

instead of seeking to attract their attention, the slightest notice might be fatal. It is a fugitive state of mind as much as a reality, and nineteenth-century London is a dangerous place for anyone who feels it. It even breaks Vaux in the end.

The worst of it is that one need not be a criminal to feel this suspicion: it is enough to be conspicuously outside of respectable society to have its gaze upon you – as we have seen time and again upon the street, sometimes for better, often for worse. It is a true *culture* of suspicion, cultivated and recycled in anecdote and literature, from Ned Ward's *London Spy* (1703) to Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821) to Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' (1891) – in which a wealthy gentleman finds he can make far more money disguised as a beggar than in conventional employment. The seller, beggar, performer knows from the start that half the hearts among the crowd are hardened against her or him, on account of the tall tales, by turns salacious and sententious, that their owners have heard.

1883: the posthumous life story of George Atkins Brine is published under the title *The King of the Beggars*, and trades upon the 'dodges' he apparently employed when arriving in London 'on tramp' in 1847. Soap applied to the mouth will simulate a foaming fit – this is 'the epileptic dodge'. To effect 'the rheumatic dodge', he counsels:

The arm should be tied up above the elbow with tape, rather tightly, and with a blow pipe, such as butchers use for blowing out a calf, you blow under the skin; the hand and arm then swell out nicely, and look most pitiable. The feet, to match, require an old pair of boots cut down the middle, and the stockings should be padded with cotton wool.²¹

The writer James Grant, whose 1838 *Sketches in London*, itself derivative of Egan, appears to be the source of much of Atkins' advice, records therein the 'most extraordinary case' of deception he has ever encountered:

Will it be believed that this rogue, who was an excellent swimmer, was in the habit of pretending attempts at suicide, by throwing himself into the Thames, with a view to work upon the feelings of whoever chanced to see him after being taken out of the water? He always contrived to select a part of the river near which there were a number of bye-standers, while another person, who was a party to the affair, took care to give the alarm, and call aloud for some boat in the vicinity. Whenever the fellow pretending to have attempted suicide was brought out of the water, the other, affecting to have been passing accidentally at the time, addressed the spectators, and said that the unfortunate man had been induced to make the rash attempt through the greatest distress, and that this was the fourth or fifth time he had sought to put an end to his life, and that within a very short period. Every spectator who had a heart within him, believing, as all always did, the gotup tale, put his hand into his pocket, and gave something to 'the poor unhappy man.' The collections thus made often amounted to two or three pounds. This daring expedient, however, was only convenient in the summer season; winter was much too cold for doing the thing comfortably. It will be asked, in what way, then, did this consummate rogue manage to live in winter? Why, by affecting to commit suicide by hanging himself in some public place, in the evenings! ... The catastrophe was one evening very nearly realised in all its horrors. In ascending a lamp-post, after the rope had been fairly round his neck, he slipped his foot and fell, and would actually have been hanged but for the opportune appearance of his friend, who cut him down.²²

It's a neat story, complete with pat moral. The point is less whether any of these cases are true, than that – as another author, George Smeeton, concedes in 1822 – ‘the number of impostors is very insignificant, when compared with the thousands, who, from numerous causes, are obliged to beg for subsistence’.²³ Smeeton, however, places this proviso on page 189 of a volume trading on any number of recycled impostor stories, and goes on to profit from his immensely popular *Doings of London*, made up entirely of such anecdotes – which, by 1828, has already run to ten editions.²⁴

These writers do real harm to those in the street, making renegades of the merely desperate. They influence the actions of institutions as well as of individuals, and in some cases, it is hard to judge whether such a story has its origin in the Mendicity Society reports or in the compilation of a Grub Street hack.

1838: the Society's annual pamphlet, by now trading chiefly on its reputation as a source of shocking stories, prints, for the first time, what amounts to a wanted notice, set in larger, bolder font than the rest of the edition:

John Quinn, a notorious impostor. – The public are particularly cautioned against the tricks of this man, who is one of the most notorious begging impostors known to the officers of the Mendicity Society. In the day-time he is seen about the west end with a tray of cutlery for sale, having a white nightcap under his hat; in the evening, and late at night, he is frequently to be found in all parts of London and Westminster, sitting on the steps of a door, apparently in the last stage of consumption, his face whitened, a white nightcap partly drawn over his face, and his legs bandaged. He has been repeatedly apprehended and imprisoned, and on one occasion sent back to Ireland, but returned to London within six weeks, to pursue his usual

avocation, which he finds very profitable. He is about 25 years of age, 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, long visage, without whiskers. In the day-time he usually wears a black coat, at night he frequently has on a light drab great coat.²⁵

It is unknown if Quinn is ever caught; almost certain, however, that any number of under-the-weather cutlery sellers come in for a hard time because of it. And woe betide the renegade who is actually caught out shamming.

1850: ‘A.H.’, a mere child, falls into the clutches of this charitable organisation. He is a boy with:

... a paper pinned on his clothes, on which was written, ‘No Tongue – aged 15’ ... but strong suspicions being entertained that he was an impostor, the constable who had him in custody took him to a doctor, who applied a strong acid to his mouth, when his *tongue* presented itself.²⁶

This story, resulting in the happy conclusion of a month in prison for A.H., is presented almost as comic relief.*

Rumour, prejudice, unearned reputation – these have real consequences, transforming innocent bystanders into scapegoats and villains simply on account of their disreputable appearance or attitude. Thursday, 19 May 1825: on a fine early evening in late spring, Frances Vane, the Marchioness of Londonderry, twenty-five years old, a coal tycoon, and seven months pregnant with her

* As of 2017, merely being found in possession of acid with intent carries a four-year jail term; attempting to use it, even if unsuccessful, can result in a life sentence.

fourth child, is browsing in Piccadilly. A trip to the Egyptian Hall to take in the new exhibition, then back into her carriage for the short trot to the bookshop of Nathaniel Hale – for some reason, she prefers his shop to Hatchards.

Her books purchased, she regains the street, full by now of people drawn to the coach and its livery. There is one brief, ghastly moment as a tall man, cloaked in black, comes in front of her. Mouth open, hands beseeching. Just the sort of distressing encounter her physician would have her avoid in her condition. But then, this is what her footmen are paid for: the man is moved aside in an instant. As she mounts the steps of her 'grand equipage', she may be aware of some commotion among the throng. Then again, she may not; an heiress who has known the admiration of Tsar Alexander is past paying heed to a goggling crowd. Two knocks, *drive on*, and she sails serenely out of view.

Among the onlookers is James Grant, around thirty years old, out strolling with his wife Eleanor and their two tiny children. Even at his relatively young age, James has already had, and lost, several trades – sailor in the Royal Navy, tailor, ballad singer. The Grants are not quite renegades. They can still rent a room and he wears his own clothes, a brown jacket and dark trousers, 'not very shabby'. Yes, they have twice been up before a magistrate on vagrancy charges – once 'because an Irish gentleman gave my wife a shilling in St James's square', and once 'for singing ballads in the street' – but they were discharged on both occasions. Yes, he has applied to the Mendicity Society – but the circumstances were exceptional: someone had robbed him in St Giles's, and all he wanted was a pitchfork in order to go haymaking; what he got was sixpence and a bowl of soup.

Recently, losing his keen eyesight and therefore any chance of resuming his trade as a tailor, Grant has had the same recourse as

Humphreys, succeeding where Humphreys failed, and got himself into the West Middlesex militia. Or possibly the East Middlesex, no one's looking too closely. The point is that the militia, unlike the two regular Middlesex regiments, is at no risk of being ordered overseas, and its soldiers are rarely on duty. Which is why he finds himself, along with his wife, each carrying one of their children, in Piccadilly on this fine May evening.

There's even a respectable reason why James Grant might have a particular interest in getting close to the carriage of Lady Londonderry. Three years earlier, at North Cray, a small Kentish village just outside London, he was among the beneficiaries of a programme of good works undertaken on behalf of the local landowner, Lord Castlereagh. A colossus of European diplomacy and British politics, bloodthirsty reactionary, butcher of the Irish, Castlereagh was also – thanks to a new hereditary peerage he helped bestow upon his late father – 2nd Marquess of Londonderry. On Castlereagh's death in 1822, this title passed to his half-brother Charles, the husband of Frances Vane – and along with the title, they inherited the gratitude of James Grant. Now, seeing the familiar livery in the London street, he wants to thank her for her in-laws' sake.

This interest, so plausibly born of innocent gratitude, is not how it will be painted later, in court. Admittedly, the fact that each of the Grants bears a babe-in-arms is suggestive, given what we saw in Chapter One. Grant's excuse for being in the crowd around the carriage – that he wants to see if Lady Londonderry is in good health – is undoubtedly very laudable, but given that it is motivated by remembering when the family gave him alms before, it rather reinforces the impression that he might wish to solicit alms again. There is a new Vagrancy Act as of 1824, and though its tendency is to reform previous confusion, it is bad news for anyone looking to beg in a troublesome manner.²⁷

Except, James Grant does *not* beg of Lady Londonderry. He is not the tall man in the black cloak. And yet, as that man is moved aside, and the Marchioness disappears inside the carriage, a hand descends on Eleanor Grant's shoulder. And here is a strange man's face, pressing close in front of hers; he has a grip on her and is wrestling her away; it is all she can do to cling on to her child, scarce a month old, as, helpless, she is dragged from her husband.

James sees it happening; begins to shout: 'What is that for?' And now there is a second man, big and burly, James's wife and babe between them. James starts towards the struggling knot.

'We will have you too!' snarls one of the men - and only now does James see the stout stick in his hand, one of the cudgels carried by the officers of the Mendicity Society. Before he can react, a third man is upon him, and then the one with the stick joins in. He strikes James 'over my head, face, and shoulders, and also on the arm with which I supported my [other] child, and I dropped it on the ground. The stick hit the child, and I lost all patience'. Breaking free of his other assailant, James lashes out at the man who has struck his child; his fist connects with the man's mouth, draws blood. The crowd around them seethes, but the Grants, encumbered by their infants, are no match for the three men. Enraged by the blow to their leader, all three fall upon James, belabouring him with their sticks, literally tearing the coat from his back.

Almost insensible, he succumbs, and the family are dragged bodily to St James's watch house, a few doors away. As James remembers:

On arriving at the watch-house, I was thrust into a dark dungeon place underground, without fire or candle, and was kept there till 12 o'clock next day; Wright [the officer who had beaten him] pushed me in, and I thought he would have broken my neck down the steps.

It is not until the next afternoon that someone comes for them, and even then, James is first hauled off to a public house opposite the Marlborough Street magistrate's office, where the officers put the frighteners upon him. 'Wright told me that "if I admitted my fault before the Magistrate, nothing further would come of it;" another man also came into the room and told me "that I had better beg Mr Wright's pardon"'. James Grant is unbowed, and though he admits the blow in court, he maintains that he was struck first. His wife is let off, but James is committed to prison for five weeks, as none will stand him bail. In prison, Wright pays him several calls, pressuring him into a confession; desperate, Grant pretends to give in to their demands and to write a written confession, but does no such thing; at last he is released, as the charge of vagrancy will not stick.

Eventually, the law gives up on Grant. But, though several steps short of a renegade, it is his precarious existence, his fall by degrees from a settled state, his history of want, his hungry children, that count against him. In the eyes of the officers, James and Eleanor Grant are vagrants, a public nuisance. The Society's lawyer, Mr Andrews, maintains to the jury 'that no person could doubt that [the Grants] were in Piccadilly for the purpose of obtaining charity, & there were ways of obtaining alms besides asking in plain direct terms'. In his view, the deferential act of dropping a curtsey to Lady Londonderry is itself actionable - 'it was as well known what they meant, as if they said "Please to give me a few pence" - never mind that no one saw Eleanor Grant actually curtseying. The Society goes on to libel the Grants in their public report, asserting without evidence 'that Grant and his wife have been known to the Officers many years as common insolent Street Beggars; and coercive measures must in some instances be resorted to.'

A year later, they get a second chance: the Grants find themselves once again on the street. Gleeefully, the Society reports that 'James

William, aged 22, with his wife and child, who have infested the town several years, were again apprehended and committed'. Such is the unremitting persecution that those perceived to be renegades can suffer.²⁸

And yet - and yet. This is not the whole story of the Grants' persecution; it omits crucial details. There are two trials, not one, and the second - in October - is brought by the Grants, against two of the officers, Wright and Jackson, on charges of assault and false imprisonment. Jackson, pleading illness, does not appear, and continues to serve as a constable for several years. Wright, however - the clear ringleader, the one who first grabbed Eleanor Grant and who struck James and his eldest child - is convicted of assault and fined 13s 4d; he will not work for the Mendicity Society again.

Still more significantly, the original struggle does not take place in an uncaring street. Though Lady Londonderry has quit the scene, plenty of others witness, protest, attempt to intervene. A gentleman on horseback cries out against the officers, who lash out at him and call him a vagabond. When he presents his card and attempts to follow them, Wright spits at him, 'I do not care a damn who, or what you are!'

Six witnesses come forward to testify for the Grants' innocence: three doctors' assistants, a saddler and the proprietors of the bookshop itself, Nathaniel and Hercules Hale, father and son. Together, their wealth of corroborating evidence acquits James Grant of one charge, albeit not the other, and later convicts Wright on one count - albeit not the other.

It's not exactly victory; indeed, it scarcely counts as justice. Yet the London street is far from silent. From Mary Ann Donovan, the Irish comb seller answering back to the Lord Mayor, to the verses

written by Love and Albert or sung by Johnson or Bezer, to the Westminster patters passing motions against Henry Mayhew, it is full of voices, articulate and bold, both willing and able to make themselves heard. It can protect its own.

1815: Captain Edward Pelham Brenton RN is busy exposing fraudulent beggars in St George's Fields. One of these, James Hays, is 'a pitiable object, his legs being drawn up to his body, without any flesh on them' - yet his account of how he came by his injuries, serving under Nelson on the *Agamemnon*, Brenton 'knew in a moment to be a fabrication, and told him so'. Hays admits it, but the altercation has already drawn a crowd, and Brenton rises from his stooping position to find himself 'very profusely abused by the surrounding mob', who come to Hays' defence and rail against the government 'for allowing the brave defenders of their country "to starve in the streets."²⁹

Summer of the same year: as thousands are dying in the fields of Belgium, an ex-sailor is being pestered in St Paul's Churchyard. At least, he says he is an ex-sailor; he also says he's blind, but the jury's out on George Dyball, whom John Thomas Smith has down as a renegade who 'never was a seaman', for all his 'nankeen waistcoat and trowsers', the unmistakable uniform of a naval sailor.³⁰

Dyball may be a renegade, even a scoundrel. But he is loved. For some time now, the City Marshals charged with removing vagrants have had their eye on him, and as Napoleon steals a march on the Allied armies in the mud of Flanders, the officers descend. But - unlike later, when three men gang up on Grant - they only send in one. As this officer seizes hold of Dyball, the beggar's dog starts up a frenzy of yapping; the passers-by see a slender, blind sailor in the clutches of a brute. And they pile in to defend Dyball. Two of the

officer's teeth go flying with the punches, and there is blood in the churchyard as he flees the scene in fear of his life.

As Blücher and Wellington pursue Napoleon back to Paris, the brave City Marshals make their statements to the House of Commons, before the newly convened Mendicity Committee. The problem with these renegades, their spokesman says, is that:

It is a very disagreeable office for an officer to undertake, for he is sure to get a crowd about him, and to be ill treated; there is generally a serious struggle before any of those common beggars can be taken into custody ... These beggars immediately make a resistance, by falling down and screaming; and then good-natured people interest themselves, and desire they will not pull the poor creature about[.]

Philip Holdsworth, the senior Marshal, agrees that 'the people generally join with the Mendicant, and the officers are frequently ill-used; insomuch so, that one officer, the week before last, in taking up a sailor, whose dog carries his hat, was seriously hurt'. Worse still, says Holdsworth, 'there are some who are blind and lame, who think they have a privilege, and their infirmities cause the people to side with them and defend them'.³¹

Despite appearances, the renegade is rarely alone. Nor does the sympathy of the street manifest itself only in violent confrontation. The times of quiet aid are just as eloquent.

The late 1860s: Charles Humphreys is at his lowest ebb, in and out of prison, crying in the park. Forced to beg for literally a crust of bread, he discovers that at:

... the third turning down Edgware Road on the left hand side from Marble Arch there is a square. Turning to the right about

three doors from the corner, I asked the servant if she could give me anything to eat, and she said she'd see. She brought me out a fair sized parcel wrapped in brown paper. I thanked her, and she said:

'When you're by here again, give another call, and I'll always see if I can't find you something.'

Now he has food; the energy he needs to keep going. Next, he needs to work on his appearance. In Charing Cross, he befriends a young bootblack. In exchange for help with a couple of customers, the boy cleans Humphrey's filthy footwear. He is starting to look less like a renegade. But where can he find work? 'After cleaning my boots, another man who sold papers in the streets used to let me look down the "Clerkenwell News" for nothing. On this particular occasion there was a youth wanted in Eastcheap.' Where even is Eastcheap? The man doesn't know. But Humphreys is standing straight again, and his boots are shining. And so he does the simplest thing in the world. He asks a policeman.

As it happens, Humphreys never makes it to Eastcheap. Halfway there, an advert catches his eye in a Holborn shop window. Brim-full of confidence, he enters; secures the job. From here, he will prosper. Thanks to the kindness the street can show, his renegade days are over.³²

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Sometimes, just sometimes, the street has its renegades - outside society, hounded by authority - who are nonetheless untouchable; who have found that thing, whatever it is, that gets them through. November 1834, and an unnamed writer-cum-journalist is snooping around St Giles's, looking out for curious characters who will make good copy. They're in luck - though they scarcely know it at the time.

Mr Thompson's, on Buckeridge Street, is known as a 'cadging house', a den of ill-repute – that is to say, it's a lodging house and pub in a 'bad' neighbourhood. The heart of the place is the 'men's kitchen', a room for food, drink, cards, warm from the hearth and rich with the smells of cooking, sweat and tobacco that waft about on the draught from boarded-up windows. Tonight, the place is crowded, already humming, and the journalist squeezes into a corner; nurses a drink; watches.

In comes Bill Chapman. Short, squat, with light brown hair, a rolling gait and the clothes of a costermonger. But Chapman is a ballad singer, and an able one at that.³³ A roar goes up from the company. Chapman, it seems, has a reputation to live up to.

[He] affected a superior degree of manliness. Swaggered around the room, his hat half pulled over his brows, and slouched a little on one side; assuming the scowling look of a bully, and at times the flashy air of a gallant ... [T]o show that he was a professed admirer of the kind of Eve, [he] took hold of his mistress when he entered with one hand, and waving the other above his head, sung 'My love is like the red, red rose', in a voice at once powerful and sweet. Then taking her upon his knee, struck up 'the light, the light guitar', in a style so exquisitely musical and rich, as fairly to disturb the card-table, and draw from the whole company a thundering round of applause, with 'Bravo, Bill!'

The journalist cannot pull their eyes away; for some reason, Chapman fascinates them:

He appeared to be a creature of great spirit and vivacity; dashed about, throwing himself into pugilistic attitudes, and striking out, right and left, at his cronies, in sportive play ... He fell a

capering, singing all the while with great animation, and beating time most elegantly with heel and toe, and giving vent to the fullness of his spirits in shouts ... and, catching hold of his wench again, thrust his hand into his bosom, – pulled out a handful of silver; swore, bravadoed, – squirted tobacco juice in the grate, and boasted.[J]³⁴

Chapman's fine Welsh voice and bravura social performance strike the journalist as copy-worthy, and the sketch is soon with the publisher. But before the results see the light of day, something happens to Chapman that changes both the story, and his status, as a confirmed – but unrepentant – renegade.

Saturday, 31 January 1835, some two months later: perhaps at Thompson's, perhaps at another 'den', Chapman is carousing with two sisters, Ellen and Isabella Watson, the latter of whom happens to be Chapman's wife, even if their union has not exactly been sanctified at the altar. All of them have been drinking, which leads to old arguments, and, well, you know what sisters can be like. Words become blows; soon Isabella is screaming death threats at her sister, and though it's all in a night's work for the trio, you can't expect the onlookers to be so phlegmatic. Next thing they know, both Chapman and Isabella Watson are being hauled off to the station house, where they give their names. Accused of cheating, imposture and creating a disturbance (Bill), and actually charged with assault and direful threats (Isabella), they are soon up before Mr Bennett, the magistrate at Hatton Garden. Ellen Watson, for her part, has fled the scene.

It's late, Mr Bennett has had a long night, and the Watson women are notorious as 'disorderly characters'; he dismisses the case, his mind on his bed. Which is when Inspector Oakley of E Division pipes up. With somewhat misplaced zeal, the weary

magistrate might feel, Oakley has been making enquiries. Chapman, it transpires, is not all he seems. As Oakley puts it in ominously dehumanising terms, 'although the thing before them was attired in man's apparel, he [Oakley] had ascertained that it was a woman'.

Bennett is surprised into attentiveness. He'd thought he'd seen it all. Peering at Chapman, he asks for his name.

'It is Mary Chapman,' comes the low reply. Not the name given at the station - but then, this is under oath, and Chapman has no choice but to revert to the name on his birth certificate.

At this point, Bennett joins Oakley in proceeding to talk as if Chapman isn't in the room with them. 'I never saw a figure more like a man, and the voice is manly,' he says, as if discussing a specimen at the Royal Society.

Oakley stands a little straighter. Perhaps he even refers to his little pocket book. 'I have known her at least ten years,' he admits, finally crossing the prepositional divide from thing to human:

... and she always appeared in a dress similar to the one she now wears - namely, a hat, smock-frock, trousers, or knee-breeches, and until last night I always supposed her to be a man; she is known all over England as a ballad-singer, and a crier of 'The last dying speeches'.

Both men are at a loss. The opera, the theatre, the ballads are full of disguised maidens, following their true loves to sea or wrapped up in confusing plots involving twins, shipwrecks, inheritances. But generally, those are either excuses to look at sexy girls in tight breeches, or tragic tales of maidenly heroism. They do not touch the short, rough fellow before them.

Bennett is torn. Every fibre of his being tells him, *down with this sort of thing* - and yet... 'She may be a disorderly and disreputable

character,' he muses, almost to himself, 'which, in fact, her dressing as a man clearly shows; but I know of no law to punish her.'

Oakley has more in his notes; perhaps they contain grounds for a charge. 'She travels the country with the woman Isabella Watson,' he offers, and they both spare a glance for Watson, still flush from the drink and the battle, but maintaining a dignified silence. 'They are both known at every race-course and fair as ballad-singers, and considered to be man and wife.'

We can't say what imputation Oakley puts upon the phrase 'man and wife', nor in what spirit Bennett takes it. He's still trying to think of a crime. 'She may have more than one reason for dressing in that manner, and passing as the husband of the woman ... I wish it was in my power to imprison her.' What is in his mind? Nothing charitable, that's for sure - fraud, deception? Neither of them breathes a word of sex - there are reporters present, for one thing, and perhaps they simply can't or won't make the imaginative leap.

Oakley's still going on, and maybe that unspoken implication hangs in the air as he observes that when they lodged at Thompson's, 'they always passed with him as man and wife; moreover, she smokes; and when Watson gives her any offence she beats her and blackens her eyes, though Watson is much taller and apparently stronger'. Who has he been talking to, this policeman, since the arrest was made? Or has he always known these things, and thought nothing of them until tonight's revelation? In Oakley's worldview, a wife-beating husband is in the natural order of things; it is only the concealed element of Chapman's identity that renders their relations troubling to him.

Asked to speak, Chapman volunteers only that 'Isabella has lived with me as my companion for many years'. Ambiguous word, that: companion. Safe, even respectable.

'Why do you dress as a man?' says Bennett, who might perhaps have asked this question earlier.

'I own I am disguised,' says Chapman, for whom the question, though surely expected, is not a happy one. 'It was owing to the cruelty of a father-in-law [i.e. stepfather] that I was first dressed in this manner.'³⁵ Meaning what, exactly? Abuse, unwanted attention, trauma... but Bennett doesn't want to know. 'When a man dresses as a woman, or a woman attires herself as a man,' he moralises, 'it creates a strong suspicion that it is done for a bad purpose ... If I could punish you, I would.'

The injustice flares up in Chapman; or perhaps he is angling for sympathy. 'I should not have adopted this disguise if my [step]father had not ill-treated me.'

Finally, Isabella Watson chips in. 'The poor fellow has been with me hundreds of miles as my companion, and he never got into a scrape before.'

Bennett throws up his hands. 'It is a case that puzzles me, but I must discharge the prisoner.'

It has been a long night for everyone. But the reporter for the *Morning Chronicle* is still paying attention and gets down a final observation – to my mind, the most moving detail in this or perhaps any of our cases. Unlike the two men of the law, and maybe only inadvertently, this journalist respects Chapman's chosen pronouns. 'The prisoner, who was chewing tobacco, then bowed his head, and walked out of the office with Isabella, who exclaimed, "Never mind, my lad, if we live a hundred years we will be in this manner."³⁶

Maybe for us, too, it's getting late, and I'm growing maudlin. But I find Isabella Watson's words almost indescribably beautiful. They have in them such comfort, such defiance, such a fierceness of affection. Whatever the details of their unorthodox relationship – apparently born out of a protective stratagem, a response to persecution, an effective guard against harassment as what would otherwise appear to be two women on the road and in the street;

but surely much more than this, to judge from their words and behaviour, surely a true queer partnership between the redoubtable Isabella and her flamboyant, talented, intensely vulnerable trans husband – whatever the fine details, theirs is the life of unrepentant renegades. Against all the world's authority, father, law and Church, they have found a way to be, together. The magistrate can't get to them. They know success in their profession, and an admiring social circle. The streets are theirs. If they live a hundred years, they will be in this manner.