Fallen woman AO4 Context

The term **fallen woman** was used to described a woman who has "lost her innocence", and fallen from the grace of God. In 19th century Britain especially, the meaning came to be closely associated with the loss or surrender of a woman's chastity. Its use was an expression of the belief that to be socially and morally acceptable a women's sexuality and experience should be entirely restricted to marriage, and that she should also be under the supervision and care of an authoritative man. Used when society offered few employment opportunities for women in times of crisis or hardship, the term was often more specifically associated with prostitution which was regarded as both cause and effect of a woman being "fallen". Today, as a result of greater understanding of women's sexuality, changing attitudes to women's role, greater employment opportunities and an acceptance that theologically, men as well as women are capable of falling from grace, the term is considered to be [anachronistic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anachronistic)[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fallen_woman#cite_note-1)although it retains strong literary associations and has considerable historical importance.