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T H R E E

“The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon”



On 4 July 1885, W. T. Stead, the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, issued a “frank warning” to readers. All those “who are squeamish, and all those who are prudish, and all those who prefer to live in a fool’s paradise of imaginary innocence and purity, selfishly oblivious of the horrible realities which torment those whose lives are passed in the London inferno, *will do well not to read the Pall Mall Gazette of Monday and the following days.*”¹ As “Chief Director” of a “Secret Commission,” he and others had spent the last four weeks painstakingly investigating the traffic in girls in London’s vice emporiums. Stead published his “findings” in a four-part series, the “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,” one of the most successful pieces of scandal journalism of the nineteenth century.

The “Maiden Tribute” documented in lurid detail how poor “daughters of the people” were “snared, trapped, and outraged, either when under the influence of drugs or after a prolonged struggle in a locked room.”² The series had an electrifying effect: by the third installment, mobs of “gaunt and hollow-faced men and women with trailing dress and ragged coats” were rioting at the *Pall Mall Gazette* offices, in an attempt to obtain copies of the paper. When W. H. Smith, the newsagent, refused to carry it, the PMG relied on newspaper boys and volunteers to sell copies on the streets. George Bernard Shaw, thrilled with its indictment of the vicious upper classes, offered his services to hawk “as many quires of the paper as I can carry” on any thoroughfare in London.³ The PMG’s advertising placards

—"Five pounds for a virgin warranted pure"—were as sensational as Stead's subheadings. Two fifteen-year-old girls were reputedly accosted outside the Charing Cross Station by a hawker crying out, "Come on Miss 'ave a copy. This'll show you 'ow to earn five pounds."⁴

Telegraphic services rapidly transformed the "Maiden Tribute" into an international event. Stead proudly boasted that his "revelations" were printed in every capital of the Continent as well as by the "purest journals in the great American republic." Unauthorized reprints were said to have surpassed the one and a half million mark. Not surprisingly, the other London dailies were furious and jealous, at first stonily ignoring the crusade and then condemning it as "the vilest parcel of obscenity." Unsympathetic members of Parliament called for the paper's prosecution under the obscenity laws, and indignant fathers, concerned about the effect of the stories on innocent family members, canceled their subscriptions to the *PMG*.⁵

Nonetheless, Stead's campaign forced the passage of age-of-consent legislation that had been stalled in Parliament for years. An enormous public demonstration was held in Hyde Park (estimated at 250,000) to demand the enforcement of the new legislation. Meanwhile, plans were underway to prosecute Stead for committing precisely the same crime, the purchase of a young girl in the London "slave" market, that he had set out to expose. Throughout the autumn of 1885, the same newspapers that maintained a "conspiracy of silence" against the "Maiden Tribute" devoted considerable space to Stead's ensuing trial, during which they tried to transform Stead from a campaigning hero to a denigrated criminal faced with a prison sentence. This worked in the short run only, for Stead emerged after three months from Holloway Prison a martyr to the cause of social justice and social purity.

The political effects of the "Maiden Tribute" were as startling as its dramatic unfolding. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 not only raised the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen, but it also gave police far greater power to prosecute streetwalkers and brothel-keepers. In addition, the act made indecent acts between consulting male audits illegal, thus forming the basis of legal proceedings against male homosexuals until 1967. The excitement generated by the "Maiden Tribute" also stimulated grass-roots political activity: throughout Britain, social purity groups and vigilance committees were organized to oversee the local enforcement of the act. This loose network of campaigning groups, populist, feminist, and nationalist in their political zeal, was dedicated to eradicating vice and imposing a single standard of chastity on men and women.⁶ Vigilance committees attacked music halls, theaters, and pornography as manifestations

of "male lust"; their signal triumph, however, was to force police crackdowns on solicitation and brothel-keeping in the metropolis and the major provincial cities. Hence a massive political initiative against non-marital, nonreproductive sexuality was mobilized, whose initial victims were working-class prostitutes, precisely those women who had been the original objects of concern for Stead and his feminist allies. Repercussions from the "Maiden Tribute" were felt throughout the Empire, in the form of age-of-consent (marriage) laws, efforts to abolish state-regulated prostitution, and, eventually, official prohibitions against liaisons with "native" women.⁷

Quite a story. Historians who have considered it have tended to focus on one of three issues: the reliability of Stead as a narrator (whether or not he told the "truth"), his sexual psychology (his status as a latter-day Puritan whose "repressed sexuality" was the "motive force" of his activities, according to Havelock Ellis); or the impact of the "Maiden Tribute" and the legislation it provoked on class politics, the idea of childhood, and the political economy of sex. These are all important questions, which I intend to address as well, both in relation to each other and in connection to another area of inquiry, surprisingly ignored by previous commentators: the narrative of the "Maiden Tribute" itself.⁸

In imposing a certain narrative logic on the story of prostitution, "Maiden Tribute" exaggerated the role of children in the social economy of prostitution⁹ and misrepresented the way young girls were recruited for the streets. Even Stead's account of his own purchase of a young girl for five pounds remains an indeterminate and unreliable narrative. I am nonetheless interested in why the "Maiden Tribute"'s distorted representation of prostitution was compelling to a variety of social constituencies; how it ordered people's experience and helped to construct a sexual subjectivity for men and women.

By focusing on narrative, I hope to explore how cultural meanings around sexual danger were produced and disseminated in Victorian society, and what were their cultural and political effects. Narratives of the "real," such as history and news reporting, impose a formal coherence on events: they "narrativize" data into a coherent "well-made" tale, converting "chaotic experience into meaningful moral drama."¹⁰ Yet different narrative forms construct different worlds of meanings marked by different levels of coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure. They address different audiences and accord varying degrees of agency to their main characters. In all such narrative forms, meanings are structured textually through a set of conventions that establish a flexible contract between a writer and her/his readers for making sense of experience. These conventions and their sys-

tematic deviations provide "clues," to quote Fredric Jameson, "which lead us back to the concrete historical situation of the individual text itself, and allows us to read its structure as ideology, as a socially symbolic act, as a prototypical response to a historical dilemma."¹¹ Despite this "flexible contract," narratives may also provoke an unexpected set of reader responses.

Stead intended the "Maiden Tribute" to "rouse the nation" by purifying "the heart with the emotion of pity and horror." To establish an "emotional bond" between himself and a new mixed-class public, he introduced the New Journalism: that "personal style, that trick of bright colloquial language, that wealth of intimate picturesque detail, and that determination to arrest, amuse or startle." By incorporating into his pages new topics and new voices (via the "universal interview"), Stead tried to democratize the newspaper and make it less estranged from ordinary "daily life." At a time when urban life seemed to segment the "public" from the "private" and to isolate the "classes" from the "masses," Stead introduced human interest stories that exposed the secrets of the rich and incited sympathy for the domestic plight of the poor.¹²

Through the New Journalism, Stead helped to mainstream a commercial formula already in practice since the 1840s among the half-penny Sunday newspapers, such as the *News of the World*, *Reynolds' Newspaper*, and *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*. The Sundays had already reshaped the staid format of news reporting of respectable dailies by incorporating narrative codes of popular literature, organized around themes of sex and crime, and by refashioning the prurient exposé style of the "crim. con." and "bon ton" journals of the early Victorian years.¹³ In the process, these newspapers linked sexual concerns to national and class concerns, thus constructing sexual issues as news. By adapting these techniques to a gentleman's newspaper that sold for one penny, Stead extended this news presentation to a more elite readership. He elevated sexual narratives to the level of sexual scandal, to a social drama that exposed social divisions and forced people to take sides.¹⁴

Stead constructed sexual danger as a national issue for a national readership, building on the prior reform agitation against the state regulation of prostitution and the grass-roots organizing efforts of an emerging social purity movement. He tried to transform the newspaper into a public forum of critical opinion for an expanded public, one that would include working people and women traditionally excluded from what Habermas has described as the classical "bourgeois public sphere." This expanded public sphere would be the place, as critic Simon Watney put it, where "modern society and individuals made sense of themselves," where symbols, images

and words circulated that provided "the basic raw materials from which human subjectivity is constructed." Stead hoped to harness those structures of feeling to fashion a new political formation under his own editorial direction, to construct a "Government by Journalism."¹⁵

Stead's project was both controlling and inciting, inclusive and restrictive, unifying and fragmenting. Contributing to these contradictory effects was the heterogeneous nature of the newspaper page: on contiguous pages and columns appeared numerous subgenres—weather reports, shipping news, foreign and domestic news, police columns, correspondence columns, and human interest interviews—all with different pretensions to factuality or opinion, as well as different relations between author and readers. One consequence of this mixed format was to represent a world in flux, fragmented and disconnected. Stead further encouraged a proliferation of meaning by shifting genres within his narrative account of the "Maiden Tribute," by reporting the multiple perspectives of readers to the "Maiden Tribute" through the "universal interview," and by reprinting both supportive and critical commentary of the "Maiden Tribute" from the contemporary press.

Stead also tried to impose a totalizing unity on this multiplicity. Although he opened his pages to new social constituencies, the editorial and reportorial tone of the *Pall Mall Gazette* addressed a "unified general public" that submerged class, age, ethnicity, and any particularity into a single moral entity. Like Henry Mayhew and Frederick Greenwood before him, Stead established a special personal relationship to this general readership. Through his own first-person narratives he spoke directly to his "mass" readership, vividly conveying the experiential quality of his own excursion into the urban unknown—in a way that demanded a response.

Melodramatic Tradition and the "Maiden Tribute"

To construct his narrative, Stead drew on older cultural forms—particularly melodrama and the literature of urban exploration—but grafted on newer forms—late-Victorian pornography and fantasy, the Gothic fairy tale—that were also not of his own construction. Through this *mélange*, he produced an unstable text and a contradictory, obsessive discourse around sexuality that remain a legacy for the modern era. His narrative was taken up, reworked by different constituencies and social forces. These multiple transformations gave rise to complex political effects, which were not exhausted in the nineteenth century.

In the "Maiden Tribute," Stead used the journalistic innovations of the New Journalism to tell an old story of the seduction of poor girls by vicious

aristocrats. Traditionally, this story had been cast in political terms as a melodrama, a form that allowed the weak to speak out and gain agency in their own defense. Melodrama dramatically expressed a language of politics that had tremendous currency throughout most of the nineteenth century. As the "man who wrote the Maiden Tribute," Stead proudly positioned himself in relation to this political tradition as the champion of working people and women. Yet he wrote in a different direction from earlier feminist melodramas and more traditional working-class forms. When Stead grafted pornographic scenarios onto melodrama and refocused the drama from the perspective of the elite male villain, he significantly transformed the story and its meanings.

Melodrama was the most important theatrical and literary form of the nineteenth century. Peter Brooks has located its historical formation in working-class theater of the early nineteenth century—in the vital, illegitimate popular theater that flourished on the margins, in the "Boulevards Du Crime" of Paris or in the unlicensed minor theaters of working-class districts in London. During the first half of the century, melodrama expanded rapidly beyond popular theater to shape both popular fiction and popular political discourse. As a "system of meaning," "a certain fiction system for making sense of experience," melodrama came to serve as a primary imaginative structure for a wide array of social constituencies.¹⁶

In both form and content, melodrama was an appropriate genre for working-class audiences, evoking the instability and vulnerability of their life in the unstable market culture of the early nineteenth century, where traditional patterns of deference and paternalism had been eroded. Below the surface order of reality lurked a terrible secret that could erupt unexpectedly with violence and irrationality. The melodramatic narrative acted arbitrarily, in its very structure calling into question the operation of law and justice. Melodramatic plots overwhelmingly reinforced the sense of destiny out of control; for most of the time, the villain remained in total command, ultimately overthrown not by reason but by chance, which in effect was the desire of the audience.¹⁷

The social meanings of melodrama were also responsive to the patriarchal and democratic expectations of its popular audience. In domestic melodrama, melodrama's most popular form, class exploitation—that terrible secret—was imaginatively represented and personalized as sexual exploitation of the daughter, which was a threat to family hierarchy and an infringement of male working-class prerogatives. A familial drama was thereby entwined with a class drama, as represented in the erotic triangle of upper-class male villain, passive plebeian hero or grieving father, and passive, victimized heroine. Melodrama also celebrated the firm boundaries of

the home, as a haven in a heartless world, a trope that tended to erase women's larger social connections and resources beyond the home as well as the intensity of female domestic labor within its walls. As historian Anna Clark suggests, melodrama could condense the diverse experiences of family economies found among working people into a nostalgic evocation of a patriarchal golden age which functioned as a rhetorical foil for the miseries of the present.¹⁸

Melodrama became a customary and familiar form of storytelling that was widely deployed in radical politics, in good part because the melodramatic representation of power and virtue was entirely compatible with the democratic, antiaristocratic, and antistatist traditions of popular radicalism.¹⁹ The attack on aristocratic seducers, for example, became a rallying cry in the anti-Poor-Law campaign of the 1830s. According to nearly every radical newspaper of the period, the Bastardy Clauses were introduced to "screen a vile aristocracy, who seduce and ruin more young girls than all the male population put together."²⁰ However much this political melodrama entailed a displacement of sexual danger and oppression outside the working class, it nonetheless inserted gender into the discussion of class politics. It placed women on the political agenda and acknowledged them as members of a class community for whom men struggled.²¹

Feminist critics Martha Vicinus and E. Ann Kaplan have pointed out that melodrama particularly appealed to female audiences, writers, and performers, precisely because it foregrounded issues of gender and power and highlighted the role of the heroine, however passive and suffering she might be. When middle-class female writers such as Mrs. Gaskell and Mrs. Wood produced literary melodramas in the mid-Victorian period, they extended the heroine's repertoire and revised melodrama's social meanings. In the women's fiction of the 1840s and 1850s, the fallen woman remained an object of charity and pity who was clearly proletarian; by the 1860s her class identity had shifted, and she became a genteel projection of the reader's own identity and the emblem of women's power and agency. The fiction of the mid-Victorian period articulated a new constellation of feeling and identification with the fallen woman's plight that found expression in feminist politics in the decades to come.²²

One dramatic example of the power of literary melodrama to crystallize female reformist consciousness may be found in Josephine Butler's reminiscences about her own entry into rescue work. Butler identified Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth* and the controversy surrounding its publication as the immediate circumstances that propelled her into "scavenger" work among "ruined" women in the 1850s. While living in Oxford with her clergyman-husband George (who was then an examiner at the university), Butler lis-

tened in silent anger to the denunciation of *Ruth* by the masculine society of “celibates” who assembled at her home in the evenings. “A moral sin in a woman was spoken as immensely worse than in a man; there was no comparison to be found between them. A pure woman, it was reiterated, should be absolutely ignorant of a certain class of ills in the world, albeit those evils bore with murderous cruelty on other women.” Inwardly furious at the audacity and arrogance of one young man who “seriously declared that he would not allow his own mother to read such a book,” she “resolved to hold my peace,” to speak “little with men, but much with God.” “Quietly,” with the support of her husband, she began to seek out “ruined” women and welcome them into her home.²³

Butler’s rescue work took on new public dimensions in Liverpool in the 1860s. After the accidental death of her young daughter Eva, she “was possessed of an irresistible desire to go forth and find some pain keener than my own, to meet some persons more unhappy than myself . . . to say . . . I understand. I too have suffered.” “It was not difficult to find misery in Liverpool,” she wrote of her early social work there. In 1866, she began to work among the women of the Liverpool workhouse in the oakum shed, which functioned as a women’s vagrant ward and Bridewell, where she practiced her transformative skills on the “wretched, dragged, ignorant” outcasts of the casual ward, persuading them to fall down on their knees and pray to Jesus. Butler’s portrait of the women combined sympathy and social distance: they were poor dumb creatures, tamed and brought to Christ through her ministrations. The collective sound they emitted, she recalled, was more reminiscent of sacrificial lambs brought to slaughter than intelligent beings: “It was a strange sound, that united wail—continuous, pitiful, strong—like a great sigh or murmur of vague desire and hope, issuing from the heart of despair, piercing the gloom and murky atmosphere of that vaulted room, and reaching to the heart of God.”²⁴

From the workhouse, jails, and streets of Liverpool, Butler brought poor “ruined” young women, friendless, all physically worn out from their hard lives, to be nursed by her in her own home. Her widowed sister helped her in this “work without a name that came upon us.” Butler kept a diary of her experiences with these dying girls, excerpts of which were published in the 1870s as antiregulationist propaganda, “The Dark Side of English Life: Illustrated in a Series of True Stories,” and later included in her biography of her husband.²⁵ Butler’s sketches of “Marion” and “Katie,” of “Margaret” and “Emma” were literary melodramas, evocative of *Ruth* and the fallen-women fiction of the 1850s and 1860s. The narratives dramatize the same apotheosis of the fallen woman into saintly madonna that

characterized Gaskell's novel, and they indict privileged men as the enemy. They assert a unified identity for women, an ideal of womanhood as "solidaire," yet they nonetheless reveal a complicated identification with the fallen woman as both a version of the self and residual Other.

The protagonists in Butler's sketches were dying magdalens who had finally found maternal protection and personal salvation under Butler's care. They were victims and heroines, "poor wandering lambs" ennobled by their suffering and sad life. Compared to the "outcasts" of the workhouses, these women were dignified, speaking subjects. Whatever their original class identity, as in literary melodrama, they tended to display "natural" refinement and gentility. Butler was originally attracted to Marion, her first case, when she saw her face, "full of piercing intelligence," across a crowded room. Laura, with her "white hands, dainty feet, graceful attire," had a "Queen-like" air and monumental grandeur even on her deathbed. Like Gaskell's Ruth, Butler's magdalens all died in a state of grace, having acquired spiritual insight and potency from their fall. Like the original Magdalen, they were closer to Christ for having sinned and been redeemed.²⁶

Butler assumed a number of roles in these narratives: omniscient narrator, stage manager, and supportive, grieving mother. As narrator, she allowed her magdalens to voice their own anger, to "curse" men for their treachery. As stage manager, Butler provided the props for an appropriate deathbed scene. "I had filled Marion's coffin with white camellias, banking them all round her. With her hands crossed on her breast, and dressed as a bride for her Lord, she looked lovely." Butler also played the supportive role of mother to the girls. When she first met Marion she asked her, "Will you come home with me? I had a daughter once." As mother confessor (preempting her clergyman-husband) she reassured her dying magdalens about their spiritual future: Emma's "love for me," wrote Butler, "was very great—extraordinarily great. She seemed to think that whatever I said must be absolutely true—poor thing—and to take the hope of salvation on my word."²⁷

It was as avenging mother that Butler assumed star billing. "Some years ago," she recounted, "I found a poor starved infant" whose mother sewed "hard, night and day, pale and lean, singing as well as her broken heart would let her."

I took it in my arms to the hotel where its father was staying for the hunting season. I held it up. "Look at him," I said, "Ay. look at him well, he resembles you, he is your son. Look well at him, for you will not see him again till he faces you at the last dread day." The man was

glad to pay a pound or two to get rid of the annoyance, and then, springing into his "drag," with cigar in mouth, he lashed his horses off to the "meet."²⁸

In this vignette, Butler has assembled and consolidated a series of visual and literary conventions associated with the fallen woman in the mid-Victorian period: the garret scene, the plight of the starving seamstress (reminiscent of Mrs. Trollope's *Jessie Phillips* and Gaskell's *Ruth*) seduced by an upper-class libertine, the sadistic hunter who whipped his horse as he had tortured and brutalized the violated maid. By inserting herself as a figure in the story, Butler accomplishes a series of substitutions. She replaces the wronged father of popular melodrama with an avenging mother who presents the magdalen's case to the dastardly seducer. But this self-presentation is also built on an alternative textual version that allowed the victim to speak out against male perfidy: according to this second version, Butler moves beyond the motherly vindication of suffering womanhood to actual impersonation of the magdalen herself. She shares the magdalen's sorrows but also her benediction.²⁹

Butler's melodramatic performances acquired more notoriety and political meaning when, in the 1870s and 1880s, she and other feminists allied with radical workingmen and middle-class nonconformists to oppose the regulation of prostitution, as established under the Contagious Diseases Acts, and secured the repeal of those acts in 1886.³⁰ A desire to liberate women from male sexual tyranny and brutality led to feminist demands for "no secrets" on sexual questions. By setting a "floodlight" on men's "doings,"³¹ respectable women asserted themselves in the public discussion of sexuality. During the repeal campaign, feminists staged two versions of political melodrama: one that endorsed the model of female heroism celebrated in women's fiction and another that invoked the democratic and paternalist message of traditional stage melodrama.

Center stage in these public melodramas was the beautiful and histrionic figure of Butler, who combined in herself the role of prophet and suffering magdalen. A charismatic leader and gifted speaker, she inspired a personal loyalty among her female coworkers that bordered on idolatry. She and her female coworkers produced hundreds of pamphlets, edited numerous repeal periodicals, and mounted public platforms across the country to denounce the Acts as a "sacrifice of female liberties" to the "slavery of men's lust" and to describe in minute detail the "instrumental rape" of the internal examination.³²

Although she had rarely spoken in public before 1869, Butler had been secretly and "inwardly" prepared by God through "sorrow" for her politi-

cal mission. She believed that she received direct visions from God and that her mystical experience validated her right, as a woman, to speak out in public. In her political narratives, Butler superimposed her version of Christian eschatology upon a melodramatic narrative, integrating biblical references and prophetic insights into a secular political language that was radical, constitutional, and feminist. It was the role of the magdalen and the female prophet alike to suffer, to set a spiritual example.³³

Butler played a crucial double role in the popular side of the repeal campaign, as principal propagandist and heroine/victim. To capture popular support, she resorted to daring acts of heroism that showed her solidarity with her fallen sisters. When a woman's meeting was held at Pontefract during the by-election of 1872, hired bullies "led by two persons whose *dress* was that of gentlemen" set bundles of straw afire while the metropolitan police casually looked on. Fortunately, "two or three working women placed themselves in front" of Butler and Charlotte Wilson, so that they could make their escape by jumping down the hatch of a trapdoor: "It was not so much personal violence that we feared as what would have been to any of us *worse than death*; for the indecencies of the men, their gestures and threats, were what I would not like to describe."³⁴

In these memoirs, Butler has presented us with a transformed melodrama, complete with stereotyped characters, extreme states of being and danger, rapid action, and the vindication of virtue over vice. In her melodrama, Butler emerges as the pure but not defenseless victim, threatened by the same sexual danger as her fallen sisters. No female villains appear in this narrative; only complicitous policemen and male brothel-keepers who "knew that their craft was in danger."³⁵ Her male friends were unable to protect her—only workingwomen could guide her to the trap door. Resourceful heroism was reserved for women.

"I always expected when it came to an election contest on this question that men's passions would be greatly roused and that the poorest among women would gather to us." Butler's repeal narratives assigned workingwomen a dignified place in the action, a voice and physical agency that extended even to the fallen. In Pontefract, a young Yorkshire woman, "strong and stalwart," with "bare muscular arms and a shawl over her head," came to her aid. In Colchester, Butler was protected by a "poorly-clad" "forlorn woman of the town."³⁶

Fallen women appear in a number of guises in Butler's political melodrama. As heroines and victims, they ranged from pathetic and grateful ghostly figures of the night to defiant spokespersons for female indignation against the male conspiracy embodied by the Contagious Diseases Acts. In a series of public "letters" on the "Garrison Towns of Kent" (1870), Butler

allowed fallen women to speak for themselves, indeed apparently to exercise more freedom of public expression than she did. The most powerful denunciation of men and male power emanated from a Chatham prostitute—a denunciation that conveniently incorporated the entirety of Butler's brief against the Acts: "It is *men, only men*, from the first to the last that we have to do with! To please a man I did wrong at first, then I was flung about from man to man. Men police lay hands on us. By men we are examined, handled, doctored. In the hospital it is a man again who makes prayer and reads the Bible for us. We are had up before magistrates who are men, and we never get out of the hands of men till we die!"³⁷

Butler gave radical meaning to the melodramatic narrative of sexual danger by vindicating female activism, by dignifying the figure of the suffering fallen woman, and by inserting herself as a heroine/victim. She also celebrated a deferential politics of motherhood that aimed at subverting patriarchal authority: it gave mothers, not fathers, the right to control sexual access to the daughters. Butler tried to deploy the melodramatic convention of suffering womanhood to invert the prevailing view of "fallen women" as pollutants of men; instead she defended them as victims of male pollution, as women who had been invaded by men's bodies, men's laws, and by that steel penis, the speculum.

In other respects, her propaganda against the Acts faithfully adhered to the gender and class expectations of traditional stage melodrama. Feminist propaganda was severely constrained by a melodramatic vocabulary of female victimization, which demanded that registered women be innocent victims falsely entrapped into a life of vice—involuntary actors in their own history, without sexual passion, not yet "dead to shame," and still possessed of womanly "modesty."³⁸

Butler also continued to represent regulationists as sadistic aristocratic villains who conspired to control women through state sanction and monopoly. The instrumental rape of registered women not only epitomized the villainous conspiracy of men, but it rendered that conspiracy even more sinister and perverse. In the name of medical science, it legitimated a cruel and unnatural sexual violation, one that inflicted pain and sexual mutilation on women. Whereas the rape/seduction scene occurred offstage in melodramatic fictions like *Ruth* or *East Lynne*, repealers made instrumental rape a vivid and dominant icon of the campaign. Detailed accounts of the instrumental rape figured prominently in repeal propaganda: "It is awful work; the attitude they push us into first is so disgusting and so painful, and then these monstrous instruments and they pull them out and push them in, and they turn and twist them about; and if you cry out they stifle you."³⁹

With great success, Butler actively encouraged workingmen to inscribe themselves within a traditional configuration of melodrama, to assume their prerogatives and responsibilities as the grieving fathers or popular heroes who rescued the passive female victims from upper-class libertines. Repeal literature specifically warned workingmen and women that the Acts would impose "the disgusting examination under the Contagious Diseases Acts" on virtuous wives and daughters of workingmen. For their own part, radical workingmen readily integrated this propaganda into the traditional political categories of popular radicalism. *Reynolds News*, a popular Sunday paper that catered to working-class readers, dwelt at length on the "horrors" of the medical examination, detailing how it subjected women to "torture" and "physical pain," outraging their feelings and causing an "agony of shame." In this case it was a "Woman" correspondent who put the workingman's case for civic virtue: "I have asked myself, was it possible that men could be found in the medical profession to undertake these offices?" "I am answered, and am satisfied that nothing is too filthy, nothing too low, for the hands of an English gentleman." The political lesson was clear: let the aristocrats "rotting with disease and sensuality" be "dragged from the seats of power" and replaced by "our honored working men" who would never "sanction these Acts."⁴⁰

Melodramatic scripts shaped popular expectations for the roles that diverse constituencies would play in the political drama over state regulation. Melodrama was a remarkably malleable cultural form, containing a variety of potential meanings and scenarios. Butler herself staged two versions of political melodrama. The melodrama of female heroism and self-sacrifice celebrated an informal cross-class alliance between feminists and "strong and stalwart" workingwomen. A more traditional version of melodrama reinstated workingmen as the heroes of the piece—allied politically with "noble self-denying ladies" but acting as responsible patriarchs within the working class. Propaganda of this sort aroused popular indignation against regulation, but it also buttressed a patriarchal stance and a sexual hierarchy within the organized working class that feminists had vigorously challenged in other contexts. In this and other ways, recourse to melodrama was a contradictory political strategy for feminists. Melodrama offered a powerful cultural resource for female political expression, but it set limitations on what could be said, particularly in relation to female agency and desire.

Much the same kind of criticism could be made of the "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon." By the mid-eighties melodrama's role as a unifying cultural form was in decline. Melodrama had to compete with other genres of

literary and theatrical representation, both popular and elite. West End audiences no longer thrilled to the old-fashioned melodramas—they sometimes laughed at them (although East End audiences still enjoyed them “straight”). In progressive circles, the older languages of radicalism, into which the melodrama of seduction so comfortably fit, had to contend with more scientific approaches to philanthropy and socialism. Whereas melodrama had personalized good and evil, had called into question the smooth operation of reason and justice, and had identified the state with corrupt power, these new scientific and realist discourses tracked the regular operation of laws of nature and society and looked to impersonal forces, including the state, as agents of change.

Scientific and realist discourses marked important intellectual developments of the 1880s, but they did not fully supplant the older language of popular radicalism. Far “from falling into decline, popular radical traditions continued to live on,” declares Patrick Joyce, and to find expression in anti-aristocratic politics, in politically centered notions of oppression and justice, and in populist mobilizations that emphasized harmonic aspects of respectable class identity rather than class divisions.⁴²

The “Maiden Tribute” exemplifies the attractions of the older language of popular radicalism. It amply demonstrates how a story that was increasingly discredited in the West End theater could still be compelling in the pages of the daily press, where Stead was able to mount a public show that captured the imagination of all but the most skeptical political avant-garde (and outraged a few “vicious aristocrats”). The “Maiden Tribute” resembled popular fiction and drama in that it contained a criticism of the “vicious upper classes,” but, as in the case of stage melodrama, this class criticism was immediately undercut by sentimental moralism and a focus on passive, innocent female victims and individual evil men that diverted attention away from the economic and social issues relating to prostitution.

Stead may have positioned himself publicly in relation to the populist traditions of political melodrama, but in fact he kept shifting genres throughout the “Maiden Tribute,” moving from costume drama to detective fiction, constituting himself corresponding as a modern-day Theseus or as a more up-to-date scientific investigator. The instability of his text is apparent from the beginning, where he introduces the “Maiden Tribute” in multiple frames: endowing it with the status of an official report of a special commission, complete with an exhaustive list of charity agencies and expert witnesses, but then introducing it again as a modern-day rendition of a classical myth of sexual violence. These different frames signaled different modes of address and levels of representation. They allowed Stead to

suppressed public expressions of the "sexual," in part because he construed such expressions as dangerously tied to commerce and the market.⁴⁸ Yet his exposé of the London slave market was itself a commercial triumph (although it did little to boost the circulation of the *PMG* in the long run): a milestone in the history of the mass media, the "Maiden Tribute" ushered in a new epoch of mass-market fantasies and desires.

In 1885, criminal vice represented a new journalistic venture for Stead, although he had long sensed its potential as good political copy. He had always been "mad on the C.D. Acts"—and as editor of the *Northern Echo* in Darlington had "intermittently . . . given such support as I could to the cause of Repeal." Then, in 1876, Stead was "stirred" by Butler's accounts of her mission to the Continent and of the horrors of the Paris brothels, published under the title of *The New Abolitionists*. He wrote to her offering editorial assistance. The only effective way of grappling with the subject, he assured her, was to deal with its "tragic and pathetic side." In short, prostitution "wanted its Uncle Tom's Cabin"; but "Who was to be its Mrs. Stowe?"⁴⁹

Nine years later, Butler took up Stead's offer and, along with Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army, appealed to him to step into Mrs. Stowe's role. After the suspension of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1883, Butler and other purity reformers turned their attention to publicizing the evils of child prostitution and white slavery, but they had been unsuccessful at lobbying Parliament for legislation to deal with the traffic in girls.⁵⁰ Even after an 1881 House of Lords committee report documented a small international traffic in British girls and a scandal erupted over the "police coverup" of a fashionable procuress, Mrs. Jeffries (who allegedly catered to the Prince of Wales), Parliament resisted at passing a bill to raise the age of consent and punish traffickers.

At first Stead balked at the "duty" thrust upon him: "Oh the agony of the thing. You know what a woman I am in these things." Then, with characteristic impetuosity, Stead seized the opportunity to show that "all that goes on in Brussels and Paris also goes on in London." A man of "excitable, impulsive, fiercely energetic temperament," he wrote the "Maiden Tribute" in a state of excitement and moral indignation: dictating to "relays of shorthand writers, marching up and down his office with an icepack on his head." Under these conditions, Stead's effort at literary cross-dressing went strangely awry: instead of Harriet Beecher Stowe he had metamorphosed into a compulsive voyeur and chronicler of sexual commerce. Instead of producing the New Abolitionist version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he authored something in theme, language, and self-presentation

closer to "Walter's" *My Secret Life*. However much his critics might decry the obscene lineage of the "Maiden Tribute," Stead consistently failed to acknowledge the transformation he had accomplished in this narrative.⁵¹

This metamorphosis demonstrates the affinity between the two literary genres of melodrama and pornography.⁵² Both genres have a linked history in radical publishing: during the early Victorian period, both genres were produced and distributed by radical pressmen, after the market for radical literature contracted in the 1820s. As purveyors of irreverent, bawdy populism, French and Latin libertine literature, and popular melodrama, Grub Street publishers moved beyond an older restricted radical audience towards an emerging "mass" reading public which cut across middle- and working-class boundaries. In 1885, Stead adopted a similar publishing strategy: through the "Maiden Tribute," he endeavored to build a mass reading public by exposing the exotic culture of the metropolitan underworld.⁵³

Given this publishing history, not surprisingly, melodrama and pornography contained the same sexual script, which focused on the transgression of class boundaries in the male pursuit of the female object of desire, the association of sex and violence, and the presumption of aggressive male sexuality bearing down on a passive asexual female. Both foregrounded power relations by emphasizing situation and underplaying character. Whereas melodrama permitted some power reversals and sympathy for the plight of the heroine/victim, late-Victorian pornography usually prohibited the female victim from mounting any resistance or telling her version of the story. Stead's own preoccupations with women and heterosexuality also precipitated his collapsing of narratives in the "Maiden Tribute." He had a penchant for "harmless flirtations" that were never consummated and openly bragged of his power of fascination over women: there were "five and twenty women" in London, he assured a reporter, who "would give their little finger for a kiss."⁵⁴

In fact, Stead's story went further than Walter's sexual odyssey in its expression of extraordinary rage against women. To evoke that rage, Stead drew on an ancient fantasy of human blood-sacrifice, featuring a male protagonist engaged in a search-and-destroy mission against a powerful feminized monster at the dark center.⁵⁵ In his first installment of the "Maiden Tribute," he introduced the myth of the maidens and youths sent as tribute from ancient Athens to perish in the Labyrinth of Crete, victims of a devouring Minotaur, "a frightful monster, half man, half bull, the foul product of unnatural lust." In London's Labyrinth, thousands of "the daughters of the people" were "served up" nightly "as dainty morsels to

minister to the passions of the rich"—horrors that should have raised hell, but, according to a high-ranking police officer, did not even "raise the neighbors."⁵⁶

Stead selected the Minotaur myth from a number of ancient stories of monsters and maidens because of the specific typology of sexual danger it contained: it situated sexual crime in an urban setting, the Labyrinth, "as large as a town" with "countless courts and galleries" (as opposed to the lonely rock on which Andromeda was chained in the Perseus myth);⁵⁷ it referred to multiple sex crimes committed by a monster, himself the offspring of unnatural female lust (thus underscoring the sexual nature of the crime and its origins in female depravity); and it made the state an accomplice to these crimes. Stead's revisions and deletions, moreover, were as telling as his initial selection of a story he attributed to Ovid. Two sets of characters drop out from the original story: the young men who served as tribute and Ariadne, Theseus' traditional guide, who let him a ball of yarn to find his way out of the Labyrinth.⁵⁸ The deliberate omission of the youth tribute was also a suppression of the homosexual theme (particularly homosexual prostitution) in his exposé of criminal vice—a suppression that nonetheless resurfaced in the margins of Stead's text, and more significantly in the legislative response it evoked. Ariadne's absence may well have been an attempt to protect Butler and her assistant from notoriety and exposure. Its effect was to erase the role of women's craft and craftiness in the drama (just as Stead would eliminate women's work from the discussion of prostitution) and to center the political fiction around a lonely male hero, Theseus, played by Stead as a democratic Christian knight and defender of social justice.⁵⁹

The class address of this frame, with its mythological references and smattering of Latin quotes, was as ambiguous as the subsequent narrative episodes of the "Maiden Tribute." Although knightly/classical allusions were traditionally the province of an elite male culture, Stead tried to democratize their class meanings by invoking the "innate chivalry of our common people." Stead thus drew on Butler's second strategy for political melodrama, celebrating the popular heroism of those manly proletarians "now at last [thanks to the Reform Bill of 1884] enrolled among the governing classes." But immediately that democratic and collective impulse was recuperated into an elite construction: the person empowered to do and say what he wanted, to become a privileged spectator moving comfortably through all social spaces, was the omniscient narrator and urban explorer, W. T. Stead. Although Stead might introduce himself at times as a "North country lad, born in poor circumstances," without university education, "without wealth or position, or other material advantages in this

world," he had in fact come a long way from his "humble" Tyneside origins. As the successful editor of a gentleman's newspaper, he had acquired the appropriate dress and gait to impersonate a privileged rake, to visit fashionable brothels and drink champagne and smoke cigars—thus enjoying a privileged mobility unavailable to workmen in their "work-a-day clothes" and "grimy faces." Stead thus reversed the masquerade of descent practiced by Greenwood and Charles Booth, to become instead a counterfeit swell and libertine.⁶⁰

To carry out his investigation, Stead immersed himself in the picaresque nightmare world of London's inferno. "It seemed a strange inverted world, that in which I lived those terrible weeks—the world of the streets and of the brothel. It was the same, yet not the same as the world of business and the world of politics." Stead acted as tourist guide and social observer for the reader, outlining the moral and social landscape of the Labyrinth—the Leicester Square restaurants, the Aquarium, the roller-skating rink, the Hyde Park benches frequented by procuresses on the lookout for unsuspecting nursemaids, the private houses with underground rooms, the isolated villas with thick walls and double carpets on the floor. He also introduced his cast of characters: the violated maids, the evil procuresses, the doctors and midwives who certified the girls' virginity. Only one or two privileged villains made an appearance as individuals, most notably a retired doctor, called the London Minotaur, "who devotes his fortune to the 'ruin' of three maids a night."⁶¹

The "Maiden Tribute" not only mapped out the same social geography as late-Victorian pornography; it also replicated, in a moralizing frame, many of the sadistic scenarios that filled pornography's pages. Simultaneously, it established a continuity with some of the themes of sadistic hunting and instrumental rape raised in women's fiction and Butler's feminist propaganda.⁶² In pornographic texts, sadistic practices appeared in three or four contemporary scenarios that reinforced each other: the hunt, evocative of upper-class male pastimes, sadistic violence, and passive, innocent victims; the discipline of the riding master, who broke the mare to the bit; school birching, administered by a governess in an aristocratic boarding school; and the gynecological exam, in which women are strapped down and "speculumed,"⁶³ both observed and violated by gynecological instruments. These scenarios were often conflated: the riding master was also a hunter; he could assume the scientific detachment of the medical examiner; the stirrups of his saddle evoked the paraphernalia of the gynecological chair.⁶⁴

This pornographic repertoire finds a place in the "Maiden Tribute." Dispersed throughout the text were incidental references to innocent maids

stalked as prey for the pleasure of the dissolute rich: no "subterfuges were too cunning or daring" for procuresses in the "pursuit of their game"; the "pathetic eyes" of a child prostitute still bore "the timid glance of a frightened fawn." In a "Close Time for Girls," Stead compared the age-of-consent legislation to the game laws, arguing that fish "out of season are not fit to be eaten. Girls who have not reached puberty are not fit even to be seduced."⁶⁵

But Stead's Minotaurs had no interest whatsoever in good sportsmanship, for the "shriek of torture is the essence of their delight." In London's Labyrinth, flogging was one of the most popular pursuits of jaded old men "who by riot and excess had impaired [their] vitality."⁶⁶ In many of the brothels visited by Stead, flogging, "both of men and women, goes on regularly, but the cry of the bleeding subject never attracts attention from the outside world." To ensure submission, girls were sometimes strapped down "hand and foot so that all resistance save that of unavailing screams would be impossible."⁶⁷ Defloration was a second specialization of the London inferno. During his investigations, Stead encountered a highly businesslike firm of procuresses whose sole business, they assured him, was in "maidenheads, not in maids." The demand for "maidenheads" in turn stimulated a medical sideline in the certification of virgins by midwives and doctors. The medical motif in the "Maiden Tribute" was particularly striking in light of Stead's own opposition to the "instrumental rape" of the C.D. Acts. The medical exam revealed the steely scientific side of sexual torture in the Labyrinth; it was introduced to represent a ritualized degradation, an act of voyeurism and violation of female bodily integrity.⁶⁸

Interspersed among these sensational accounts were "realist" "stories from life" of young girls drawn into the London Labyrinth. Some narratives, like that of "Annie, a London girl of singularly interesting countenance," were first-person confessionals, presented in the flattened tones of the charity case history. In other cases, Stead narrated his own interviews with girls "delivered for seduction." These interviews also presented the girls and their stories in a matter-of-fact-manner, that still reveals Stead's voyeuristic presence as well as his struggle to impose a meaning or moral on the story. When Stead tried to bargain with "one virgin," offering one pound in lieu of seduction instead of the promised two, she stood her ground, demanding to be "seduced." "We are very poor," explained the girl. "Mother does not know anything of this: she will think a friend of Miss Z's [the procuress] has given me the money; but she does need it so much." Could any "proof" be more "conclusive," Stead asked, of the "absolute inability of this girl of sixteen" to assess the value of the one "commodity" with which the law considers her amply fit to deal "the day after

she is thirteen?" In most of these interviews, young girls appear as innocent informants, simpleminded in their storytelling. Yet every now and then Stead reversed the direction of erotic energy, presenting himself as unnerved by the presence of a little "brazen-faced harlot" masquerading as a *femme fatale*.

Disequilibrium and excess shaped Stead's account of the double life and took its toll on the investigator. For he seems to have gone over the edge in his attempt to authenticate and document criminal vice. Two eerie features of his narrative soon become apparent: the readers were shown London's inferno through Stead's elite gaze, and exploration led Stead into actual impersonation of a Minotaur. In order to prove to the public how easy it was to procure a young girl, Stead obtained one himself. In an episode entitled, "Why the Cries of the Victims are Not Heard," the brothel-keeper spoke confidentially to him (and therefore to the reader) as a potential customer for her services. "'In my house,' said a most respectable lady who keeps a villa in the West of London, 'you can enjoy the screams of the girl with the certainty that no one hears them but yourself.'" Stead proudly documented his successful ventures into the black market for virgins. In "I Order Five Virgins" we have a fictionalized account of his transaction with a firm of procuresses. "'Come,' said I, in a vein of bravado. 'What do you say to delivering me five on Saturday night [with the proviso that they had to be certified as *intacta* by a midwife]?' " "Five . . . is a large order,' she replied. ' . . . we will try, although I have never before dealt with more than two, or at the most three at one place. It will look like a boarding school going to the midwife'." In his fictionalized accounts, Stead openly engaged in the dialogue as a potential customer; but when he retold the story of his actual purchase of Eliza Armstrong, whom he called Lily in the press, he hid behind the third-person narrative and did not acknowledge his complicity. Yet this was the one story, he declared, that "I can personally vouch for the absolute accuracy of every fact in the narrative."⁶⁹

The "Lily" story, Stead's *pièce de résistance*, appeared in the first installment of the "Maiden Tribute" under the subheading "A Child of Thirteen Bought for £5." It was told as a Gothic fairy tale, whose principal characters were evil women who preyed upon a passive, silent, female child. "At the beginning of this Derby week, a woman, an old hand in the work of procuration, entered a brothel in —street, M—, kept by an old acquaintance, and opened negotiations for the purchase of a maid." While they were discussion the local candidates, a "drunken neighbour" came into the house and immediately offered her own daughter. "Don't you think she would take our Lily? I think she would suit." Lily, Stead tells us, was a "bright, fresh-looking child," "an industrious warm-hearted

little thing" devoted to the "drunken mother" who wanted to sell her into "nameless infamy." She had never been outside her immediate neighborhood except for two school outings to Richmond and Epping Forest. She was just the kind of sturdy "cockney child" who "by the thousand annually develop into the servants of the poorer middle class."⁷⁰

Unfortunately, "Lily's mother" had arrived too late. However, when a deal for another girl fell through, "Lily's mother" got her "chance." "The brothelkeeper sent for her, and offered her a sovereign for her daughter. The woman was poor, dissolute, and indifferent to everything but drink." The father, also a "drunken man," was told that his daughter was going to a situation; he received the news with "indifference." Financial arrangements with the brothel-keeper were finalized; she would receive £5—£3 paid down and the remaining £2 "after [the daughter's] virginity had been professionally certified."⁷¹

"The first step had thus been taken." The girl was taken to a midwife to be examined and then conducted to a house of ill-fame. Through the eyes of the omniscient narrator, we witness the defilement of the child, who was undressed, put to bed in the brothel, chloroformed, and who awoke to find a man in the room. "And then there rose a wild and piteous cry—not a loud shriek, but a helpless, startled scream like the bleat of a frightened lamb. And the child's voice was heard crying in accents of terror, 'There's a man in the room. Take me home; oh, take me home!' . . . And then all once more was still. *****"⁷² The man was Stead, the actual rape was never attempted, but the young girl was terrified.

No fairy godmother appears in this inverted fairy tale to protect the young girl—only an evil procuress, an evil brothel-keeper, an evil midwife, and most shocking of all, an evil mother willing to sell her child into "nameless infamy." The entire "business" was conducted among working-class women, most of whom were friends and neighbors. The only innocent party was the "unsuspecting" girl child, whose sole protest was the bleat of a "frightened lamb." Men are curiously missing from the story, except for the omniscient narrator and the shadowy male figure at the end, the perpetrator of a crime so horrible that "Stead's delicate muse took refuge in a row of asterisks."⁷³

Public Reaction

Stead's policy of "frank brutality" seemed to have stirred "London to its depths" and, in the view of his critics, set "class against class." Radical workingmen, trade unionists, and socialists responded warmly to Stead's

attack on upper-class profligates and readily integrated the "Maiden Tribute" into a traditional political analysis of "Old Corruption." Old-fashioned conspiratorial fantasies reached their height when Charles Spurgeon, the popular evangelist, publicly railed against the "princes of the blood" and other royal patrons of London brotheldom. Both the Marxist *Justice* and the more traditionally radical *Reynolds News* (which called for the passage of "Our Daughters' Protection Bill") endorsed the paternalist and democratic message of Stead's revelations, while feminists heralded Stead as a "champion" of women whose campaign broke down a great barrier of silence surrounding the sexual crimes of men.⁷⁴

As these responses suggest, "Maiden Tribute" provoked multiple and contradictory readings on the part of a heterogeneous reading public. Stead's journalistic conventions not only permitted evangelical reformers, feminists, and socialists to speak out against male rakes, but allotted space to the male libertine voice as well. Thanks to Stead's policy of the "universal interview," "Men of the World" were permitted to defend their own sexual practices with adult workingwomen in the pages of the *PMG*. Perhaps the most striking feature of male libertine speech was its own negative characterization of male sexuality—as compulsive and compulsory behavior. It was "no good railing against base appetite," warned the "Saunterer in the Labyrinth"; if you suppress prostitution, warned another worldly correspondent in a private letter to Stead, "You have not reduced the number of cases of illicit copulation on the part of men. They will take it just the same—from maid servants, from ladies of position and from the few skulking syphilised whores who survive the prosecution."⁷⁵

Popular indignation forced the government to act. On 30 July, Sir Richard Cross, the home secretary, opened debate on the third reading of the age-of-consent legislation, as embodied in the Criminal Law Amendment Bill. In introducing the bill, Cross acknowledged, "this is a question that has stirred England from one end to the other," because "there is nothing more sacred to the English people, and there is nothing which they are so determined to maintain, as the purity of their own households." A heated debate on the clauses ensued, and the bill finally passed through Parliament on 10 August. The disreputable performance of parliamentary members during these debates confirmed purity reformers' worst suspicions of the vicious upper classes. During parliamentary debates, old rakes like Cavendish Bentinck treated prostitution as a necessary and inevitable evil, while others objected to curtailing male sexual prerogatives to protect girls who, they claimed, were already defiled by their sordid and vicious environment. One member of the House of Lords acknowledged that "very

few of their Lordships . . . had not when young men, been guilty of immorality. He hoped they would pause before passing a clause within the range of which their sons might come."⁷⁶

Even the sexual practices exposed in the "Maiden Tribute" received a curious endorsement when the Commons considered a clause to make flogging the punishment for violating young girls (since the 1870s, flogging was repeatedly proposed as part of legislation to punish assaults on women). Samuel Smith defended the flogging amendment as the "only kind of persuasion that brutal natures could understand." Others, including supporters of the age-of-consent bill like James Stansfeld and James Stuart, attacked the flogging clause as a "retrograde notion" that would not help to "humanize the man." At the time no one openly acknowledged the irony of proposing flogging, one of the featured vices of the London Labyrinth, as punishment for the crimes of the "Maiden Tribute" (although Josephine Butler recognized it as a male discourse and argued that if women had been present as members of Parliament, they would have "tempered" the discussions); but twenty-three years later, when flogging was again proposed for *souteneurs* (pimps), Bernard Shaw rose to the occasion and directed his pen against the "flagellomania" of legislators. Flogging was a "perfectly well known" form of "debauchery," he pointed out, a "mania which is based on the sensual instinct, though in some cases it takes a retaliatory form."⁷⁷

Finally, on 22 August an enormous demonstration was held in Hyde Park to demand the rigorous enforcement of the new legislation. As one historian has observed, in calling this "monster" demonstration Stead "was looking beyond his original goals," "determined to keep alive the movement" which he had incited. Billed as "London's First Town Meeting," the Hyde Park demonstration would, Stead hoped, inaugurate a new political constituency that would transform the London Labyrinth from an "amorphous, anarchic, multitudinous mass of houses and streets" into a moral, known national community. Like most oppositional spectacles of the period, the Hyde Park demonstration was intended to display massive support for the cause as well as to present supporters to the public as respectable and reasonable citizens.⁷⁸

With banners proclaiming "Protection of Young Girls," "Men, War on Vice," "Sir Pity Us," "Shame, Shame Horror," ten columns of people set out for the park. The East End and Pimlico contingents bravely marched through the "enemy" territory of the West End, observing the absence of "great ladies on the balconies of Belgravian mansions" and the virtual desertion of "clubland." Newspaper commentators were struck by the repre-

sensation of women and workingmen in the crowd. Many acknowledged the "large muster of women" as "one of the unique features of the demonstration." Members of the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, dressed in black, arrived in carriages, while "from another part of town" came the members of the Women Trade Unions and employees of the Army Clothing Establishments, led by Henrietta Muller, followed along by wagonloads of young virgins dressed in white, flying the banner "Innocents will they be slaughtered."⁷⁹

The impressive spectacle of women in public was set against the overwhelmingly patriarchal sentiments expressed in the signs and iconography. The banners of working-class London enunciated a popular reading of the "Maiden Tribute" as traditional political melodrama, with workingmen as heroes of the piece. East London called on Englishmen to protect their daughters, while the South London delegation condemned "principalities and wickedness in high places." A similar representation of sexual difference and sexual hierarchy appeared on the surfaces of trade union and socialist banners that "waved to and fro in the wind": on their "crackled surfaces" appeared skilled workingmen with the tools of their craft, or as Herculean figures, endowed with classical bodies; while women only materialized either as bereft widows, deserving of fraternal protection, or as inspiring angels of justice and socialism.⁸⁰ Sympathetic observers also detected a sturdy proletarian manliness in the physiognomy of the crowd, as workingmen listened with "stern expressions" and "determined jaws" to reformers of all shades represented on the dozen demonstration platforms. For one brief moment, feminists and trade unionists joined with Anglican bishops, socialists, and nonconformist temperance advocates to protest the aristocratic corruption of young innocents.⁸¹

By assembling a range of news accounts, editorials, and opinions about the "Maiden Tribute," Stead promoted criminal vice as the "burning" question of the hour, endeavoring to incite through proliferation and cross-referencing a sense of the "Maiden Tribute" as hyperreal and world-encompassing. Despite his efforts to control the "moral" of his story, Stead had to contend with struggles over meaning partially activated by his own journalistic practices. The publication of the "Maiden Tribute" precipitated a chain of unexpected events that significantly transformed the original "plot," adding new installments and genre shifts. Outside of the newspaper, popular constituencies reinterpreted the meaning of Stead's actions; yet their own perspectives were rechanneled and reprocessed as they were reported in the columns of the daily press.

The Armstrong Case

As the carnival spirit excited by the "Maiden Tribute" reached its height, an ominous counterdrama began to unfold—first in the streets of a Marylebone slum, then in the local police court, to be amplified in the national press, and fully enacted in the Old Bailey. This counterdrama presented Stead's cast of characters in a new light and threatened to undermine completely the credibility of the "Secret Commission" and its "Chief Director."⁸² Copies of the "Maiden Tribute" had found their way to Charles Street, Lisson Grove, Marylebone, where neighbors angrily confronted Mrs. Elizabeth Armstrong with "selling her child." Mrs. Armstrong recognized certain details of her own daughter's life in the Lily story and rushed to the local police court to demand her daughter back.⁸³ A reporter from *Lloyd's Weekly News* took an interest in the case and published an account of it on July 12, under the heading "A Mother Seeking Her Lost Child."⁸⁴ Eliza was not reunited with her family until the day following the Hyde Park demonstration. By then, plans to prosecute Stead and his confederates on abduction charges were already in the works; their criminal prosecution would occupy the attention of the national press throughout the fall.

This was an extraordinary chain of events. Most authors of political fictions did not expect to be pursued by their own characters into the law courts and confronted with opposing versions of the story.⁸⁵ However, Stead's own journalistic practice, particularly his policy of the "universal interview," seemed to call forth the retributive justice that followed. For, if privileged male villains, the "Men of the World," were allowed to present their case in the pages of the *PMG*, was it not fitting that other members of the cast—the silenced child and her evil mother—should find their own voices and establish their right to be heard in public? In so doing, they transformed Stead's role from that of a "campaigning hero" to that of a "denigrated villain" faced with a criminal charge.

Six defendants stood in the dock of Central Criminal Court on 23 October 1885: Stead; Rebecca Jarrett, the reformed "old procuress," now a member of the Salvation Army and matron of Hope Cottage, the rescue home for prostitutes established by Josephine Butler in Winchester; Bramwell Booth, son of General Booth of the Salvation Army; Samuel Jacques, an ex-war correspondent and agent of Stead; Elizabeth Combe, a Swiss lady and member of the Salvation Army; and Louise Mourez, the French "abortionist" and midwife. The main charge was abduction of a girl under sixteen from her parents' home; Stead, Jacques, Jarrett, and

Mourez were secondarily charged with indecent assault, on account of the midwife's examination of Eliza.

Beyond what was narrated in the "Maiden Tribute," few new facts emerged from the proceedings. The testimonies did reveal Eliza's subsequent history after the brothel scene: she was taken first to another house where she was again examined by a doctor, Heywood Smith, who again certified her virginity; and then she was spirited away to France to live with a Salvation Army family. None of Stead's own actions were disputed. Attention focused instead on his mental state: to a certain extent, on his motives for abducting Eliza; and more persistently, on what he knew of the conditions under which he had obtained Eliza. As a consequence, the spotlight fell on the female protagonists of Stead's fairy tale—on his informant, Rebecca Jarrett, and on Mrs. Armstrong and her female neighbors. At issue was their credibility as storytellers. Did Mrs. Armstrong knowingly sell her daughter into "nameless infamy," as Stead alleged? Or did she, with the help of her neighbor Mrs. Broughton, negotiate with Jarrett to send Eliza to service, as she stubbornly asserted? Did Jarrett misrepresent these negotiations to Stead as the prosecutor suggested, or did Stead misrepresent what she told him in the "Maiden Tribute"?

It is impossible to establish the absolute truth from the testimonies, even though three important witnesses, Eliza, Mrs. Armstrong, and Rebecca Jarrett, challenged the veracity of Stead's narrative. Much seems to have remained unsaid in the original transactions. As Jarrett herself acknowledged in her later memoir: "That Mother never asked me what I wanted her for or where I was going to take her [sic] never even asked when she would see her again [...] she had got the money there I could take her where I liked [...]" As interesting as the facts of the case are the attitudes and positions struck by the courtroom actors in their contests with each other, as they tried to reposition themselves (or were repositioned by the national press) within the fiction system of the "Maiden Tribute."⁸⁶

The most unsensational and uncontroversial witness was the muted child victim of the "Maiden Tribute," Eliza Armstrong. Overall, Eliza showed remarkable self-possession in recounting her story, which largely paralleled the "Maiden Tribute," even to the point of casting the brothel scene in a matter-of-fact manner very different from Stead's voyeuristic perspective. Eliza also represented herself as an active agent in the negotiations about her "service." She had "worried" her mother to secure a position with Jarrett: "I was anxious to go out to work, our family, six or seven, lived in one room—my sister [who was at service] was not able to spare anything for my father and mother." She did not like the trip to the mid-

wife, tried to get away from Mourez when she examined her, and later told Jarrett that Mourez was a "dirty woman." She was treated by the defense as a "truthful witness" and was not subjected to "severe cross-examination."⁸⁷

In contrast, Mrs. Armstrong was subjected to a grueling cross-examination. When she first applied to Marylebone Police Court, *Lloyds* had depicted her as a "poor but apparently respectable woman" who "wept bitterly" and in a "faltering voice" "explained that her dear girl was only 13 years of age, and she feared some harm had happened to her." At the committal proceedings and then at the Old Bailey, she was obliged to defend herself and her family honor more forcefully. From bereaved mother, she became a saucy Cockney matriarch to the press, a "woman with a bold face," a "difficult witness" who talked back to "learned counsel." Although she not "infrequently contradicted herself" and "burst into tears" at the severe questioning of the defense counsel, on the "crucial point" of selling her daughter and receiving a "corrupt consideration" Mrs. Armstrong "never wavered." The defense could not discredit her testimony. "Rough in manners, far from refined in language the Armstrongs may be," acknowledged *The Times*. "But nothing which has come to light is inconsistent with motherly affection on the part of Mrs. Armstrong."⁸⁸

Although press commentary generally treated social relations in the Charles Street slum as "incomprehensible" and comic, Mrs. Armstrong's own testimony presented the neighborhood norms as coherent and pe-re-mptory. Mrs. Armstrong could talk back to "learned counsel," but when she was stopped by neighbors who accused her of selling "my child," this woman "with a bold face" trembled in her boots. "I had got the scandal of the neighbors in the street," a scandal that jeopardized her standing in the community and threatened to isolate her from her safety net.⁸⁹ The wife of a casual laborer, she depended on the reciprocity and good will of her neighbors in times of trouble. Part and parcel of that mutual aid system was the collective supervision of children. Local matriarchs who might overlook the occasional drunken spree would take it upon themselves to administer a severe rebuke to a mother who violated the codes of acceptable mothering; for such a violation, like public fighting among women, threatened to "get" "the street a bad name."⁹⁰ "A good many people stopped me in the street" and "spoke to me rather angrily." To vindicate herself, as her female neighbors looked on, Mrs. Armstrong publicly confronted Mrs. Broughton, who was "standing at the street door," with conniving with Jarrett to buy Eliza.⁹¹ Shortly thereafter, she proceeded to the Marylebone Police court to demand her daughter back.

The neighborhood, with its codes and rituals, marked the limits of

Mrs. Armstrong's social universe. She could apply to the police court when looking for her lost child because she regarded it, like the board school where she charred, as another resource of her neighborhood (even though she had been recently charged there with drunken disorderliness). But it did not occur to her to approach W. T. Stead and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Stead clearly did not appreciate her intense localism when he asked Mrs. Armstrong why she did not contact him to find Eliza, to which she replied, "I did not know where you lived."⁹²

The *Daily Telegraph* introduced Charles Armstrong to its readers as the epitome of Outcast London: a chimney sweep and former sergeant in the army, he was a man with "thinning" hair, a "florid" complexion, and "watery" eyes. At Stead's trial, Charles Armstrong's testimony was extremely important to the legal issues of the case; for the charge of abduction rested on the assumption that Eliza had been removed from her home without the consent of the legal guardian, the father. In his testimony, Mr. Armstrong defended his wife's respectability, but he nonchalantly recounted how he had beaten her twice in one day, first because she wanted to attend a local funeral and later because she had arranged with a neighbor to send Eliza off to service with a strange woman without asking his permission. He treated wife-beating as a natural male prerogative, a casual fact of daily life: when asked if he discussed their dispute with anyone, he replied, "Do you think I tell everybody that I knock my wife about?" The press, however, invested considerable significance in these beatings, interpreting them either as a sign of his callous depravity, or, contrastingly, as indicating his innocence in the negotiations over Eliza. Even *Reynolds*, formerly a supporter of Stead, but ever protective of slights against the working classes, took the latter line: as evidence that the parents were not "as bad" "as they seemed," it cited the facts that the mother was overjoyed when the daughter was returned and that the father hit his wife when he found out she had let Eliza go with a stranger.⁹³

Through the "Maiden Tribute" and the ensuing prosecution of the "Chief Director," both Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong would be taken up by forces outside their locality, drawn into a national drama where they played enigmatic and caricatured parts before a bemused and distanced public. The reading public had to decide whether inhabitants of Charles Street were denizens of Outcast London, living in tainted surroundings, as Stead alleged; or whether the Armstrongs were a poor but respectable couple, who struggled to rear a modest, affectionate, industrious, "pure" child. Whether villains or innocent dupes, the Armstrongs articulated domestic values and relations that did not fit comfortably into the rigid gender and family boundaries of melodrama. Instead their public perfor-

mances edged nervously into the conventions of the music hall, where the "struggle over the breeches" and the ineptitude of the male breadwinner regularly appeared as comic routines.

Mrs. Armstrong might have presented herself to the police court magistrate as a grieving mother searching for her lost child, but, within her own community, she knew her moral claim as mother and wife was based on her day-to-day labor as household manager, not on a higher spiritual and emotional nurturance, commonly sentimentalized in melodrama. Mrs. Armstrong's loyalties extended beyond the limits of the individual household, so centrally focused in melodrama, to the social world of the street. It was she who negotiated Eliza's "service" ("My husband leaves all those things to me"); it was she who took the initiative in defending the family honor, going to the police court, ultimately traveling up and down the country with a reporter in search of her daughter.⁹⁴

All along, the father held the trump card. He took no responsibility for daily life, other than to pay out household money to his wife; but he had the final say, the right to discipline his familial subordinates if he was displeased. Like many other Cockney husbands, Mr. Armstrong tried to discourage his wife's social relationships outside the family and regarded female neighbors as competitors for her time and attention. However jealously he defended his domestic prerogatives, he remained passive in the face of the uproar over his daughter's disappearance until the state forced him to take an active role; Scotland Yard insisted that Mr. Armstrong, not Mrs. Armstrong, accompany one of their detectives to France in pursuit of Eliza. Eventually he began to realize the benefits of notoriety and entered into the spirit of the adventure, granting interviews to *Lloyds*.⁹⁵ Patriarchy functioned very differently in Charles Street than in the upper reaches of society, but there was enough of a family resemblance for the judge, newspaper correspondents, and commentators to translate Armstrong's actions into a version of respectable paternalism.

Two more witnesses from Charles Street substantiated Mrs. Armstrong's account of her transaction with Jarrett. Then, Rebecca Jarrett, the "old procuress," a tall woman, between thirty-five and forty, not "very prepossessing," took the stand. The *Daily Telegraph* introduced her as a "notorious" villainness, an abandoned woman whose cross-examination revealed the "repulsive features of the degraded life from which she is said to have been rescued." Alternatively, the defense counsel tried to salvage her reputation by recounting her story as a "sad one." She had gone into prostitution in her teens, Sir Charles Russell explained, having been taken "advantage of" by a "gentleman," and later kept gay houses in Bristol, Liverpool, and Manchester. Finally, in late 1884 she was converted and re-

formed by the Salvation Army and sent from the Army's shelter in Hanbury Street, Whitechapel, to work for Josephine Butler at her rescue home in Winchester. In May 1885, Russell continued, Butler sent Jarrett up to London to aid Stead in his investigations. Stead prevailed upon her to make reparation for her past life by resuming her old role as procuress to serve as his agent in the London inferno. To defend her status as a "changed woman," she reluctantly agreed to assist Stead, on condition that her old friends not be incriminated or punished for their activities.⁹⁶

To supply Stead with young victims, Jarrett explained in her testimony, she visited a number of well-known haunts—including Lady Lake Grove in the East End where a ring of white slavers were to be prosecuted later that year—but failed to find a girl "in stock or in hand." She was forced to return to her old friends. When she arrived at the home of her friend Nancy Broughton, with whom she had worked in the laundry of the Savoy Hotel, she was running out of leads. As one commentator has observed, Broughton was clearly "in the nature of a last rather than a first resort."⁹⁷

In her testimony, Jarrett firmly denied that she had ever called Broughton's home a brothel: "Mr. Stead did not write down what I told him." Her credibility was entirely demolished, however, when the prosecutor revealed that she had earlier lied about the addresses and names of the gay houses she had claimed to run. She was "not going to have her past looked into," she exclaimed. "You forced that lie out of me."⁹⁸

This was the final blow for the defense. In his summing up speech, the prosecution dismissed Jarrett as a thoroughly discredited witness. She was "one of those women who are led to exaggerate their own guilt for the purpose of glorifying or exaggerating their degree of present merit."⁹⁹ Jarrett had mislead Stead about her former life, Mr. Webster assured the jury; and she then proceeded to mislead him about the deal she had cut with Mrs. Armstrong.

Even before Jarrett had left the dock, Stead knew he had lost the case. Unlike Jarrett and the Armstrongs, whose testimonies were first shaped by the courtroom interrogation and then reprocessed into newspaper accounts, Stead was able to present his own case directly to the public. *The Armstrong Case: Mr. Stead's Defense in Full* contained the full testimony Stead was not allowed to present in court (on the grounds that the discussion of motives was immaterial to the legal issues raised by the case). Stead defended his "work" on two grounds, first, as a necessary experiment to "verify the process," and second as "rescue and reclamation," an effort to "intercept" a girl intended for the London slave "market." He stuck to his previously stated summary of Eliza Armstrong's true history: she had been sold to Rebecca Jarrett for "immoral purposes and . . . the only hope of

rescuing the child from a life of shame was to remove her to safety, far from the vicious surroundings of a drunken home in a Marylebone slum."¹⁰⁰

Stead stressed his good intentions, but many questions remained nonetheless about exactly what he was trying to prove in buying Eliza and the manner in which he undertook to "save" her. Stead presented himself at the trial and elsewhere as a defender of women: "In the 'Maiden Tribute,' I do not say one hard word about [any] women, except those who made themselves agents to the men . . . , " he wrote to Elizabeth Cobb on 5 August. He took pride in leading a purity movement "in which fallen women were uniformly spoken of with real respect, admiration. Almost all previous movements have had a tendency to punish the erring woman. This at least is solely directed against the tempting man. It is a change for once to strike at the strong, instead of assailing the weak." In fact, Stead did say many hard words "against women" in the "Maiden Tribute." His behavior towards both Eliza Armstrong and Rebecca Jarrett, whom he acknowledged as innocent or well-meaning parties, was hardly one of "respect" or "admiration." He consistently glossed over his mistreatment of Eliza: the midwife's examination was necessary "to prove that a little harlot had not been palmed off on us." Besides the "momentary surprise" of the exam, he assured the jury, Eliza did not experience the "slightest inconvenience." Had she objected to the examination, they would have "discontinued that part of the project." But did Stead really expect a startled and vulnerable girl to voice her objections openly?¹⁰¹

Jarrett also suffered harsh treatment from Stead who used her, in her own words, as a "poor tool" to verify his experiment. After Jarrett had told him "details of a ghastly nature," Stead described how he exerted his "overbearing will" and considerable interviewing skills to coerce her to play a part for which she was "imperfectly fitted." He was "pressed for time"; she was "reluctant"; "I was inexorable." "I said that if she had procured girls for dissolute men she must procure girls for me, as if I was a dissolute man." He pressed her to buy "one, two, three girls merely to show that it could be done." Unfortunately, Jarrett was, according to Stead, "muddle-brained" and suffered from a "defective memory." Jarrett had insisted that "Mr. Stead did not write down what I said to him"; and Stead himself acknowledged that "three weeks had elapsed before I wrote the article." "Compelled to play a fictitious role she confused her parts, and involved everyone in a confused tangle of misconceptions."¹⁰²

Despite his self-justifications, considerable evidence exists that Stead had confused his part as well, both by misrepresenting what Jarrett had told him and by identifying too closely and enthusiastically with the villain role. By his own admission, he was in an extreme state of excitement the

weeks he was exploring the London inferno. "I had been visiting brothels and drinking champagne and smoking, which I was not used to, and was very excited and therefore I may have confused some of the statements Jarrett told me." "I wrote to the best of my recollection but I may have been confused in details."¹⁰³

More than a confusion of details may have been involved. One cannot help feeling that Stead almost willed this sequel into being. Although he deliberately erased his presence from the Lily episode, he retained enough of Eliza Armstrong's history—reference to her outings at Epping Forest and Richmond, for instance—to make her recognizable. As with the staged rape itself, he seemed to be "playing with fire"—inventing scenarios that implicated him in illicit sexuality yet masked his involvement and permitted him to draw back at the last minute. His contemporaries began to suspect that he had entered too fully into the part of the rich debauchee: his "revelations," sneered the freethinking, republican *National Reformer*, "may be nothing more than the account of [his] own frenzied deeds and feverish sin-stained dreams." Stead seemed determined to keep up this role; throughout the autumn he continued to boast of his successful purchase of virgins, remarking that "if only I had violated Eliza Armstrong and taken the usual precautions . . . there would have been one more lost girl in London and I would have escaped scot-free."¹⁰⁴

Stead continued to play with fire even after his conviction and prison sentence. His diary entries of 1886 reveal his continued deep absorption in the role of sexual libertine/explorer. He clearly did not want to give up his "night investigations." Night after night, following his release from jail, he prowled around Hyde Park and Waterloo Station, interviewing poor young streetwalkers and paid contacts of the underworld like the procuress "Carrotty Kate."¹⁰⁵

If we treat these diary entries as representative of Stead's field notes we learn something of the kind of sources he may well have processed into the "Maiden Tribute" during the "Secret Commission's" four-week investigation in May and June of 1885. The difference in the narratives told to Stead by the streetwalkers and those presented by his paid informants was striking. Carrotty Kate told him stories reminiscent of the "Maiden Tribute" and of sensational pornography, of the adventures of the Earl of Nugent, known to her as the "gold stick," or the exploits of another titled villain, the "Master of the Black Rod." She urged him to buy "one or more of the children she had in stock" ("the girl Maggie, she thinks her mother would part with for £20"). In a similar vein, Mr. Cook, a private detective who had been dismissed "in disgrace" from the police force, assured him that "when the 'Maiden Tribute' appeared, four (I think) members of Parlia-

ment came down to his office, formed a Committee of Enquiry and desired him to investigate the whole thing." They said they knew these things went on; but they could not believe that it could be done so cheaply. Had I [Stead] said £25 or £30 instead of £5; they would have believed the story. I had got into the middle class, not into the swell, and as a consequence they did not believe it was true."¹⁰⁶

Young girls on the street told a different story. Walking around Waterloo Station, Stead encountered "several girls about in clusters." "Two dressed in black said 'goodnight' and on my returning it came after me." "The older acted as a spokeswoman for her little friend Pat—a girl of 17." They were employed at Crosse and Blackwell's jam factory and lived together. Pat had been procured by the older girl, named Gunter, "on the order of Mr. M" who was "in the habit of going down to Crosse and Blackwell's factory gates at dinner time" and "watching the girls come out." "Mr. M. was an old gentleman—'much older than you; quite bald at the top of his head.'" "They did not like him, but he was a great swell, & had lots of money." Overall they liked "the work in the factory better than the work in the streets. But the difference in pay was very great. Times they said were hard; and beggars could not be choosers."¹⁰⁷

The girls spoke the unsensational language of sexual bartering, not the melodramatic language of seduction. They consciously weighed the advantages of one form of work against another, the work of the jam factory against the work of the streets. These grim, exploitative alternatives indicated appalling economic choices, not an organized system of outrage or the collusion of villainous mothers, who delivered working girls up to Mr. M., the old swell. The matter-of-fact nature of sexual bartering only found partial expression in the "Maiden Tribute" in the interviews with juvenile prostitutes that resembled Stead's later diary entries. "They were poor, work was bad, every crust they ate at home was grudged, they stopped out all night with some 'gay' friend of the female sex and they went the way of the rest." But this alternative explanation for youthful prostitution remained submerged under an avalanche of horrifying tales of violated virgins, stories supplied by the likes of Carrotty Kate and other paid informants to feed Stead's own fantasies and facilitate his political project.¹⁰⁸

Stead's own storytelling bore an uncanny resemblance to the literary difficulties encountered by his contemporary, Sigmund Freud, when he undertook to narrate the sexual history of a young girl, Dora. Both Stead and Freud were unreliable narrators who inserted themselves into the story as dramatic characters and callously enforced their versions of the stories. Both included an invasive gynecological theme in their narrative: Stead required Eliza to undergo two gynecological examinations, while Freud de-

fended his discussion of sexual acts and positions with Dora by likening it to a conversation between a female patient and her gynecologist. Both composed their case histories considerably after the events had taken place and after the story was originally narrated to them. Although they privileged these cases by making them more finished narratives than most of their published investigations, they incorporated material from other cases into their "true" histories and omitted and "forgot" details from the original interviews. Neither provided information about how they reorganized the interviews into coherent narratives. From Stead's later field notes we have tried to reconstruct his process of inclusion and exclusion, and to hear the voices of his female subjects in a less mediated fashion than Freud allowed us to do in Dora's case.¹⁰⁹

The Verdict

After twelve days of testimony, the jury reached its verdict. Booth and Mme Combe, who had taken charge of Eliza after the brothel visit, were acquitted, but Stead and Jacques were found guilty of the charge of abduction. The foreman expressed "the opinion at the same time that Stead had acted from pure motives and that he had been misled by Jarrett." Stead was sentenced to three months hard labor (Jacques to one month). He stayed in Coldbaths Field, "a gloomy bastille," for three days, then he was transferred "after strings were pulled" to Holloway Prison as a first-class misdemeanant, where he was allowed daily visits from friends. Altogether, he had rarely had a "happier lot" than the two months he spent in "Happy Holloway." Proud to be "the man who wrote the Maiden Tribute," he continued to wear his prison costume on the anniversary of his imprisonment until his death in 1912 (on the *Titanic*). As for the Armstrong family, they soon moved away from Charles Street; Stead later claimed to have received a letter for Eliza (who had been taken up by the Salvation Army) reporting that she had married a respectable man and had six children.¹¹⁰

"I have had a fair trial," wrote Stead, "a full hearing, and on the evidence before the court a just verdict." But, objected Josephine Butler, "what of the courtesy or even decent fairness shown in regard to Rebecca?" Jarrett and Mme Mourez (who was convicted of indecent assault and died in prison), were sentenced to prison terms twice as long as Stead's, and their hard labor was not commuted. Jarrett felt badly used by Stead and British justice: "The Salvation Army let Mr. Stead have me to be the poor tool to show it all up. I truly done it for God and for the poor child to show what some wretched Mother will do for money. When I found it was for a Public Show I felt it. It almost drove me back to drink."¹¹¹

Jarrett was willing to assist Stead in part because the story of Eliza resonated with her own history. Jarrett told her story in her memoir, dictated in old age, "written by my own self not to boast of my disgusting life *no* but to show how good *Jesus* is to a poor lost degraded woman." Jarrett mentioned no proper names in her text, with the exception of Stead and Butler (a marker of their superior class), and she eliminated practically all the subsidiary characters from the action. This exclusion extended to the men who lived with her and off her earnings and who seem to have been interchangeable—"I seemed to get one if one left me I soon got another to take His place [.]"—as well as to Nancy Broughton, who had served as the intermediary in the negotiations over Eliza.¹¹²

Overwhelmingly, Jarrett spotlighted the figure of the Mother—good and bad—as the emotional focus, the archetypal presence, of her narrative. Like the "Maiden Tribute," her personal memoir featured an exploiting mother, but it evidenced considerably more empathy for the mother's own plight, as a figure who was both oppressive and oppressed. Before Jarrett was thirteen, her mother "got me in the way of looking for my share." When her brothers returned from the sea, they threw Rebecca out. She went away with a man who kept her for two years.¹¹³ At this point, Jarrett interrupted her narrative to defend the mother who led her into a "life of infamy."

Some of you will say as read this what a *bad Mother* she must have had [...] but Please don't she was a good Mother [...] it was my wretched Father's doing [...] He left her several times and lived with other women [...] my poor Mother was left with 8 children [...] I was the baby [...] that was his work [...] she took to drink [...] it was trouble that drove her to it [...] she had to work to keep us clean and respectable [...]

Jarrett's story continued to oscillate between mothers who saved and mothers who betrayed. The mothers of the Salvation Army had rescued Jarrett from drink and decline in late 1884, when at thirty-six she began to "break up": "it was not the preaching that done the work in my poor soul it was the care and trouble they all took of me." She was then placed in the hands of Mrs. Josephine Butler where "I was watched over with the greatest of care[.]"¹¹⁴

The drama of the Mother continued to dominate Jarrett's narrative of her work for Stead. Stead had told her to prove "her words were truth" that "the Mother thinks of the Money not her poor child," a task she first avoided by seeking girls in the open market from brothels. Failing in her search, she "changed my dress put on some very showey thing went into the street [Charles Street]" where "I had seen these poor children running

about no one seemed to care for them I got my eye on a very pretty girl but dirty." Jarrett assessed the street's reputation according to a semiotics that interpreted "dirty children playing in the street" as a sign of a rough and "tainted" neighborhood, where mothers might well sell "their daughters," even though her own mother who had "ruined" her had kept her "very clean."¹¹⁵

Having assessed Charles Street as a street where mothers failed in their duty to their children, Jarrett proceeded to represent her purchase of Eliza as a dramatic confrontation between herself and one such mother. "I asked to see the Mother I told her I wanted to take her child away with me she did not ask me what for or how I was going to use her." Yet Jarrett's identification with her own mother made her "repent of the work" Stead had "thrust" upon her; she sent Eliza all dressed up to say good-bye to her mother "so that if the mother saw the child dressed up and looking smart her mother's heart might relent [...]she might say that she should not let her go."¹¹⁶ Even after Eliza was sent off to France, she would dwell "night and day upon the thought" of rewriting the inverted fairy tale Stead had scripted, to make "the whole story 'end well.'" According to Josephine Butler,

She built a sort of castle in the air, in which she continually dwelt. Her plan—her dream—was as follows: To get the child from Paris; to have her with us here to train and teach her; then a little later to take her herself to Charles Street, London, to present her to her mother and father, and to Mrs. Broughton . . . to convince these poor people that she (Rebecca) was indeed a changed character.¹¹⁷

Butler, who felt protective towards and responsible for Jarrett, tried in 1886 to make amends by writing Jarrett's biography. In recounting Jarrett's life, Butler returned to female literary melodrama: she blamed an upper-class seducer for Jarrett's fall and virtually eliminated the "evil mother" from the action, while retaining the figure of the grieving mother in the person of Jarrett herself. According to Butler, at fifteen Jarrett went to service, where "she came in contact with one of the gentleman visitors" who led her "away from the path of virtue." Jarrett lived with him for two years, and she bore two children. Deserted by her lover, deprived of her children—whose "voices would have woke up her mother's heart within her"—she returned to London and "drowned her sorrow in drink." She became a landlady who "encouraged young girls in sin." Then came her conversion and rescue work.¹¹⁸

Butler presented Jarrett as a sympathetic figure, a social heroine and magdalen mother; nonetheless Butler's relationship to Jarrett was just as

complicated and manipulative as Stead's. As Amanda Sebastyn has observed, Butler's pamphlet shows the "steely side of the professional organiser when she described her star rescue worker as 'clumsy in all her ways' and called her 'the first instrument which came to hand' in the fight to save children."¹¹⁹

This condescension was complemented by an identification with the saintly Mary Magdalen as the ultimate female victim, a sign of the approaching apocalypse. Butler even refashioned Jarrett's "clumsy" performance in the dock into a staged martyrdom that ratified her own prophetic power. "I had a strange inward feeling of prophetic joy, let them abuse her and let the men sitting all round me whisper amen as they did to all the judge said against her," she wrote to Stead. "Don't you see that in this crisis of the world's moral history, the situation would have been incomplete . . . unless there had been prominently among us—even in the Dock that sad, pitiful typical figure—the fallen woman . . . in all her moral rags and tatters."¹²⁰

Both Stead and Butler constructed the fallen woman "in all her moral rags and tatters" as a dramatic character in an intensely charged scenario.¹²¹ Both set out to expose a conspiracy of privileged men in which the state functioned as an accomplice. Both represented sexual perversion as an expression of corrupt male power. There was not much difference between Butler's vicious officialdom as featured in her repeal propaganda and Stead's debauched statesmen or sadistic judges. Both Stead and Butler foregrounded heterosexual violence, literal rape and its medical variation. Both produced political fictions that disseminated images and narratives of scientific and sexual violence more widely than other literary voices at the time, including those heard in pornography. Their representation of perverse sexuality contained a homosexual and homophobic subtext, usually expressed in the margins of their texts: in a *private* letter to the permanent home secretary in 1870, Butler had charged the Admiralty with using prostitutes to cover up homosexual practices in the Royal Navy;¹²² while Stead, as we have seen, deliberately suppressed the "youth tribute" from his story of the "Maiden Tribute," even though he incidentally mentioned establishments where flogging of both "men and women" occurred.¹²³

Although Butler and Stead graphically recounted tales of sexual violation, Butler's repeal stories and her life of Jarrett sharply diverged from the class and gender imagination of the "Maiden Tribute." In each case, Butler told the story of sexual violence from the perspective of the female victim and her avenging mother, even allowing her fallen magdalens to "curse" men for their iniquity. Stead, by contrast, recorded no towering voices of female indignation in the "Maiden Tribute," only the frightened "bleat" of

the muted child victim. Because of their extreme youthfulness and inexperience, Stead's violated maids lacked the practical resources of Butler's prostitutes; as prepubescents, they were devoid of the sexual agency that might threaten the ascendancy of male desire, a threat that increasingly preoccupied a wide range of fin-de-siècle male intellectuals and artists.¹²⁴

There was also a marked shift in the class meanings of Butler and Stead's fiction. In her repeal propaganda, Butler had fashioned two melodramas, one that celebrated an informal cross-class alliance, based on a deferential code of reciprocity, between feminists and "strong and stalwart" workingwomen; another, more traditional version, that reinstated workingmen as the heroes of the piece. In both versions, she assigned working people a dignified place in the action, a voice and physical agency. No female villains appeared in her story, only incidental references to male brothel-keepers who "knew their craft was in danger."¹²⁵ Overall, Butler represented working people as more virtuous and devoted to justice than their social superiors. Readers of the "Maiden Tribute," by contrast, were shown London's inferno through Stead's elite "male gaze." Heroic workingmen were completely obliterated from the text (further diminishing the presence of men in the story, aside from anonymous "minotaurs" and the omniscient male narrator), and slum mothers were transformed into the principal villains.

Butler's representations of working people were shaped by her perception of them as political allies (more reliable, in fact, than middle-class men), while Stead, despite his Radical politics and his subsequent support for the socialist demonstrators, represented the London poor as outcast denizens of the slums. He incorporated into the "Maiden Tribute" certain themes and motifs derivative of his earlier journalistic coup, "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London," excerpts of which he had published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1883.¹²⁶ Overtones of "Outcast London" had found expression in the Lily episode, where, Lily, the sturdy cockney girl, living in "vicious surroundings," was sold into "nameless infamy" by her dissolute, drunken mother.¹²⁷ By representing the unrespectable poor in the figure of the slum mother (rather than her "shiftless" husband) Stead anticipated a tendency to imagine the urban poor as 'actively' (and perniciously) female. To a certain extent, his representation of the slum mother accorded with the actual sexual division of labor in poor families: as household managers, mothers like Mrs. Armstrong *were* responsible for the moral and physical welfare of their families. In subsequent decades, female social investigators and settlement workers, who studied the distribution of resources within the household, would champion the cause of the mother and use their expertise to lobby for a family policy, an "endowment for motherhood," that

would support and empower poor mothers at home.¹²⁸ But recognition of the “power” of the mother provoked other middle-class observers, female and male, to blame “bad mothers” for the degenerate conditions of the slums and the physical degeneracy of slum-dwellers, while ignoring the actual constraints on women who appeared powerful but who suffered from male domination and the inequities of class.¹²⁹ This paradox of the powerful but oppressed (and oppressing) mother was at the heart of Rebecca Jarrett’s narrative of her own mother. As her biographer, Butler attempted to pull back, to bring Jarrett’s story in line with traditional female literary melodrama. She desired to project a more respectful image of the working class and of working-class women in particular, but she also resisted confronting the dangers and deprivations that proletarian women faced within the family. For Butler, sexual danger came from without—outside of the family context, from another class.

Butler and Stead were both masters of imposture and disguise, crossing over the stable boundaries of class through their respective identification with working-class victims and upper-class villains. Their impersonations constitute, from a twentieth-century perspective, unsettling forms of identification, but they set up different political potentialities for action for men and women. Whereas Butler extended the boundaries of female heroism through an identification with “suffering womanhood,” Stead’s impersonation of the sexual libertine allowed him considerably more license to do and say what he pleased, while building a defense against guilt and moral judgment. Yet these performative roles by no means exhausted the political and cultural repercussions of the “Maiden Tribute,” whose contradictory effects on cultural production, politics, and subjectivities will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

1. PMG, 4 July 1885. "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" appeared in the PMG on 6, 7, 8, 10 July 1885.

2. *Maiden Tribute*, p. 3. "Maiden Tribute" was reissued in *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon (The Report of the "Pall Mall Gazette's" Secret Commission)* (London: Pall Mall Gazette, 1885). Except where noted, the quotations from the "Maiden Tribute" are taken from the reprint.

3. PMG, 9 July 1885. George Bernard Shaw to W. T. Stead, quoted in F. Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, 2 vols. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1925), 1:175.

4. H. A. D. Phillips, "Offenses against Marriage and the Relations of the Sexes," *Law Quarterly Journal* (London) (Oct. 1885): 471-86.

5. Raymond L. Schultz, *Crusader in Babylon: W. T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), pp. 148-49; Edward Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain Since 1700* (Totawa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), p. 157; Whyte, *The Life*, 1:117; *Saint James Gazette*, quoted in Horace Wyndham, *Victorian Sensations* (London: Jarrolds, 1933), pp. 63, 135; PMG, 7 Aug. 1885.

6. For background to the social purity movement, see Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*; Judith R. Walkowitz, "The Politics of Prostitution," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 13 (Autumn 1980); Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-moral Politics in England since 1830* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987). Stead's revelations greatly aided a number of other fledgling organizations, including the child welfare movement, which insisted that "justice for the young took precedence over the claims of parenthood." This was done without challenging the strict boundaries of the private family. As George Behlmer notes, the men and women who created this vision "would do so by arguing that the security of the home demanded it. The Englishman's castle was to be breached for the good of the castle." George Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), p. 16. The Armstrong trial also did the Salvation Army "a great deal of good," wrote Bramwell Booth. It gained the Army "friends in political circles" and propelled it into rescue work and social services, into a more developed and institutionalized policy of winning souls. Bramwell Booth, quoted in Alison Plowden, *The Case of Eliza Armstrong: 'A Child of 13 Bought for £5'* (London: BBC, 1974), p. 139.

7. Mrinalini Sinha, "Gender and Imperialism: Colonial Policy and the Ideology of Moral Imperialism in Late-Nineteenth Century Bengal," in M. S. Kimmel, ed., *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987), pp. 217-31; Dagmar Engels, "The Limits of Gender Ideology, Bengali Women, the Colonial State, and the Private Sphere, 1890-1930," *Women's Studies International Forum* 12, no. 4 (1989): 425-37; Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990).

8. Authors concerned with the truth of the "Maiden Tribute" include Michael Pearson, *The Age of Consent: Victorian Prostitution and Its Enemies* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1972); Alison Plowden, *The Case of Eliza Armstrong: 'A Child of 13 Bought for £5'* (London: BBC, 1974); Charles Terrot, *The Maiden Tribute: A Study of the White Slavery Traffic of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Frederick Muller, 1959). For Stead's sexual psychology, see Havelock Ellis, quoted in Whyte, *The Life*, vol. 2, app. 3, "Stead's Obsession with Sex," p. 341; Hugh Kingsmill, *After Puritanism* (London: Methuen, 1952). On the political implications of the "Maiden Tribute," see Deborah Gorham, "'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' Re-Visited," *Victorian Studies* (Spring 1976): 353-79; Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society* (London: Longmans, 1981).

9. All the available statistics on the age of prostitutes drawn from venereal disease hospitals, police reports, rescue homes, workhouses, and prisons indicate very few young females on the streets below the age of sixteen. These institutions, of course, were selective in their recruitment of inmates, but their processes of selection were different. See Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, chap. 1; Ann Higginbotham, "The Unmarried Mother and Her Child in Victorian London, 1834-1914" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1985); idem, "Respectable Sinners:

Salvation Army Rescue Work with Unmarried Mothers, 1884-1941," in Gail Malmgreen, ed., *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 216-33.

10. Lisa Duggan, "Uncontrollable Impulses: Sex, Science and Sensationalism in Turn-of-the-Century America," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1992), chap. 2, p. 2; Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *On Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 1-23.

11. Fredric Jameson, "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre," *New Literary History* 7 (1975): 157. Quoted in Jean Radford, Introduction, Jean Radford, ed., *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 11.

12. Stead, from unproofed galleys of *Josephine Butler: A Life Sketch*; Evelyn March Phillips, quoted in Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 342.

13. Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chap. 10.

14. For Victor Turner, social dramas are significant events for the production of social meanings. They "arouse consciousness of ourselves as we see ourselves," and they consolidate new systems of meanings by converting "particular values and ends, distributed over a range of actors into a system . . . of shared or consensual meaning." Victor Turner, "Social Dramas and Stories about Them," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 156.

15. Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)," *New German Critique* 5, no. 2 (1974): 49-55; Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 42; W. T. Stead, "Government by Journalism," *The Contemporary Review* 49 (1886): 654-74.

16. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. xiii. See also Michael R. Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1956); David Grimsted, *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Gilbert Cross, *Next Week East Lynne* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977); Martin Meisel, *Realisations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

17. Thanks to Laura Mulvey for these insights.

18. See Anna Clark, "Rape or Seduction? A Controversy over Sexual Violence in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Sexual Dynamics of History*, ed. London Feminist History Group (London: Pluto Press, 1983).

19. Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Joan Scott, "On Language, Gender and Working-Class History," *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 53-67; Patrick

Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), chap. 2.

20. Quoted in Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), p. 201.

21. See also Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Knopf, 1986), chap. 3.

22. Martha Vicinus, "'Helpless and Unfriended': Nineteenth-Century Domestic Melodrama," *New Literary History* 13 (1981-82): 127-43; E. Ann Kaplan, "The Political Unconscious in the Maternal Melodrama: Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861)," in Derek Longhurst, ed., *Gender, Genre and Narrative Pleasure* (Hemel Hempstead: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 31-50; Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982); Sally Mitchell, "Sentiment and Suffering: Women's Recreational Reading in the 1860s," *Victorian Studies* 21, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 29-45.

23. Josephine Butler, *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1892), pp. 97-98. See Nancy Boyd, *Three Victorian Women Who Changed Their World: Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill, Florence Nightingale* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), chap. 1.

24. Josephine Butler, *Josephine H. Butler: An Autobiographical Memoir*, ed. George W. and Lucy A. Johnson (London: Arrowsmith, 1928), pp. 58, 60, 64.

25. Josephine Butler, "The Dark Side of English Life: Illustrated in a Series of True Stories," *The Methodist Protest*, Jan. 1877, Feb. 1877, March 1877, April 1877, May 1877. Thanks to Elinor Riemer for this citation.

26. *Ibid.*, "No. 1—Marion," Jan. 1877; "No. 4—Laura," May 1877. Of Marion, Butler wrote, "She loved much, this woman, who had been five years 'on the streets' and her spirit became that of a purified saint," gifted with the power of prophecy. "Marion had 'prophesied' to me, before she died, of hard days and a sad heart which were in store for me in contending against the evil to which she had fallen victim." The dying Emma simply assured Butler, "we shall be together. . . . I will look out for you."

27. *Ibid.*, "No. 4—Emma," April 1877.

28. *Ibid.*, "No. 3—Margaret," March 1877.

29. Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), chap. 6; Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon*, pp. 163-65.

30. Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

31. Josephine Butler, testimony before the Royal Commission of 1871, quoted in Glen Petrie, *A Singular Iniquity: The Campaigns of Josephine Butler* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 115.

32. Mrs. Kell of Southampton, quoted in Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, p. 170; *National League Journal* (London), 1 Sept. 1870.

33. Josephine Butler to W. T. Stead, n.d. [1886]. Stead Papers. Thanks to Professor Joseph O. Baylen for access to the Stead Papers. Nancy Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, pp. 61-65.

34. Josephine Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1911; rpt., Westport: Hyperion Press, 1976), p. 49.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Quoted in Josephine Butler, "The Garrison Towns of Kent," *Shield*, 9 May 1870.

38. Josephine Butler, speech before the annual meeting of the Ladies National Association, Plymouth, 1872. Quoted in *Western Daily Mercury* (Plymouth), 6 Sept. 1872.

39. A registered woman, quoted in a letter from Josephine Butler to J. J. Garth Wilkinson, quoted in Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, p. 109.

40. "A Woman," "A Protest against the Contagious Diseases Acts," letter to the editor, RN, 15 May 1870.

41. Martin Meisel, *Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); I. M. Britain, *Fabianism and Culture: A Study in British Socialism and the Arts, 1884-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Gareth Stedman Jones, *Language of Class*.

42. Joyce, *Visions of the People*, pp. 65, 59.

43. The definitive biography of W. T. Stead awaits the publication of Joseph O. Baylen's study. Existing studies include Whyte, *The Life*; J. W. Robertson Scott, *Life and Death of a Newspaper* (London: Methuen, 1952); Kingsmill, *After Puritanism*; Stephen Koss, *Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

44. Pearson, *Age of Consent*, p. 126.

45. Stead to John Morley, quoted in Whyte, *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 72.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Harold Frederic, quoted in Whyte, *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 115. As Koss remarks, Gladstone, who did not assiduously follow newspapers, followed the *Pall Mall Gazette* very closely. The PMG was clearly influential among progressive intellectuals as well: many correspondents writing to Karl Pearson about the issues of the Men and Women's Club commented on Stead's escapades.

48. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Stead, quoted in Joseph O. Baylen, "Oscar Wilde Redivivus," *The University of Mississippi Studies in English* 6 (1965): 77-86.

49. Stead, unproofed galleys of *Josephine Butler: A Life Sketch*.

50. Simultaneously with these initiatives against the traffic in girls, a grass-roots purity campaign, spearheaded by Ellice Hopkins, focused on educating workmen in chastity and in recruiting them into White Cross Leagues. See Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, chap. 5; Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, pp. 117-26.

51. Stead, *Josephine Butler: A Life Sketch*; Josephine Butler, quoted in Judith R. Walkowitz, "Politics of Prostitution," *History Workshop Journal* (Autumn 1980): 248; A. J. Milner, quoted in Plowden, *The Case*, p. 111.

65. *Maiden Tribute*, p. 5; *PMG*, 8 July 1885.

66. *Maiden Tribute*, p. 4; *PMG*, 6 July 1885.

67. *Maiden Tribute*, p. 4; *PMG*, 6 July 1885.

68. *Maiden Tribute*, pp. 8, 4. The administration of chloroform during the outrages on violated virgins fully realized the "rape" motif implicit in the earlier debates over the use of chloroform during childbirth. See Mary Poovey, "'Scenes of an Indelicate Character': The Medical 'Treatment' of Victorian Women," *Representations* 14 (Spring 1986): 137-68.

69. *Maiden Tribute*, pp. 4, 8, 5.

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*

73. "The Stead Case," *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* (London) (14 Nov. 1885): 631.

74. Reginald Brett, quoted in Whyte, *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 177; *Justice*, quoted in *PMG*, 20 July 1885; *RN* (London), 2 Aug. 1885. The sympathies of *Reynolds* lay wholeheartedly with the working-class paterfamilias whose property—his daughter—had been expropriated by the idle rich; "Not only do they [the rich] rob workers of the fruit of their labour, but the idle classes also regard the daughters of the workers as born and bred to minister to their passions." Other progressive organs tried to accommodate their class protest to the more scientific political discourse of the 1880s or to express their skepticism of the puritanical revival that would result. The Fabians, for example, although endorsing Stead's campaign, looked on the "Maiden Tribute" as but one "result of the exploitation of man by man which is the curse of modern society" (*PMG*, 20 July 1885). Both William Morris and Karl Pearson worried that the revelations would stimulate a puritanical revival. William Morris to Stead, 12 Aug. 1885, Stead Papers.

75. *PMG*, 20 July 1885, 18 July 1885, 10 Aug. 1885; E. Ray Lankester to Stead, 11 July 1887. A barely disguised incest motif was contained in the "Saunterer" letter (*PMG*, 18 July 1885). For Lewis Carroll's outraged response to the "Maiden Tribute," see "Whoso Shall Offend One of These Little Ones," *SJG*, 22 July 1885.

76. Sir Richard Cross, quoted in George Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), p. 75; *Hansard Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 3d ser., 300 (30 July 1885), cols. 579-85.

77. Quoted in Gibson, *English Vice*, p. 158. *Times*, 31 Aug. 1885; Josephine Butler, "To the Demonstration Committee," *PMG*, 20 Aug. 1885; Ian Gibson, *The English Vice: Beating, Sex, and Shame in Victorian England and After* (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 158.

78. W. T. Stead, "The Town Meeting," *PMG*, 24 Aug. 1885; Schults, *Cru-sader in Babylon*, p. 161. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

79. The *Daily News* further characterized the assemblage as "essentially a working men and women's demonstration." "The Press on the Demonstration," *PMG*, 25 Aug. 1885.

80. See John Gorman, *Banner Bright: An Illustrated History of the Banners of the Trade Union Movement* (London: Allan Lane, 1973); "From One in the Crowd," PMG, 24 Aug. 1885.

81. A part of the East End contingent had marched through Pall Mall's clubland, where they saw youthful "mashers" assemble at the doorstep of their club; some claimed to have pointed an accusing finger "of scorn" at Cavendish Bentinck, ensconced "in a window at the Carlton." At Hyde Park, hawkers sold fruit and nuts, "prints, cheap and nasty," and "democratic organs" like *Justice*, which detailed how the "working classes are robbed by landlords and capitalists." Schults, *Crusader*, p. 161; Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, p. 113; PMG, 24 Aug. 1885.

82. Other studies of the Armstrong trial include Wyndham, *Victorian Sensations*; Plowden, *The Case*; Pearson, *Age of Consent*, Madge Unsworth, *Maiden Tribute: A Study in Voluntary Social Service* (London: Salvationist Publisher and Supplies, 1949).

83. "Crying bitterly, she told [the magistrate] how Eliza had left home with an old friend of her neighbours to go into service. The child's employer had said that she would write regularly, but she had not heard from her since the day she left." Quoted in Pearson, *Age of Consent*, p. 171.

84. LWN (London), 12 July 1885. This article was also noted in the evening edition of the PMG.

85. For a discussion of the tendency of "characters" in newspaper scandals to dispute the meanings produced by both newspaper and courtroom narratives, see Lisa Duggan, "Uncontrollable Impulses."

86. For differing views of the guilt or innocence of the Armstrongs, see Plowden, *The Case*, Unsworth, *Maiden Tribute*, or Pearson, *Age of Consent*. Rebecca Jarrett, unpublished memoir, n.d., p. 12, Salvation Army Archives.

87. DT, 24 Oct. 1885; Eliza Armstrong, testimony before Central Criminal Court, *Central Criminal Court Session Papers* (12th session, 1884-85), pp. 900, 896; DT, 24 Oct. 1885.

88. LWN, quoted in Plowden, *The Case*, p. 24; Mrs. Armstrong, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 29; Mrs. Armstrong, quoted in Wyndham, *Victorian Sensations*, p. 143; DT, 26 Oct. 1885; *Times*, 9 Nov. 1885.

89. LWN, 13 Sept. 1885.

90. Quoted in Ellen Ross, "Survival Networks: Women's Neighborhood Sharing in London Before World War One," *History Workshop Journal* 15 (Spring 1983): 14.

91. Mrs. Armstrong challenged Mrs. Broughton's sexual reputation. "She called me everything," explained Mrs. Broughton in her testimony, "she called me whore and prostitute and said I had been a prostitute all my lifetime; and I was not married to the man I was living with." Mrs. Broughton, testimony at Central Criminal Court, *Session Papers*, p. 924. According to the PMG, Mrs. Broughton claimed that Mrs. Armstrong called her a "bloody cow." In an unpublished paper on sexual reputation in early nineteenth-century London, Anna Clark discusses the complex issues involved in neighborhood sexual slanders, including class tensions, competition, and the ambiguous status of common-law marriage (see Anna Clark, unpublished paper, 1986).

92. Mrs. Armstrong, testimony before Central Criminal Court, *Sessions Papers*, p. 915.
93. PMG, 15 Sept. 1885; Mr. Armstrong, testimony at Central Criminal Court, *Session Papers*, p. 945; Mrs. Armstrong, testimony at Central Criminal Court, *Session Papers*, p. 904; Mr. Armstrong, testimony at Central Criminal Court, *Sessions Papers*, p. 942; PMG, 15 Sept. 1885; RN, 8 Nov. 1885. After the Armstrong trial, Reynolds ultimately judged Stead "deservedly punished."
94. Mrs. Armstrong, testimony at Central Criminal Court, *Sessions Papers*, p. 904; Plowden, *The Case*, p. 75.
95. Plowden, *The Case*, p. 75.
96. DT, 29 Oct. 1885.
97. DT, 31 Oct. 1885; Plowden, *The Case*, p. 98.
98. Jarrett, testimony at Central Criminal Court, quoted in Plowden, *The Case*, p. 97; DT, 13 Nov. 1885.
99. Sir Charles Webster, quoted in Plowden, *The Case*, p. 121.
100. W. T. Stead, *The Armstrong Case: Mr. Stead's Defense Told in Full* (London: H. Vickers, 1885); DT, 5 Nov. 1885; Stead, quoted in Plowden, *The Case*, p. 37.
101. W. T. Stead to Elizabeth Cobb, 5 Aug. 1885. Fawcett Autograph Collection, Fawcett Library, London. Vol. 11; Stead, quoted in Wyndham, *Victorian Sensations*, p. 129; Stead, *Armstrong Case*, p. 12; *ibid*.
102. Jarrett, unpublished memoir, p. 15; PMG, 9 Nov. 1885; DT, 3 Nov. 1885; PMG, 2 Nov. 1885, 9 Nov. 1885; Stead, testimony at Central Criminal Court, *Sessions Papers*, pp. 999, 1001.
103. DT, 4 Nov. 1885.
104. *National Reformer* (London), 30 Aug. 1885; PMG, 25 Aug. 1885.
105. Stead, Diary Entries, 3 March–28 July 1886. Stead Papers. According to Robertson Scott, these entries were transcripts of shorthand notes dictated by Stead to his secretary Underhill.
106. *Ibid.*, 6 March 1886, 7 April 1886.
107. *Ibid.*, 3 March 1886.
108. *Maiden Tribute*, pp. 3, 11.
109. For discussions of Freud's role as narrator in the Dora case, see the introductions and articles by Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane and the articles by Steven Marcus, Toril Moi, and Madelon Sprengnether in Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane, eds., *In Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
110. DT, 9 Nov. 1885; Stead, quoted in Wyndham, *Victorian Sensations*, pp. 161, 162; Plowden, *The Case*, p. 141.
111. PMG, 9 Nov. 1885; Josephine Butler, *Rebecca Jarrett* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1985), p. 55; Jarrett, unpublished memoir, pp. 15, 12, 13.
112. Jarrett, unpublished memoir, p. 3.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
114. *Ibid.*, p. 9, 8. Arriving at the Salvation Army refuge in Hanbury Street, Whitechapel, (a "place I had never been in my life," for her haunts were in the more prosperous West End) she was greeted by a "lovely young Mother with red jersey on [Salvation Army uniform] [...] She rose up and *kissed* me said I have been waiting for

you dear." Jarrett was stunned and grateful for this intimacy: "I was one of London[s] kept women living a life of impurity getting my living by it [.] " "The kitchen was a poor little back kitchen but its memory is very sacred to me" (pp. 6, 7). Jarrett characterized herself as a "scullery maid" to "show up the dirt" or "to do the dirty work" (pp. 15, 16). For a discussion of maternal ideology and the Salvation Army, see Pamela Walker, "The Hallelujah Lasses," unpublished paper, 1990.

115. Jarrett, unpublished memoir, pp. 11, 12. See Ross, "'Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep': Respectability in Pre-World War I London Neighborhoods," *ILWCH*, no. 27 (Spring 1985): 39-59.

116. Jarrett, unpublished memoir, p. 12; Jarrett, testimony at Central Criminal Court, *Sessions Papers*, p. 991. Unsworth (*Maiden Tribute*, p. 30) comments: "A recollection of a similar event in her childhood must have come painfully to Rebecca."

117. Butler, *Rebecca Jarrett*, pp. 43, 44.

118. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 22, 23, 25, 32. In this pamphlet, Butler attempted to explain why Jarrett lied in court to protect her old associates, whom she had promised not to harm.

119. Amanda Sebestyn, "Two Women from Two Worlds," *Spare Rib* (London), no. 155 (June 1985).

120. Butler to Stead, n.d. [1885]. Stead Papers.

121. In this comparison, I am drawing on Butler's repeal propaganda as well as on her biography of Jarrett.

122. Josephine Butler to Vernon Lushington, P.R.O., Admiralty Papers, Adm.1/6148, 12 Jan. 1870. See Eugene L. Rasor, *Reform in the Royal Navy: A Social History of the Lower Deck, 1850 to 1889* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1976), pp. 98, 99.

123. PMG, 6 July 1885. In his diary entry, 3 March 1886, Stead included observations from his nocturnal walk around Hyde Park: "Around the Marble Arch, I found some few women; no boys." A homosexual prototype of the "Maiden Tribute," complete with an upper-class rake who seduces a bootblack boy and then sells him into prostitution in Paris, was published in 1881 as *Sins of the Cities of the Plain or, Confessions of a Maryanne*. Oscar Wilde bought a copy in a bookshop in Coventry Street, Leicester Square. Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1988), pp. 102, 103. See Stead's rather sympathetic response to the Wilde case (where he judged the Marquess of Queensbury as a far greater villain than Wilde and worried about the chilling effect of the Wilde case on friendship between men [*Review of Reviews* (London) 11 (June 1895): 491, 492]). However marginal, the homosexual theme would surface in the clauses of the Criminal Law Amendment Act itself. An antiaristocratic bias may have prompted its inclusion in the bill (reformers accepted its inclusion but did not themselves propose it), as homosexuality was associated with the corruption of working-class youth by the same upper-class profligates, who, on other occasions, were thought to buy the services of young girls. Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), pp. 18-20. *Reynolds News* (19 July 1885), ever vigilant about the perverse practices of the aristocracy, openly addressed the homosexual

subtext that provided a shadow discourse to female outrage. It reminded its readers that there are "offenses which, if less harmful in their immediate physical effects, have yet a horrible degrading influence on childhood and manhood." Whereas the "sated voluptuaries" of the metropolis were never "called to account," at "every country assize there are sure to be several poor ignorant rustics charged with kindred offenses."

124. On child pornography, see Graham Ovenden and Robert Melville, *Victorian Children* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972); Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

125. Josephine Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London: Horace Marshall and Son, 1911), p. 49.

126. Beatrice Webb, quoted in Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 285; Anthony Wohl, ed., *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970).

127. Stead, *Armstrong Case*, p. 15. Stead emphasized the degraded environment of Charles Street, hinting at incest: Eliza was "taken from a single room in a Marylebone slum, where eight people lived and slept, and from which she was most anxious to go, and placed in a situation in a comfortable middle-class family." Stead's opponents also manipulated the themes and motifs of "Outcast London": they blamed Stead for unleashing the destructive energies of the street by encouraging and disseminating pornography; and they objected to curtailing elite male sexual prerogatives in the vain attempt to protect girls who had already been corrupted by their environment.

128. On the "endowment of motherhood," see Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-1939* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Ellen Ross, "Response to Hal Benenson," *ILWCH* no. 25 (Spring 1984): 34; Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop Journal* 5 (Spring 1978): 9-66.

129. Lewis, *Politics of Motherhood*, pp. 80, 81, 166; Pat Ayers and Jan Lambert, "Marriage Relations, Money, and Domestic Violence in Working-Class Liverpool, 1919-39," in Jane Lewis, ed., *Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850-1940* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 196-202; Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987).