

Decades of Reform: Prostitutes, Feminists, and the  
War on White Slavery

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## **Introduction to Project:**

This research should be approached as an interdisciplinary project that combines the fields of history and English. The essay portion should be read first and be seen as a way to situate the poems in a historical setting. It is not merely an extensive introduction, however, and the argument that it makes is relevant to the poetry that comes afterward. In the historical introduction, I focus on the importance of allowing the prostitutes that lived in this time to have their own voice and represent themselves honestly, instead of losing sight of their desires and preferences in the political arguments that were made at the time. The poetry thus focuses on providing a creative and representational voice for these women. Historical poetry straddles the disciplines of history and English and “through the supremacy of figurative language and sonic echoes, the [historical] poem... remains fiercely loyal to the past while offering a kind of social function in which poetry becomes a ritualistic act of remembrance and imagining that goes beyond mere narration of history.”<sup>1</sup> The creative portion of the project is a series of dramatic monologues, written through the voices of prostitutes that I have come to appreciate and understand as being different and individualized through my historical research

The characters in these poems should be viewed as real life examples of women who willingly became prostitutes. They are a characterization of the women that are referred to throughout the essay. I often find that specific voices are lost in the field of history. This project allows the historical analysis to take place without unnecessarily sacrificing the voices of the women involved. I chose to write poetry, because, “the historical poem promotes micro-awareness of the human and invites a greater contemplation of what virtues we enact as well as our intricate emotional responses.”<sup>2</sup> The poetry in my project will help to elucidate the lives of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>2</sup> Major Jackson, “Poetry and the End of History,” *American Poet*, 2.

the women who worked for the Everleigh Club, eliciting the reader's emotional responses and connections in a way that a historical essay would not.

## **Introduction: The City and the Sisters**

The city of Chicago was rebuilt after the great fire of 1871 destroyed seventy-three miles of streets and left nearly 100,000 people homeless.<sup>3</sup> Chicago recovered quickly and grew at a rapid rate. William Bross, a survivor of the fire, visited New York City and began to spread news about Chicago, “‘Go to Chicago now!’ he thundered. ‘Young men hurry there! Old men, send your sons. Women, send your husbands! You will never again have such a chance to make money.’”<sup>4</sup> He predicted that Chicago would reach a population of one million by 1900; the city reached the number ten years earlier than his prophecy. Chicago’s future was bright for some time, but it became overshadowed by the vice and corruption that infiltrated the city. The influx of individuals hoping for a better future also led to the creation of one of the nation’s most well known red-light districts: the Chicago Levee.

The Everleigh Club was opened in Chicago towards the beginning of 1900 by a very ambitious sister duo. Ada and Minna Everleigh searched far and wide, traveling throughout major cities in the United States, such as St. Louis and New Orleans, meeting renowned madams such as Rose Bailey in New York City and Minnie Stevens in Boston.<sup>5</sup> The goal was to relocate from Omaha to a city that needed an upscale brothel, something not so riddled with filth. Their travels were disheartening, since no city seemed quite ready for their plans to elevate the business of prostitution. At the urging of Cleo Maitland in Washington, the sisters visited the brothel of Effie Hankins in Chicago.<sup>6</sup> The sisters loved the two-building mansion located at 2131-2133 South Dearborn Street, and after wandering around the premises, they decided to take

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<sup>3</sup> Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 159.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Washburn, *Come into my Parlor* (New York: Knickerbocker Publishing Company, 1934), 16-18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

the beaten down brothel.<sup>7</sup> In a short amount of time they managed to turn one side of the building into a rather extravagant place.

The sisters did not foresee any problems when it came to recruiting. They knew it could be handled without the help of others. “The problem of supply and demand, known as white slavery, was a false issue – this they were sure of. Girls didn’t have to be bought and white slavers were unnecessary. Talent, as a matter of fact, came to their door begging for admittance.”<sup>8</sup> The white slavery scare that spread news of women being kidnapped and seduced into prostitution would become the major tool used to fight vice in American cities. The scare became more powerful in the beginning of the century, reaching its peak between 1910 and 1913.<sup>9</sup> The sisters were right about the issue from the beginning: girls came knocking and begging, and the waiting list stretched on and on. Before they were hired, the girls met with Ada: “I talk with each applicant myself...She must have worked somewhere else before coming here. We do not like amateurs. Inexperienced girls and young widows are too prone to accept offers of marriage and leave. We always have a waiting list. To get in a girl must have a pretty face and figure, must be in perfect health, must look well in evening clothes. If she is addicted to drugs, or to drink, we do not want her. There is no problem in keeping the club filled.”<sup>10</sup> In order to be fully prepared for life at the Everleigh Club, the girls had to go through training,<sup>11</sup> in which they learned how to handle themselves properly: they must act like ladies, or they would be forced to leave.<sup>12</sup> They also received instruction in poetry that would cater to more romantic men.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> See poems *Ada Everleigh Visits the Hankin’s Brothel* and *Minna Everleigh Visits the Hankin’s Brothel*.

<sup>8</sup> Washburn, *Come into my Parlor*, 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Mara L. Keire, “The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States,” *Journal of Social History* 35, (2001): 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ada Everleigh cited in *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>11</sup> See poem *By the Time I’m Through, These Girls Will Know Their Balzac*.

<sup>12</sup> Washburn, *Come Into my Parlor*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> See poem *Lillian Gives a Poetry Lesson*

girls came and went throughout the years that the Everleigh Club was in operation, sometimes to better places, but other times not.

The sisters attempted to keep the Everleigh Club scandal free – not always successfully – despite the messes that were being created throughout the rest of the Levee district.<sup>14</sup> Not once did they acquire a girl through illegal means. It was the easiest way to keep the club from receiving major trouble and attention. This is not to say that all parts of their operation were conducted legally; everyone in the Levee had to make payments. As Clifford G. Roe, an important reformer and the assistant state’s attorney in Illinois stated, “It is fairly safe to say that wherever houses of vice are operating in defiance of the laws, and most of them are so doing, some one is getting protection money.”<sup>15</sup> In the case of the Everleigh Club, the protection money was going out to various vice lords of the levee, including “Big Jim” Colosimo, a Chicago crime lord, Bathhouse John, Ike Bloom, a businessman who owned various nightclubs and dance halls throughout the city, and Hinky Dink Kenna. Bathhouse John, also known as John Coughlin, as well as Michael “Hinky Dink” Kenna were alderman for Chicago’s First Ward of the Chicago City Council. It was actually atrociously high protection fees that discouraged Minna and Ada from giving the brothel a second try after it was shut down in 1911. Despite the fact that the sisters profited around \$120,000 per year, \$40,000 in fees was way too much for the lords of the levee to ask for so close to the end of their reign.<sup>16</sup> This was an intelligent decision, on the part of the sisters, considering that no real protection could have been offered at the time, and the entire district was annihilated soon after.

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<sup>14</sup> See poem *Katie Discusses Her Mistake*.

<sup>15</sup> Clifford G. Roe, “What Women Might Do With The Ballot: The Abolition of the White Slave Traffic,” *National American Women Suffrage Association*, 1912.

<sup>16</sup> Washburn, *Come Into my Parlor*, 53 and 139.

The Everleigh Club garnered a little too much attention through an advertising scheme called “The Everleigh Club, Illustrated,” that depicted pictures of the inside of the club, and described the general atmosphere and grandeur. This scheme was a little more racy than their previous advertising method.<sup>17</sup> A city boy saying, “Looks like you have Babylon in its wildest days in your city, Mr. Mayor”, taunted the Mayor Carter Harrison himself with the pamphlet.<sup>18</sup> This proved to be too much of a slap in the face for the mayor, and on Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup> 1911, the Mayor issued a mandate to shut down the Club.<sup>19</sup> The Chief of Police John McWeeney warned the sisters, but they ignored his words. The mayor cited the pamphlet as the reasoning behind his abrupt actions. Yet, reform had been picking up speed since before the club opened, which meant the mayor was facing increasing pressure from the city’s most vocal reformers. He did his best to completely destroy the rest of the red light districts following the closing of the Everleigh Club. This meant that many fingers were pointed in the direction of the Everleigh sisters. Haughty madams, such as Zoe Millard said, “If there had been no Everleigh Club there would have been none of this. The Everleighs were too damned exclusive to even be nice to the reformers.”<sup>20</sup> Fingers were pointed, yet they did no good. The red-light district was shut down, and the only blame that could really be placed was on the wave of reform.

It is interesting that the Everleigh Club was one of the first brothels to be shut down in Chicago as a result of reform efforts, considering the sisters had made sure that the white slavery scare did not touch their doorstep. During the time of the reform movement, the women’s movement was also gaining momentum throughout the United States. The participants in this movement ultimately defined their main goal as obtaining suffrage. Yet other goals throughout

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<sup>17</sup> See poem *A Ride to the Loop*.

<sup>18</sup> Washburn, *Come Into my Parlor*, 193.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>20</sup> Zoe Millard cited in *Ibid.*, 213 also see poem *Grace Monroe Receives a Visitor at the Hospital*.

the years would center on social purity, of which prostitution was the main target. A continued focus on prostitution meant that tactics had to shift. The major tool for fighting prostitution became the white slavery scare. As women became more concerned about fighting for their civil rights, it became beneficial to unify women in some way. It was determined that the best way to do so would be to conform to classic gender roles that described women, as a group, as passive, gentle, nurturing, and morally upright. These descriptions needed to be applied and exemplified by all women in order for a unified womanhood to be preserved. Women could then be called upon to help fight in the war against white slavery. As morally upright human beings, they could more easily combat the vice that was raging in America's cities. It would hurt the feminist movement if the war on vice were a fight against women who willingly became prostitutes. Women such as Doll, an Everleigh girl who gladly satisfied every fetish, would do great harm to the idea of womanhood as a whole.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the white slavery scare became necessary in order to portray women as the victims rather than the victors when it came to the practice of prostitution. The Everleigh Club was opened and closed during a time of great reform. Reformers occupied the Levee district of Chicago in an effort to expose the evils of prostitution, harm business, and put pressure on politicians. The Club was a target because it was extravagant, different from every other dive on the block. Even though the Everleigh Club did not deal in white slaves, they were targeted as a result of the fervor surrounding the white slavery scare.

### **The Influx of Women**

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought about a mass movement of independent women into urban areas. Brian Donovan, in his book *White Slave Crusades*, writes: "Women's opportunities for employment skyrocketed in major urban centers, and women were employed in record numbers as clerks, typists, secretaries, and phone operators. In 1890, 19

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<sup>21</sup> See poem *Doll Writes to her Sister*.

percent of the U.S. female population worked outside the home; by 1910, nearly a quarter of U.S. women had entered the paid labor force. New employment opportunities gave working-class women a growing public presence in major U.S. cities.”<sup>22</sup> A working class that was originally composed of men was being infiltrated by the female population. Women were moving to the city in mass numbers to live and work. As they did this, shifts should have occurred to ensure wage equality so that women could live on their own just like an independent man at the time, yet these shifts never occurred, leaving some women to live an impoverished life, or supplement their earnings in immoral ways. A reason for these shifts not occurring is that, “women were valued by employers chiefly insofar as they were unorganized and would accept low wages.”<sup>23</sup> There were also many efforts to keep women from unionizing in the same way that male employers were able to.<sup>24</sup>

The most popular form of employment was as a department store clerk.<sup>25</sup> In her book *Sisters in Sin*, Katie Johnson comments on the depiction of the working girl in theater during the time period, particularly the shop-girl: “While plays about working women were not unusual, shop-girls plays were innovative because they dramatized the economic pressures that forced working women to contemplate (and sometimes turn to) a life of prostitution.”<sup>26</sup> It was considered that when a young women took employment in a department store she was dangerously close to a life of sin. She was placed in a precarious position, luring people into the store and attempting to sell them the items on display, while being available herself to be

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<sup>22</sup> Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>23</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; “Employers used the full range of techniques to prevent women workers from unionizing, from employee associations and corporate welfare schemes to spies and blacklists, promotion of ethnic and racial conflicts among employees, disruption of meetings, and police intimidation and violence.”

<sup>25</sup> Katie N. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin: Brothel Drama in American, 1900-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83; “According to the 1890 census, almost 20 percent of American women were employed. Of the jobs open to them, department store work was seen as the most desirable.”

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

tempted. “The shop girl was, as Willa Cather [an American novelist] astutely put it, a kind of bait. The paradox of the shop girl, therefore, was that while she was put on display as bait, she assisted leisure-class men and women in their conspicuous display of wealth, while not possessing the capital to purchase the items herself.”<sup>27</sup> The dramas that concerned the shop girl were right to point out the economic hardships that department store girls face. The discrepancies between men’s and women’s wages become even more appalling to consider when placed side by side with the sales of a young girl’s male counterparts. Jacob Riis entitles a section of his book *How the Other Half Lives* “The Working Girls of New York.” In this section he describes a poor young girl and the injustice she faces at her workplace:

The investigation of the Working Women’s Society disclosed the fact that wages averaging from \$2 to \$4.50 a week were reduced by excessive fines, ‘the employers placing a value upon time lost that is not given to services rendered.’ A little girl, who received two dollars a week, made cash-sales amounting to \$167 in a single day, while the receipts of a fifteen-dollar male clerk in the same department footed up only \$125; yet for some trivial mistake the girl was fined sixty cents out of her two dollars.<sup>28</sup>

This story would be difficult for any young women to read, especially if she was deciding to pursue an urban life.

Jane Addams writes about the white slavery issue and prostitution as a whole in her book, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*. She writes about the increasing number of women entering the work force: “Successive reports of the United States census indicate that self-supporting girls are increasing steadily in number each decade, until 59 percent of all the young women in the nation between the ages of sixteen and twenty, are engaged in some gainful occupation.”<sup>29</sup> She discusses the fact that more and more women were entering the urban work force with high hopes, only to encounter terrible hardships. Women were employed in a variety

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>28</sup> Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Norton and Company, 2010), 135.

<sup>29</sup> Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 56.

of different fields in rapidly increasing numbers: “The number of women employed in the newly emerging trade and transportation fields increased 139 percent between 1900 and 1910. In the same decade the number of women employed as stenographers and typists increased 200 percent, female bookkeepers and accountants increased 150 percent, female telephone and telegraph operators 300 percent, and female factory workers 600 percent.”<sup>30</sup> While the white slavery narrative may have focused on the girl in the department store, it largely ignores the women who occupied other realms of employment.

The issue of the independent woman relates to feminist reform and prostitution. A fear of female independence existed, because it meant that women could choose their occupations for themselves. Feminist reformers chose to highlight the aspect of female independence that led to a life of vice, revealing the parts that women did not have control over, such as low wages. When feminist reformers chose to conform to traditional genders roles, they embraced a woman’s role in the home as both a mother and housekeeper. Of course arguments for economic equality existed, but in order to create an agenda that fought for suffrage, women called on traditional gender roles and fought against prostitution through the white slavery scare. Economic pressures made prostitution attractive to independent women, especially at an establishment like the Everleigh Club.

### **The White Slavery Scare: Function and Form**

The term ‘white slavery’ was originally used to describe working-class men during the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>31</sup> It was frequently used by Democratic politicians to make the jarring association between blacks and the degradation that the white working man suffered. The term

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<sup>30</sup> Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 31.

<sup>31</sup> Donovan, *White Slave Crusades*, 18.

was first used to describe sexual exploitation during the 1880s in England.<sup>32</sup> The British used “white slavery” in order to raise the age of consent, and were met with successful results. In the United States, “with the efforts of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the white slavery issue entered the American public and political discourse by the end of the nineteenth century.”<sup>33</sup> The WCTU was able to publicly expose the issue of white slavery through investigations into forced prostitution in lumber camps in both Michigan and Wisconsin performed by Katharine Bushnell.<sup>34</sup> As lumber camps grew in these two areas of the country, the immigrant population also expanded, leaving the WCTU to be wary of the vice that could possibly be infiltrating the camps. Bushnell’s findings were published in a pamphlet titled “Another Maiden Tribute” that described the terrible conditions of the lumbermen’s forced prostitutes.<sup>35</sup> The narratives were published in magazines, newspapers, and books. The entrance of the terminology into American culture caused an uproar and a variety of reformers were able to use the white slavery scare to benefit their goals in regards to prostitution as well as women’s rights.

The white slavery scare was a way for reformers to bring the issue of prostitution into the American household. The white slavery scare was used for a variety of different goals, most importantly, the end of commercialized vice. The issue of white slavery was complicated, because the term suggests and even implies that young white women are falling victim to the evildoings of the “other.” Through the name “white slavery,” the issue is represented as an inversion of the enslavement of African American individuals: an issue that hit very close to home considering the proximity to the Civil War. There was hysteria associated with the white

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

slavery scare: “The fate of so-called white slaves was one of the primary preoccupations of turn-of-the-century America. It was the subject of several vice commission investigations, congressional hearings, and legislation typified by the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910. Indeed, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was originally formed to investigate the trafficking in women.”<sup>36</sup> Even though the hysteria is considered to be unfounded by some historians, the white slavery scare as a tool was very effective in the hands of reformers.<sup>37</sup>

Brian Donovan explores the white slavery scare in his book, and comes to the conclusions that there is no “correct” definition because, “For some authors, white slavery referred to the drugging and abduction of chaste women. Others used the term to refer to a number of exploitive situations: pimps abusing their prostitutes, child prostitution, seduction and betrayal, economic compulsion to enter prostitution, or confinement in a brothel.”<sup>38</sup> Depending on who was interpreting and applying the definition, white slavery could mean a number of things. The most accepted definition would involved some sort of coercion, whether it be kidnapping or seduction. Typically, the author would specify if the women were chaste, depending on whether or not the write believed that a woman would willingly choose sex work as an occupation.

In her book, Mara Keire takes a different approach, furthering what Donovan says to explore the idea that individual authors employed the definition in opposite ways in order to further their own aims: “Middle-class white slavery writers and established anti-vice reformers shared an economic interpretation of urban vice, but they diverged in the tone and tenor of their rhetorical tactics. Rockefeller, the quintessential New York reformer, disliked the ‘hysteria’ of the white slavery scare and actively shunned publicity; however, Roe, an Illinois state prosecutor

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<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 109.

<sup>37</sup> Donovan, *White Slave Crusades*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

from Chicago, used melodramatic exaggeration to court a popular audience.”<sup>39</sup> The fundamental definition of white slavery would always remain the same, but the interpretation and application was where differences would be revealed. Roe and Rockefeller found that their audiences reacted differently depending on what tactics they used. The individuals who employed white slavery were able to use it to their benefit, morphing the definition of the term to suit their needs.

Clifford G. Roe was in fervent opposition of white slavery, devoting a majority of his life to fighting the issue. He elaborated on the horrors that young women were forced to suffer as a result of white slavery. His book, *Panders and Their White Slaves*, has an impressive number of tales that deal with coercion, women falling victim to false promises, as well as women giving in to various amusements.<sup>40</sup> The narrative of the white slave followed the same standard plot, tale after horrifying tale: “In most, a white woman is abducted by a cadet (or pimp) and tricked into entering a brothel where she is drugged, beaten, and held against her will as a sexual slave [one famous example being *The Girl Who Disappeared* by Clifford G. Roe].”<sup>41</sup> These sensational stories gained popularity throughout the United States, causing an uproar amongst mothers and protective fathers. Roe wrote a less sensational piece in which he defines white slavery, saying: “What is white slave traffic? It is the widely accepted term for the procuring, selling or buying, inveigling or encouraging of women for the purposed of holding, forcing or enticing them into a life of prostitution. The term white slavery, perhaps, is a misnomer, and not really descriptive, since the traffic reaches every race and color, originating in Europe, where its victims are white; however, it is generally used to designate the business by which the vice merchant is kept supplied.”<sup>42</sup> The pamphlet, surprisingly enough, calls for women to recognize that white slavery

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<sup>39</sup> Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 74.

<sup>40</sup> Donovan, *White Slave Crusades*, 73; see Table 4.2.

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 112.

<sup>42</sup> Clifford G. Roe, “What Women Might Do With The Ballot,” 1.

is not always fully white. Even though this piece does not describe in horrible detail the survival story of a single young girl, it does call the reader's attention to the belief that white slavery is a very elaborate business that stretches across the entire globe. He calls for women to fight against slavery. Female sentimentality can bring an end to the atrocities of vice. He also states that both men and women should behave in a morally upright fashion and be held to single moral standard.<sup>43</sup> In this way, he is calling on traditional ideas of manhood and womanhood that state that women are kind and gentle and that men are just morally sound.

Ernest Bell, wrote *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls*, telling the sad stories of young women who have fallen victim to white slavers. In his book, he defines white slavery: The term 'white slave' includes only those women and girls who are actually slaves...the white slave trade may be said to be the business of securing white women and of selling them or exploiting them for immoral purposes. It includes those women and girls who, if given a fair chance, would, in all probability, have been good wives and mothers and useful citizens.<sup>44</sup> Unlike Roe, Bell stresses that the women who become victims of white slavery are, in fact, white. The other thing he stresses is that their service is involuntary. It is interesting that he takes the two pieces of the phrase and defines them separately, stressing each part. He wants the reader to imagine that slavery that was forced upon African Americans and then apply it to young white women. By stressing that these 'white' women would become valuable members of society otherwise, he is also stressing the kidnapping narrative, and the presence of a non-white 'other.' Throughout his entire book, he continues to call on the preservation of womanhood. He presents womanhood as something that has constantly been attacked. By characterizing womanhood in such a way, his

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 9; "However, that time is now passed, at least in America. No longer are women the serfs, nor the toys of men, but through education and changed economic conditions they have entered into the commercial and industrial life and are becoming more and more independent. It seems the time has arrived when women should insist upon a single standard of morals for men and women"

<sup>44</sup> Bell, *Fighting the Traffic*, 14.

book can be seen as important for the feminist movement through its representation of women as defined by gender stereotypes.

The *Social Evil in Chicago* provided one of the most important definitions of white slavery for Chicago. The large Vice Commission Report contains charts and graphs, as well as in depth descriptions of the existing conditions in the city. The introduction of the report reads:

The term 'white slave,' is a misnomer. As a matter of fact the traffic is not confined to white girls but to all unfortunate girls and women of all colors, races, and nationalities. The use of this term, however, is authorized by the National Government and was incorporated in the international law on the subject. A 'white slaver' in reality is a man who employs men or women or goes out himself to secure girls upon some false pretense, or misrepresentation, or when the girl, intoxicated or drugged, and not in possession of her senses, is conveyed to any place for immoral purposes.<sup>45</sup>

This report was considered to be the most accurate look at vice in the city of Chicago. The definition that was given in the report made sure to include women of all types, instead of spreading the issue as a phenomenon that only touched pure white women. The information held inside the report was appalling and reformers were converted; no longer did they support segregation. The entire report opens with the statement: "CONSTANT AND PERSISTENT REPRESSION OF PROSTITUTION THE IMMEDIATE METHOD: ABSOLUTE ANNIHILATION THE ULTIMATE IDEAL."<sup>46</sup> The report also suggested that the city establish a morals court and appoint a morals commission.

The city did establish a morals court in the year 1913, which is characterized by Michael Willrich as the year "in which the Second City got serious about vice. After decades of mutually profitable accommodations between ward politicians, police, magistrates, and brothel-keepers, State's Attorney John E. Wayman officially shuttered the old red-light districts, including the

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<sup>45</sup> Chicago Vice Commission, *The Social Evil in Chicago*, 41.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

renowned Levee.<sup>47</sup> The city cracked down on vice, following carefully the advice given by the Chicago Vice Commission. Previous to the establishment of a Morals Court, arrested prostitutes received little more than a slap on the wrist in the form of probation and a fine for \$200.

Reverting back to some of the ideals held by the social purists, “In addition to probation, the Morals Court ordered prostitutes treated for venereal disease and tested for mental defects, helped them find legitimate jobs, referred them to private agencies and refuges, and culled from their cases scientific knowledge of the social evil.”<sup>48</sup> Instead of merely reprimanding prostitutes, the Morals Court used them to gain information that would be useful for further investigations, and they also did their best to place them on track to becoming functional members of society.

Feminist reformers were able to use the white slavery scare as a tool to gain civil rights. The basic definition of white slavery specified that the women taken into a life of prostitution had no choice. Tales of women being seduced and abducted were effective when it came to convincing the public that the prostitution was not a problem of independent women, but rather independent men who had difficulty restraining their sexuality.<sup>49</sup> Women were depicted as the victims in this scenario. The white slavery narratives rested on the idea of a unified womanhood presented by feminist reformers. Everleigh girls like Grace Monroe and Ethel challenged the stories that portrayed women as helpless and sexually passive. In order to preserve this traditional image of a woman, the white slavery scare was presented, overshadowing and ignoring the decisions that many women willingly made.

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<sup>47</sup>Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 174.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>49</sup>Donovan, *White Slave Crusades*, 18.

## History of Reform

The entire issue of prostitution rotates around women, yet many different explanations have been made concerning the phenomenon of sex work that do not mention women. One such argument was formed in 1915 by Robert Park in his essay “The City.” In his essay, Park describes the city as a whole exemplifying the practices and observances of the people living in its boundaries.<sup>50</sup> He goes on to describe the ways in which the structure of the city can be defined, ultimately focusing on a moral definition of the city: “The city possesses a moral as well as a physical organization, and these two mutually interact in characteristic ways to mold and modify one another.”<sup>51</sup> The city is constructed and defined by moral regions of varying degrees. Individuals who seek out the same forms of entertainment, no matter how lewd or vulgar, will find themselves inhabiting the same areas of the city, thus creating a lower moral region. Urban life imposes many restrictions on an individual, and the presence of the red light districts allows impulses and instincts to be acted out freely in the same metropolitan area that the individual inhabits. Park goes on to say, “We must then accept these ‘moral regions’ and the more or less eccentric and exceptional people who inhabit them, in a sense, at least, as part of the natural if not normal life of a city.”<sup>52</sup> Taking the entirety of his argument into consideration, it can be said that the city of Chicago contained “moral regions” since its founding that grew and evolved as the city grew.

Chicago in the late 1800s and early 1900s openly tolerated vice. The city needed someone to bring the issue to the attention of individuals who would fight against the corruption. One of the first individuals to express concern and horror was W.T. Stead, a British journalist

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Park, “The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the City Environment,” *Journal of Sociology* 20, 5 (1915): 578.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 612.

who reprimanded the city for its problem with vice during his stay for the 1893 World's Fair. Even though he visited the United States multiple times, his efforts, including his publications and the establishment of the Chicago Civic Federation were unsuccessful: "Despite the publication of his sensational book, *If Christ Came to Chicago*, Stead failed in his mission. Many Americans frowned on prostitution; however, they shied away from Stead's evangelical fervor in fighting it."<sup>53</sup> Although Stead's efforts failed, his initial confrontations started efforts to control the vice in the city.

One approach to the issue of prostitution was the social purity movement that began during that later decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>54</sup> The movement, beginning in the 1860s and 70s, focused on the goal of sexual morality and returning to a state of normality, because prostitution itself represented a sexual corruption. On one side of the argument were individuals who felt that prostitution would always exist and should be regulated medically, meaning that prostitutes would be regularly examined and tested by doctors. On the other side were individuals who wished to completely annihilate the practice of prostitution.<sup>55</sup> Both groups were hoping to achieve the goal of social purity, but they sought that end through varying means and tactics. The purity movement continued to expand and fight against the issue of prostitution, yet with expansion came the undertaking of many new topics. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that prostitution was brought to the forefront once again. By this point, however, the issue of cataloguing prostitutes and performing mandatory medical inspections had

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<sup>53</sup> Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 4-5; "In the decades after the Civil War, prostitution in the cities continued to be a focus of concern and prompted what has been called a 'purity crusade' for the regeneration of American sexual morality."

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; "On one side of the controversy were the 'regulationists' – usually municipal officials, public health officers, the police, and some physicians – who felt that prostitution would always exist and concluded that medical inspection was the only way to protect the public from the contagion of venereal disease. The purity forces totally opposed such a plan and viewed any official sanction and licensing of prostitutes as an insult to womanhood, a denial of the civil liberties of the prostitute, and unworkable solution because most prostitutes would never be registered on the official roles, and an endorsement of the double standard of morals."

since died, due to the failure of a plan in Missouri: “In 1870, St. Louis’s city council enacted its notorious Social Evil Ordinance, requiring the venereal inspection of prostitutes. Four years later, after a vituperative campaign against the program, the Missouri legislature nullified the law. The outcry over the St. Louis ‘experiment not only killed the ordinance within the city, but its failure discouraged other cities from implementing similar programs, despite support from most medical doctors.’”<sup>56</sup> This botched experiment meant that other cities, Chicago included, did not wish to try this forced medical regulation, ultimately allowing the social purists to win the argument.

The progressive reformers of the late nineteenth century held the belief that individuals should be better and that there were ways to make them better.<sup>57</sup> This meant that reform movements saw a turn inward, and a focus on the individual. It also meant that problems encountered by reformers could be solved, instead of things that would simply need to be dealt with over time: “the Progressives regarded drugs, vice, insobriety, not as simply conditions, but as social problems that could be solved. This was an aspect of the profound pre-war faith in social progress, the Progressive reflection of ‘the Victorian faith in the individual and confidence in the inevitability of human progress.’”<sup>58</sup> In order to achieve this, the federal government would need to interfere and control the actions of citizens.<sup>59</sup> The manipulation of legislation would allow for social evil to be fully destroyed. The progressive mentality allowed for a focus on individual human conduct instead of a larger focus on the issues of vice and changing the structures that allowed impropriety to flourish.

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<sup>56</sup> Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 8.

<sup>57</sup> Langum, *Crossing over the Line*, 5; “...to a considerable extent the reformers of the late nineteenth century wanted to make individuals human beings better.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*; “By the proper use of social engineering, often employing the coercion of the federal government, individual human behavior could be controlled and changed through legislation. Men could be forced to be good and social evils conquered forever.”

Samuel Paynter Wilson in *Chicago and Its Cesspools of Infamy*, declares that “It is unhappily true that the devil’s work is done here [in Chicago] upon a large scale; but so is the work of God upon an even greater scale. If the city contains the gaudiest, the most alluring, and the vilest haunts of sin, it also boasts of the noblest and grandest institutions of religion, of charity, and virtue.”<sup>60</sup> The citizens of Chicago were declared to be more powerful than any vice district as long as they had the help of God. Religion played a large role in the destruction of vice through the efforts of reformers. Ernest Bell is a famous religious reformer who openly attacked the practice of segregation, organizing people throughout the city of Chicago to fight against the toleration of vice in the city.

Religious reform efforts attempted to combat the immorality that was being openly practiced. In his book, *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls*, he warns of the horrors that can befall young girls as a result of the white slave traffic. He calls upon citizens to do what they can to restore the freedom, upon which the country was founded, to the young girls who have it forcefully taken from them. He writes: “‘That glory may dwell in our land’ is the motive of the writers of this book. With a true patriotism...we have pursued that painful necessary task of telling the truth to the American people concerning evils that have made us reel with horror. For the protection of the innocent, for the safeguarding of the weak, for the warning of the tempted and the alarm of the wicked, the truth must be told – the truth that makes use free.”<sup>61</sup> He applies his religious fervor to the United States as a whole by acting as a defender of freedom and the rights of all the people who reside in the United States.

Bell furthers his persuasiveness and connections to the American people by commenting on treaties that protect immigrants: “One word more: I hope soon to see the time when the laws

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<sup>60</sup> Samuel Paynter Wilson, *Chicago and Its Cesspools of Infamy*, (Chicago, 1910), 19.

<sup>61</sup> Ernest Bell, *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls* (Chicago: G.S. Ball, 1910), 9.

of the land will as carefully protect the daughters of the United States from the destroying hand of the white slave trader as the international treaty agreements now protect the girl who is brought in from foreign shores.”<sup>62</sup> Bell is referring to the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic brought about by increasing international pressure in the early 1900s. This pressure led to a conference in 1902 and the proposal of an international agreement, and this treaty was accepted fully by the United States in 1908. It is true, however, that on American soil vice was combatted through the Red Light Abatement Movement, which began in 1891. The movement was not very rapid, and by 1915 only seventeen states had a Red Light Abatement Act. Illinois passed the Act in 1915, and in the following two years as reform picked up speed, fifteen more states joined. His comments seem to imply that the Red Light Abatement Movement was progressing too slowly and the efforts were not enough.

Specifically in Chicago, it was not until after the Committee of Fifteen, an organization formed specifically to combat vice in Chicago, conducted their research that the decision shifted to complete annihilation. The Vice Commission Report entitled *The Social Evil in Chicago* specifically discussed the issue of segregation: “Many years ago, the authorities of the city attempted to localize vice in certain districts of the city. From time to time, property holders and heads of families have objected to their neighbors, thereupon these establishments have been widely scattered over town. The various neighborhoods into which they have moved have speedily secured enough of an influence to drive them back into the neighborhoods from which they have been driven.”<sup>63</sup> The Vice Commission made a point of discussing segregation early on in their report, in order to disengage any arguments that could be made concerning the effectiveness of segregation. *The Social Evil in Chicago* proved to be an effective tool, because

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>63</sup> Chicago Vice Commission, *The Social Evil in Chicago*, (Chicago: Gunthrop-Warren Printing Company, 1911), 168, 3.

“after the Chicago Vice Commission, urban Progressives could not support reputational segregation and still maintain credibility as committed anti-vice reformers.”<sup>64</sup> This shift marked the decision for the reform movement to focus their attention on bringing about the annihilation of the red light districts and an end of efforts to segregate.

Originally formed into 1908, the Committee of Fifteen shifted its focus from vice as a whole in 1911 to investigate prostitution in the city in order to determine whether or not the vice districts should be shut down. One of the aspects of prostitution that the Committee of Fifteen looked into was the supply of women. This was a curious topic, because despite the influence of the white slavery scare, it was apparent that some women wished to lead the life they were living. The report includes a table that details aspects of the lives of thirty women who lived in houses of prostitution, and one column is entitled “Causes for Prostitution.”<sup>65</sup> There are only two women out of thirty who chose to be prostitutes of their own volition. They are described as “Crazy; wanted to; born with the devil in her” and “Naturally bad; immoral at 15 years.”<sup>66</sup> These women, even though they did not make up the majority, did stand as examples of reasons why women chose to become prostitutes. Instead of their choices being accepted, they are given negative labels. The choices and descriptions of the women surveyed indicate the ways in which independent women were viewed when they chose to live a life of vice. It is true that some female prostitutes could be labeled as ‘naturally bad,’ such as Everleigh girls Phyllis, who was seduced by drugs, and Myrtle who simply craved attention.<sup>67</sup> Yet, when it came to the Everleigh Club, these “bad” girls were rare. In order for the idea of the ideal woman to take hold and further the feminist movement, women who chose prostitution must either be given a bad label

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<sup>64</sup> Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Chicago Vice Commission, *The Social Evil in Chicago*, 168.

<sup>66</sup> Roe, “What Women Might Do With the Ballot,” 8.

<sup>67</sup> See poems *Myrtle Gossips with a Friend* and *Phyllis Converses with a Woman in a Bar*.

or be completely ignored. The feminist movement chose to ignore such women through the white slavery scare, which became large enough to shadow the idea that women would even consider becoming prostitutes.

### **Feminist Reformers**

The female reformers of prostitution seemed to be a combination of all the types of reform: they despised corruption, they employed white slavery scare tactics, they furthered the social purity movement, and they fought against vice in the name of God. Donovan writes, “The WCTU inaugurated America’s war on white slavery with its vice investigations in the late nineteenth century. It also helped organize in 1895 the first National Purity Congress, a convention of the American Purity Alliance, where purity workers delivered approximately thirty speeches divided among seven panels.”<sup>68</sup> The start of the white slavery scare was crucial to the burgeoning reform efforts. Frances Willard and Katherine Bushnell, the leaders of the WCTU, brought the white slavery issue to light in the United States. For feminist reformers, the fight against vice and prostitution was a reaction to the changing social structure: “The white slavery genre in the United States developed during a period marked by rapid urbanization, the rise of women in the workforce, and the changing racial composition of American cities. These social shifts converged in white slavery narratives. The poetics of white slavery storytelling created a powerful voice for expressing concern over the pace and direction of social transformation.”<sup>69</sup> The social composition of the United States was changing, and the fear and uncertainty translated into a scare of white slavery, which as seen previously, in most instances focused on the presence of a non-white “other.” This fear makes sense considering the influx of immigrants during this time period.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

Beliefs about the moral standing of women during the nineteenth century stemmed from beliefs about women's morals during the Victorian era:

This set of ideas – what Barbara Welter termed the ‘cult of true womanhood’ – extolled the innate virtue of women that stemmed from their sexual modesty and passivity. Women's supposed lack of sexual passion ensured domestic harmony...this ideology of femininity allowed middle- and upper-class women to make a strong claim for political power in the name of ‘social housekeeping’ and ‘home protection.’<sup>70</sup>

Women were able to take the sexist views applied to them during the 1830s and 40s, and use them during the early 1900s to argue for political rights that they could turn around and use to combat the white slavery scare. Although there were women who wished to argue for importance to be placed on differences amongst women, the most obvious way to unify woman to achieve women's rights was to buy into gender differences between men and women and ignore differences between individual women.

Clifford Roe, in his writings for women's suffrage, calls for the preservation of womanhood as well as manhood. He calls on the American people to recognize the gravity of the war against vice, saying: “Right now political battles are being waged for and against vice, and the traffic in girls. Great political movements are being launched against politicians who have connived at and even encouraged vice and its right hand partner, white slavery, in order to gain personal, selfish power and perhaps wealth at the expense of the nation's manhood and womanhood.”<sup>71</sup> Men and women both needed to act in defense of the helpless young girls who were being taken advantage of. Women could help in the fight against prostitution by gaining the right to vote, and men could help by living up to standards of manhood that called for the protection of women. In the preface of *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls*, Reverend Bell writes, “...we are confident that this is truly the land of the free – free, glad, safe womanhood – and the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>71</sup> Roe, “What Women Might Do With the Ballot,” 1.

home of the brave – men brave enough to protect our girls and to deal with the White Slave traders and all their sort as they deserve.”<sup>72</sup> Bell uses an interesting tactic by calling on men to be brave and protect women. He is playing into gender differences as well and portraying women as being helpless and men as being strong and the rescuers of women.

Also important for the women’s suffrage movement is Jane Addams, who published *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*. She became the vice president of the National American Women Suffrage Association in 1911. Her book was published in 1912, and even though it explored the topic of white slavery, it was a statement in favor of women’s political power. She writes that the political power for women is on the horizon “and it is believed she will show her efficiency most conspicuously in finding means for enhancing and preserving human life, if only as the result of her age-long experiences. That primitive maternal instinct...will doubtless promptly grapple with certain crimes connected with the white slave traffic.”<sup>73</sup> Within this section of her book she continues on to say that if women were given the right to vote that vice would not be allowed to continue with protection. With this, she is implicating men in the corruption. Also, through describing women as maternal beings, she is conforming to gender stereotypes as a method for claiming that women should be given political rights.

Roe uses arguments about the gentle nature of women in his contribution that argued for women’s suffrage. He calls on the honest nature of women as the only way to battle the corruption that is taking place within the big cities, such as Chicago, that are riddled with vice.<sup>74</sup> The WCTU created the white slavery scare as a tool to use in order to gain political power. It was a way to pull women out of their role as a sexual predator and into the role of victim. The Everleigh club is the perfect example of girls who chose to become prostitutes and did not

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<sup>72</sup> Bell, *Fighting the Traffic*, 11.

<sup>73</sup> Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 192.

<sup>74</sup> Clifford Roe, “What Women Might Do With The Ballot,” 7.

occupy the role of victim. The Everleigh girls could be considered sexual predators because of their role as seductresses. In order to combat these labels, the white slavery scare was widely adopted to explain prostitution. The movement for women's rights needed to preserve the ideal unified womanhood in order to make more legitimate steps toward suffrage and basic civil rights denied based on sex.

## **Feminism and Gender**

While feminists in the early 1900s may have fought ardently for the destruction of vice, they had their own agenda. The white slavery scare was a tool used by the early feminist movement in order to further women's rights. Women had to determine a proper method of unification in order for their efforts to be fruitful:

The nineteenth century woman movement had dealt with the tensions engendered by women's actual diversity (of inscriptive character, achieved status, and opinion) in several ways. [One] strategy was to concentrate ideologically and rhetorically on the character and conditioning that women of all sorts were presumed to share by virtue of attachments to home, family, and childrearing, a portrayal which resembled reality sufficiently to be more widely persuasive. The woman movement operated from firm convictions about women's own ground of expected domesticity while aiming toward goals of equality between the sexes: equality of access to education, a single sexual standard, equal suffrage.<sup>75</sup>

The most successful way for women to unite was through adapting and furthering socially constructed gender norms. Women, in an effort to fight for their own rights, made the decision to undermine gender equality and accept the traditional roles women were expected to fill. They called on the image of a genteel woman in order to argue that women could help fight against vice and impropriety if they gained political rights. Feminist reformers such as, Frances Willard and Katharine Bushnell of the WCTU and Jane Addams employed these techniques within their writings and speeches.

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<sup>75</sup> Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 6-7.

The idea of manhood was starting to evolve at the same time that feminism was taking off in the nineteenth century. “In short, by the end of the [nineteenth] century, a discourse of manliness stressing self-mastery and restraint expressed and shaped middle-class identity.”<sup>76</sup> If this is the definition of manhood that was being expressed at the beginning of the time when the Everleigh Club was opened, then the men who frequented the red-light district, would not have been able to be included in this definition of manhood. Feminists would not have been able to argue against prostitution if women were choosing to be prostitutes and willingly entering a life of immorality. There were men who were acting against the definition of manhood at the same time that there were women acting against the definition of womanhood. If the belief that women chose to become prostitutes became widespread, then the women’s movement toward suffrage would suffer harsh blows. A unified womanhood was the way to achieve the goal of woman’s suffrage and the white slavery scare was the perfect tool to present the solidarity of women. The white slavery scare was also able to then depict men as being the aggressors, and unfaithful to their idea of manhood.

Nancy Cott, in *The Bonds of Womanhood*, writes, “Although it portrayed women as sacrificial victims to male lust, the language of moral reform evoked women’s power; power to avenge, power to control and reform.”<sup>77</sup> Even though she is speaking of an earlier time period, the white slavery scare harkens back to these the methods used by nineteenth-century feminists concerning prostitution. Women suffered from the lust of men, rather than possessing the ability to lust themselves. The feminists who fought against vice in the early twentieth century called on this idea of women being passive sexually to strengthen their white slavery rhetoric. Men were then turned into the aggressors, and women were freed from blame. Buying into gender

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<sup>76</sup> Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 12

<sup>77</sup> Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 153.

stereotypes allowed women to fashion a frightening white slavery narrative that could be used as a tool for women's rights.

Women were able to play into the gender differences highlighted during this time period, and call on men to help solve the problem. The white slavery scare was able to paint men as the aggressors of the problem of prostitution. Instead of the problem being pinned on women, women were able to be seen as a way to solve the problem of prostitution, and men would need to make an effort in order for change to take place. Historian Connelly writes, that "An extraordinary amount of time was spent determining why women became prostitutes; very little was spent determining which men engaged them and why. Prostitution became a manifestation of female maladjustment and dislocation, even for those who took pains to denounce the double standard and the uncontrolled male sex drive. Antiprostitution was, in fact, consciously based on a historical analysis of the origins of the 'woman problem.'"<sup>78</sup> Men wished to blame women for men's immorality, but feminist argued that women were pure and being corrupted, thus buying into gender norms, but successfully putting the blame on men. Feminists needed to find a way to combat this idea of the "woman problem" and the way to do that was through the unification of women and a return to traditional gender differences.

Women who were willing to become prostitutes challenged the idea of a woman who was virtuous and domestic. In order to preserve the idea of womanhood in the face of women who were willingly leading an immoral life, the feminists of the 1900s turned to the white slavery scare. White slavery rhetoric was forced to rest on the idea that women were composed of a single moral group. As a single group women could achieve more in the way of political rights. Arguments about womanhood would not be able to make any headway if there were women in the streets challenging this ideal. Women who sought work as prostitutes were the main problem

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<sup>78</sup> Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 30.

that challenged the women's rights agenda. Places such as the Everleigh Club were a huge problem for female reformers. The girls from the Everleigh Club loved their jobs, and those who left regretted their decision later. The rhetoric of white slavery was needed so that women could be described as victims who were unwilling to become prostitutes. Clifford Roe writes, "In our efforts to abolish the traffic in girls, it does not seem fair to fight the unfortunate women who either gravitate or are tricked into lives of shame. The persons to fight are those who encourage, maintain and protect the social evil."<sup>79</sup> It would be absurd to attack women who are forced to become prostitutes. This is the exact idea that a unified womanhood wished to convey through the white slavery scare.

The women of the Everleigh Club unknowingly fought against the goals of the feminist movement during the early 1900s. The ideal womanhood specifically excluded women who actively participated in sexual acts and chose to pursue evil occupations. Feminist reformers across the United States fought valiantly against prostitution as a social evil, rather than seeing it as a legitimate occupation. Through the white slavery scare, the depiction of prostitution as a social evil perpetrated by men was able to take hold of the public. White slavery narratives were used by feminist reformers to preserve traditional ideas of womanhood that suggested that women were incapable of pursuing a career as a prostitute of their own accord. Spread through feminist propaganda, the white slavery scare allowed feminist reformers to fight for women's rights through the preservation of an ideal womanhood. The Everleigh Club courtesans were not seeking to undermine the feminist movement; they were exercising their independence as women, establishing themselves as the opposite of gender stereotypes, as well as debunking the myth that all prostitution was forced. Using them as an example reveals that the white slavery scare was used as a tool by the feminist movement.

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<sup>79</sup> Roe, "What Women Might Do With the Ballot," 8.

## The Women of the Everleigh Club

## *Minna Everleigh Visits the Hankin's Brothel*

When I step out of the hansom, place my heel  
deliberately on the ground,  
I know it is right. 2131-2133  
Dearborn Street will become home to us and  
our investments. *Oh Ada, isn't it grand?*  
Effie welcomes us inside,  
and I embrace her invitation  
to look around, sliding my hand up  
the banister of the heavy mahogany  
staircase, as though it is adorned with gold leaf,  
and wander through the rooms,  
like Goldilocks, examining the lives of a different species.  
Based on their living style, I do not have  
high hopes for her whores. *Do the girls  
only entertain in their rooms?* Effie  
responds, but I do not listen,  
because I am contemplating the contrast between  
my plans and what is before me. I almost  
laugh, imagining clouds of dust billowing  
while tricks dip their wicks. Everything  
needs to be stripped, the cheap perfume  
that drapes itself like a blanket over  
their filthy beds would need airing out,  
to rid the house of their revolting sex.  
In my mind, I smell fountains of perfume  
puffing out wisps of the best  
French scents money can buy.  
My eyes blaze with vibrant visions  
of luxury: long Oriental rugs  
summoning visitors into the house,

an entire room gilded, complete  
with a gold piano, a library filled  
with books that cultivate the mind, crystal  
chandeliers that drip down from the ceiling,  
damask chairs from which a suitor can gaze  
intently upon the woman he chooses.  
My heels click down the third  
story hallway that leads into the 2133  
side of the house. It feels cold and neglected,  
yet still familiar. The floors creak, screeching  
out the suffering of women  
who had fallen victim to slavers  
or the financial desperation of parents. Flirtatious  
laughter and the joyful bickering  
of happy prostitutes will erase the sounds of sobbing.  
I click past open doors, glancing inside,  
moving quickly until I see myself,  
my full body reflected in a cracked,  
red stained mirror, and step inside.  
I am transfixed by the transmission  
of memories that begins to play,  
as if I am watching myself  
in one of the productions  
I used to be a part, mounting  
the stage many times before reaching Nebraska.  
Lester's shadow grabs my neck, stains the mirror  
with my blood. My reflected hands grip  
and slide, smearing it across the surface.  
I stare, never flinching at the blows.  
Ada grips my shoulder like a man  
who has just won a game of dice,

and whispers in my ear.  
I pry my eyes away from the past,  
embrace the house and the wealth it will bring.  
*I would love to see the girls!* somehow  
manages to slide through clenched teeth.  
I do flinch when Effie whistles  
to summon her whores. They line up like  
Civil War soldiers, and my nostrils fill  
with the scent of syphilitic sex.  
I try to force out the stench and  
images it brings to mind.  
We take the house minus the hardened whores.

## *Ada Everleigh Visits the Hankin's Brothel*

I climb out of the hansom slowly, filled  
with purpose. The mansion seems  
to rise out of the pavement,  
a mirage, out of place when compared  
to the squalor that characterizes  
the red light district. Hansoms cluttered  
the streets, occupied by women  
and their tricks in the dark. Everything seemed  
so gray, a biting contrast to the blues  
of the sky and the lake I wish I could see.

The California sits across the street,  
at night the women grind their hips  
in an attempt to entice men who walk by,  
rolling them as soon as they came inside.

*What lovely neighbors we have, Minna,  
"Blubber" Bob Gray and his wife.*

His wife who willingly takes fifty cents,  
*I can't believe anyone could be such  
such a shabby businesswoman.*

When Effie opens the door, I look past  
her shoulder to take in the filth: the servants  
have failed to keep up with the mess,  
the walls are stained and dirty, the mirrors  
are cracking, floors are crusted with dried  
and loose dirt, the lights are foggy. I imagine  
girls in gowns swirling up plumes of dust  
as they dance seductively. There is  
an abundance of rooms that will need to  
be cleaned, the items inside burned.

Ada strides through deliberately,

her mind moving as quickly  
as her feet, and she soon is out of my sight  
in the big house. We are changing  
the business of sex, men are easy to interpret  
and satisfy, and we carry with us  
the power of class. The money will flow,  
expertly allotted for payoffs  
and protection, it will find its way into  
the hands of the lords of the levee,  
such as Ike Bloom and “Big Jim” Colosimo.  
I let my mind go, and it dwells  
on the fantasies of these men: “Big Jim”  
will like his women encrusted with diamonds,  
glittering in every area,  
including the ones that are kept covered.  
Ike Bloom will want women unlike  
the ones who service the men at Friedberg’s,  
he will want a woman who appears  
to only have eyes for him, he’s a little soft.  
I reel my mind back, imagining  
the internal workings of the club,  
and how I will manage the business,  
conveying the intricacies to Minna  
so she can do the talking and negotiations.  
I run to catch up with my sister, my  
steps echoing through the empty part  
of the house, I stop when I see her staring,  
she seems entranced by her own reflection  
displayed in a disgusting red mirror  
in an almost empty room. I know  
what she is seeing, but am not alarmed,

she is strong and will not let it destroy her.  
I grip her shoulder a little too tightly  
and whisper, *Any fate is better than  
a silent windpipe, right?* She turns, her eyes  
now mirroring the excitement within  
my own. Effie summons her whores once we  
make our way back down to the first floor, and  
I suppress a gasp as they line up like  
cavalrymen before they begin to charge.  
Their faces bring the realization that  
elevating the business will not take  
as much as I had previously thought.  
The girls I find will replace these tired  
women who have given in to the  
hardships and let them surface on their flesh,  
surpassing them in every way from beauty  
to attitude, by loving their occupation  
and every act they perform. We take the house,  
and the gears in my brain once again  
begin to click, as I imagine all  
the little details I will keep in order.  
One of the first that must be done  
is to rid the place of the staff as well  
as the harlots. A house must be kept  
by colored servants, the Southern way.

## *By the Time I'm Through, These Girls Will Know Their Balzac*

*"Pleasure is like certain drugs; to continue to obtain the same results one must double the dose, and death or brutalization is contained in the last one."*

- Honore de Balzac

You will study Honore de Balzac and his ideas on pleasure, they and your experiences will teach you more than I will be able. You must make men want you, by making them feel wanted. Prolong their waiting time, sit and let them think their vile thoughts about you. Brush aside their ploys to rush by saying wait until I know you better, coy smile and eyes lingering in places they don't belong. Now turn to one another. Go on, practice your flirtatious lines and smiles and looks. *I really shouldn't encourage sapphism. What is it to me? None of my concern, really.* Sit up straight, Ethel! The only thing a man is going to want to do to you is tie you to a board to straighten your posture. The waiting is for you as well. Do you think you know what every man wants right away? Well you're wrong, and we didn't hire any of you to sit around and think you know everything. Patience, have patience. Our clients will not mind the wait, he knows what he is waiting for, and it is your job to make sure it happens. We are not trying to be efficient, rushing through lines

of clients will simply wear you down,  
and lead to little profit. Instead,  
we will replace it with fantasy.  
Creating a fantasy will take time,  
but it will be very rewarding.  
You don't think so? Well, you will have wait,  
and trust my sister and I to take care of you.  
If you find yourself to be dissatisfied,  
the door will always be open  
if you decide to take your leave.  
You will be provided with gowns,  
and we expect you to behave  
as if you belong in one. Jewelry,  
but not too much! You must create  
the sparkle in a man's eye, not your diamonds.  
We expect you to dance. Do any  
of you know how to dance? No, I don't mean  
the can-can, or any of the filthy movements  
the girls make in the cheap brothels  
on this street. We are not a dance hall,  
but there is nothing wrong with tasteful,  
and pleasurable dancing. We will start  
practicing tomorrow. I expect you  
to select partners and take this exercise  
seriously. Wait, before you retire  
for the evening I would like you all  
to take a book of poetry. You will  
learn to like it as you memorize it.  
Yes, poetry is very romantic,  
and that will be what some of your suitors  
are hoping for. You are free to go now.

## *Lillian Gives a Poetry Lesson*

Do you know who Shakespeare is?

You do? Well, I don't really, but the sisters seem to think he was quite a wonderful man.

You like poetry, don't you? *They said this would work wonders on a man, but maybe they didn't mean just any man.* Wonderful!

Some is good enough. Shakespeare wrote poems as well as plays, but you already know that, I'm sure. He did what? Plays within plays?

Well that seems rather confusing.

Shakespeare wrote pretty poetry about love.

Look at you, giving me those eyes. May I begin?

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*

No? Why must you taunt me so?

*Thou art more lovely and more temperate:*

I am complimenting you, sir: your manner and class, the warmth that you ignite within me, and the smile you bring to my lips.

*Rough winds do shake the darling buds of may,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.*

Summer leaves rather quickly, but you stay, coming to see me ever so often.

Don't argue with me, I look forward to your visits a tremendous amount.

*Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;*

The summer is characterized by extremes.

You are soft and warm, and I anticipate your visits when I can admire your appearance.

*And every fair from fair sometimes declines,*

*By chance or nature changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy external summer shall not fade*

Your beauty is better than the beauty of summer,  
because it never disappears. You become  
even more irresistible when you blush.

*Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade*

You may die lover, but your beauty will not.  
Don't scoff at me! Would you prefer handsome?  
Because I find you to be just that.

*When in eternal lines this, and this gives life to thee.*

Charming words that I dedicate to your  
handsome face. When I think of beauty  
that never dies, I think of you. This poem  
will always bring you to my mind, for your face  
will never fade from my memory.

## *Myrtle Gossips with a Friend*

My dear, it's so good to see a familiar  
female face. Isn't he adorable?  
Come here, Rascal. Charlie bought  
him for me just in case I got lonely  
after I moved into the apartment.  
How is work? I'm still insulted about  
being let go. It was just a petty  
prank, you know. No harm was done, so  
I don't see what all the fuss was about.  
Who are you to criticize me? You weren't  
even there. It was quite exhilarating,  
all these men fighting over me. I felt  
as if I was standing on top of a cliff,  
commanding a battle going on below me,  
while I remained safe from harm. And to think  
that they were willing to kill over me!  
How romantic, all these men falling  
at my feet like peasants bowing to a queen.  
I can see by your eyes that the thought excites you.  
Entering the business allowed me to snag  
a real man who can take care of me.  
That's not what I wanted though.  
I love the excitement, and somehow  
managed to let myself settle  
into what could easily become  
a tremendously boring life, filled  
with dishes and dog walks, dinner parties,  
and high class drama. What a letdown.  
Men behave like little boys, captivated  
by any pretty little thing. I shared

the pretty little things that captivate me:  
my guns. It only seemed fitting  
that I settle any debate through fair play  
once offers were made. Why not let them  
know that others were on the table?  
I gave them a chance to have their say.  
How could I decide? It was a terrible  
predicament, which is why I took  
it into my own hands without delay.  
Being the reason for bloodshed  
would not cause me any distress  
whatsoever. Men will be men, who am I  
to get in their way. They helped themselves, really.  
You don't have to believe me, I will  
in no way place blame where it does not belong.  
I sat down in a chair in the Gold Room,  
gold and red look so lovely together,  
and let them play their game. I might have let  
some encouraging words slip out of my mouth,  
as they lay claim to my entire being,  
and giggling as I had a vision of them  
tossing me this way and that in a fierce  
tug of war. Things were about to come  
to a close; my fate was about  
to be determined, my surname to be decided,  
when the lights turned off ending my one chance  
at fame. Minna is a fool, and her sister is no better.  
Those men would have been honored to die for me,  
but in the end they slunk away in shame, deciding  
someone would care if they were caught dead  
in a whorehouse. I was left to be reprimanded,

but Minna could not shame me. I had already pictured  
the story in the paper, I would play a poor  
innocent damsel who was in need  
of being rescued, her debts to the brothel  
owners finally about to be paid off.  
The headlines would exclaim in bold print:  
Shots ring when the men get overly  
excited about who will rescue her!  
Oh, I won't hear it. No pity,  
because I will reclaim my moment  
in the spotlight somehow.

## *A Ride to the Illinois Trust and Savings*

I look ridiculous! Stop laughing,  
you fools! You ought to be jealous;  
I am clearly the favorite at this moment.  
What a shame you had to fall from that position,  
Nellie. *Now I've gotten to her.*

Glare at me all you want, it doesn't change  
a thing. Yes, I'm coming! Good afternoon,  
ladies. I'll see you in a bit. *This dress  
and jewelry are so foolish, really.*

Minna, Ada, thank you for allowing  
me to accompany you today.

*I think the others don't understand  
what this is like, I feel as if I am royalty.  
All of these men acting like children,  
scrambling and craning to catch a glimpse  
of the trio in the carriage. Beauty  
truly is a powerful thing. I don't  
mind the dress, really; it is creating  
quite a bit of attention. Oh my,  
when I smile at them,  
it is as if I have just thrown gold  
at their feet or kissed them on the cheek.  
They blush and act as if my generosity  
is shocking. The sisters aren't even looking  
outside the carriage, but I guess that is my job.*

Yes, of course, I know the reason  
I was brought along. *And I certainly  
don't mind playing along. Harmless flirting  
from afar, really. Let's see, what can I do?  
My hair looks rather silly, might as well*

*let it fall across my shoulders, so I can caress  
the tresses before I pin it up again. Just look  
at them stop as if they have just  
been hit in the face! I really can do better,  
though. My lips do feel quite dry, and I must  
have a mirror with me. My lips do feel  
quite dry, so I'll just touch my tongue  
against my finger and rub them so they  
look glossy and less chapped. Oh my, the looks  
this time. They might as well be drooling.  
A slight wave couldn't hurt either, just  
so they know that I am watching them as well.  
Here come the ladies of the house, what perfect  
timing, I thought I might soon be kidnapped,  
and what a loss that would be for the Club.*

## *Phyllis Rambles at a Woman in a Bar*

I'm going to tell you about my fall  
from grace. The Everleigh Club saved me.  
Never once did I feel like the whore  
that I am now. My hair was a blazing blond  
when I first arrived. Touch my tresses.  
Your hand withers away.  
Can you believe it was once beautiful?  
I was so distraught! What's a girl  
to do when her lover is no longer?  
No, there were no other options.  
Me? A loving wife or department  
store slave, or some secretary?  
The Everleigh life was one of glorious  
shame, of forgetting my name  
as often as I would be able, of exposing  
the contours and lines of my inner-most  
body without revealing the self, my mind,  
of accepting always the would-be-lovers  
who would leave as soon as I gave them  
the opportunity to be done with me.  
I would gladly do it again.  
This time, believe me, I wouldn't make  
the mistake of walking away.  
You seem surprised. "Mistake?"  
It's a word I'm forced to say,  
I must admit the reality  
that it was. But have you  
ever inhaled true ecstasy? The thrill  
was more than any man, and I can remember

being with hundreds now. I can't tell which part  
of the story you are judging me for most.  
Are they both equally appalling?  
And why do you pose as an upright woman,  
while inhabiting such a filthy place?  
I used my erotic charms on that exotic Chinaman,  
blindfolding him. Yet even there, forced  
completely into my arms, he  
was the one who seduced me.  
You're staring at my mouth,  
but opium wasn't the problem.  
Unfortunately I don't make enough  
on Bed Bug Row to fix it, my missing  
teeth, stolen from me, yet not willingly  
like when I gave up my purity. But just so you  
know, I've seen your stare before.  
That bitch who knocked  
them out was judging me, the way  
I see you judge me now.  
At least you're mostly silent about it.  
The monetary fall was much worse  
than any physical blows: fifty  
dollars or more per client to less  
than twenty-five cents per trick makes  
the whole business so dirty. The men  
who visit me now are foul with the way  
they shove themselves into any hole  
they wish until they get their fill, or I  
get mine, really. Please don't leave.  
I understand that it's vulgar, but I really feel  
so used by my own self.

## *Doll Writes to Her Sister*

They come consistently, these members  
of 'screwballs incorporated.' I get them  
all: the wild ones, the weird ones, the ones  
that need a fight, all those men  
that nobody else would handle right,  
because I know how to keep my opinion  
to myself, and believe me, it can be  
rather difficult. Sometimes, the other girls  
complain about their suitors. They run their mouths,  
blabbing like little schoolgirls on the playground,  
but I just keep my mouth shut, since I am  
well rewarded for feeding every fantasy,  
no matter how ridiculous. One man  
owns an African gold mine and hands  
me diamonds like they are nickels and dimes.  
I never know what he'll bring with the seasons,  
of fall, winter, and spring. He hands me a carat  
each time. I've never been robbed. I know. I'm lucky.  
Three diamonds is a lot for a little girl like me.  
I can't even begin the pictorial process of  
imagining him braving those African  
summers. It is odd to think that an entire  
continent of colored folks exists. From stories  
he tells me, it's not much to be missed.  
Anyway, throwing diamonds makes me recollect  
the kind of fetish even I didn't expect.  
Gold Coin Kid brings a whole bag and he aims  
them straight at my little pink bull's-eye,  
tossing and tossing until they're mine, a game  
he needs to finish before we begin.

These men never wear me out. In fact,  
they feed my pocket well and without  
them, I'd be buried in boredom. One  
man wears me down some,  
though. He's aroused by the memory  
of a youth he was forced to forgo  
and so we run around and around my small  
boudoir, with him chasing me until I am about ready  
to die from lack of air, then I run  
up the ladder that has been placed in my room,  
only for him to pull me back down, violently  
tugging where I have too much fat to feel. This  
exercise is repeated again and again,  
until I am dizzy. I don't find these men  
strange, for I consider myself  
normal, yet found myself seduced  
by a woman. Suzy had a beautiful body,  
and I understood why men were so drawn  
to fight over her. Her bouquet of roses  
tattooed just below the belly button  
made me want to touch the tips of their stems.  
She was soft against my fingers,  
and I held her close to my body  
through an entire night, an intimacy  
I don't consider right when it comes  
to the customers I liked. Yet, she was gone  
so soon, though it was probably for the best,  
considering how drawn I was to her flowers  
and the rest of what she offered me during our  
brief hours together. I know the rest  
of the family would love to believe

that I am diseased and rotting,  
but you can tell them that I am  
perfectly content and particularly wealthy.

## *Grace Monroe Receives a Visitor at the Hospital*

I never wanted to work for Madam Millard,  
especially after the Everleigh Club.  
That place was a dream, bursting with extravagance.  
I apologized, even though the sisters knew  
I never would have left if the place hadn't been  
shut down. It was such an abrupt ending  
to a good thing, like a magician  
disappearing at the end of his act,  
so many wonderful things I wished I could  
protract, but it was over. One poor girl  
completely lost her mind right at the end,  
began tearing her dress like a savage  
and yelling at Ada and Minna.  
She even attempted to slam a champagne bottle  
over a police officer's head like Diamond  
Bertha used to do to unruly suitors. Silly  
woman, she could be fierce. It's quite disturbing  
what happened to her in New Orleans.  
Oh, that must be the nurse. Would you let her in for me?  
I'm glad she has come, the pain was becoming  
almost unbearable. Well, where was I? Bertha, right,  
I'm shocked you've never heard the story.  
It was foolish for her to waltz around the town  
covered in diamonds. If she attracted robbers  
in Chicago, of course they were going to come  
after her in New Orleans, but to cut off her hands  
and leave her to die in the street is terribly barbaric.  
I imagine her curling her fingers  
into fists so they couldn't steal her rings.  
Ugh, it makes me cringe too. It also makes

me want to rub my wrists, but they are  
still sensitive to the touch. I never  
told you that story either. It is much more real  
than what happened to Bertha. I don't know  
what came over me, but I knew that I must defend  
the Everleigh sisters from the slander  
of that wretched woman. Madam Millard, I mean.  
She was creating a fuss in the streets,  
flapping her arms around like a gander,  
screeching and cawing about how terrible  
the Everleigh Club was. It was very silly, I know.  
I shocked her out of her pathetic rant  
so quickly, but I immediately knew  
I was in trouble. I could not recant  
my statements. Her disbelief was  
quickly overcome with anger, her pupils  
took up her entire eye. Vic Shaw blocked  
me in the door, and I knew there was nothing  
I could do to get away. I tried not  
to flinch, but my flesh trembled as their fists  
continued to find new parts of my skin  
to bruise. I was unable to tell if the blood  
on my tongue was from my broken teeth  
or my bashed nose. I put my hands up,  
and tried to speak, but each of them grabbed  
a wrist and yanked. I felt myself being lifted up,  
and then a snap, like a rope being pulled  
too tight, and I tried to cry out as I  
crumpled, but just babbled and gurgled  
the blood in my mouth. They pushed me down,  
and my impulse to catch myself was met

with excruciating pain that shot  
to my elbow. They ripped my dress  
and began to make a mess of my back,  
beating me over and over with a whip  
like the one I'm sure Lill the Whipper uses  
on Vic's prostitutes. I thought my mind  
might give up, as Vic shoved me into a corner  
and Madam Millard raised her fist again.  
I tried to force my face to relax as I thought  
about the pain that would soon touch my teeth,  
but it never did. I wish I could remember  
seeing Minna break Madam Millard's nose.  
I don't even know if it broke, but I chose  
to think it did. She pulled me into her arms,  
and I folded everything in,  
like a helpless insect gathering its legs  
as it dies, my broken wrists tucked  
against my breast. Don't be upset, I am  
perfectly alright now. My fragile bones  
will reconstruct, and the wounds will close. I wish  
I could expose the evil those two women possess.

## *Katie Discusses her Mistake*

Truly, only a fool would walk away  
from employment at the Everleigh Club,  
but I did. Yes, everything you hear  
about the place is true. I stumbled through the streets  
black and shiny with ice and marched by way  
right to Vic Shaw's. So hotheaded, I wish  
I hadn't gotten so angry during my argument  
with Minna. I could have turned  
to life as a pickpocket, sliding my hands  
where they didn't belong and coming out on top,  
but I thought myself too pretty for a life  
on the streets. I still don't know which would have made  
me more money. Both are bad choices,  
I know, yet there is something exciting  
about being an independent woman.  
I can spread my wings without worrying  
about having them clipped. The last man  
I entertained at the Everleigh Club died  
the same night I left. If you really think I had  
something to do with it, you have got another  
thing coming. I got caught trying to use drugs  
to make a mess of that man and a mess of money  
on the side. Minna made me leave quietly,  
but my footsteps echoed down the chilled street.  
I was a traitor in the simplest sense,  
but when I saw the tense body of the man  
I tried to dope up and knock out, I knew  
that there was nothing simple  
about what was happening. Vic was betting  
on my anger to keep me silent, but I was

getting anxious, and paced the room  
like a cheetah in the zoo, until she left me alone.  
I ran to the telephone and dialed Calumet 412,  
whispering desperately for Minna  
to be brought to the line. When she came,  
I quickly spit out, 'They're framing you.  
They've got a dead body at Shaw's and they're  
going to plant it in your furnace.  
It's Nat Moore. Yes, he's the one. They've got it all fixed.  
You must stop 'em. It's a dirty trick  
and I won't let 'em do that to you,'  
and then I hung up. I knew suspicious glances  
would be turned to me, so I left silently.  
I worked my way through train stations,  
snatching wallets and jewelry, as donations  
for my journey to a city that didn't know I existed.  
My name was never brought up in relation  
to the murder. You seem surprised by that.  
Well, I didn't kill that man, and I don't know  
who did, but I bet Vic Shaw had  
a lot to do with the whole mess.

## **Process Paper**

For the creative portion of my project, I looked at a variety of different sources. To begin, I read the book *Sin in the Second City* by Karen Abbott. This book provided me with a great foundation for my poetry, introducing characters to pursue with further research. The book also gave me an idea of what life was like in the Everleigh Club so I could better situate the characters I would ultimately use in my dramatic monologues. The bibliography section of Abbott's book pointed me towards other useful sources that provided more detail and characters to choose from. I chose to write the first three poems from the perspectives of Ada and Minna Everleigh before introducing the prostitutes themselves. I felt that this would give the reader a better idea of the process that the girls would have to go through before becoming the individuals represented in the dramatic monologues. Each poem entailed a different amount of research and imaginative play, but every character mentioned is a real individual who was somehow involved in vice. Through revealing these characters as independent women who had the opportunity to choose their own occupation, I am exposing a narrative that is the opposite of those that compose white slavery tales.

### **Minna Everleigh Visits the Hankins Brothel and Ada Everleigh Visits the Hankins Brothel**

For these two poems, I consulted the book *Come Into My Parlor* by Charles Washburn. I wished to highlight the differences between the roles the two sisters played in the business by examining the ways in which their imaginations would take off when they first visited the mansion that would become the Everleigh Club. From Washburn, I learned that Ada was very concerned with keeping the club clean, hence the comments on the filth. She was also concerned with the business aspect. Minna was concerned with making the Club into a grand space. She was also the more vocal and sarcastic of the two, hence the snide comments within the poem.

Another aspect that I wished to include in the poems was a hint of their ambiguous past. I reread sections of both the Abbott and Washburn books that discussed their past. The books suggest that the sisters married two brothers who were physically abusive. Washburn wrote about a scene of physical abuse in which Lester, Minna's husband strangles her, which is why I included the mirror scene.

### **By the Time I'm Through, These Girls Will Know Their Balzac**

In this poem, I captured a glimpse of the process the girls would have to go through once hired. Honore de Balzac is cited in both Washburn and Abbott as being the model for what the girls were taught about pleasure. I did research on Balzac for this poem, and I also incorporated the names of a few prostitutes. In order to make the poem more realistic and set in the correct time period, I did research on dances that were performed in dance halls during the early 1900s. I included these as the ones that the girls would not be allowed to perform inside the Club.

### **Lillian Gives a Poetry Lesson**

Karen Abbott imagines a different poet being the source of the girls' recitations, but I wished to go with the love sonnets of Shakespeare. I wanted to include a poem within a poem in the same way that Shakespeare included plays within his plays. I constructed the poem in a way that allowed Lillian to use Sonnet 18 as a form of flattery as well as instruction. While I did not encounter a narrative of Lillian's life in my research, I stumbled across her name and decided to use it. There is a hint, perhaps, that she still feels foolish reciting poetry, and always reverts to the poem she understands best.

### **Myrtle Gossips with a Friend**

I originally discovered Myrtle in the pages of Abbott's book, and decided it would be perfect to let the reader get in her head. I searched the pages of Washburn's book and discovered

a similar description of her obsession with guns. She obviously had a diva attitude, and wound up in an apartment living a very comfortable lifestyle. Washburn writes about one of the other girls visiting her by including one sentence of dialogue. I turned this one sentence into an entire conversation that captured her persona.

### **A Ride to the Illinois Trust and Savings**

Through Washburn, I discovered that the two sisters would bring their favorite courtesan to the bank with them so that she could act as an advertisement of what the club had to offer. In order to situate the poem, I did research to determine what bank the sisters could have potentially been using during the time period. Using Internet sources, I discovered that there was a surplus of banks located in the Loop during this time period due to restrictions on branch banking. I was able to choose a bank that was established previous to the sisters settling down in Chicago, and remained open well past 1911.

### **Phyllis Converses with a Woman in a Bar**

I discovered the tragedy of Phyllis's downfall within *Come Into my Parlor*. In this poem, I explored the differences between the Everleigh Club and Bed Bug Row. The string of brothels where Phyllis wound up was actually referred to by that name in Abott and Washburn's books. I wish to capture the fact that Phyllis was taken in by the drugs and pimps that occupied the red light district, even though she led a good life at the Club.

### **Doll Writes to Her Sister**

I had the opportunity to visit the Chicago Public Library, where I was able to read the book *Upstairs at the Everleigh Club* by Ray Hibbeler. This book detailed Doll's experiences at the Everleigh Club. Through this poem, I am able to give the readers images of the interesting men that the courtesans would sometimes encounter. Suzy occupied a large section of Hibbeler's

book, so I wished to include her to some extent in my poem. She was a prostitute who originally came from China. The Everleigh Club borrowed her, because a suitor did not wish to stoop to the level of the other house in which she worked.

### **Grace Monroe Receives a Visitor at the Hospital**

Grace Monroe is an important figure, because even after the close of the Everleigh Club she chose to pursue a life as a prostitute. Washburn writes about Minna coming to her rescue, and I wanted to include this in the poem. I also chose to identify the other madam as Vic Shaw, a long-time rival of the Everleigh Club, even though sources leave it ambiguous. This decision made sense considering the research I had done that revealed Vic's multiple attempts to frame the sisters for murder.

### **Katie Discusses Her Mistake**

This poem also discusses Vic Shaw and her attempt to frame Minna for murder using Katie and a suitor that she had previously been entertaining. It appears, through looking at Abbott and Washburn, that Katie disappears after the incident. Washburn had commented on the fact that she was a pickpocket, so I revealed the side of her within the poem as an indication that she could survive a new life on the streets. The portion in quotation marks was taken directly from *Come Into My Parlor*.

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