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# The Casualties of Industrialisation in Glasgow:

## *Juvenile Delinquents and Magdalene Girls*

Amanda Gavin

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The Victorian era saw the colossal growth of Glasgow as an industrial city; some prospered but many more suffered the ravages of industrial capitalism. This paper will focus on a figure that came to symbolise the social dislocation of this era - the 'prostitute'. The definition of the 'prostitute' far exceeded a meaning of 'sex worker' and encompassed a meaning of a working class woman who subverted middle class norms without necessarily being sexually active. We will explore who the 'prostitute' was in practise and argue that 'juvenile delinquents' were politically 'prostitutes'. We will draw parallels between preventative industrial schools and adult reformatories such as Magdalene Homes, arguing that they had the same functionality. The paper aims to highlight the resistance of working class women to these attempts at social control and ultimately concludes that they retained a morality that was distinctly their own.

In the 19th century, Glasgow was the site of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation; from 1801 to 1841, Glasgow's population increased from 77,000 to 275,000, and by the beginning of the twentieth century the city was home to 760,000 people.<sup>1</sup> It was the industrial powerhouse of Scotland with a staggering amount of wealth concentrated within the city. However, many fell on the losing side of industrialisation and the population growth brought with it a crippling housing crisis, which made destitution highly visible. The pollution, disease and poor hygiene of the living conditions of Glasgow's urban poor served as a symbolic representation of social disorder. In religious, legal and medical discourses, the 'prostitute' of Victorian Scotland existed as a symbolic causality of the progression of industrial capitalism. In these discourses, the 'prostitute' served to reinforce middle-class superiority: against their 'respectability', she symbolised the degradation and debauchery of working class women; against their middle-class morality, she symbolised working-class depravity; against their virtue, she symbolised vice.<sup>2</sup> In middle class Victorian discourse destitution was usually considered the fault of the individual - their behaviour was perceived as immoral.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Sinclair, *Introduction to Social Policy Analysis: Illuminating Welfare* (2016), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830* (2002), p. 97.

Accordingly, many of the strategies deployed to combat poverty were of individual moral reform rather than wide social change. Marxist analysis of class relations during the nineteenth century often fails to consider the nuances of gender; the working class was not a monolithic cultural entity and we must recognise that it was gendered. Judith Walkowitz has argued the 'prostitute' was considered a symbol of the social dislocation in the industrial era and became the target for moral reform.<sup>3</sup>

In this essay, I examine the strategies deployed to reform the 'prostitute'. As we will see, the 'prostitute' of Victorian moralist discourse was an ambiguous figure who's meaning far exceeded that of sex worker. For the purposes of this paper, the 'prostitute' was a working class woman who has subverted middle class morality through her appearance, behaviour or perceived 'promiscuity'. We will also consider 'juvenile delinquent' girls as political 'prostitutes' and consider the reformatory schools (RS) and industrial schools (IS) they were sent to in the hope of being reformed. Reformatories for 'fallen' women in the Victorian era have rarely been considered in relation to RS, but it is misleading to approach them as separate movements. By the nineteenth century Glasgow had a vast number of reformatory institutions, many of them quasi-judicial with working relationships with magistrates. The Glasgow Magdalene Asylum was founded in 1812 and later became the Magdalene Institution (GMI) in 1840 with the aim of 'the repression of vice and for the reformation of penitent females'.<sup>4</sup> In 1838 the House of Refuge for Boys in Glasgow was established with the Magdalene Asylum serving as the *de facto* female branch. Two years later the official House of Refuge for Females was established merging with the Magdalene Asylum which became the Magdalene Institution (GMI).<sup>5</sup> The institution existed alongside numerous others designed to reform 'fallen' women; The House of Shelter, the Whitevale Shelter (Prison Gate Mission), the Dalbeth Refuge for Penitent Women (Roman Catholic), the Night Asylum for the Homeless, the House of Industry of Indigent Females, the Glasgow Home for Deserted Mothers and Home for Servants out of Place.<sup>6</sup> These institutions operated in a similar fashion and closely resembled a penitentiary despite entry being voluntary. Engaging in sex work was viewed by middle class philanthropists as one of the biggest risks to young working class girls and institutions used a reformatory approach as well as a preventative one. Providing the poor with industrial skills was often considered the remedy to the destitution made so highly visible by industrialisation and urbanisation in Glasgow. This is

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: 1983), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> 'Advert for Lock Hospital and Magdalene Asylum' in *Handbook of Glasgow Charitable and Beneficent Institutions* (1907)

<sup>5</sup> J.D Bryce, *The Glasgow Magdalene Asylum, Its Past and Present: With Relative Facts and Suggestions* (Glasgow: 1859), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> This list may not be exhaustive but this is the institutions and societies traceable by the Post Office Directory; See Anon, 'Wanted: The Truth About Pauperism', *Glasgow Herald*, 30 December 1891 pp. 5-6.

reflected in the movement of RS and industrial schools (IS) for children which in part responded to the criticism of the brutal prison system which placed children with adults regardless of sex. By the 1840s the reformatory approach was virtually indistinguishable from the preventative one.<sup>7</sup> This essay examines industrialisation in Glasgow from the 'bottom up', by considering the effects of 'reformatories' on those who are often hidden from the historical record: working-class women and adolescent girls.

Judith Walkowitz argues that mid-Victorians viewed prostitution as a social disorder, and the discussions surrounding it diverted from the central issues of class politics.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Mahood argues that poverty was not seen as a consequence of industrial capitalism but rather as a result of poor lifestyle choices such as intemperance and prostitution.<sup>9</sup> However, the directors of reformatories at times displayed a more nuanced understanding; the 1865 annual report of the GMI pleaded to its subscribers 'with regard to destitution, we...call the attention of masters of public works and other employers to the vast importance of the instrumentality they have in their hands for meeting the wants of the working classes.'<sup>10</sup> Laundries were a defining feature of most of the reformatories for 'fallen' women in Glasgow, as they served to support the charitable institutions whilst also providing the inmates with skills. Barbara Littlewood and Mahood consider them to have served a symbolic purpose representing a daily cleansing ritual for inmates.<sup>11</sup> However, the management of the reformatories stated that these served to support the institutions with little mention of any intended ritual symbolism; instead, it is in the intensive religious training in which we find the cleansing rituals. The directors of the GMI stated that religion was the 'great anecdote for moral evil'.<sup>12</sup> Although, juxtaposed by the focus placed on individual moral reform, industrial training in reformatories was intended as a pragmatic solution. The House of Shelter stated that their inmates were employed in needlework, and received 'the proceeds of their labour, in return for which the inmates are lodged, fed, and clothed.'<sup>13</sup> The Catholic Training Home for Young Girls stated that their 'first object was to train the young girls for domestic work.'<sup>14</sup> The Glasgow

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<sup>7</sup> The key differentiation between industrial and reformatory schools were that industrial schools intended to be non residential and were known locally as 'feeding' schools which was considered an incentive for children to attend.

<sup>8</sup> Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society Women*, p.41.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Mahood, *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: 1990), p.52.

<sup>10</sup> GUSC, sp coll BG54-c.11, 'The Fifth Annual Report 1865 The Glasgow Magdalene Institution', Glasgow 1865, p.9.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Littlewood, Linda Mahood, 'Prostitutes, Magdalenes and Wayward Girls: Dangerous Sexualities of Working Class Women in Victorian Scotland', *Gender & History* 3:2 (1991) p. 167.

<sup>12</sup> GUSC, sp coll BG54-c.11, 'The Fifth Annual Report 1865 The Glasgow Magdalene Institution', Glasgow 1865, p.5.

<sup>13</sup> 'The House of Shelter, 114 Hill Street' *The Post Office Glasgow Directory*, Glasgow 1882, p.153.

<sup>14</sup> Margaret H. Irwin, *The Condition of Women's Work in Laundries Report of an Inquiry*

Institution for Orphan and Destitute Girls served to provide girls with training fitting them for domestic service which served as a preventative measure for vulnerable young girls who were most likely to ‘fall’.<sup>15</sup> Placing girls into domestic service was often viewed as a desirable solution to the ‘prostitution problem’, since philanthropists hoped the influence of a domestic environment and a middle class family would prevent them from being ‘led astray’. However, seduction and rape of domestic servants by masters was pervasive and they were vulnerable to abandonment.<sup>16</sup>



Figure 2.1: GCA P1891, ‘Glasgow Juvenile Delinquency Board’, Glasgow 1886.

The institutions viewed placing an inmate in ‘respectable’ employment as the desirable result of her time in the reformatory: The Glasgow Home for Deserted Mothers for example made ‘efforts...to procure them situations.’<sup>17</sup> Long term relationships could be formed with inmates which at times resembled probation; minutes from the GMI on 15 August 1860 recorded a report from a factory manager stating that Mary Fitzroy had been conducting herself satisfactorily.<sup>18</sup> They also

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Conducted for the Council of the Women’s Protective and Provident League of Glasgow (Glasgow: 1893).

<sup>15</sup> ‘The Glasgow Institution for Orphan and Destitute Girls’, *Post Office Glasgow Directory*, Glasgow 1881, p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> See Jeffrey Weeks, ‘Sexuality and the Labouring Classes’ in *Sex, Politics and Society* (2012), pp. 79-80.

<sup>17</sup> ‘The Glasgow Home for Deserted Mothers’ *Post Office Directory*, p. 103.

<sup>18</sup> GCA, TD 1577 1/1, ‘Homes Committee Notes Minute Book No. 2, 1860-1862’, Glasgow 15 August 1860.

provided financial support on leaving the institution with Fitzroy recorded as being paid maintenance for her and her child until her first monthly wage.<sup>19</sup> The GMI often printed successful cases in their annual reports indicating the kind of future they envisioned for their inmates. In 1865 it was reported that an inmate recorded as 'M.I.M' was 'Assisted to a situation, in which she continued till she got married about a year ago to a respectable tradesman. The matron has visited her house, and says it is quite a model - everything so clean and tidy.'<sup>20</sup> Magdalene girls were intended to be domestic servants and ultimately good wives for working class men. The reports were read by subscribers to ensure that their donations were being used adequately and the focus remained on cases they perceived as successes, with little detail of the unsuccessful. The statistics provided by the GMI suggest a sizeable proportion of inmates rejected the regime. The statistics from 22 December 1859 to 12 June 1861 show about one third of inmates as leaving of 'their own accord'.<sup>21</sup> Out of 147 inmates who were admitted in 1863, 10 'left of their own accord', seven 'left clandestinely' and one was 'dismissed for insubordination'.<sup>22</sup> These inmates either rejected or failed to achieve the middle class standards of morality and femininity set by the institution. The institution had no legal power to detain inmates but made it very difficult for them to leave once admitted. On admission the inmate would be given a uniform and occasionally their heads were shaven which was designed to suppress the desire to leave. This tactic was less common in the GMI but the Magdalene Asylum in Edinburgh did this regularly and found it effective.<sup>23</sup> Inmates were required to give one month's notice if they wished to leave and were frequently put in solitary confinement for this period. Those who ran away before this were charged with the theft of their uniform and were not allowed to be readmitted.<sup>24</sup>

The reformatory approach was virtually indistinguishable from the preventative one, so children deemed at risk of becoming delinquents were enrolled in IS alongside their criminally convicted peers. The Glasgow Juvenile Delinquency Board (Fig. 2.1) met every two weeks to intern 'at-risk' children in an IS.<sup>25</sup> A working-class mother would often have to choose between keeping her children, and giving them up to an IS to protect them from a life of destitution. She would be aware of the sometimes brutal discipline of industrial and reformatory schools, but would also be aware that the schools guaranteed hot meals, safety and adequate clothing. As Fig. 2.1 shows, many children had to struggle through Glasgow's biting cold weather in bare feet - the schools would have provided them with shoes. As a branch of The House of Refuge for Females the GMI would home girls convicted under the Youthful Offenders Act 1854 which tacitly placed adolescent girls in the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> GUSC, sp coll BG54-c.11, 'The Fifth Annual Report', p.11.

<sup>21</sup> GCA, TD 1577 1/1, 'Homes Committee Notes'.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Mahood, *Magdalenes*, p.80.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.81.

<sup>25</sup> GCA, P1891, 'Glasgow Juvenile Delinquency Board', Glasgow 1886.

category of 'prostitute'.<sup>26</sup> The residential schools for girls closely resembled women's refuges in their approach. The curriculum was characterised by the same intense religious instruction coupled with industrial training. The schooling was not only the proletarianisation of children but a deliberate attempt at social colonisation that produced working class identities in the vision of the middle class. These identities were distinctly gendered: boys were trained in 'masculine' industry and trade such as woodwork, shoemaking, tailoring and printing, while girls were placed in the domestic sphere with laundry work, needlework and cooking lessons.<sup>27</sup> When the Glasgow Reformatory for Girls moved from Rottenrow to the rural location of East Chapelton (Fig. 2.2) in 1870 it became almost entirely self sustaining: vegetables were grown, livestock was kept and 'all the clothes of the school were made on the premises' and washed in the large laundry worked in by the girls.<sup>28</sup> The 1899 inspectors' report of the institution shows that the girls often defied the standards of morality and femininity expected by the staff with theft, bad language, attempts at absconding and 'immoral conduct' all listed as offences. The penal character of RS should not be understated; one girl is recorded as being isolated in a cell for one month within the school complex.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Bryce, *Glasgow Magdalene*, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> The examples of trades are taken from the following sources which covered both male and female industrial and reformatory school curriculums: UGRA, Ba4-d.10, 'Report of the Glasgow Boy's House of Refuge, Duke Street 1854-1864', printed at the institution likely by the boys themselves; GCA, DTC 14/1/48 55A, 'House of Refuge and Reformatories Inspectors Reports 1899', Glasgow 1899.

<sup>28</sup> GCA, DTC 14/1/48 55A, 'House of Refuge and Reformatories Inspectors Reports 1899', East Chapelton, Glasgow 1899.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

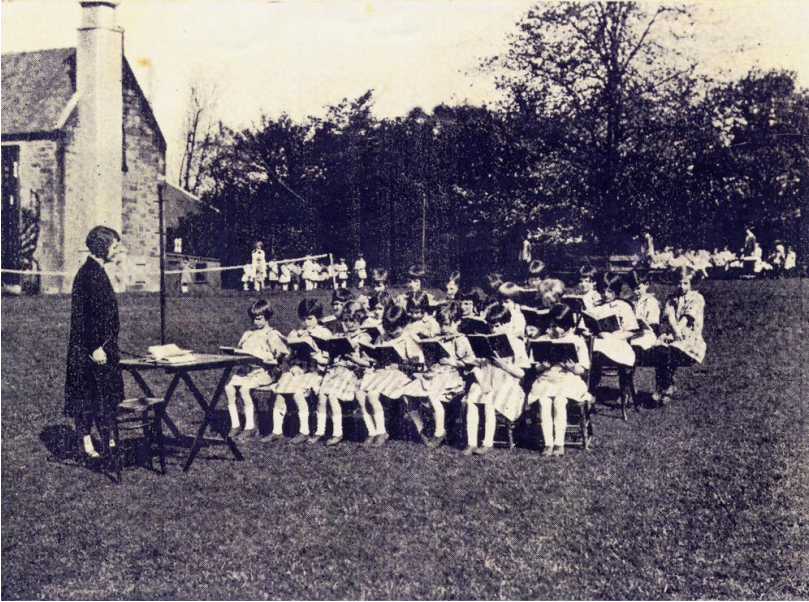


Figure 2.2: GCU, Heatherbank Museum of Social Work, print 881, 'Glasgow Reformatory for Girls at East Chapelton, Bearsden', Glasgow c. 1890.

The notion of working-class parents teaching their children 'depravity' was commonly used to justify middle-class intervention. A series of newspaper reports titled *The Dark Side of Glasgow* printed in 1870 quoted the Victorian idiom 'as the twig is bent the tree will grow'.<sup>30</sup> The author detailed how 'our city arabs' were taught from infancy 'to beg, to cheat, and to steal'.<sup>31</sup> The network of institutions intended to remove children from this environment were conceptualised as a surrogate family with the matron being a stern motherly figure and male directors like patriarchal fathers. The House of Refuge for Boys described their discipline as 'parental kindness, combined with firmness and decision'.<sup>32</sup> The female refuges for 'prostitutes' were structured similarly and inmates were often infantilised as ignorant victims. The 'prostitute' and the destitute street child were viewed as figures that needed middle class benevolence but also to be carefully controlled. The same author described the task of social reformers 'To control our streets then - to teach these city Arabs something of practical humanity, and to help ... them

<sup>30</sup> GCA, AGN 2114, 'Series of articles from North British Daily Mail 1870s', 'The Dark Side of Glasgow, First Report VI', *North British Daily Mail*, 27 December 1870.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 'A Wretched Childhood'.

<sup>32</sup> UGRA, Ba4-d.10, 'Report of the Glasgow Boy's House of Refuge, Duke Street 1854-1864' p.5.



to grow up in habits of industry, and morality'.<sup>33</sup> A strong work ethic and middle-class morality were to be instilled in order to 'save' the poor, but also served as a deliberate social colonisation starting in childhood. The social reformers attempted to forge a working-class identity that was seen as beneficial but never resembling anything other than their own class. A report on the East End of Glasgow stated 'these localities have begun to produce a type of humanity peculiarly their own, both physically and morally.'<sup>34</sup> These discourses crudely resembling eugenics attempted to legitimise middle-class intervention into the lives of those who struggled under industrial capitalism by biologically distancing themselves whilst placing themselves in the role of paternalist.



Figure 2.3: GCA, C67, 'Woman With Naked Baby, Slum Interior', Glasgow, no date, c.1910

As industrialisation in Glasgow progressed, many migrated from other parts of Scotland, Ireland and Britain in search of work. Migrants were usually forced to live in some of the worst conditions the city had to offer, and Glasgow's slums earned a reputation as being among the worst in Europe. Fredrick Engels reported that 'I have seen human degradation in some of its worst phases, both in England and abroad, but I can advisedly say, that I did not believe, until I visited the wynds of Glasgow, that so large an amount of filth, crime, misery, and disease existed in

<sup>33</sup> GCA, AGN 2114, 'The Dark Side of Glasgow, First Report VI', *North British Daily Mail*, 27 December 1870.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

one spot in any civilised country'.<sup>35</sup> The slum housing conditions (Fig. 2.3) were viewed as a source of immorality with a newspaper reporting that 'the rising generation in these polluted localities become certainly infected with the moral pestilence amidst which they are born and reared.'<sup>36</sup> As Frank Mort argued, 'The wretchedness of the working-class environment, the state of the dwellings, non-existent sanitation, lack of concern over personal decency and hygiene were seen to encourage irregular sexual conduct.'<sup>37</sup> Juvenile 'delinquents' and 'prostitutes' were consciously removed from the city and placed in rural locations, removing them from both industrial and moral pollution. The Green Street IS reported that 'every child below a certain age gets to the country in the summer for a fresh air fortnight'.<sup>38</sup> Under the Glasgow Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Repression Act 1878 children from IS and RS were emigrated to colonies in Canada as domestic servants or farm workers. The House of Refuge for Females at Lochburn, which included the Magdalene branch, was a certified 'Protestant reformatory' and emigrated several inmates as domestic servants.<sup>39</sup> An 1898 passenger list for the Buenos Ayrean shows 17 girls aged between 13-18 as being sent with the 'Houses of Refuge & Reformatory & Industrial Schools of the City of Glasgow' to Montreal as 'domestics'.<sup>40</sup> The Juvenile Delinquency Act applied to those aged 14 and under, so given the ages of these girls they would have been from the Magdalene branch of the House of Refuge. The Maryhill Girls' IS recorded a visit to Canada by the Matron to 'see the girls out in service there'.<sup>41</sup> Organised emigration of working class children preceded the Act; in 1864 a Kingston agent complained that girls from the Maryhill Girls' IS were absconding from their situations in the country to the cities; 'I feel confident that in time the country would prove a better place for them, as in the cities they will be exposed to all sorts of temptations'.<sup>42</sup> Whether being homed in a rural location outside of Glasgow or making the difficult passage to rural Canada, young girls were deliberately being removed from an industrially and 'morally' polluted city. However, it appears many were drawn to the urban surroundings in which they had grown up.

The scholarship has often attributed lessening birth rates for working class families in the late 19th century to the success of middle-class moralisation. However, evidence points towards the emergence of a distinct working-class culture that evolved in spite of, not due to, middle-class intervention.<sup>43</sup> Working-class parents

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Annan, *The Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow*  
<http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/Mar2006.html> [accessed: 27 January 2017]

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 'Early Training'.

<sup>37</sup> Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, p.93.

<sup>38</sup> GCA, DTC 14/1/48 55A, 'Inspectors Reports', Green Street Industrial School.

<sup>39</sup> PAC, RG 76 Volume 119 File 22968, 'Immigration Branch' pp. 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> PAC, RG 76 C-4542 3661, 'Passenger Lists of the Buenos Ayrean Arriving in Quebec and Montreal on 1898-07-12'.

<sup>41</sup> GCA, DTC 14/1/48 55A, 'Inspectors Reports', Maryhill Girls' Industrial School.

<sup>42</sup> Marjorie Kohli, *The Golden Bridge: Young Immigrants to Canada 1833-1939* (Toronto: 2003), p. 385.

<sup>43</sup> Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, pp. 91-2.

repeatedly resisted the loss of control felt through the industrial school system with the Glasgow IS register noting many mothers forcibly removing their children. Grace Reid, aged nine, was 'taken away by mother' on 6 July 1848 and John McMullen, aged seven, was 'taken away by his mother' on 22 June 1849.<sup>44</sup> The children themselves also displayed considerable resistance with James Robertson, aged 14, admitted on 1 February 1849 noted as having 'Left same day - would not permit his hair to be cut offering great resistance to Mr Johnston.'<sup>45</sup> In November 1881 an assistant matron of the Glasgow Girls' IS at Lochburn was prosecuted for the maltreatment of Mary Jane Park, aged 13.<sup>46</sup> Park had absconded from school only to be discovered as having returned to her parents home by the matron who escorted her back to school under the promise to her parents that she would not be punished. However, the matron took Park into the laundry removed her clothes, flogged her until she was badly bruised and placed her in a spray bath. A monitor, in giving evidence stated that the matron said during the punishment 'You are a bad, wicked girl. You are sent here by the Magistrates and I am empowered to punish you and I will punish you.'<sup>47</sup> The institutions designed to remove children from the adult prison system ultimately relied on the same brutality in order to police working class children. It was unusual for the press to sympathise with the girl and her father as the children in IS were generally viewed as a public nuisance requiring systematic and often forceful intervention. This attitude was often reflected in the press:

"To clear the streets...of the pests which now infest them..to rescue to the young from the evil influences which surround them, to dissipate the moral darkness in which they live, and to train them in habits of industry and morality, is a labour which will require the full force of our limited army of working social reformers."<sup>48</sup>

IS and RS, alongside refuges for 'fallen' women, systematically colonised and policed working class behaviour, sexuality and norms. As juvenile delinquents, young girls were seen as 'prostitutes', and the preventative approach had yet to distinguish itself from the reformatory one. Consequently, an offence need not have been committed before girls were subjected to often cruel reformatory strategies. The progression of industrialisation in Glasgow propelled working-class women and adolescent girls into public view allowing for their 'morality' to come under intense scrutiny from the middle-classes. The 'prostitute' was a figure constructed in the discourse of middle-class philanthropists as someone who both suffered under industrial capitalism, and so needed to be saved, but also as someone

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<sup>44</sup> GCA, D-ED 7/146/2, 'Register of the Glasgow Industrial School'; Notably, education was not compulsory in Scotland until 1872 so these children being removed was not against the law.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> 'Another Industrial School Scandal', *The Dundee Courier & Argus*, 19 November 1881; Issue 8843.

<sup>47</sup> 'Glasgow Industrial School Scandal', *The Dundee Courier & Argus and Northern Warder*, 6 January 1882, Issue 8884.

<sup>48</sup> GCA, AGN 2114, 'The Dark Side of Glasgow, VII', *North British Daily Mail*, 1871.

who had to be carefully controlled. The vast number of reformatories removed women and girls from urban spaces and confined them in the domestic sphere. The approaches combined a gendered industrial training with intense religious instruction, which aimed to produce a Christian working-class woman in the vision of the bourgeoisie. The system of homes and residential schools was characterised by profound paternalism, in which matrons, directors and other inmates served as surrogate families. However, the working-classes consistently resisted middle-class moralisation by leaving institutions, absconding from schools, removing their children, and ultimately forging their own identity and morality. The result was a unique working-class culture in Glasgow by the end of the nineteenth century.

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