners, they were sometimes given the chance of going to a Refuge to learn a profession and receive instruction, although it was difficult to find a job and with the result that, on many occasions, emigrating to the colonies was the only way out. Penal prisoners were subject to the conditions of the 'ticket of leave', which allowed them to work outside the prison as long as they reported regularly at a police station and did not break the conditions of their release. If they did, they would suffer several more years in gaol.[231]

Throughout this chapter, it has become evident that Cambridge prisons were part of the system of containment of prostitution. The trade was associated with the commitment of petty offences that did not change much throughout the Victorian era. All the women were clearly identified as prostitutes in the registers and journals of prisoners both for the county gaol and the town gaol, which functioned as prisons for offenders who had not committed serious crimes, as these would be sent to government convict prisons. These female prisoners served short sentences with hard labour or paid fines, and their numbers diminished throughout the period. Their ages also varied, but their offences were similar and common to them.

[231] Priestly, *Victorian Prison Lives*, 277-8, 283-6.

Chapter 5

Domesticating 'the Fallen': The Cambridge Female Refuge

Rescue work and female refuges

Asylums, penitentiaries, refuges and homes were institutions that flourished throughout the nineteenth century to rescue prostitutes and make them respectable working-class individuals. Middle-class reformers saw in prostitution something inevitable but tried to remove it from the public gaze by taking the women off the streets. Isolating them and instructing them religiously was the way in which places of confinement, created for the purpose, would achieve their aim. The result would be the socialisation of 'women into the sexual and social mores of the middle-class' and the creation of 'an industrial workforce of domestic servants.'[232] The majority of towns and cities in England had one of these institutions for the reform of 'the fallen', the Cambridge Female Refuge being one of them. However, in the case of Cambridge, the House of Mercy was not only under the supervision and governing of the Anglican Church and of the city as the University was also involved significantly in its running, as we shall see.

In the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, the traditional Puritanism of the middle classes was imposed on the aristocracy and the 'ungovernable poor', and Christian values were spread by people like the Wesleyan Methodists, the Benthamites and especially the Anglican Evangelicals, led by the members of the Clapham Sect. These established the Proclamation Society in 1787 and the Society for the Suppression of Vice in 1802; they tried to close brothels and punish sexual offenders among the lower orders, though morality was only partially imposed on the aristocracy.[233]

The first penitentiaries were established in the second half of the eighteenth century under the auspices of the Anglican Church, the first being the Magdalen Hospital, opened in Whitechapel in London in 1758.[234] On its model, several other asylums and homes were created till the middle of the nineteenth century, when there was an explosion of these religious organisations with the formation of the Church Penitentiary Association

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[232] Paula Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 13.
[233] David Innes Williams, *The London Lock: A Charitable Hospital for Venereal Disease, 1746-1952* (London and New York: Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd, 1995), 49-50.
[234] Frances Finnegan, *Do Penance or Perish: A Study of Magdalene Asylums in Ireland* (Piltown, Co. Kilkenny: Congrave Press, 1991), 8.

for the Reclamation of Fallen Women (CPA) in 1848.[235] The CPA was inspired by the Oxford movement of the 1830s, which consisted in a 'high church' or Anglo-Catholic revival with more importance given to the sacraments and the role of priests. These were also members of the university who wrote tracts 'to reform the church and attract serious young men who would enter its service'.[236] We will find some of these aspects echoed in the ways the Cambridge Female Refuge was run. The Church of England established numerous Houses of Mercy under the control of Anglican nuns and had its own official journal *Seeking and Saving*. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were also a few Catholic homes involved in rescue work.

Nonetheless, it was the Evangelical church who had an outstanding role in philanthropy throughout the Victorian period. For them, morality and social reform had become the pillars of religious practice, putting the emphasis on the reading of the Scriptures more than on religious services. Consequently, they promoted the teaching of reading and writing – which was part of the instruction that the women in the asylums and refuges received --, disapproving of leisure activities such as dancing, the theatre, gambling, etc., and devoting a considerable amount of time and money to charity work. Evangelicals gave more importance to individual conversion and believed in the possibilities of transformation and regeneration of 'fallen women' and other people who were seen as having led a life of vice and sin. This is because their religious activity acquired a more humanitarian quality attempting to improve people's lives on earth instead of postponing action in favour of heavenly reward.[237] Evangelicals even established their own society in 1856, the Reformatory and Refuge Union, to coordinate their work, centring more on prevention than reform.

There were also private individuals, some of them famous like Josephine Butler, Charles Dickens, the Duchess of Bedford, Prime Minister Gladstone, etc., who established their own homes or did rescue work. So, reform institutions were mainly in the hands of middle and upper-class men and women. More specifically, members of the clergy and lay men and women were involved in the running and supervision of asylums and homes. Men had a prominent role in the management of these places as directors and officers, taking part in annual meetings, writing annual reports and minutes, and taking charge of the finances. The CPA itself was a male-dominated organisation which took

[235] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 26.
[236] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport, USA: Greenwood Press, 2009), 246.
[237] Ibid., 246, 256.

care that the institutions followed the spiritual guidance of the Church of England. At the same time, they encouraged the bishops of the various dioceses to become involved in this charity work, as was the case of the Cambridge Female Refuge. Women oversaw the domestic side of the running of the Refuge, concerned with the inmates' work, their diet, their dress, their leisure and the purchase of articles and goods.[238]

The fact that many of these places were called 'homes' has a close relationship with the ideology of the double spheres that relates closely to the then prevailing distinction between the public and private realms. As discussed elsewhere in this book, the sphere of work and activity outside the home belonged to men, whereas the sphere of the home belonged to women. The home represented a shelter from the dangers and agitation of the outside world. Because of this, woman's roles were to be a good mother and wife, preserving high moral values, counselling her husband's conscience and educating their children. The home must be a haven of peace and tranquility, and its ruler – the woman -- dependent on and obedient to her husband.[239] This is the logic that lies behind the organisation of these institutions run as a family home, with their middle-class managers perfectly organised into male and female roles. It is in this context that 'fallen women' were given the opportunity of living in a place of confinement with characteristics like those of a middle-class home with the values of protection and isolation from peril. The references to the word 'home' in the archives of the Cambridge Female Refuge are a constant presence, as we shall see.

As stated above, with the creation of the CPA many houses of mercy were opened in England with many characteristics in common with the penitentiaries and asylums, but in this case under the control of nuns. The objective of Anglican penitentiaries, known as Houses of Mercy, was to provide shelter to prostitutes and 'fallen women' on a voluntary basis, despite their punitive name. They also claimed to reform and transform them into respectable working-class women, although here we need to note that not only prostitutes rated as 'fallen', but also any woman who had had sexual experience outside marriage were also their target. As a result, kept mistresses, abused children, victims of incest or rape or simply women who were thieves or drunkards were candidates for these places of isolation. According to the archives of some of these penitentiaries, most women were labourers' daughters; many of them did not have a mother, had been servants in London, having been in prostitution for a period of less than a year. Younger 'sinners' were seen

[238] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 26-7.
[239] Mitchell, *Daily Life*, 266-7.

as easier to reform and were the preferred targets of most homes, especially in earlier stages of the reform movement. Regarding their age, most were in their late teens or early twenties and could hardly read or write. As with asylums, inmates had to remain in the institution for about two years. Applicants were never refused entrance, although they had an interview with the Mother Superior. As the century progressed, these Houses of Mercy tried to classify penitents but ultimately came to specialise in different types of women. Like in asylums, women were trained as laundresses – there was also a metaphorical significance in their washing of sins -- under a harsh discipline similar to that of the nuns. They were also trained in domestic chores to become servants in middle-class households, but, in contrast with refuges, they were also trained in nursing. They received some education focused on literacy and arithmetic. They were given references and an outfit to obtain a position upon leaving, and those who had children could stay in touch with them, as some sisterhoods also ran orphanages.[240] It is quite significant that Houses of Mercy were run by the nuns who were educated middle and upper-class women and were widely seen as having some kind of authority over 'the fallen' because of their pure sisterhood. Nuns had no moral stain, and their work was sanctioned by the Church of England.

Nevertheless, both penitentiaries and refuges can also be looked upon as places where female offenders, particularly those charged with sexual misconduct could be detained and reformed instead of being secluded in prisons with other types of criminals. Persuading young women to avoid 'corruption' and convincing them to join an asylum where they could receive moral education and industrial training was behind a non-statutory system based on middle-class standards of femininity. 'Corruption' was connected with the idea that young women were in peril of being influenced by other depraved and vicious women if they became their associates. With time, the system would reach a widening range of ages and offences, accommodating a huge female working-class population. This meant that stigmatisation, labelling, and overcrowding became features of the system and intervention on the part of middle-class reformers to reclaim 'fallen women' was even stronger. In other words, these institutions became forms of patriarchal intervention and a technology of power as an apparatus of social control. In

[240] Susan Mumm, '"Not Worse than Other Girls": The Convent-based Rehabilitation of Fallen Women in Victorian Britain', *Journal of Social History* 29, no. 3 (1996): 527-32.

this context, the Cambridge Female Refuge can be seen as part of the moral architecture of City and University for containing immorality and sexual 'deviance'.[241]

The Cambridge Female Refuge

Foundation and early years (1838-1859)

The Cambridge Female Refuge, also known as the Cambridge House of Mercy, was established in October 1838 as an experiment to provide the city and the University of Cambridge with a place where to keep and reform Cambridge prostitutes and 'fallen women'. In accordance with this, the appeal for funds and support to the 'members of the University and the inhabitants of the town' was made in the first *Annual Report* of 1839 'under a painful conviction that in a place like Cambridge something ought to be attempted in alleviation of an evil which derives, unhappily, so much encouragement from the peculiar nature of its population'.[242] As shall be discussed later, the rationale behind this first call for subscriptions and donations was the threat that these kind of women were seen as posing to the population of the city. The aim was the 'alleviation of an evil' which was perceived by the respectable inhabitants of the area and made them, and not only the prostitutes, vulnerable, as I will argue.[243] It is also significant that, in contrast to other asylums and refuges of the time, the role of the University is outstanding in this endeavour to save women from degradation and sin. The strategy behind this is the importance of keeping not only citizens of Cambridge but also University undergraduates safe from venereal disease and 'deviant' sexuality.

Because this first year of the Refuge was declared to be a successful experiment, the founders rejoiced in the formation of the Institution as the *1839 Report* argues, stating that the founders felt justified in appealing for enlarged support.[244] This also meant the need to purchase bigger premises by creating a Building Fund. In the *Reports* for 1845, 1868 and 1892, the way in which the idea of creating a Refuge in Cambridge for women leading a sinful life and in need of shelter was explained. In particular, the *1868 Report*, which commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Institution, described how, during a walk on the Haslingfield Road in the afternoon of 21 August 1838, three leading members of the University and the Church – the Rev. George Spence, Vicar of St. Clement's, the

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[241] Linda Mahood, *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990a), 49-50.
[242] *Annual Report 1839* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/12), 5.
[243] Ibid., 5.
[244] Ibid., 5.

Rev. Charles Perry, Fellow of Trinity and later Bishop of Melbourne, and the Rev. Thomas Boodle, Vicar of Barnwell -- were talking about the situation described by Rev. George Fisk – later rector of Walsall --, a young man working as curate in Barnwell.[245] He was doing an excellent job among the poor and the women of the area, as Barnwell was a low working-class neighbourhood in Cambridge where poverty and disease were the most frequent companions of its inhabitants at the time. According to his testimony, on one occasion, several women (about between ten and twelve in number) approached him to say that thanks to his words they had become aware of their situation of sin and danger. They expressed their desire to forsake their previous vicious lives and to be taught the way to obtain a respectable maintenance. Mr. Fisk tried to accommodate them as servants, but most of his efforts were in vain as the women were not properly qualified.[246] As a consequence of this, these three gentlemen, who can be considered as the founders of the Cambridge Female Refuge, decided to adopt the means to erect a home for those 'fallen women' who were seen as wishing to return to an honest life.

Refuges and Penitentiaries, also known as Magdalen Homes because of the comparison between Mary Magdalen and the inmates or penitents of these institutions, were established for the salvation of prostitutes and 'fallen women' in terms similar to those in the New Testament, but also to contain the threat that they posed for the male members of patriarchal middle-class families. The notion of seduction as being the cause of prostitution that presented 'fallen women' as helpless victims -- which was probably a very adequate idea for the appeal for funds in the first decades of the nineteenth century -- gave way to a new idea that defined them in terms of their presence in the public sphere. According to doctors and social investigators of the time, other causes of prostitution were poverty, unemployment or lack of education, or even certain traits of character attributed to working-class women.[247] The label of 'prostitute' was created by middle-class social and political discourses during the nineteenth century. Women who engaged in prostitution received various names in newspapers of the time such as 'common prostitutes, unfortunates, 'fallen women', women of ill repute, nymphs of the pave[sic], the frail sisterhood, women of the town, abandoned females, etc.'.[248] These labels represented a constellation of women's behaviours which were considered reprehensible

[245] *Annual Report 1868* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/20), 3.
[246] *Annual Report 1845* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R/60/27/12), 9.
[247] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 55-6.
[248] Frances Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution: A Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1879), 12.

and menacing by middle-class reformers. Single mothers or working-class girls working in other professions were also included in the group. In other words, 'by the nineteenth century the bourgeoisie could not easily ignore the presence of large numbers of women in the streets, whose dress, physical appearance, occupation, or behaviour led to their being labelled as "prostitutes"'.[249]

Along these lines, the aim of the Cambridge House of Mercy is stated clearly in the following words:

> The object of this institution is to afford to females who have been leading a sinful course of life, and express a desire of returning to the path of virtue, a temporary refuge, where they may be sheltered from temptation, be provided with proper employment, and receive religious and useful instruction, until an opportunity offer[sic] for restoring them to their friends, transferring them to a Penitentiary, or placing them in some situation where they may procure for themselves an honest livelihood.[250]

In this declaration of intent, three aspects of the reform system can be appreciated: firstly, to avoid the spread of prostitution and venereal disease; secondly, to offer a refuge for 'fallen women' to protect them from temptation and from returning to a life of vice, along with receiving religious and moral instruction; and thirdly, to prepare them for their reintegration in society by teaching them respectable working-class jobs such as dressmakers, laundresses and servants. They were also taught reading and writing as most of them were illiterate, as is mentioned in many of the *Annual Reports* throughout the Victorian period. Nor was the scope of the Institution to be a hospital or a workhouse, but to be a Refuge for 'the encouragement of incipient penitence and the formation of such new desires, principles and habits as may, under the Divine blessing, qualify the inmates to become reputable and useful members of society'.[251] This is an idea frequently repeated in the *Annual Reports* for the Victorian period. However, 'the class of human beings for whom they plead, are, perhaps, of all others the most wretched, the most helpless, and they lament to say, the most neglected'.[252]

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[249] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 69-70.
[250] *Annual Report 1839*, R60/27/12, 5.
[251] Ibid., 8.
[252] Ibid., 11.

During this experimental stage, the location of the Cambridge Refuge was provisional in a small properly walled place in the East Road known as 'Dover Cottage' with room for eleven women. It was a detached house surrounded by a garden at a rent of £30 per year. Of the initial eleven women seeking assistance, only six remained while the other five were either refused admittance – because of pregnancy or bad health -- or left for different reasons. According to the *Annual Report* for 1839, in the case of these six women, 'their labours have not been in vain; there has been a general improvement in their appearance, manners and habits, - in their reading and needlework -'[253], making it necessary to find accommodation for a larger number of women in more convenient premises according to the managers of the Institution. In the *1840 Annual Report*, it is stated that only a maximum of nine women could be accommodated in the Asylum's first location and be counted as inmates of the Institution at the time. Also, it is claimed that 'from *want of accommodation* they have been obliged *to refuse admission to several applicants!*'[254]

A new location was therefore found where new premises could be built after buying a piece of freehold ground of 150 square feet that did not belong to the University. The Refuge was located in the Barnwell area – a populous working-class suburb --, in Christ Church Street, on the south side of the Newmarket Road and at the rear of Christ Church. This location was very convenient for the inmates to be able to attend religious services. There they were screened from public view, despite having been formally 'admitted into the congregation.'[255] Thus, 'the first sod was dug for the foundation on the 18th of February 1841, and the building was occupied on the 6th of October following'. The plot of land had been bought at a price of £790 and the estimate for the erection of suitable buildings was of between £2,000 and £3,000.[256]

The new building, although plain in appearance, had two floors: a ground floor with a Board Room, a Matron's Room, two Day Wards, a Probationers' Ward, Kitchen, Store Closet, Bath Room, Wash-House and Laundry; the first floor with two Dormitories, a Probationers' dormitory and a Sick Ward, and apartments and closets for the Matron, Assistant Matron and Matron's Servant. Each ward had its own Staircase and Airing Ground to favour separation between inmates as well as classification that was so

[253] Ibid., 7.
[254] *Annual Report 1840* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/12), 8. (Italics in the original)
[255] Ibid., 9.
[256] *Annual Report 1892* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/22), 6.

common in the period to avoid the corruption of milder cases by the hard ones. The total number of women who could be accommodated in the premises was twenty-eight, together with another six women who would reside in the Probationers' Ward for a short period of time. Thus, 'This arrangement will readily be perceived to be of the greatest advantage in allowing of a graduated classification of the inmates.'[257] These definitive premises underwent several transformations and repairs involving the building and the furniture throughout the period to improve the living conditions of both inmates and staff.

At this point, to talk about Michel Foucault's biopolitics in two of his seminal works *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* (1976) might seem outdated, but I will argue that his theories seem quite relevant in these times when notions of vulnerability and precarity present in this book are invading academic analysis of literary and historical issues. In the nineteenth century, medicine, religion, and philanthropy became discourses of power and knowledge which created the category of the subject, through carceral institutions such as hospitals, prisons, asylums, penitentiaries, workhouses, etc. These modern institutions were given the purpose of producing docile bodies through discipline and surveillance. In Foucauldian terms, 'the carceral' makes inmates of these institutions behave according to norms, subordinates individuals to institutional needs, scrutinises and observes all subjects, and uses punishment to control 'deviants'.[258] Thus, power is not exercised by the state but by social institutions which create these 'docile bodies'. This idea, together with the fact that modern power operates through continual classification, surveillance and intervention, eases ascription of bodies to various categories (race, gender, illness, class, etc.) and of actions to various labels, ranging from praiseworthy to deviant, punishable, or criminal. Foucault asserts that power is exerted in what he calls its 'capillary forms', that is, through multiple and complex ways, and not by individuals or single groups; rather, he talks of various and shifting positions of power and resistance within a network of relations.[259]

In the Cambridge Refuge, these capillary forms of power can be seen as having been present through a whole network of middle-class reformers, Evangelicals and a system of isolation, confinement, and indoctrination of 'fallen women'. Following this reasoning, inmates were deviant subjects who had not conformed to the rules of society

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[257] *Annual Report 1841* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/12), 7-8.
[258] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 293-308.
[259] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 92-8.

as far as sexual performance was concerned, so their behaviour was punishable. In the case of women, sexual promiscuity was seen as an even more despicable fault than in men, and the system did not punish the male sex for their behaviour. Nonetheless, acts of insubordination were not uncommon, as we will see. Specifically, in the case of this Refuge and many other asylums and houses of mercy of the time, these power/knowledge relations were part of spatial relations that assigned a specific place to various bodies within social and religious discourses, depending on their gender and class and using binary codes such as unfallen/fallen, decent/corrupted, middle-class/working-class, industrious/idle, submissive/ungovernable, etc. Thus, disciplinary power had become the most efficient and economical way of producing docile and useful bodies, and this was the idea behind the Cambridge House of Mercy.

This Institution illustrates women's vulnerable situation under this regime. In particular, the probationary ward was, according to the *1839 Account,* very much needed as a place 'in which inmates, newly admitted, might be kept for a season from the rest, and thus, the risk and danger of deception and moral contamination avoided or dismissed'.[260] This meant that newcomers represented a threat to the inmates who were in the process of reform, and to reformers and asylum authorities who tried to impose values of respectability on them, making both collectives vulnerable to each other. Probationary wards were common to other refuges and asylums of the Victorian period, such as the York Penitentiary or the Glasgow Magdalen Asylum, as we will see later.

Equally significant is the fact that the whole area of the ground which also included gardens, a fore-court and drying ground, was enclosed by 'substantial walls of considerable height', making of the place a fortress.[261] This indicates that Refuge authorities were worried about possible acts of resilience and resistance on the part of inmates, escaping being one of them, as we will also see. Simultaneously, walls served to avoid contamination of the decent population. At a later stage in 1841, various arrangements were finished with the addition of a medical closet and a pew for about thirty people was completed in the parish Church adjoining premises for the women in the Refuge. This would allow keeping them out of public view but joining 'the great congregation in prayer and thanksgiving, and in bearing [sic] the word of God'.[262] This shows how middle-class regimes were prevalent in the organisation of inmates' activities;

[260] *Annual Report 1839*, R60/27/12, 10.
[261] *Annual Report 1841*, R60/27/12, 8.
[262] *Annual Report 1842* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/12), 6.

these ‘fallen women’ were treated almost as semi-human through their isolation and separation from decent society.

The General Rules for the governing of the Refuge appear in all the *Annual Reports* of the early years until 1858, being defined in the *1839 Report* with slight modifications found in the *1841 Report*. Reports were, as their name implies, produced annually to be presented to the General Meeting of the Subscribers, together with the audited accounts and the resolutions passed since the previous *Report.* As texts written by the Secretary of the House of Mercy, *Reports* had a clear middle-class bias, and the voices of the penitents can hardly be heard unless you read between the lines. However, they are an important source to understand the way in which rescue work functioned in Victorian times together with the *Managing Committee Minutes, the Committee of Ladies Minutes with the Matron’s Reports, the Visiting Clergymen’s Books, the Matron’s Book* (from 1873) and *the Visitors’ Books*. However, only some of these archives have survived. Subscribers and benefactors were all members of the Society and a list of them with their contributions was always added at the end of every *Annual Report*. People subscribing £1 were regarded as members for one year; people subscribing £10 or executors paying bequests of £50 were categorised as life members.

A General Committee was established of twenty-one members who were all the resident incumbents of the parishes of Cambridge together with elected members chosen from the list of Subscribers from time to time. As can be seen, there was a strong religious presence in the structure of this governing body. The General Committee would appoint a Treasurer, one or more Secretaries, and two Auditors and would meet at least twice a year or on extraordinary occasions when needed. Its function was also to appoint a Managing Committee of seven people among its members who would meet weekly to take care of the domestic arrangements. At the same time, this Committee would appoint a Committee of Ladies who would visit the Institution and assist in the running of the household as well as in the issues concerning the inmates. These ladies would meet weekly and would supervise the work of the Matron who was also appointed by the Managing Committee.[263] At this early stage there were other officers like the Surgeon, Mr. Hammond, who served the Refuge for thirty years and the Bankers, but no Chaplain was appointed at this initial stage. The parochial clergy were the ones visiting the Home three times a week in weekly rotation to afford religious instruction.[264] In the *1842 Report*

[263] *Annual Report 1841*, R60/27/12, 24-5.
[264] *Annual Report 1839*, R60/27/12, 8.

another officer appears: the Collector. A similar organisation existed in the York Penitentiary created in 1822, although this Home also had a President.[265]

An extraordinarily important figure in the running of refuges and penitentiaries was the Matron. Both the Matron and the male officers of these institutions reproduced the patriarchal family model and the social class order. For example, this idea of a family can be found in the *1841 Report* when talking about the atmosphere in the establishment during the preceding year, where it can be read how 'peace and harmony, kindness and good will have pervaded the entire family'.[266] Preferably matrons should be middle-aged spinsters or widows, subordinating their actions to the fatherly male directors and being motherly role models for the inmates. Similarly, the other female members of the staff were usually unmarried women.[267] Finding a suitable woman for the task was a very arduous mission due to the demanding characteristics of the job and the low wages they received. It was quite convenient for them to have had experience in rescue work, a deeply religious nature, a strong constitution as well as some education. Other relevant traits of character could be sympathy, firmness, skill, and patience to deal with very absorbing work while gaining the confidence and respect of the women penitents and to cope with the everyday running of the refuge.[268]

The Matron's duties were described in one of the sections of the General Rules. As stated above, she was responsible for the internal arrangements of the house, providing 'food, coals, candles and other necessaries for the Inmates' as well as for taking care of the linen and bedding. She had also to conduct family worship in the morning and in the evening. Besides, she had to keep the women's clothes until they were released, which suggests that inmates were obliged to wear uniforms, although there is no allusion to them in the *Reports.* Among her duties, the Matron had to supervise the women's behaviour and the materials for their work, keeping proper financial accounts and reporting on the inmates' conduct weekly. Probably, the hardest aspect of her demanding and time-consuming job was that 'She shall not be one night absent from the house without permission from the Committee and having provided an approved substitute'.[269] This means that the Matron had to live on the premises and without strong personal ties outside the Institution. The first matron at the Cambridge Refuge was Mrs. Tofts who held the

[265] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution,* 170.
[266] *Annual Report 1841,* R60/27/12, 10.
[267] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 88.
[268] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution,* 182.
[269] *Annual Report 1841*, R60/27/12, 26.

position for about thirty years till 1867. She is described as a 'respectable female of middle age, whose correctness of conduct, right judgement, and great kindness towards the Inmates' made of her 'a competent person as superintendent of the establishment'.[270]

The 'Rules relating to the Inmates' were nine and 'were read to each Female on her admission into the Institution'; at the same time a printed copy was to be 'posted in a conspicuous place in each room', so that when a woman refused to comply with these rules, she was expelled.[271] All the women were under the control of a carceral system more similar to a prison than to a refuge: they were not allowed to leave the premises until discharged; they had to attend family worship morning and evening; they had to be employed constantly except for the times of meals, exercise, instruction and rest, with strict timetables -- rising at 6 o'clock and going to bed at 10 o'clock from the 1st of April to the 1st of November, or rising at 7 and going to bed at 10 from the 1st of November to the 1st of April --; and they had to keep silent. All women had to go through medical inspection upon entering, so that if they were found pregnant or diseased, they were not admitted.[272] These rules and routines were common to these kinds of institutions in the Victorian period. So, it is important to clearly distinguish asylums from other places of confinement. As stated in the *Annual Reports*, the Cambridge House of Mercy was intended as 'a refuge for the real penitent', and not a substitute for the hospital or poorhouse. In this sense, the appeal to 'benevolently disposed persons' who would sympathise 'in the wretchedness of a forlorn and destitute female, naturally with her wish to be sheltered and relieved' could be more effective.[273] In these *Reports* their voices could only be heard in their letters to the Matron after their release, although those appearing in these written archives had probably been selected by the officers of the Institution with an eye to propaganda, as I will argue.

Although reproaches for past misconduct were not accepted, Rule V reflects that the idyllic situation described in the letters and in the examples of reform given in many of the *Reports* does not correspond with the thoughts and behaviour of many of the women who entered the Refuge. The wording of this rule is very significant, alleging that

[270] *Annual Report 1839*, R60/27/12, 6.
[271] Ibid., 17.
[272] Ibid., 18.
[273] Ibid., 8.

> Care shall be taken to repress all reproaches from past misconduct. Railing and all angry expressions, disregard of truth, swearing, or coarse and indecent conversation, or indecorous behaviour, dishonesty and disobedience to authority, shall be punished by the Committee by expulsion or in such other way as they shall judge to be expedient.[274]

We do not know from the *Reports* in the archives what kind of punishment was decided for the inmates other than expulsion. Nonetheless, what I try to demonstrate in the light of these traces left over from the past is that these rules reflect not only the vulnerability of these women subject to the regime of power of a ruling middle-class, but also the vulnerability of the ruling classes towards individuals who showed some kind of 'moral deviancy', especially in the area of sexuality. In this sense, immoral and dishonest behaviour together with indecorous use of language and swearing were traits of character attributed to the lower orders of society[275], but it was the physical proximity of prostitutes that represented a real threat to the middle-classes and their moral codes of behaviour. Each woman had to sleep in a separate bed, keep a decent deportment and could not have any contact by letter or receive any visits from relatives without the permission and supervision of the Matron. These visits would take place on any Monday between 10 and 12 o'clock. Those who left the Home at their own desire were never re-admitted.

Regarding the admission process, applications were discussed at the weekly meeting of the Managing Committee which took place every Tuesday at 1 o'clock. Later, a by-law was passed on 4 January 1842 that when a situation was urgent the applicant might 'be admitted to the Probationary Ward, on any day in the week, by order in writing of *two* at least of the Managing Committee, if the Surgeon's report be favourable – subject to such order being confirmed or otherwise at the next weekly meeting'.[276] A long interview with the applicant was often part of the process like in the Glasgow Magdalen Asylum opened in 1812, but it was not difficult for women to cheat the officers.[277] Once admitted, in most institutions, girls had to go through a probationary period of about two months as already explained. This time was spent in isolation and under the monitoring of the Matron, the male officers and the Ladies' Committee. In the case of the Glasgow

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[274] Ibid., 18.
[275] Shani D'Cruze, *Crimes of Outrage: Sex, Violence and Victorian Working Women* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 179-84.
[276] *Annual Report 1845*, R60/27/12, 16.
[277] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 77.

Magdalen Asylum probation lasted three months[278], whereas in the York Penitentiary it was for about two to three weeks.[279] During this period, potential penitents had to convince the authorities of their sincerity and their capacity to accept the monotony of daily life within the asylum. Similarly, it was important not to distort the daily lives of those who had been already admitted, so that their minds should not be unsettled by new candidates.[280] The probation ward was also used as a place of isolation to punish bad behaviour or refusal to work.[281]

The ways to obtain funding were varied, besides subscriptions and donations. The proper form for a legacy or donation read like this:

> 'I give and bequeath unto the Treasurer for the time being, of a Voluntary Society established at Cambridge, in the year 1838, commonly called or known by the name of '*The Cambridge Refuge*' the sum of sterling*: the same to be paid within months next after my decease, out of such part only of my personal estate, as shall not consist of mortgages or chattels real, in trust to be applied to the uses and purposes of that Institution; and for which the receipt of such Treasurer shall be a sufficient discharge'.
>
> *If it is intended to be free of legacy duty, the words 'clear of legacy' may be added.
>
> N.B. Devises of land, or of money charged on land, or secured on mortgage of lands or tenements, are void: but money or stock may be given by Will, if not directed to be laid out in land. [282]

This form remained the same during the Victorian period, but there were other ways to obtain income. The first time that sermons appear as a source of income for the Refuge is in the *Annual Report* for 1844 when several parishes of Cambridge are mentioned where sermons are preached on behalf of the Institution. However, the practice seems to have started in 1840. Also, money was collected at General Meetings which took place once a year with the Subscribers and friends of the Institution usually in the Town Hall. These meetings were presided over by the Vice-Chancellor, the Bishop of Ely or the Mayor, or

[278] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 78.
[279] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 89.
[280] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 37.
[281] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 193.
[282] *Annual Report 1840*, R60/27/12, 7. (Italics in the original)

other prominent members of the city, the Church and the University, such as Masters or Professors of Colleges (most of whom were members of the Church) and squires, which shows the particular characteristics of an institution like this in a university town as Cambridge.

Nevertheless, in these early years, one of the means to upkeep the Home was from the inmates' work, in particular needlework and laundry-work. From its very beginning, the Cambridge Refuge established that women must occupy their time with an activity that would keep them busy and contribute to their maintenance, apart from instruction of any kind. Another characteristic of this Institution, like many others of its type, was that 'A portion of the produce is given to the Inmates as a stimulus to improvement, and the remainder will be carried to the credit of the establishment'.[283] The idea was to create a strong respectable working-class workforce to cater for the demand for servants and laundry maids in bourgeois households. Also, on a spiritual level, through this activity 'women could do penance for their past sins and purge themselves of their moral contagion'.[284] In particular, washing, starching and ironing were very harsh activities that girls performed for most of the day. It left them exhausted, especially when many of them were physically weak or had entered the institution in a sickly condition.[285] This is the reason why in later stages the Refuge hired an Assistant Matron or a Laundress to help in the process of teaching the girls, although at the same time new equipment made things a little bit easier.

The *Reports* from this early period between 1839 and 1858 all contain the 'Terms of washing' in the following way:

THE TERMS OF WASHING
AT
THE FEMALE REFUGE
CHURCH STREET, CAMBRIDGE

	s	*d*		*s*	*d*
Day Shifts, each	0	2	Tablecloth, *3d to 6d*		
Girls' ditto	0	1	Traycloth	0	1 1/2
Plain Shirts	0	3	Breakfast ditto	0	2
Shirts with frills or			Table Napkins, per doz.	0	9
plaited bosoms	0	3 1/2	Sheets, per pair	0	4
Boy's ditto	0	2	Small ditto or servants'	0	3
Gowns, from *4d to 9d*			Pillow-cases, per pair	0	1

[283] *Annual Report 1840*, R60/27/12, 9.
[284] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 221.
[285] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 177.

Petticoats, *2d to 3d*			Counterpane	1	0
Girls' Frocks, *2d to 3d*			Marseilles Quilt	1	6
Nightgowns, *2d to 3d*			Towels, per doz.	0	6
Girls' ditto	0	1	Kitchen Cloths, per doz.	0	6
Nightcaps, *1d to 1 1/2d*			Round Towels, each	0	1
Night Jackets	0	1 1/2	Toilet Covers *1 1/2d to 3d*		
Pockets	0	1	Flannel Coats	0	2
Handkerchiefs	0	0 1/2	Flannel Waistcoats	0	1 1/2
Stockings, per pair	0	1	Stays	0	4
Socks ditto	0	0 3/4	Dressing Gowns	0	9
Children's ditto	0	0 1/2	Children0s Stays	0	2
Neckerchiefs, each	0	1	Baby's long Frocks	0	4
Waistcoats	0	3	' short ditto	0	2
Boys' ditto	0	1 1/2	' Diapers, per doz.	0	9
Trousers, *4d to 6d*			Baby-clothes, per doz.	0	9[286]

And also the 'Terms of needlework':

THE TERMS OF NEEDLEWORK

AT

THE FEMALE REFUGE

CHURCH STREET, CAMBRIDGE

	s	d		s	d
A fine Shirt, frilled	2	0	Napkins, per dozen	0	9
Ditto, without frill	1	9	A Breakfast Cloth	0	2
A Shirt of inferior cloth	1	6	A Tablecloth	0	3
Ditto, without frill	1	3	A large, ditto	0	4
A coarse ditto	1	0	Towel and Glass Cloths,		
Ditto, not stitched	0	9	per dozen	0	6
A Boy's fine Shirt, frilled	1	3	Dusters, per dozen	0	4
Ditto, plain	1	0	Sheets, ten yards in a pair	0	6
A boy's shirt of inferior			Ditto, 12 yards, ditto	0	7
Cloth	0	9	Ditto, 14 yards ditto	0	8
A collar and a pair of			A child's first Shift	0	2
Wristbands	0	3	A large ditto	0	4
A fine shift	1	0	A small night ditto	0	4
Ditto, stitched round the			A large ditto	0	6
sleeves and bosom	1	3	A child's Nightcap	0	2
A coarse Shift	0	8	Ditto, double border	0	3
A Night Shift	1	0	A child's Petticoat	0	2
Ditto, stitched	1	3	A small Frock	0	4
A Night Jacket	0	4	A large ditto	0	6
Ditto, stitched	0	6	A Pincloth	0	1
A Nightcap, double border	0	4	Ditto, with seams	0	2
Ditto, with edging	0	6	A boy's ditto, with sleeves	0	3
Ditto, single border	0	3	A large ditto	0	6
A pair of pockets	0	4			
Ditto, with inside Pockets	0	6	_____		
A Petticoat	0	8			
An under ditto	0	6	BABY LINEN		
A flannel ditto	0	4			
Handkerchiefs, two sides,			A small Shirt	0	2
per dozen	0	9	A small Cap	0	2
Ditton hemmed round	1	6	An under, ditto	0	1
Neckerchiefs, yard wide	0	2	A long Bedgown	0	4
Ditto, yard and a half wide	0	3	A long Frock	0	6

[286] *Annual Report 1859* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/20), 12.

An Apron	0	1	A fine ditto	0	8
Pillow-cases per pair	0	4	A long Petticoat	0	4
Ditto, with buttons and button-holes	0	6	A Blanket	0	3
			Napkins, per dozen	0	9

Marking Letters and Figures, *3d.* per dozen; ditto, on coarse materials, *2d.*
Frilling to be charged *1d.* and Tucking *½d*. per yard in addition to the above Prices.
Cotton or Thread will be charged if not sent.

Payment is requested on delivery of the work. All work is expected to be ready cut out.
N.B.—Work of any description not mentioned in the above list, to be charged as directed by the Ladies' Committee.[287]

From a close look at the two tables, one can infer how hard these tasks could be, the long hours and, especially, the business-like character of these places of reform.

Finally, in the table which includes the finances of the Institution between 1839 and 1858, two other sources of income are mentioned regarding legacies: 'special Receipts by Legacies not funded' and 'Dividends from Legacies funded'. In the same table, a category concerned with 'Fines by the Proctors' appears.[288] Also the finances show that the relationship between University and Refuge was very close, with the University possibly contributing with the fines imposed by proctors on prostitutes for disorderly behaviour in its area of jurisdiction under the Vagrancy Act 1824. Similarly, both the 1839 Metropolitan Police Act and the 1847 Town Police Clauses Act allowed fines of 40s for women who were thought to be common prostitutes if found loitering or soliciting on the streets importuning passers-by.

It is difficult to discern the type of women addressed by the Refuge from the information contained in the *Annual Reports* of this early period. There is more relevant information about inmates' profiles in the *Minutes of the Managing Committee* which have survived, but they only cover a period of about fifteen years, between 1838 and 1853. These institutions could have targets like 'any woman found in the streets who could not give a satisfactory account of how she earned her living. This would have included the unemployed and casual labourer, and women who either lived alone or shared accommodation with other women, as well as 'any women whose dress, behaviour or physical appearance was grounds for being suspected of prostitution'.[289] However, during the admission process, officers would try to discover if the applicant was a newly

[287] *Annual Report 1859*, R60/27/20, 13.
[288] Ibid., 7.
[289] Linda Mahood, '"The Magdalene's Friend": Prostitution and Social Control in Glasgow, 1869-1890', *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, no. 1-2 (1990a): 51.

'fallen woman' or a victim of seduction rather than a hardened prostitute. As stated, she could not be pregnant or diseased. The candidates were supposed to be young girls preferably under twenty-five, intelligent and well-disposed to discipline.[290] In other words, the distinction was basically between those girls worth 'saving' and those who were not. At the same time, older prostitutes were seen as exerting a pernicious influence on the younger ones. There were even homes which focused on girls under twenty as a special group to reform.[291]

In the case of the archives for the York Penitentiary, most applicants were orphans or had a stepparent, suffering cruelty or neglect. Many were utterly without friends or means. In cases where the girls came from a respectable family, indifference or shame were probably some of the reasons for their homelessness and becoming streetwalkers.[292] Significantly, the directors of the Glasgow Magdalen Asylum sent women they considered not to be apt for the Home to relatives or friends or to the poorhouse in return for a few shillings. Other women who became chronically or terminally ill just stayed in the refuges until they died, because they did not have any other place to go.[293]

It was not uncommon for the Cambridge Refuge that a girl died on the premises, like the case of Sarah Spink who was eighteen and died of natural causes on 21 October 1846, according to the testimonies given for the Coroner's inquisition. The year 1846 was especially difficult for the Refuge, with financial anxieties and the Servant dismissed after two years of satisfactory service because of misconduct. According to the coroner of the borough, Charles Henry Cooper, the body did not show any signs of violence. The Matron, Mrs. Tofts, declared that the woman was in very good health and was not on the sick list, but she complained of her throat, and of cold and shivering the days previous to her death. She called the Refuge's Surgeon, Mr. Hammond, but the girl died in the arms of Matilda Webb, a servant at the Home.[294] Sarah Spink's death is also recorded in the *1846 Report* in the following way: 'The event, however which casts the darkest cloud over this year's *Report* is the death of one of the recently admitted Inmates, *the first death which has been recorded in the annals of this Institution*'. A little later in the same *Report*, the reflection is added about the situation of the woman who being in 'so much need of

[290] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 77; Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 167.
[291] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 36.
[292] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 197-8.
[293] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 100.
[294] *Coroner's Inquisition. Sarah Spink, Aged 18, Died of Natural Causes at the Cambridge Female Refuge* (Cambridgeshire Archives, CB/Co/P11/34).

true repentance should have been hurried away into eternity', while at the same time expressing that 'some comfort may be derived from the fact that after her admission as Probationer she expressed a strong desire to remain, and her conduct whilst under our roof was quiet and orderly'.[295] In that way, the *Report* reinforces the importance of the work done by the Refuge and its good influence over penitents even under these sad circumstances.

The archives for the Glasgow Magdalen Asylum also describe the backgrounds of its inmates: most came from lower-class surroundings, were orphans or from single-parent families, were in their late teens having been sexually initiated between sixteen and eighteen, and their former occupations were as low-ranking domestic servants or unskilled factory labourers. They drifted from one job to another and ended up engaging in full-time or part-time prostitution.[296] In the case of the Cambridge Refuge, some information about candidates can be gathered from the *Minutes.* Many of them came from broken families, had been the victims of failed courtships or had been abandoned by their husbands or partners; they had changed jobs frequently, had suffered rapes or seductions, and had even attempted suicide. Many attributed their fall to bad company or bad influence, public spaces or fairs being usually given as the scene of their 'sin'.[297] Fairs are mentioned again in the *Annual Reports* as places where seduction of women took place, especially because of the late hours, the drinking and dancing booths and the festive atmosphere. In particular, the Midsummer Fair was an event leading to great promiscuity. The Committee of the Refuge expressed their thanks to the police and Mayor for his prohibition of any booth remaining open after midnight in the year 1859 with the hope that this measure would be maintained in the coming years.[298]

However, these applicants' narratives can of course not be taken literally. They were biased by the middle-class lenses of those officers who recorded inmates' lives in terms of sin to build an image of the prostitute as a 'fallen woman' without agency. This agency was difficult to reclaim once she had dared to leave the domestic sphere, surrendering to the dangers of the world outside the home. This is the reason why they were friendless and homeless and in a situation of vulnerability that inclined them to submit to the sharp discipline and hard work of reform life in an asylum.[299]

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[295] *Annual Report 1846* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/19), 6.
[296] Mahood, ''The Magdalene's Friend'', 54.
[297] *Cambridge Female Refuge Minute Books* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/1 and R60/27/2).
[298] *Annual Report 1859*, R60/27/20, 9.
[299] Howell, 'A Private Contagious Diseases Act', 392.

At this point, theories of vulnerability and precariousness become very relevant for the analysis of inmates' lives both outside and inside the institutions. Butler's ideas of vulnerability and precarity become very convenient for describing confrontations and alignments between inmates and authorities. This way, establishing a contrast between middle-class strategies to contain sexual deviants and working-class traits to assert their group identity, both parties became vulnerable. Thus, asylum inmates first come under the predicament of Butler's notion of precarity. According to this, the lives and deaths of all the people whose destinies are not a matter of concern, because they belong to the category of the subaltern and 'the other', do not deserve public mourning. They cannot be labelled under the category of human as they are under the control of regimes of power.[300] This was the case of 'fallen women' as these nineteenth century places of confinement were regimes of power under the control of middle and upper-class men and women that reproduced biopolitical forms of power in a global unifying manner. These regimes were political strategies to remake working-class culture. Despite being charities, asylums, homes, refuges and penitentiaries, these institutions were local state representatives that complied with a political apparatus whose aim was to control and reform women who did not fulfil middle-class standards of morality because of sexual misconduct.

This idea of control was present in the frequent visits by members of the middle-class who were involved in these institutions' rescue-work. These visitors were either prominent individuals from the city or the University, women belonging to the Committee of Ladies, or male and female members of similar establishments elsewhere in the country. Their visits and impressions were recorded in the *Visitors' Book* and were regulated in the following way:

> N.B. Visitors may be admitted to inspect the Institution on the first Monday in every month, between the hours of One and Three, by Order from any one of the Managing Committee, who will most gladly grant it to any respectable Applicant.[301]

An instance of one of these visits was connected with the Female Refuge in Bath. A clergyman member of that institution reported on the good running of the Cambridge

[300] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 19-49.
[301] *Annual Report 1843* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/12), 11.

Refuge 'of which he could speak with "unmixed satisfaction"'. Consequently, the Bath matron was sent by the managers for a few days 'to get an insight into the working of such an establishment'.[302]

The institutions had a deep religious character that marked attitudes towards the prostitute. The diversity of religious feelings during the period is reflected in the names they received. Penitentiaries evoked sin, punishment and penitence. The latter was the reason why women were frequently called 'penitents'. Magdalen Asylums received their name from the best-known female sinner in the New Testament, Mary Magdalene. This offered women forgiveness although still making use of punishment. The idea was that inmates repented their past lives, asking for absolution of their sins to start a new life. The established Church of England was stricter initially, but gradually gave way to a more sympathetic attitude following the example of Evangelicals. Although in some Anglican establishments, prostitutes were regarded as sinners who would be excluded from Paradise and condemned to the eternal fire of Hell, and parallels were established between England and Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, most Evangelical and other kinds of homes put the emphasis on a forgiving God. Prostitutes were seen as victims of social injustice or of wicked men who had led them out of the path of virtue and then left them to their fate. In this sense, women were looked upon as children, weak, passive and pitiful, and as such in need of guidance. As a consequence of all this, most philanthropists had a redemptive approach in common, considering their mission to reclaim every single individual soul from eternal damnation. Evangelicals also believed that this world was a preparation for the next, so that they too had to dedicate their lives to good works to achieve the reward of Heaven. In this context, the parable of the lost sheep was constantly alluded to in relation to the rescue and reform of prostitutes.[303] Appeals to contributors in the *Reports* of the Cambridge Refuge reflect all those ideas. In this way,

> Every one of these misguided females, unless rescued in *this life* from their sinful course, must have been lost for ever; and although the precious atonement made by the Saviour of sinners is as efficacious for them as it is needful for every other child of Adam, it is affecting to consider what would have been their probable

[302] *Annual Report 1845*, R60/27/19, 6.
[303] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 31-3.

> state, if a shelter had not be found for them in such Asylum as this for which we plead.[304]

The same *Report* reproduces the fate that is ascribed to 'fallen women' who are not rescued and end their lives in a prison, a hospital or a madhouse, or continue their lives of vice becoming hardened sinners and betrayers of innocence themselves catering for male lust. The traditional notion of the prostitute's downward path leading to destruction because of her sin is here reproduced.[305] Thus, the object of reformers at the Cambridge Refuge was 'the saving of the souls of these poor wanderers […] to join this blessed work of today, and to be permitted to follow at ever so great a distance the feet of Him who came TO SEEK THAT WHICH WAS LOST'.[306]

As a result of all this, religious indoctrination was fierce, putting the stress on sin and guilt.[307] The Scriptures were seen as revealing how far the women were sinners, so that penitence and prayer together with incarceration and isolation became their punishment. Through the Bible, the women would learn about stories which taught them morality through self-sacrifice and duty.[308]

However, besides religious teaching, these penitents needed to be instructed in other aspects of life as they were mostly illiterate and unskilled. Many of the girls seeking admission in these refuges were described as uneducated and ignorant. They knew nothing or very little about domestic tasks like washing, cleaning and cooking, so they were taught in these apart from reading and writing.[309] In many of the *Annual Reports* of the Cambridge Female Refuge of this early period allusions to applicants' ignorance and illiteracy can be found, and in later stages diverse mechanisms were developed to make the teaching and training of these women further reaching and more comprehensive.

As far as recruitment was concerned, there were several tactics for attracting women to these places of confinement and isolation. Of course, some came voluntarily seeking a shelter, probably because of their miserable state and the lack of a place or family to turn to. But apart from those, magistrates and police officers sometimes helped the managers of these institutions to recruit girls from the streets. On other occasions,

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[304] *Annual Report 1841*, R60/27/12, 15. (Italics in the original)
[305] Mahood, *The Magdalenes,* 55.
[306] *Annual Report 1841*, R60/27/12, 16.
[307] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 174-5.
[308] Mahood, *The Magdalenes,* 83.
[309] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 202.

managers accepted women released from lock hospitals or hospitals with lock wards if the candidates were seen as wishing to reform themselves. However, most Evangelicals and Nonconformists were inclined to recruit prostitutes themselves 'through street work, midnight meetings or brothel visiting' or through Female Missions.[310]

In the case of the Cambridge Refuge during this early period, one can read in some of the *Annual Reports* in the 'Analysis of Receipts' that some of the inmates were kept by workhouses which sent them for reform; others came from other penitentiaries which also paid for their maintenance. But the collaboration between the University and the Refuge was essential in the recruitment of women. In one of the *Reports,* it is affirmed that 'the cooperation of the Proctors of the University during the ensuing year –whose services have often been, and still may be, of most essential use in procuring hopeful admissions into this house of mercy'.[311] Even more important for this process of recruitment was the work done by the Cambridge Female Mission which is mentioned for the first time in the *Report* for 1854. In this *Report,* the male agent of this independent association, Mr. John Edwards, is thanked for his efforts to rescue 'fallen women' from the town and the adjacent area, with words showing gratitude in the following way:

> He has induced one young woman to return home to her friends, and secured admission for another into this house of Refuge. A third woman has been provided with a respectable place as laundress; and a young child will to-morrow be taken up by him to London, from one of the worst houses in Barnwell, before she has time to be ruined, in order that she might be placed under the charge of a valuable society expressly instituted for the rescue of such young persons.[312]

There were in the country a number of Ladies' Associations which offered protection as well as advice in homes especially established for young girls who were 'wayward and troublesome' or were surrounded by a potentially dangerous environment. Their next natural step would be to become prostitutes, representing a threat both to themselves and the community at large.[313] The Cambridge agent of the Female Mission would first try to persuade the women prostitutes to join the Refuge; but if they remained obstinate, he

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[310] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 35.
[311] *Annual Report 1852* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/19), 6.
[312] *Annual Report 1854* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/19), 6-7.
[313] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 94.

would then send them to London. Similarly, at this early stage, the Refuge would in all probability receive inmates from the Spinning House -- the University Female Prison established in 1807 to detain women accused of prostitution in the University area --, especially when Proctors were very active in reclaiming girls for the Institution as discussed in another chapter of this book.

In this scenario, the numbers of inmates for the period 1839 to 1857 are presented in the following table, but these figures must be analysed with prudence[314]:

Years	Number admitted each year into the house having passed the Probation Ward	Left in disgrace each year	Sent to their friends, or to the Union on account of illness, being cases of a satisfactory nature	Sent out into respectable service	Total number of Inmates at the close of each year
1839	11	3	*Two* were sent to a London Penitentiary		6
1840	6	1	1	1	9
1841	4	0	0	2	11
1842	9	0	5	4	11
1843	7	1	3	2	12
1844	10	0	0	3	19
1845	11	5	2	6	17
1846	11	3	3	3	14
1847	7	8	6	3	4
1848	14	3	1	3	11
1849	9	3	4	1	12

[314] *Annual Report 1858* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/20), 7.

1850	7	8	3	1	7
1851	12	5	2	2	10
1852	6	3	2	1	10
1853	10	0	2	4	14
1854	8	1	2	4	15
1855	9	3	3	8	10
1856	22	6	7	4	15
1857	7	2	3	2	15

The numbers in this table for the year 1858 are missing, but they are discussed in the *1859 Report*. According to it, during that year seven women had entered the Probationary Ward, but only two were finally admitted while the others left for various reasons, although it seems that only one left wilfully; one woman was sent out to the workhouse because of bad health, one returned to her friends, one married and six were sent out for respectable service. So, the total number of women remaining in the House at the end of the year was eight.[315]

The number of inmates throughout the period 1838-1859 that remained in the house at the end of each year ranges between six during the first year and nineteen in 1844. The reason for this must be the oscillations in the recruitment activity and consequently in the number of women seeking admission, as well as the fact that some of the inmates were dismissed by the institution for several reasons after the two years of reform and instruction while others 'left in disgrace'.

The year 1847 must have been especially complicated, as the *Annual Report* acknowledges. Seventeen inmates had left the Institution for several reasons, which included pregnancy and ill health for which they were sent to the Union Workhouse; three had gone to service – of whom one had been engaged for the Refuge as a servant --, and four had returned to their friends. But regrettably, seven had left at their own desire 'and after earnest expostulation on the folly and danger of the step they were obstinately

[315] *Annual Report 1859*, R60/27/20), 5

resolved upon taking'.[316] Persuasion was employed to avoid women's desertion, but in many cases, it was in vain. They were supposed to have come to the refuge voluntarily and in theory could not be detained against their will. By contrast, in places like the Glasgow Magdalen Asylum inmates were asked, before being discharged, to give a month's notice and were left in isolation to think about their decision. If they persisted in their idea, they were reprimanded in front of the others, as happened to those who were dismissed for bad behaviour.[317] The statistics for this Asylum suggest that more than one-third of the women left the institution before the two years of confinement. Thus, in the *Report* of the Cambridge Refuge for the year 1847, the issue of contagion by example is mentioned as one of the main reasons why women became refractory:

> Again, among a class of persons like those who are the objects of this charity, when once an unsettled or dissatisfied spirit creeps in, it is very likely to spread by the contagion of example. It has been found accordingly, that several have come forward at or about the same time to express their determination to leave.[318]

There were also women who just escaped from these asylums, and euphemisms were employed to describe the situation in the Cambridge Refuge *Annual Reports*, as we shall see. They ran away probably because their temperaments were not suited to the discipline, routine and fierce religious brainwashing that were not adequate for their needs. Similarly, many others insisted on leaving and had to be left to their will to avoid such 'insubordination' spreading to other inmates. Finally, others were simply dismissed because they were bad-tempered, were idle or unwilling to follow the rules.[319] Even cases of general insubordination were not uncommon in the refuges. In the *Report* for 1850 when the Refuge again had eight women who had 'left in disgrace', some of the motives for these circumstances were given: some had been dismissed for bad conduct while others had proved refractory and would not stay.[320] Another issue is that we do not always know from these *Reports* about the number of women who went through the probationary period without success or the number of women who were dismissed after having gone

[316] *Annual Report 1847* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/19), 5.
[317] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 80-1.
[318] *Annual Report 1847*, R60/27/19, 5-6.
[319] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 182.
[320] *Annual Report 1850* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/19), 5.

through the admission procedure without being accepted by the Institution, so the figures in the table must be interpreted with caution.

One significant year in this early period was that of 1848 when one Sub-Matron was hired for the first time, a Mrs. Melville, to be replaced by a Mrs. Wilson in 1855. Equally relevant was the acceptance of an inmate who had been a hardened prostitute for twelve years. This is recorded as a major achievement, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the Refuge.[321] In the same vein, 1849 was the year when a Physician was hired for the first time, Dr. Webster, which means that few advances had been made with the hiring of staff in the progress of rescue work in the Refuge. Another outstanding year according to the table above is 1856 when twenty-two women were admitted, representing an important peak during this early period. Of these, during the year, three left at their own will, three were expelled for bad conduct, and another three were sent out to the workhouse on account of illness.

When talking about the figures for inmates in the York Penitentiary, Frances Finnegan argues that, behind the reasons for women abandoning such institutions, there were situations which were not really accounted for. She asserts that the categories established and the euphemisms with which they were defined convey an optimistic view about the work done, hiding failures. For example, when the accounts mention inmates being restored to friends, it meant in many instances that they were ungovernable, and thus having a negative effect on the other girls.[322] In any case, these categories, together with that of those who just did not want to stay on the premises, were a symptom of resistance and resilience on the part of a group of working-class women who did not identify themselves within the discourses on Magdalene and 'fallen women' as sinners, and who therefore resisted moral reform and surveillance.[323]

At this point, theories of resistance and resilience become very adequate to explain the inmates' behaviour in these institutions in the face of middle-class regimes of power. Sarah Bracke's definition of resistance 'characterised as the ability of something or someone to return to its original shape after it has been pulled, stretched, pressed, or bent'[324] becomes essential in my analysis of inmates' reactions. They did not share

[321] *Annual Report 1848* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/19), 5.
[322] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution,* 205-6.
[323] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 59.
[324] Sarah Bracke, 'Bouncing Back: Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience', in *Vulnerability in Resistance,* eds. Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay (Durham, N.C., USA: Duke UP, 2016), 54.

middle-class perspectives on their own class. But resistance leads to resilience and often subjects who are vulnerable and victims of trauma or violence want to recover their subjectivities and identities through 'denial of vulnerability' and 'a disidentification with dependence', gaining restoration and agency.[325] In other words, women penitents did not accept their vulnerable condition, rejecting their dependence on Evangelicals and middle-class reformers, but instead asserted their agency in breaking out of confinement.

In this context, the monitoring of inmates went beyond release. Most of the women who finished the two-year confinement satisfactorily were sent out for service in a middle-class family. Other instances of success involved marriage or emigration to the colonies to avoid bad influences and have a fresh start. Marriage within their own class was considered by middle-class reformers a happy outcome for many of these women who eventually became mothers and wives. Girls were given a reward for remaining in the same position one year: '*two* of those reported last year as having gone to service, have received each a gratuity of one guinea for *retaining their situations a twelve-month and conducting themselves very satisfactorily*'.[326] Bonuses were an incentive to stay in contact. Many returned to seek advice or help in difficult times. The Ladies' Committees visited the girls in their positions.[327] It was a kind of parole system in which the inmates' performance when they finished confinement was traced and recorded. The truth is that the world that awaited them outside the home was bleak and threatening, even if they had made an effort to reform. Life in domestic service was one of loneliness and hardship, and the women suffered exploitation and humiliation in all probability. In fact, many of them returned to their former lives of 'sin and evil courses' because their situation became unbearable after release.[328]

Nevertheless, *Reports* put the emphasis on the positive results of their work as a propagandistic weapon. The moral change that the Refuge had produced in these 'fallen women' as objects of reform was the main argument put forward for potential subscribers and benefactors to give donations and legacies for the maintenance of the system. For example, a young woman who had left the asylum at her father's wish, expressed her gratitude in the following words: 'I feel very grateful and very thankful to God, for

[325] Ibid., 59.
[326] *Annual Report 1842*, R60/27/12, 10. (Italics in the original)
[327] Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, 94.
[328] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 201.

snatching me from such a sinful course of life, and I hope I shall be ever grateful to the Committee for their kind instructions to me'.[329]

Others wrote letters to the Matron full of gratitude and tender memories of their time at the Refuge:

> I hope, my dear Matron, you will pray for me, give my love to all the young women and tell them, that I often think of them and pray for them, and I hope they do the same for me. I hope that my conduct now that I am in the world, will prove that the instructions I received while I was with you have not been in vain.[330]

The selection of letters was a clear move towards the support of the task developed by all the staff and members of the Institution who contributed with their work to the salvation of these women with the object of collecting money. However, not all the voices of the women who left the Refuge were heard, and we obtain a biased interpretation of the reality behind the asylum's walls.

The Cambridge Female Refuge in the mid-Victorian period (1860-1880)

The early years of the mid-Victorian period opened with some convulsions regarding the power of the University in regulating prostitution and reforming 'fallen women', as well as with some financial anxieties which reached a peak in 1862, as we shall see. Some events brought important changes for the Refuge. The government of the Institution suffered a substantial change with the resignation of Rev. Titcomb, who had been Secretary between 1848 and 1859, and Treasurer between 1846 and 1852 together with Rev. S.B. Sealy, who also resigned in 1859. Even his wife, Mrs. Titcomb resigned from the Ladies' Committee in the same year. These men had been key in the running and progress of the Institution. This situation brought some delay in the presentation of the *1860 Report*, as the new officers had to adapt to their positions. However, it seems that the changes did not affect the good results of the Institution in any great measure.[331]

In this account, the importance of the labour done by both the Proctorial system and the Cambridge Female Mission in the recruitment of inmates is underlined, the latter with the almost exclusive support of the undergraduates and University members. At a

[329] *Annual Report 1840*, R60/27/12, 6-7.
[330] *Annual Report 1842*, R60/27/12, 9.
[331] *Annual Report 1860* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/20), 3-4.

time when the authority of Proctors to regulate prostitution in Cambridge was a question of debate, the Refuge re-affirms the significance of 'the work of Restoration of 'fallen women', exerted by the Proctorial jurisdiction of the University'. The *Report* further states that if 'in consequence of recent events, the University should lose the power which has hitherto possessed, very great evil would result to the morals of the Town as well as of the University'.[332] There were significant tensions between town and gown at this stage which had existed before and continued to exist till the 1860s at least. Although the University counted on the support of the respectable population and rate-payers, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the issue began to have political connotations and some citizens got involved in radical opposition against this system.[333] This confrontation reached its climax in 1860 leading Mr. Titcomb himself to send a letter to two local newspapers, the *Cambridge Chronicle* and the *Independent Press*, which had the endorsement of the Female Refuge in the new Secretary Mr. John Scott. Mr. Titcomb had also been himself incumbent of Barnwell, the area of Cambridge where misery and depravity were at their worst in this period. The letter, dated 10 November 1860, includes a defence of the proctors in their work to prevent vice and to reform 'fallen women' in the following way:

> I need not remind you that we have had many instances in which the Proctor has rescued those he has taken from the streets, by passing them from the Spinning House to the Refuge; that in some cases a Proctor has sent them away from Cambridge at his own expense to Reformatory Institutions elsewhere; while in other cases women have voluntarily gone to the Proctor, and entreated him to take them to the Spinning House in order that they might escape the pollution of the streets.
>
> There are facts which, I think, it would be wise to make public. The popular idea of our Proctorial system as a mere instrumentality devised for the coercion and imprisonment of prostitutes, is so palpably unjust, that anything that redeems it from that obloquy, and exhibits it in the light of philanthropy and Christian beneficence, cannot be but useful.[334]

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[332] *Annual Report 1860,* R60/27/20, 7.
[333] Howell, 'A Private Contagious Diseases Act', 393.
[334] J.H. Titcomb, *The Beneficial Effects of the Proctorial Jurisdiction*, 10 November 1860 (Cambridge University Library, Cam.d.860.36).

The words that come next by Mr. Scott, incumbent of St. Paul's Parsonage and Secretary to the Refuge are of relevance in backing the importance of the Proctors' work, emphasising the idea that 'the Spinning House has always been a kind of *feeder* to the Refuge'. He then adds that 'during the present Term, -- in which the Proctors have abstained from action, -- *we have not had one application* from girls in Cambridge for admission into our Institution'.[335]

As far as the Female Mission in this period is concerned, a substantial change took place in the recruitment of candidates for the Refuge. From 1877 it was women and not men who did the job of reclaiming 'fallen women' either on the streets or in the houses to which they resorted. This came as part of a tendency, which had spread in the country and particularly in London, to hire women agents because 'The special requirements of this difficult and delicate mission seems to demand the special qualifications which women alone possess'.[336] In the *Report* for two years later, another important change is incorporated by which the female agent, whose tact and kindness to gain the confidence of the women are praised, can take them to a house in the neighbourhood of the Refuge located in the Barnwell area where they can be immediately admitted. Again, girls were provided with a home while the Refuge Committee decided which course to adopt in the case of each applicant.[337]

The year 1862 was especially difficult, as stated above, taking the Refuge to the brink of closure because of a lack of funds. According to *the Report*, 'This deficiency has not arisen from any particular increase in the expenditure, but from a decrease 'in public sympathy and support'.[338] The public seemed to be tired of so many special appeals, and collaboration between town and gown was evoked, in the hope of ending the Refuge's debts. The local clergymen were called on to preach sermons on behalf of the Refuge, and College services were another venue proposed for appealing for funds. Similarly, the inhabitants of Cambridge were addressed in the hope that they would renew subscriptions or become new subscribers. In the same fashion, attention was called to the fact that hardly any washing had been sent to the laundry, which had been another source of income. This shortage of demand would be a constant feature of most of the period.

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[335] Ibid. (Italics in the original)
[336] *Annual Report 1877* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/13), 7.
[337] *Annual Report 1879* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/13), 7.
[338] *Annual Report 1862* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/20), 3.

Nonetheless, the ideology of 'fallenness' was enduring in the appeals of these mid-Victorian years:

> The Committee desire to impress upon the minds of the public the idea that, in the majority of cases, return to homes and friends is rendered impossible, on the part of 'fallen women', not only from the fact that their friends often shut their doors against them […] but also that the young women themselves will not return home. Their pride will not let them carry their disgrace to where they are known and have been respected –for there is a pride of shame as well as a pride of honour.[339]

This Refuge imputed a proud sense of shame to these women which reconciled them with the idea of being worth being rescued. Besides, their image of victims with no friends in the world emphasised their weakness and childish nature, as Bartley also argues.[340]

This idea of weakness is reflected in the way in which probation is enforced during this period. The *Report* for 1865 insists on the fact that there were some applicants who did not want to go through that stage, expressing their wish to join the other girls at once and to have the guarantee of a situation in a few weeks. For the managers of the Refuge, the candidates' sincerity had to be proved by their isolation for a period of between one week and a fortnight. The Committee did not consider probation a severe ordeal; just the opposite: it was a time when the inmate was never alone, accompanied by the Matron or Sub-Matron. She also had everything she needed to have for a comfortable stay: 'Books to amuse her, a garden to walk in', being 'well fed and comfortably clad'.[341] However, for the young woman it must have been a hard experience to be subject to a Foucauldian regime similar to a prison and under the surveillance of the asylum authorities.

In this sense, religious instruction was more clearly defined during this period, with inmates being baptised or confirmed. In 1872 a Chaplain was appointed to the Institution for the first time, Rev. C.E. Searle, which meant that more constant and personal care was taken in the indoctrination and salvation of inmates. In the *Report* for this year direct allusion is made to the Diocese of Ely, identifying the work done by the Refuge with a branch of the Church work in the area which was represented by the Bishop of Ely who presided over most annual general meetings. Also, the Home received women

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[339] Ibid., 6.
[340] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 33.
[341] *Annual Report 1865* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/20), 6-7.

from different towns and villages in the area, not only from the town of Cambridge.[342] This was why, in 1873, the days on which inmates could be visited by friends changed to the second and fourth Fridays in the months for residents in Cambridge, and the second and fourth Saturdays for those coming from the countryside. A visit by the Archbishop on 11 December 1872 was acknowledged in the *Report* for 1873. He also inaugurated the Church of St John the Evangelist in Wellington Row the same day.[343] He would also preach occasionally in Ely Cathedral on behalf of the Refuge. In 1875, local committees of the Cambridge Female Refuge were established in towns like Huntingdon, Wisbech, Bury St Edmunds and Bedford to serve the area that belonged to the diocese.[344]

Leisure was also more clearly specified in the functioning of the Refuge during the mid-Victorian period. The one-day excursion to Hunstanton, a seaside town in Norfolk, became a classic. Thanks to the Great Eastern Railway Company, the double journey was made at single fares. It was a special day for everyone in the Refuge. In 1845, the railway had come to Cambridge, changing the city for ever. People could travel faster and at cheaper cost, while stagecoach trips and river traffic declined and almost disappeared.[345]

Regarding numbers, the table for the years 1859 to 1868 runs as follows[346]:

DATE.	ADMITTED.	DISMISSED.				
		Probationers.	Disgrace.	Union from illness.	Home.	Service.
1859	12	3	0	3	1	5
1860	11	5	1	1	1	3
1861	12	3	2	2	0	5
1862	13	2	5	0	1	5
1863	10	1	1	0	2	6

[342] *Annual Report 1872* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/13), 6.
[343] *Annual Report 1873* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/13), 6.
[344] *Annual Report 1875* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/13), 7.
[345] Boyd, *The Story of Cambridge*, 70.
[346] *Annual Report 1868*, R60/27/20, 8.

1864	8	1	4	0	0	3
1865	21	5	7	1	1	7
1866	14	5	7	0	0	2
1867	11	1	10	0	0	0
1868	14	-	3	1	1	-

Of the year 1869 we only know from the archives that there were thirteen inmates in the Refuge.[347] If we compare this table with the one for the years 1839-1857, the average number of women admitted had risen from 9.47 to 12.6. This means that there was an intensification in the rescue work in the town and the University, and the Refuge was growing as a home for the reception of female penitents. The year 1865 saw a peak in the number of women admitted. However, in my opinion, this increase does not have any relation with the passing and application of the Contagious Diseases Acts as Cambridge was not under their jurisdiction.

Thus, as I also argue in the chapter about the Spinning House, I disagree with Howell when he affirms that the Cambridge University system of regulation of prostitution was an antecedent to the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869. There is a considerable number of scholars who have analysed the CD Acts and their impact on the population of the registered districts. (Finnegan, 1991; Howell 2000, 2009; Mc Hugh 1980; Ogborn, 1993; Romero-Ruiz 2008, 2014; Sigsworth and Wyke 1973; Walkowitz, 1991). The CD Act of 1864 established that if a woman was suspected of being a prostitute, she could be detained by the police to be taken to a certified hospital for examination; if she refused, a magistrate could order her medical inspection and be sentenced to prison for one or two months. If she was found with venereal disease, she was confined in a hospital for up to three months. The idea was to protect sailors and soldiers in eight garrison towns and dockyard towns in England: Aldershot, Chatham, Colchester, Plymouth/Devonport, Portsmouth, Sheerness, Shorncliffe and Woolwich -- and three in Ireland – Cork, the Curragh and Queenstown. Women were given certificates

[347] *Annual Report 1869* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/20), 8.

after release.[348] With the 1866 Contagious Diseases Act the operations were extended to Windsor and women suspected of being prostitutes had to undergo regular medical inspections every fortnight for a period of one year. If the suspected prostitute was found venereally ill, she could be kept in a hospital for up to six months.[349] The 1869 CD Act was passed as an amendment to the one of 1866, extending the maximum time of confinement of women in hospital to nine months, and allowing the detention of prostitutes for up to five days if they were not fit for examination. Canterbury, Dover, Gravesend, Maidstone and Southampton, became new 'subjected districts'. The CD Acts were applied until their suspension in 1883 and their repeal in 1886.[350]

Howell establishes a number of similarities between the Cambridge system and the CD Acts to demonstrate his argument: proctors could detain women suspected of being prostitutes on the area under University jurisdiction; these women were taken to the Vice-Chancellor's Court and, if sentenced, were confined in the Spinning House.[351] However, there were areas outside the University domain that were not under its control, but in the hands of the town police who would apply the 1824 Vagrancy Act and then the 1839 Metropolitan Police and 1847 Town Police Acts. In addition, the women detained were neither medically inspected nor sent to a lock hospital for cure. Finally, both Cambridge and Oxford Universities had had for several centuries their own legislation and police to control prostitution among their undergraduates.

The numbers for the rest of this period after the passing of the three CD Acts are shown in the next table that has been elaborated with the information found in the *Reports* for the years 1870 to 1880. There are no figures relating to the number of probationers, and in just a couple of instances there are discrepancies in the archives. Information is sometimes lacking for some of the years:

Year	Admitted	In the Home (end of year)	Dismissed or left voluntarily	Left because of illness	Returned to friends/home	Gone to service	Married

[348] Philip Howell, *Geographies of Regulation: Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 38-9; Paul Mc Hugh, *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 37-8; E.M. Sigsworth and T.J. Wyke, 'A Study of Victorian Prostitution and Venereal Disease', in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age,* ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1973), 94-5.
[349] Howell, *Geographies of Regulation*, 41-2; Sigsworth and Wyke, 'A Study of Victorian Prostitution', 95.
[350] Mc Hugh, *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform*, 51-2; Sigsworth and Wyke, 'A Study of Victorian Prostitution', 95.
[351] Howell, 'A Private Contagious Diseases Act', 377.

1870	-	16 (average)	2	1	1	2/4	1
1871	-	18	2/5	1	1	4	4
1872	-	-	1	3	3	3	1
1873	15	15	2	-	2	4	1
1874	12	18	4	-	-	6	1
1875	11	16	2	-	-	11	3
1876	6	16	2	-	-	6	8
1877	16	11	2	1 (sent to Fulbourn Mental Asylum)	3	8	2
1878	16	-	8	-	3	3	3
1879	18	10	8	1 (sent to a London Hospital)	-	4	3
1880	13	11	2	-	-	7	2

Similarly, the *Reports* show that women were also sent to other refuges, probably due to misconduct: two in 1871, one in 1873, one in 1878, and four in 1879. Some of the women who were sent to service settled in Canada. There was one case of an inmate's death in 1877. Finally, one woman was sent to Mrs. Mayne's Home for Deserted Mothers[352] in 1874, and another one was provided for by an anonymous 'lady' in 1879. The average number of women in the Refuge during this period was 14.5, which again represented another increase in comparison with previous years. To cover the needs of the increasing number of women, new appointments were made in 1871: a laundry superintendent to relieve the Matron from that burden, and Assistants for each dormitory.

The years 1878 and 1879 were difficult as the number of inmates who left voluntarily or were dismissed was eight in each case. The Asylum Committee lamented the ingratitude of these women, but at the same time attributed the quite frequent cases of insubordination and outbursts of passion to the 'class from whom the inmates are taken', to then add that the inmates' faults 'are yielding to the gentle treatment and kindly

[352] Mrs. Mayne's Home for Deserted Mothers was founded in London in 1864 to provide a home for previously respectable women and their illegitimate children. By mid-1894, it had become part of the Church Penitentiary Association for the Reclamation of Fallen Women (founded by Gladstone). This association was more effective in diminishing the number of deaths of illegitimate children by letting mothers keep their children for longer before the latter were taken to a foster home. The Home was first located in Great Coram Street, and then moved to Burton Crescent in 1891.
University College London, 'UCL Bloomsbury Project'.

influences of the House'.[353] In other words, this is a process of domestication of 'fallen women' according to middle-class standards, taking into account the situation in which they arrived at the Refuge:

> The applicants for admission have been mainly, if not altogether of the lowest class, and the advantages here afforded to them can hardly be overrated. Many of the poor creatures who appear before the Committee are as ignorant and uncivilised as if they had not been born in a Christian land. Some of them are complete 'wrecks' both in body and mind, and utterly abandoned to their own resources, at an unusually early age.[354]

However, according to the *Reports*, after their stay in the Home, the change effected in them was prodigious:

> Those who had only seen them on their admission would be astonished to find how altered they become at the end of their two years' probation. The visible effects of a rapid transition from a life of systematic vice and semi-starvation to the comforts and regularity of a Home – the only home some of them ever knew — and its moral atmosphere, are almost incredible.[355]

Remarks like this appear very frequently in the sources to address a middle-class readership and attract subscriptions.

Therefore, the transgression committed by women prostitutes had to be atoned for under the condition of regret and shame that they developed in the Refuge. The feeling of embarrassment that inmates are quoted as claiming to have experienced was a self-conscious performance of decency, that is, 'an acknowledgement of normative rules of conduct through the admission of guilt –an admission the morally decent and socially disciplined displayed'.[356] And yet, the truth was that women were rewarded with pecuniary rewards as they remained in the Institution for longer, and until they completed their two years' residence, according to the following scale:

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[353] *Annual Report 1872*, R60/27/13, 4.
[354] *Annual Report 1865*, R60/27/20, 5.
[355] Ibid., 5.
[356] Rimke, 'Constituting Transgressive Interiorities', 258.

> That each Inmate, who has been in the House for six months receive 3d. per week, payable weekly; and each Inmate, who has been one year in the house, 6d. a week, payable also weekly, the payment for any given week to be forfeited by disobedience, carelessness or misconduct, at the discretion of the Matron.[357]

Bonuses served various functions: they were incentives to make women work, encouraging industry and self-respect. They also supported middle-class ideas about the judicious use of money.[358] For example many inmates put their earnings in a Savings Bank, according to many *Reports*.

Regarding the issue of propaganda, apart from the letters to the Matron, the Ladies of the Committee or other governing authorities, a new feature appears in some of the *Reports* for this mid-Victorian period: letters from mistresses reporting on ex-inmates working in situations in their homes. Here are some examples:

> The mistress of one of them writes as follows: 'I really believe her to be a changed character (in her inner life), for her everyday 'conduct is so consistent'.
>
> Another correspondent sends the following report of another young woman: '---- - is going on remarkably well. -- -- in whose service she is, tells me that they find her a valuable servant.' […]
>
> Another correspondent wrote lately to the Matron to ask her to select one of the inmates for her service. This case is the more satisfactory, as the same lady obtained her former servant from the Refuge. Concerning her she writes in the highest praise, and 'deeply regrets that she should have to lose her valuable services'.[359]

The Cambridge Female Refuge in the late-Victorian period (1881-1899)

The last years of the Victorian period brought with them some changes regarding the conception of sexuality and morality, extending the control over vice and the responsibility for promiscuity to the male population. It was a matter of purifying the nation, and the Social Purity Movement emerged in the 1880s, especially with the creation

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[357] *Annual Report 1873*, R60/27/13, 5.
[358] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 51.
[359] *Annual Report 1862*, R60/27/20, 5.

of the National Vigilance Association (NVA). The NVA was born in 1885, the same year as saw the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (CLAA), which brought important changes to the lives of prostitutes. The age of consent was raised to sixteen and male homosexuality was made illegal for the first time, but also other aspects concerning the control of brothels and prostitutes were implemented. As a result, women could not resort to 'houses of ill fame' or work in couples, beginning to depend on pimps.[360] Social purists started to think that it was more useful to stop the demand rather than the supply of prostitutes, viewing the business also as a consequence of men's sexual incontinence and not only as women's fault. They were also critical of preventive work and reform only being done among women and saw punishment as something to be applied to both sexes and all social classes.[361] This idea of social purity, together with the emphasis on the importance of female rescue work, can be found in the *Annual Report* for 1890, where a lady was anonymously quoted from a recent *Westminster Review:*

> Women who as examples of all that is pure and good are the natural leaders of Society, are recognising in increasing numbers their responsibility for the morals of their day, and are not now ashamed of holding out a helpful hand towards the outcasts of their own sex. Women […] are rising to a higher morality. If women rise, men may rise at a corresponding level, and vice be regarded not only as a vulgarity, but as a moral disqualification for the favour of society.[362]

The rescue work among the women of Cambridge and its surrounding area continued to be done by the Female Mission with its female agents throughout the late years of the Victorian period. Similarly, the funding during this time remained in the hands of the town, but especially of the Church and the University. Finances suffered various ups and downs, with a positive move in the purchase of two other houses at No. 15 and No. 16 in Christ Church in 1881 which the Refuge rented so as to help its maintenance. In fact, No. 16 was rented to the Cambridge Female Mission.[363] Presents and gifts were also mentioned as part of the help the Institution received for its running: gifts of clothing from

[360] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 156.
[361] Ibid., 185.
[362] *Annual Report 1890* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/21), 9.
[363] *Annual Report 1881* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/21), 7.

the Cambridgeshire Guild of Needlework, food, books and magazines, flowers and plants, etc. Visits by a dentist are also recorded in some *Annual Reports*.

Illustration 3

Section and Elevation of (Extension to) Female Refuge, n.d. late nineteenth century, Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/11.

Inmates' routines were defined in more detail in the last *Reports* of the century, when their instruction and teaching became more specific. Among the routines, housework, laundry-work, needlework, classes and lessons, religious teaching and recreation were considered. Laundry-work, needlework and housework were part of the teaching to become servants and obtain a situation in a middle-class home after release. These would keep the women in their own sphere of gender and class. The work in the laundry was kept between 6.30 am and 7 pm, with regular breaks for meals and recreation. The rest of the evening after 7 pm, they could either work, read or rest as they pleased. On Saturdays, work was finished by 5 pm, and there was no work on Sundays. Girls were given the chance to have a walk once a week whenever possible.[364] As can be seen, working hours were very long and included washing, folding, and ironing in bad sanitary conditions with dampness and hardly any ventilation. Such conditions must have been lethal for even strong young women. There is no reference to meals or menus in the *Reports* of the Cambridge Refuge. It seems that the diet was similar to that of workhouses. For example, the CPA recommended meat five times a week, fish on one day, and bread and cheese on Friday; currant pudding was served on Sundays, and the rest of the meals consisted of bread and butter with tea or coffee. In difficult times, meat would disappear from the menu.[365]

Religious instruction continued being a priority: girls joined at 7.30 for prayers; after breakfast the Matron taught a short class, and Hymns were sung as well as at Evening prayer. On Wednesday evenings there was a service conducted by the Chaplain, although in the past the girls had attended the evening service at Christ Church where they would mix with the local congregation in the Barnwell area. They went to Christ Church for Sunday service as well. The Chaplain also prepared inmates for baptism and confirmation. There was a Bible class on Fridays given by one member of the Ladies'

[364] *Annual Report 1899* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/22), 7.
[365] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 49.

Committee.[366] The ladies of the Committee were in charge of teaching lessons in reading, writing, arithmetic and singing since, as we have learnt from earlier *Reports*, Refuge applicants were mostly ignorant and even illiterate in many instances.[367]

Another aspect of life within the asylums which improved in the last decades of the nineteenth century was leisure. Working-class amusements like alcohol, gambling, fairs, etc. were not considered apt for women in the refuges and were totally forbidden because they were associated with social chaos. Therefore, the leisure pursuits organised by the institutions' authorities were basically those related to the middle-classes with a respectable and morally elevating hint. A respite from the hard work of the laundry was considered important, but always under supervision.[368] The traditional excursion to Hunstanton was kept through the late years of the Victorian period, but several new treats were implemented either regularly or for special occasions. For instance, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887, a special dinner was held in the Refuge and then the girls went for a walk in the town to see the illuminations of Parker's Piece.[369] From 1889, during the annual excursion, a visit to Barham Hall, Pembroke College's property in Hunstanton, was added for the inmates to have afternoon tea. In the late years, another excursion took the girls to the Vicarage of Hauxton to have tea with Rev. William Ward. Similarly, Christmas also became a special occasion with the collaboration of the ladies on the Committee for the Christmas tree, giving tea to the inmates with the company of friends of the Institution.[370]

Another significant change in these late years of the Refuge was the incorporation of the cubicle system. In most of these types of institution, girls used to sleep together in dormitories with many beds for a small space, not allowing them any privacy. It was also an arrangement that could bring corruption in the eyes of middle-class reformers. Therefore, many asylums and homes began to give inmates either a private bedroom or a cubicle.[371] At the Cambridge Refuge cubicles were provided in 1887 for the women at the Ladies' Committee's initiative. Dormitories were divided into separate bedrooms under the cubicle system, taking care that ventilation be what was defined as sanitarily adequate. These were the advantages that the Managing Committee could see in this new

[366] *Annual Report 1899*, R60/27/22, 8.
[367] *Annual Report 1886* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/21), 8.
[368] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 55.
[369] *Annual Report 1887* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/21), 6-7.
[370] *Annual Report 1897* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/22), 8.
[371] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 50.

arrangement: it would lead to some moral improvement or at least self-respect and spiritual welfare; inmates would enjoy pretty surroundings with their personal things including pictures, photographs, etc. bringing cheerfulness to their lives; and finally, the young women could be on their own for certain part of the day, favouring the reading of the Bible or reflection on the teachings of the day.[372]

Regarding the numbers for inmates, the table for the years 1881-1899 is as follows:

Year	Admitted	In the Home (end of year)	Left of their own accord	Returned to parents/friends	Dismissed	Gone to service
1881	13	11	-	-	-	10
1882	-	-	-	-	-	6
1883	15	-	-	6	1	10
1884	-	-	-	1	-	8
1885	16	-	11	-	-	6
1886	23	14	2	1	2+4 (to other Homes)	6
1887	17	14	5	-	4	7
1888	12	15	4	-	3	8
1889	20	18	-	-	1+4 (to other Homes)	10+2 (Canada)
1890	14	17	4	2	1 (hospital)+3 (to other Homes)	5
1891	16	18	1	3	3 (to other Homes)+1	7

[372] *Annual Report 1887*, R60/27/21, 7-8.

					Magdalen Hospital (London)	
1892	13+4*	-	-	4	3 (to other Homes)	8
1893	15	-	-	2	3 (to other Homes)	9
1894	13	20	-	3	1 (to another Home)+2 Ipswich Hospital	4
1895	11+1*	14	-	2	4+2 (to other Homes)	10
1896	17	20	-	1	1 (to another Home)+1 to prison	8
1897	7	17	-	3	1 (to another Home)	6
1898	9	17	-	1	2+1 (to another Home)	5
1899	12	18	-	1	2 (to other Homes)	7

*Re-admitted

The average number of girls remaining in the Refuge for the last two decades of the nineteenth century is 16.38, which represents an increase once more, taking into account that there is some missing information for six years in the period. It is difficult to find an explanation for this unless we think about the significant growth of population at the end of the Victorian era or the professionalisation of an Institution with, now, more than sixty years of history in 1899. We also know from the archives that five women left without finishing probation in 1884, and two were considered not eligible in 1888. To

this, we have to add that one girl died in the Refuge in 1892 and one was promoted to Assistant Laundress in the Institution, which was quite a common practice. One outstanding aspect of the data contained in the table is that of women being re-admitted in 1892 and 1895, contravening the General Rules of this House of Mercy, but there is no explanation for this in the *Reports* of those years. Similarly, emigration to the colonies to work in service, particularly in Canada and Australia, continued in this late period, so that many young women could start a new life in a new country. In the same fashion, some of them married and so far as we can tell settled happily in most cases.

However, if we take a closer look at these numbers, we can ascertain that the success of the rescue work done in the Refuge was not that impressive. As stated above, unruly or rebellious women were disrupting the functioning of these places on many occasions. An easy form of rebellion could be not doing their job as laundresses properly and thus affecting the Refuge's income, or just simply stopping working, which would probably mean expulsion.[373] If we look at the number of inmates who 'left of their own accord' – which was an euphemism for running away --, who returned to their parents or friends, or who were dismissed because of bad conduct or to be transferred to another home, we can assert that numbers of cases of 'fallen women' saved by devoted philanthropists were far from satisfactory.

Nevertheless, and on a positive note, in the *Reports* for these last years, some details, although mostly biased, can be obtained about inmates. For example, in the *Report* for 1883, brief information is given about twenty-seven cases in the year who were identified just by their numbers[374], whose situations ranged from working in situations to married, in the colonies, in ill health, returned home, or causing trouble in some cases. We know the ages of two of them who were nineteen and twenty-three respectively.[375]

In the *Report* for 1893, details about some of the inmates who left the Institution that year were recorded. They were given the numbers corresponding to their admission, but we do not know their names. However, their stories are very much in line with the middle-class ideology of reform. Number 643 was only fourteen when she entered the Home; her father died and her mother married another man; she was described as theatrical, quarrelsome, with outbursts of passion and violent screaming. Number 630

[373] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 60.
[374] Applicants were given numbers after admission which followed the order of entrance since the Institution was established. This information could be usually found in the Managing Committee minutes, but most of them have not survived, except for the years between 1838 and 1853.
[375] *Annual Report 1883* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/21), 8-9.

was seventeen upon entrance; she had been in an orphanage after her mother's death and the subsequent father's absence; she was so ill because of 'her sinful life' that she died of inflammation of the brain in Addenbrookes Hospital. So, we can presume that she died of syphilis. Number 624 was twenty-three on admission and came from a decent family; while in service in London, she had met bad companions and became what is described as a drunkard. Number 618 had been seduced and left by a soldier while in service in Bedford. Finally, number 633 was a servant in a lodging-house in Cambridge, with a dead mother and a missing father; she had been arrested in the streets and taken to the Spinning House where she appeared obdurate; then she was taken to the Refuge, but was restless and wayward, and as a consequence was transferred to another asylum.[376]

We find similar information about inmates for the years 1894, 1895,1896, 1897, 1898 and 1899 in the *Annual Reports*. In some cases, they were given numbers or letters; in other cases, they were identified by their initials. Words like 'untruthful', 'sullen', 'violent passions', 'disobedient', 'quarrelsome', 'depraved', 'stubborn' were used to describe them when they entered the Refuge. However, many showed 'repentance'. All the testimonies which came mainly from the Matron ended up by stating the power of the Institution to change them and transform them into respectable working-class women. A couple of examples were described as 'mentally deficient' and 'mentally weak'; of one of them the *Report* says: 'She is an orphan and will never be morally strong enough to battle with the world's temptations through mental weakness', endorsing the belief of the time that mentally deficient women could not control their will when exposed to moral temptation.[377] Another issue which attracts attention is that many of these women were really very young, almost children, varying in age between fourteen and eighteen, with girls in their twenties highly exceptional. Child prostitution and child abuse were another strong preoccupation for Victorians, especially in the last decades when the 1885 CLAA was passed, raising the age of consent. As a result of all this, many asylums for very young or mentally deficient girls were established in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As Bartley argues, these girls were seen as a threat to themselves and to society because of their inability to cope alone.[378]

Propaganda to raise money was behind these girls' stories, although the usual method of including letters from the Matron from former inmates persisted in the accounts

[376] *Annual Report 1893* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/22),7-9.
[377] *Annual Report 1896* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/22), 8-9.
[378] Bartley, *Prostitution*, 94, 119.

of the late years of the Refuge in the Victorian period. I will now describe the common characteristics to these letters in the *Reports*, as all of them agree on the following:

> 1. In affectionate regard for the Matron, and in attachment to the Home they have left.
> 2. In regretting the loss of the services, classes and lessons to which they were so long accustomed.
> 3. In attributing their improvement mainly to the Matron's daily teaching.
> 4. In a clearer perception of the dangers surrounding them in their present life, and of the great need of prudence and circumspection if these dangers are to be avoided.
> 5. In a resolve to do their work bravely, and to put up with anything that may be disagreeable to discharge their several duties properly.
> 6. In a deep conviction of the necessity of trust in their Heavenly Father, and a resolve to seek by prayer through Christ their Saviour for His help and comfort.[379]

All these words together with the selection of letters and testimonies amount to corroborating the domestication and subjugation of 'fallen women' to middle-class standards of morality and decency, making the women a respectable workforce, accepting their gender and class position, and following the religious principles they had been taught. Most letters were addressed to the Matron, who was always an outstanding figure in the Refuge, allegedly being regarded by many inmates like a mother. Here is an example: 'My dear Mother, -- I feel very happy as yet. I keep on praying to God to keep me, and to take all wicked thoughts and feelings away, which I am sure He will do if I keep to Him'.[380] This idea of the Matron as a motherly figure and also of the directors as fatherly figures was connected with the notion of the Refuge as a home and the infantilisation of the penitents in their process of transformation.[381] Presumably, had ex-inmates had different (e.g. religiously less 'appropriate') thoughts, they would have been less likely to write at all of a motherly Matron, if they ever did, to be mentioned in such *Reports,* given that these amounted ultimately to appeals for further funding.

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[379] *Annual Report 1890*, R60/27/21, 6-7.
[380] *Annual Report 1889* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/21), 7.
[381] Mahood, ''The Magdalene's Friend'', 55.

Finding situations for women was an arduous task, and there were numerous appeals to the people of Cambridge in the *Reports*. Having a Magdalen asylum ex-inmate as a servant in a respectable middle-class home must have been considered as not very desirable, despite the low wages they earned, and their being provided with an outfit after release. Many women expressed their disappointment in their jobs, and many others came back to the Refuge as visitors for short periods. These visits were presented as 'a great testimony to the hold on their affections which the Matron nearly always succeeds in winning and keeping', affording the 'means by which the Matron is enabled to keep an influence over them'.[382]

To conclude, throughout this chapter we have seen that the Cambridge Female Refuge in the Victorian period fulfilled all the characteristics of institutions of its kind, supporting the middle-class ideology of fallenness concerning 'deviant' poor women. The causes of their fall as described in the *Reports* also conforms to the ideas of the time about women as simultaneously victims and sinners. Still, a change in direction attributing some of the guilt to men appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, inspired by the Social Purity Movement and the views of the many associations to protect young girls. The idea behind seclusion was to protect both the girls and the rest of society from the perils of a life of promiscuity and depravity; also, to reform penitents through religious indoctrination and hard work to return them to the community as decent working-class women. In the case of the Cambridge Refuge, special features can be discerned connected with the division of the city in town and gown. The University had a strong and important role in the control and regulation of prostitution in the area under its jurisdiction, and both proctors and the Spinning House worked in collaboration with the Refuge. Also, there was close connection with gaols and the workhouse, constituting Cambridge's interrelated architecture of sexual containment, which also encompassed other institutions and associations in the town, the county, and even other parts of the country.

However, as in other institutions of the kind, the success of their Evangelical work did not meet expectations. Many women did not go beyond the probationary period or left before completing the two years of isolation. Some of them would return to their families or friends while others would return to their former lives. We cannot hear their voices in the *Reports* and *Minutes of the Managing Committee*, but their lives within the walls must have been very hard to cope with. To this we need to add that their acts of

[382] *Annual Report 1898* (Cambridgeshire Archives, R60/27/22), 7.

insubordination were surely associated with their claiming of their own class identity and agency, bearing in mind they probably found sympathy in people of their own class. These did not share their values with those of the bourgeoisie. Most girls shared disrupted family backgrounds and similar pasts, starting in the business at a very young age. So, their situation must have been really desperate to accept seclusion and rules and regulations difficult to assimilate within their own moral values as a class. They would not probably accept a life of loneliness and drudgery in domestic service, although those who tried to reform them did it in real earnest with about seventy refuges by 1900 in England. Reformers sincerely thought that the education and instruction these women received would awaken in them a change of heart. And yet, for the women, resorting to prostitution for money, food, or drink was just something normal before, they would hope, settling down stably with a man. The reality was that the boundaries between respectability and immorality were not that clear for people of their own class.

AFTERWORD

Throughout this monograph, it has been my intention to describe Cambridge's architecture of containment of 'fallen women' in the Victorian era through a number of institutions mainly run by the middle-class. I have proved that the main feature of this task has been the collaboration among them, and, in particular, the liaison between town and gown, that is, the University and the city of Cambridge, which was characterised by numerous conflicts and tensions.

My discussion has been concerned with the exploration of prostitution in Cambridge as a perceived 'social evil' that had to be contained and regulated. The occupation of the public sphere by these women was seen as a threat to Victorian morality and middle-class ideology about women's proper place. With their behaviour, patriarchal values were contested as well as the notion of true womanhood that pervaded the social organisation of the period. Under both town and gown authorities, these 'fallen women' became very vulnerable of being contained in these places of isolation and reform, especially when it came to fears of contamination both in the moral and physical sense (venereal disease) on the part of the 'decent' Cambridge population.

In the first chapter, I have provided a contextualisation of the history of the University of Cambridge from the thirteenth century onwards but putting the emphasis on the Victorian period and the most important changes that the era brought about. To that end, both archival resources and recent scholarship have been discussed to explain how the social and historical context of Cambridge has been essential in the production of conditions and ideologies that supported the theory of the double spheres and the double standard code of morality concerning men's and women's sexual behaviour. Josiah Chater's diaries have been of special importance to reconstruct Cambridge's Victorian past and in the re-imagining of daily lives and big events in the city and the University. Also, Cambridge prostitution in the Victorian period has been analysed as the place was an attraction for women coming from the countryside and other parts of the country to find clients among the undergraduate population. The places where prostitutes could be found in the city and the University area have been described and contextualised within the working-class makeshift economy, contributing to the local history of the Victorian city.

In the second chapter entitled ‘Suppressing Vice: Cambridge University Spinning House’, the history and mechanisms of the University of Cambridge Female Prison have been described as an institution that was born to give work and shelter to the poor of the city, but then was transformed into the place where women charged by Proctors and their ‘bulldogs’ with offences associated with prostitution were kept. After being convicted by the Chancellor’s Court, the women were confined for a short period of time in the Spinning House and subjected to a disciplinary regime which included medical inspection, poor diet, light tasks and no instruction or training for their return to mainstream society. For the writing of this chapter, archival materials like the rules and regulations of 1849 and 1854 and the *Committal Books* (1823-1894) have been of the utmost importance to envisage the situation of vulnerability of the inmates. However, acts of insubordination and resistance were similarly common among the women who did not identify with the moral values of middle-class society. Of special value are the case studies of Elizabeth Howe who died in the Spinning House in 1846, and the cases of Beatrice Cooper and Daisy Hopkins in the 1890s. The former proved the awful conditions of the place and the latter the situation of vulnerability that Cambridge poor women suffered under this University regime.

In Chapter 3, ‘’Fallen women’s Makeshift Economy: The Cambridge Poor Law Union Workhouse’, I have explained how this institution was a crucial part of the city’s architecture of containment of immorality. Again, the vagueness of the concepts of ‘prostitution’ and ‘fallen women’ have been my main line of argument for a place of confinement of the poor that covered the wide ranges of situations/identities that such terminology might encompass. Various aspects of lives in the workhouse connected with poor women have been considered like the segregation of the sexes, the roles of officers in the workhouse structure, the rules and the inmates’ behaviour, sickness and disability, the containment of venereal disease, the running of casual wards, pregnancy and illegitimacy and the situation of abandoned wives and mothers. In all these elements stigma is a conspicuous feature associated with the role of ‘fallen women’ in Victorian Cambridge. Archival materials have seen the light for the first time to illustrate case studies that come to demonstrate the precarity of poor women’s lives and the role of prevalent ideologies around prostitution in the discourses of the time.

With Chapter 4 entitled ‘Prostitutes’ Crimes and Petty Offences: The Cambridge Gaols’, I have explored another face of the architecture of containment of prostitution, offering a comprehensive coverage of different forms of gaols, transportation, prison acts

and reforms, the court system and sentencing, corporeal and capital punishment, and prison diet. Again, my main contention has been that the middle-class ideology about women's proper behaviour was behind the running of Cambridge prisons and the treatment of the women inside. For this, the analysis of archival evidence has been fundamental to demonstrate that most women prisoners were prostitutes and had committed petty crimes associated with their activity and with poverty. They were sentenced to short periods of hard labour and/or given fines, and prison life was also part of their makeshift economy.

In the last chapter entitled 'Domesticating the Fallen: The Cambridge Female Refuge', many aspects of this institution for the 'rescue' and reform of prostitutes and 'fallen women' in Cambridge have been discussed covering the years of the Victorian period. Once more, the collaboration between the city and the University becomes an outstanding feature that makes of Cambridge — together with Oxford -- an isolated case in contrast with the rest of the country. As I have argued, the role of the Church is of great relevance here as in the rest of institutions in the city and the University for the containment of immorality that have been discussed in the previous sections of this monograph. In the chapter, I have provided a very detailed contextualisation of the practice (and ideologies) of 'rescue' work, and again, a compelling argument has been made for the vulnerability of working-class women who were liable to be classed as 'fallen' and/or prostitutes. With the inclusion of case studies and tables based on archival materials I have offered valuable primary data for analysing the way in which such an institution functioned as a form of social control.

Judith Butler's theories of vulnerability and precarity together with Michael Foucault's biopolitics and governmentality as well as the concept of 'stigma' have been the common thread in the analysis of all these institutions and the situation of 'fallen women' in them. However, it has been also demonstrated that poor women's vulnerability runs parallel with that of their middle-class peers as they perceived their behaviour as contaminant and threatening to their moral values and ideology.

Throughout the text, my main contention has been that ideology and class divisions were behind the tensions between town and gown in Victorian Cambridge and that all the institutions worked in close collaboration to contain promiscuity and immorality both in the University and the city. I hope to have contributed to the writing of the history of Cambridge in the nineteenth century and especially of the women who were the targets of the system. Although in a veiled and certainly sometimes biased way,

the voices of the women in the archives have been heard for the first time, and readers can have a first-hand approach to Cambridge's architecture of containment of immorality in the Victorian period.

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