

Erlend Nikolai Frislid

"This Loathsome Subject"

Reporting on Sexual Crime and Social Purity in
Victorian London

Master's thesis in History with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Michael Geary

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Preface

Huge strides have been made in making sexuality an approachable research subject in recent decades. During this time, it has also increasingly become a topic that is talked about in schools and media. Despite this, sexuality continues to be a topic that makes people uncomfortable. And then in large parts of the world, sexuality is stigmatized to the point of not to being discussed at all. Although this thesis only focuses on a miniscule sliver of what amounts to the history of “human sexuality”, it adds to our understanding of the journey that has led us to where we are today. As a future teacher, I hope that I can contribute to normalizing sexuality as a topic. Understanding what once was, and where we have come from – is one modest step in this process.

Abstract

In this thesis I explore how the conservative newspapers of *Times* and *London Evening Standard* reported on issues of sexual crime and social purity in 1885 to 1888. I look at a selection of newspaper articles that tackle topics such as sexual assault, prostitution, poverty and its connection to immorality, and commentary on legislation. By using critical discourse analysis I establish the existence and omission of multiple themes in how sexual crime and social purity was reported on. Respectability, domesticity, sexual repression, along with classism and sexism are some themes that are clearly apparent in in *Times* and the *Standard*. I also look at some omissions, with venereal disease and homosexuality being the two most notable ones. I argue that these findings are consistent with how Victorian society at large was structured socially and culturally at the time and that newspaper reporting generally mirror these trends.

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I would also like to thank my friends for being there through thick and thin. We have spent countless hours together in room 6361 and I am not sure this would have been possible without your continuous presence there.

Finally, I ought to thank my family for occasionally asking how my master's is going. I probably would have been able to push through regardless, but it is the thought that counts after all.

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Introduction

On August 11th, 1885, *Times* proclaimed “It is time that public discussion of this loathsome subject should cease.”¹ The Criminal Law Amendment Act (CLAA) had just passed in Parliament after much public debate. “This loathsome subject” is here the sexual acts which the CLAA aims to regulate – such as prostitution, age of consent, sexual acts between two males, among other things. *Times* hoped that by the CLAA finally passing in Parliament, there would be no reason to discuss these topics. In this thesis I will examine the extent to which *Times* and *London Evening Standard*, two prominent London-based conservative newspapers heeded these words in how they reported on sexual crime and social purity in the years 1885 to 1888.

At the close of the 19th century, England was undergoing tremendous changes. Politically, socially, and culturally the country saw many of its norms and traditions uprooted. Literacy rates increased, political rights were extended to more and more people, new ideologies rose in prominence and old fell out of fashion and economic conditions improved for many. This period represents an important steppingstone to society as we know it today and has received considerable scholarly attention. One topic that has also been of great interest to historical research was the Victorians’ conceptualization of sexuality and the social purity movement. The Victorians are famously known for their aversion to sexuality and attempts to both regulate and repress it. The Contagious Diseases Acts and its repeal campaign, the “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon”, and the social purity movement are all manifestations of this tendency. Due to the Victorians’ aversion to discussing aspects of sexuality, these angles are some of possible ways to begin to understand the prevailing thoughts on the subject matter. Newspapers provide a unique perspective in that they report on all of these topics and can be interpreted as markers indicative of some of the dominant discourses at the time. By looking at *Times* and the *Standard*, this thesis seeks to expand on our understanding on how sexuality was conceptualized and discussed in a period where it was not supposed to be addressed publicly nor privately.

1885 marks the year where *Pall Mall Gazette* released the “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” – a sensationalist series of articles revealing the existence of sexual exploitation of young girls in

¹ *Times*, August 11, 1885.

London. Following this, the Criminal Law Amendment Act was swiftly passed in Parliament. This bill sought primarily to protect young girls from sexual exploitation, but also criminalized homosexuality among other things. The 1880s was also defined by the suspension of the Contagious Diseases Act in 1883, which was repealed three years later in 1886. Both the CLAA and the repeal of the CDA were legislative acts related to the social purity movement – a movement which attempted to fight what they perceived as declining moral standards in British society at the time. In fall of 1888, London was shaken by another revelation which would influence newspaper publishing. The murders committed by the figure now known as Jack the Ripper shocked the citizens of London, and Britain as a whole. These murders, typically on prostitutes, became the target of speculation and sensationalist writings in newspapers. As this thesis is mostly concerned with the discourse related to the CLAA and the CDA, the fall of 1888 marks a natural end point due to the potential influence of Jack the Ripper on reporting of sexual crime.

The thesis is structured into three main chapters. As part of the introduction I provide a literature review of research that has already been completed on similar topics. I also go through the methodology used in the thesis. The first chapter provides background information relevant to understanding Victorian society as it relates to the focus of this thesis. Concepts such as domesticity and respectability; sexual regulation and the social purity movement; and how sexual crime was managed by both the justice system and the newspapers who reported on it. After that I will present my findings from my analysis of the newspapers which is organized into some broader themes which emerged. Respectability, domesticity, sexual repression and social purity are some of the larger themes presented in this chapter. Finally, I will examine these themes taken together while also contrasting this with some of the notable omissions related to sexual crime and social purity from the newspapers I identified.

Literature review

Victorian England has received considerable scholarly attention. Its abundance of written source material, temporal proximity to us, yet simultaneously distinct society and culture lends itself easily to a wide range of academic investigations. One such area of academic investigation is the Victorian's conception of morality, and then more specifically as it relates to sexual morality. A major work on this is *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* written by Jeffrey Weeks. This book provides a general overview of how sexuality has been regulated since 1800 and includes multiple chapters dedicated to the Victorian period. In his book, Weeks argues how class, family and ideas about domesticity and gender all came to influence Victorians' views on sexuality. Judith R. Walkowitz is a historian with numerous authoritative works related to sexuality and prostitution in the later Victorian period. Her first book *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* explores several aspects related to the Victorian prostitution, a prostitute's life experiences, and how society viewed and treated prostitutes. *Prostitution and Victorian Society* influenced other subsequent works like *Prostitution Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914*. This book authored by Paula Bartley focuses specifically on how late Victorian England attempted to prevent prostitution through education, reform and training houses, and other forms of activism. These two works form a solid foundation for understanding the prostitute's position in Victorian society, and how Victorian society attempted to contain what they perceived to be the problem of prostitution.

The Contagious Diseases Acts is another topic which features prominently in historical research on the Victorian period. Books such as *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930* by Peter Baldwin, and *Sex, Sin and Suffering Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870* by Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall look at how venereal diseases and prophylactics were handled in Europe at large while also contrasting this with the uniqueness of the English approach. These books reveal how there was a concerted effort to fight venereal diseases by states and how prostitution and venereal disease was seen as interconnected. They also show how society at large at the time was conscious of the existence of these issues despite their reluctance to speak of them in the open.

From the 1880s and onwards British society was defined by a series of sensationalist publications in newspapers. The “Maiden Tribute and Modern Babylon” and the subsequent passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act resulted in the social purity movement gaining traction. *Sex Trafficking, Scandal, and the Transformation of Journalism, 1885–1917* explores how two sex scandals in Britain and the US shaped journalism going into the 20th century and especially how it paved the way for “muckracking” – a derogatory term used to describe progressive sensationalist journalism which exposed social injustices. “Purifying the public world feminist vigilantes in late Victorian England” written by Lucy Bland is another work which concerns itself mostly with the different Vigilant Associations that rose in the aftermath of Stead’s sensationalist.

Other relevant works are *The Unwritten Law Criminal Justice in Victorian Kent* by Carolyn A. Conley. This book describes how law was practiced in Kent – an English district just south-west of London. One chapter is devoted to how the Victorian justice system treated women and then especially as it relates to violence and sexual violence. Sean Brady’s *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861–1913* is a book that focuses on sexuality and morality in Victorian England as it relates to homosexuality. Brady’s book provides insight into how homosexuality and masculinity’s influence on sexuality was discussed and how it was *not* discussed in public – with some notable examples from *Times*. All these works and many more are in some way connected to sexuality and social purity and provide the framework for which this thesis will base itself on and add to.

Methodology

Terminology

The phrase “sexual crime” refers broadly to any sexual act that is regulated or deemed illegal related to sexuality in the period in question. Sexual assault, prostitution, abduction, obscenity, sexual acts between two males are all examples of things that will be referred to as “sexual crimes”.

The Victorians had a different conceptualization of sexual assault than the ones in the 21st century. They also used different terminology to refer to instances of sexual assault. Indecent assault, outrage, ravish, rape, criminal assault, assault, having carnal knowledge – are all phrases used almost interchangeably to refer to instances of sexual assault. In order to avoid confusion, I will use the phrase “sexual assault” to refer to any instance where sexual contact takes place without consent from the victim in place of the phrases used by the Victorians themselves.

Source Selection

This thesis focuses on two London-based newspapers and articles related to sexual crime published in the period after the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed in 1885 and up until Jack the Ripper terrorized London in the latter half of 1888. I have chosen to focus on the London Evening Standard and the *Times* – both prominent conservative newspapers catering to middle-upper class individuals.² This limits the number of representations available for analysis as both newspapers represent the same section of society. However, it allows me to have a greater degree of confidence in the themes that do present themselves

The newspaper articles were found by utilizing online archives. I used a number of phrases and keywords to find articles:

buggery; sodomy; gross indecency; unnatural crime; criminal assault; assault; indecent assault; sexual assault; rape; CDA; Contagious Diseases Act; syphilis; Criminal Law Amendment Act; CLAA; abduction; prostitute; prostitution; brothel; brothel keeper; disorderly house; disorderly woman; disorderly women; carnal knowledge; Vigilance; Vigilance Association; ladies association; Great Evil; outrage; social purity; obscene literature; pornography

There are some obvious limitations to this approach. The first being that there might be certain phrases I have omitted that could be relevant to the thesis. Secondly, the approach relies on the search engines reliably locating articles with the aforementioned words and phrases. In the case of some words – such as “rape”, “sodomy”, “syphilis”, “contagious diseases acts” very few results were returned. With “syphilis” this is to be expected as it was not socially acceptable to

² Dennis Griffiths, ed., *The encyclopedia of the British press, 1422-1992*, (Macmillan, 1992), 39.

refer to the disease by its medical name in polite society. In the case of “rape”, the word was seldom used and in its place phrases such as “criminal assault” and “indecent assault” were utilized. In the instances where there were comparatively few results returned, I have chosen to include all the articles I found in my analysis. In other instances, such as when searching for “disorderly houses” or “Criminal Law Amendment Act”, the number of results far exceeded what is practical to analyze. In these cases, I have skimmed through a larger number of articles and chosen a smaller, more manageable sample that I examined afterward. This selection which includes shorter and longer articles, published in different years of the period in question, should be representative of the broader selection of articles on the aforementioned topics.

There are some confounding variables that could account for the themes present in the discourses identified in the newspapers. The first is the difference in styles of writing between reporters. Nuanced details such as off-hand comments on the physical appearance of a person could simply be the function of a single reporter choosing to focus on that rather than any overarching tendency that could be a marker of discourse. The newspapers do not mention the reporters who are responsible for writing an article – and as such accounting for this variable would be unfeasible given the scope of this thesis.

Discourse Analysis

Discourses can be thought of as the rules which dictate the production of texts and utterances – the “domain of statements”.³ A given text can have multiple discourses present with each representing some part of the world and representing it from a particular perspective.⁴ There are an infinite number of ways of representing the world through text, but not all of these representations will necessarily be a discourse. Discourses are characterized by being stable over time and in being shared by a group of people.⁵ Different discourses will generally use different words to describe the world even when the topic is the same. For instance, a puritan and a sexologist will utilize vastly different words when discussing either prostitution or masturbation.

³ Norman Fairclough, *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research* (Psychology Press, 2003), 123.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

Discourse analysis is then a tool used to analyze texts beyond its smallest constituent members such as words and sentences. It is the analysis of the rules that govern texts. In this thesis, discourse analysis will be employed as the primary way to analyze the primary source material.

One way to utilize discourse analysis is to examine how power and ideology and the relationship between these two govern the production and consumption of texts in a society.⁶ This approach is called critical discourse analysis and concerns itself both with overt and opaque themes as they relate to power and control; dominance and discrimination.⁷ Critical discourse analysis is often used to look at individuals and groups who suffer in society and how the powerful make use of language to justify the continued existence of inequality.⁸ Ideology is seen as instrumental in both establishing and maintaining unequal power relations and critical discourse analysis thus attempts to reveal exactly how language allows ideology to have this mediating role. As such, any produced text can never be considered to exclusively be the result of a single person or a single discourse.⁹ The Victorian period are not only marked by the presence of racism, classism and sexism; but there are also overarching ideologies such as domesticity, respectability and social purity that dictate how the world was conceptualized and discussed.

Lexical analysis is one of the simplest ways to do discourse analysis and a tool that will be used extensively in this thesis. In this approach, it is the words used and the words not used which is looked at in a text. Overlexicalization is one way this can manifest itself and involves instances where an author uses an excessive number of words to describe a concept to highlight how it deviates from expected norms.¹⁰ Referring to sexual relations between two men as a “gross and unnatural crime” makes it clear that this crime is unlike regular crime such as robbery and murder. Another aspect of lexical choice this thesis deals extensively with are representations of individuals. In reporting sexual crime individuals are judged as a function of their occupation, class, gender and outward appearance. References to, or direct comments on such aspects are a common occurrence in newspaper articles at the time. With discourse analysis there is never any way to neutrally represent a person in any language.¹¹ All descriptions will neglect to mention

⁶ David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction* (Sage, 2012), 23.

⁷ Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Methods of critical discourse studies* (Sage, 2015), 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰ Machin and Mayr, *Critical discourse analysis*, 37.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

some aspect of the person or choose to highlight another. “A person deliberately injured their child last night”, “a woman hit their crying child”, “a 40-year-old prostitute named Jane Doe beat their three-year old child” can all be said to be accurate representations of the same scenario – where the author has simply chosen to highlight or omitted different aspects of the event. However, all of these descriptions will invoke different images in readers and sway their opinions in one way or another. Such descriptions provide useful insight not only into what newspapers want their readers to believe, but also what discourses influence their own worldview. In this thesis, a combination of looking at the topic of a newspaper article and its lexical choices will be used to identify larger themes in newspaper reporting. By looking at these themes in combination, the thesis will then seek to establish what ideologies and discourses dictated public discussions of sexual crime and social purity and whether this was connected to how society at large handled the subject matter.

Chapter 1 – Victorian Society

The Victorians' view of social purity and sexual crime was shaped by a large number of factors. Some of these are obvious in how they influenced beliefs at the time – such as legislation and activism. Other factors exerted influence in a more subtle way. Notions of respectability and domesticity dictated almost all aspects of social life in Victorian society - sexuality and social purity included. In this chapter I will provide historical context about Victorian society and its various facets that is relevant to understanding how sexual crime and issues related to social purity came to be reported on. First, I will give a brief summary of how respectability and domesticity defined the social landscape of Victorian society. Following that I will describe how sexuality was regulated and repressed, and how this manifested itself differently between men and women. Finally, I will also explain how sexual crime was viewed and managed by the justice system and then how newspapers approached reporting on sexual crime in the period.

Domesticity and Respectability

Victorian society was defined in part by its conceptualization of domesticity. Although changes during the 19th century had ensured newfound liberties for both men and women, the century also carried with it new constraints through societal pressures.¹² The ideal of domesticity was one such pressure. It reached its climax around the 1850s and based itself on the idea of two spheres existing in society, where women belonged to one and men to the other.¹³ This doctrine of “separate spheres” stated that women belonged to the domestic sphere – the home. They were charged with caring for children, the household and religion, and were supposed to stay away from the masculine elements found in the public sphere. Men, on the other hand, were associated with the public sphere of business, politics and hard work. Ideally, a man was supposed to be independent, professional and able to provide for his family. Despite men and women adhering to this idea of two separate spheres, they were united in their home. The family's role in an

¹² Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, politics and society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800* (Routledge, 2017), 32.

¹³ Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, culture and society in nineteenth-century Britain* (Routledge, 2016), 166.

individual's life became more and more significant during the Victorian period. These relations were now often intimate and long-lasting. The family became a refuge, in which it was possible to seek shelter from poverty, class exploitation and the proliferation of vice found in the public sphere.¹⁴ The home was idealized and seen as morally superior to the rough outside world. The doctrine of separate spheres, along with Christian puritan values, would form a large part of the ideology underpinning the social purity movement in the latter part of the century.

Alongside the concept of separate spheres came the ideal of respectability. The extent to which a family or person was respectable was in many ways tied to whether they could achieve the ideals prescribed by the doctrine of separate spheres. Although respectability was something all classes were aware of and strived to achieve, it manifested itself distinctively in the different classes. For instance, working-class respectability was not just a milder version of the respectability found in the middle-class – but operated on different criteria.¹⁵ Generally, families were judged on whether the husband had a steady job, if he drank excessively, or if he was violent toward his wife. Other factors were whether a woman returned borrowed items on time, if a couple was legally married, or their children were sent to Sunday school.¹⁶ Irrespective of gender, people were judged on whether they had a proper house, the right clothes, their mannerisms and behavior.¹⁷ Failing to achieve these standards meant a person would have their character questioned and in cases of sexual crime this could be a deciding factor for a judge or a jury.

Sexual Aversion, Regulation and Repression

During the Victorian period, sexuality alongside other bodily functions, was seen as something indecent to be ignored and even repressed. There were some changes during the period, and particularly toward the latter part of the Victorian period talk about sexuality increased.¹⁸ For instance, as part of a more general trend of classification, sexual variety across different species, humans included, was increasingly looked at. Sexuality was now considered along a number of

¹⁴ Weeks, *Sex, politics and society*, 34.

¹⁵ Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 131.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁸ Weeks, *Sex, politics and society*, 30.

different lines - moral or immoral; masculine or feminine; normal or abnormal; heterosexual or homosexual. With these lines also arose the desire to regulate sexuality based on what was considered right or wrong.

The most overt way sexual regulation manifested itself during the Victorian period was through legislation. During this period, the state gradually took on responsibilities that were traditionally in the jurisdiction of the church such as with marriage and divorce.¹⁹ With the decades, this would result in the state eventually having the primary regulating role in regard to sexuality in British society. Venereal disease and prostitution and the interaction between these two was one area in which Parliament most heavy-handedly attempted to exert this influence. This topic became more frequent in Parliamentary debate from the 1860s and onward, and the measures put in place to curb venereal disease would be a controversial topic for several decades afterward.²⁰ Despite examples such as this, the state was reluctant to repress individual freedoms by enforcing morality. However, with the mounting pressures from the public in the 1880s, especially with the rise of the prominent social purity groups, they would gradually become more receptive to public pressure.²¹ Homosexuality, prostitution and obscenity were some expressions of sexuality the state considered particularly threatening to the moral character of society and which were regulated in part because of the aforementioned rise of social purity groups. The end-product of all these influences was a culture of sexual restraint and ignorance.

Female sexuality was largely dictated by the ideals of domesticity and respectability. Up until the 1870s, marriage was women's only proper destiny. Any woman who failed to achieve this singular goal was viewed with either pity or suspicion.²² Marriage was also one of the only ways a woman could have sex without receiving harsh judgement from society. However, this in itself was not an acceptable reason to pursue marriage. Women were supposed to be "passionless" and the only reason they were supposed to have sex was to satisfy their husbands and to reproduce. As William Acton wrote "the majority of women . . . are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind."²³ With these words Acton defines what would be considered proper for

¹⁹ Ibid., 102.

²⁰ Ibid., 28.

²¹ Ibid., 112.

²² Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 243.

²³ Ibid., 243.

women in the Victorian period. However, this meant that the inverse must also be true: a woman who did have sexual feelings or pursued extramarital sex was deemed to be unfeminine and unwomanly. This line of reasoning went even further. Many considered a girl or woman who was the victim of sexual assault to be irreversibly morally damaged. A worker at a lock hospital in the 1880s exemplified this belief when he stated, "the innocent girl[s] once outraged seemed to suffer a lasting blight of the moral sense. They never came to any good; the foul passion of the man seemed to enter into the helpless victim of his lust."²⁴

Whereas female sexual ideals were based on the idea of them being "passionless", ideal male sexuality was recognized as existing, but was supposed to be directed exclusively onto his wife.²⁵ This played into the ideal of domesticity in which the man was supposed to be the breadwinner and seek refuge in the home which was kept by his wife. Men were recognized as being sexual creatures, but even as these sexual urges related to their wives they were expected to be able to restrain themselves. Spousal love was in the eyes of Victorians not contingent on sexual attraction.²⁶ Masturbation was another sexual act that men had to be mindful of. Masturbating was believed to cause harm to the masculinity of boys and men.²⁷ Victorians considered masturbation both a moral and medical issue and fighting it would be one of goals of the social purity movement. Although spermatorrhoea ceased being treated as a serious condition by the 1860s, the belief that men should abstain from masturbation persisted until the turn of the century. Social purists took up the mantle for the fight against masturbation in the 1880s from what had primarily been doctors in the earlier parts of the century. The target group also changed from being primarily adult men to boys.²⁸ All these manifestations of sexual repression reveal how sexual restraint was a trait highly valued in Victorian society. Men were not only expected to show sexual restraint by abstaining from extramarital sex, but also as it related to masturbation and their sexual urges for their wives. Talks about masturbation features little in newspapers in the 1880s, but this view of masturbation as something unmasculine highlights the overarching beliefs that dictated male sexuality in the period.

²⁴ Ibid., 372.

²⁵ Ibid., 241.

²⁶ Ibid., 242.

²⁷ Ibid., 252.

²⁸ Ibid., 252.

Not all expressions of sexuality fell neatly within the heteronormative dichotomy outlined above. “Unnatural crimes”, a term primarily used to refer to sexual acts between two men, was a topic laden with silence as there was a fear that any discussion of it would only serve to inform the public. Even in 1921, a bill attempting to make sex between two women illegal failed in Parliament not because they objected to the contents of the bill, but because lawmakers feared passing such a bill might make women aware of an unexplored realm of sexual possibility.²⁹ The topic of sex between women was thus a topic barely touched on in public discourse. Sex between men was talked about to a larger extent. Newspapers still reported far less on unnatural crime than they did other types of sexual crime. Most reports on unnatural crime between two men are characterized by disbelief that any man of good character would willingly engage in sexual acts of that kind.³⁰ The fact that unnatural crime was neither spoken about nor reported on did not mean that it did not exist. Male prostitution was widespread in Britain and there were several public places known for offering opportunities to those seeking them in the larger British cities.³¹

Prostitution was one area where attempts at regulating sexuality by the state was the most plainly obvious. During the 19th century, most European countries practiced some form of regulationism in their efforts to control prostitution.³² Regulationism was seen as a necessary step to contain the moral and social consequences of general promiscuity as resulting from primarily male sexual demands and desires.³³ Britain was one of few European countries to not practice regulationism. For most parts of the 19th century, prostitution in Britain was in and of itself not illegal. The main concern of the police was to keep it out of the public’s eye and ensuring it did not turn into a nuisance for respectable citizens.³⁴ As with other improper and immoral subjects related to sex, the Victorians would rather not have to discuss prostitution at all. The lack of a proper legal definition of a “common prostitute” reflects Victorian society’s aversion of handling the problem directly. Prostitution existed in a variety of forms – there were full-time prostitutes whose only income was through soliciting sex; women who used sex as a means of bartering; and those who

²⁹ Ibid., 249.

³⁰ Brady, Sean, *Masculinity and male homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913* (Springer, 2016), 60.

³¹ Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*,

³² Ida Blom, "Contagious women and male clients: Public policies to prevent venereal diseases in Norway, 1888–1960," *Scandinavian journal of history* 29.2 (2004): 98.

³³ Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 359.

³⁴ Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian society: Women, class, and the state* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 14.

every once in a while resorted to prostitution to supplement their income.³⁵ Most prostitutes in Britain operated independently and relied on renting rooms in “disorderly houses” to service their clients. Since the police concerned themselves little with prostitutes unless it was a public nuisance, there was little reason for prostitutes in Britain to seek out pimps for protection something which further amplified their relative independence compared to their continental colleagues.³⁶ Prostitution was considered a great social evil in and of itself, but the issues of “contagious diseases”, a euphemism for venereal diseases and particularly syphilis, resulted in Parliament becoming more heavily involved in regulating prostitution in the 1860s.

The CDA, first passed in 1864, was a response to outbreaks of venereal disease in the British army – which appeared to affect their army to a much larger extent than any other European army.³⁷ This was the closest Britain ever came to the continental system of regulationism. The Acts gave police in certain districts and cities where a large number of British soldiers were stationed the authority to inspect prostitutes suspected of being infected with venereal disease. If a prostitute was infected, they could be detained in a hospital or even arrested if they refused to comply with said orders. Two years later, in 1866, a stricter version of the CDA passed which gave police the authority to inspect all prostitutes in the affected garrison towns, not just those suspected of venereal disease. It also increased the geographical range of the Acts, ensured that medical inspections were carried out more often, and increased the maximum duration of hospitalization by three months.³⁸

Both the 1864 and 1866 version of the Act failed in achieving its stated goals. Many prostitutes simply settled outside of the geographic range the Act accounted for; or in some cases they lived right alongside the soldiers – knowing that police officers would not dare detain them; or saying that they were menstruating to circumvent inspection.³⁹ The CDA did have a positive impact in that it diminished juvenile prostitution in garrison towns, and the Acts also seem to have reduce venereal disease in the affected areas – although this might have been because infected

³⁵ Ibid., 14.

³⁶ Ibid., 26.

³⁷ Baldwin, *Contagion*, 372.

³⁸ Ibid., 373.

³⁹ Francis Barrymore Smith, "Ethics and disease in the later nineteenth century: the Contagious Diseases Acts," *Australian Historical Studies* 15.57 (1971): 120.

prostitutes traveled to other unaffected areas.⁴⁰ No matter the influence of the CDA in curbing venereal diseases, its social impacts were far greater. A number of middle-class citizens saw the Contagious Diseases Act as effectually implementing regulationism in Britain. Prostitution was in their eyes a great social evil and implementing even a form of regulationism meant condoning prostitution. As such, one of the greatest influences of the CDA might be that it mobilized a significant portion of middle-class Britain and caused them to enter the political realm for the first time.

Already with the first version of the bill, there mounted opposition to the legislation in British society. Especially middle-class women who took offense at how the bill targeted exclusively women were at the forefront in what would become a larger campaign for repealing the Acts.⁴¹ To begin with, the bills were simply sanitary measures with a limited scope, but with each amendment the public rationale expressed to justify the legislation became defined on moral and social grounds instead.⁴² The growing social purity movement critiqued the inherent assumption in the Acts that prostitution was the least evil solution to male sexuality.⁴³ Sexual restraint and abstinence in young men could allow them to achieve the same level of moderation as women were capable of. Josephine Butler, and the Ladies Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, were instrumental in articulating this critique this would eventually morph into the larger social purity movement that would carry on into the 1890s.⁴⁴

The social purity movement consisted of a multitude of groups, organizations, and associations that all sought to fight what they perceived to be social evils present in society. These groups rose in prominence after the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 which gave them more room in their efforts to suppress immorality. Before 1885, the Ladies' Associations for the Care of Friendless Girls was one of the most influential groups in the social purity movement.⁴⁵ The LNA was primarily concerned with protecting girls by the means of legal reform against men who would seduce them.⁴⁶ The government was mostly opposed to the changes proposed by the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 126.

⁴¹ Ibid., 121.

⁴² Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian society*, 69.

⁴³ Smith, *Ethics and Diseases*, 129.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁴⁵ Paula Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and reform in England, 1860-1914* (Routledge, 2012), 73.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 83.

LNA as they saw it as infringing on civil liberties and similar notions which prevailed at the time.⁴⁷ Once Stead published the “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” in 1885, revealing the existence of trafficking of young girls inside London - public awareness and outrage came to a head. Parliament swiftly passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act in response – a bill which sought to protect young girls among other things. The social purity movement also benefited by Stead’s revelation. The public became more sympathetic to their cause and with the CLAA the arsenal of tools available to fight social evil was also expanded. These social purity groups were mostly concerned with stopping prostitution, but any manifestation of sexuality was seen as a threat. Most organizations made no distinctions between sexual literature which served to educate, or pornography.⁴⁸ Their vision of a pure society meant that everything sexual was to be repressed, no matter the intents behind it.

With the CLAA - the social purity movement, and then particularly the National Vigilance Association - came to increasingly utilize the law to enforce their code of morality on society.⁴⁹ This meant that their efforts to rid the streets of social evil came to rely heavily on the police. Operating rescue and training homes to help prostitutes meant that the purists could work independently from other societal institutions. Now their success was contingent on the willingness of a given police commissioner to assist the vigilantes in their cause.⁵⁰ According to the police, shutting down a disorderly house or other efforts to stop prostitution would often just result in it reappearing in another space soon after. The successes that vigilantes claimed responsibility for were often exaggerations according to the police. Vigilance associations were also often out of touch with public sentiment.⁵¹ They were a loud minority who hosted public meetings, patrolled the streets, petitioned politicians and the police, and voiced their opinions in newspapers. The rest of society was not necessarily in accordance with neither the methods nor the justification that these vigilance associations relied on.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 191.

⁴⁹ Morgan, Sue, ““Wild Oats or Acorns?” Social Purity, Sexual Politics and the Response of the Late-Victorian Church,” *Journal of religious history* 31.2 (2007): 153.

⁵⁰ Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention*, 161.

⁵¹ Ibid., 193.

Sexual Crime – From the Court to the Newspaper

Another aspect which influenced how sexual crime and social purity was seen and reported on during the Victorian period was the British justice system. This system and those responsible for upholding it during the Victorian period were characterized by a high degree of sexism. A study into the justice system in Kent revealed that judges were far more likely to be lenient when it came to violence by men against women than the opposite.⁵² Women were expected to behave submissively and yield to the will of the man – and any attempt to resist this was seen as highly inappropriate. There were some protections afforded to women and children who were victims of violence. The Act for the Better Prevention of Aggravated Assaults Upon Women and Children passed in 1854 allowed magistrates to rule on cases where there was clear evidence of bodily harm due to the violence.⁵³ Before the CLAA was passed in 1885, there had also been a fight to increase the age of consent which up until the middle of the 19th century had been based on legislation from the 13th century.⁵⁴ In 1861, the law stated that it was a felony for a man to sleep with a girl under the age of 10, and a misdemeanor to sleep with a girl between the age of 10 and 12. It further emphasized how any man who “abducted” a girl under the age of 16 was committing a crime against the father. The prevailing belief at the time was that daughters were an economic asset owned by her parents, and then primarily her father. The social purity movement made raising the age of consent one of their goals and in 1875 it was increased to 13.⁵⁵

Despite these improvements, women were still heavily restricted in their ability to defend themselves against said violence. For violence against a woman to be reprehensible, she had to be completely defenseless.⁵⁶ As soon as a woman tried to defend herself from physical harm, she seized being perceived as defenseless, and judges were likely to punish her far more harshly than they would a man who committed an equivalent act of violence against a woman. Beating a woman was seen as an understandable reaction to a woman misbehaving and judges would rule

⁵² Carolyn A. Conley, *The unwritten law: criminal justice in Victorian Kent* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 72.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁴ Deborah Gorham, "The “maiden tribute of modern Babylon” re-examined: Child prostitution and the idea of childhood in late-Victorian England," *Victorian Studies* 21.3 (1978): 353.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 364.

⁵⁶ Conley, *Unwritten Law*, 74.

with this in mind. In 1859, a woman threw a hairbrush at her husband – who proceeded to chase her and then stab her with a butcher knife. The court decided that both parties were equally to blame for the incident.⁵⁷ Another concern was that a “bad woman” could plot to have herself beaten by provoking her husband to get rid of him. Despite these qualms, sentencing against domestic homicides on women did grow more severe toward the latter part of the 19th century. After a judge in 1879 sentenced a man to six months for beating his wife to death, he was criticized publicly and felt obliged to justify his sentencing by exclaiming how the man was “no doubt under great irritation” due to his wife spending his money on drink.⁵⁸ British sentiments were changing and these instances of senseless violence came under increased scrutiny by both the public and the justice system.

Of all types of violence, sexual violence included - rape was considered the most serious offense in the Victorian period with murder the only other crime which received harsher punishments.⁵⁹ However, it was also one of the crimes where prosecutors faced the most difficulty in being believed. The belief that rape «is an accusation easy to be made and hard to be defended” laid the foundation for how such accusations were received by the justice system.⁶⁰ Any sign that the victim could be blamed for the rape taking place was weighted heavily. If for instance the victim’s injuries were only “very slight”, the jury was inclined to believe she was obviously not completely opposed to the events that took place and that a charge of rape was unjustified.⁶¹ Rape and sexual assault was treated similarly to domestic violence in that they often required the victim to have been “adequately injured” physically to prove that the sexual assault actually took place. Unlike domestic violence, there was an expectation placed on women that if they did not consent they would fight the perpetrator.

While the justice system saw some changes during the 19th century, the British newspaper industry was almost entirely transformed. At the beginning of the century, most newspapers were mostly concerned with the educated middle- and upper-classes and sought their readership only from those ranks. As such, the contents of the newspapers reflected the leanings of the intended

⁵⁷ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 80.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 85.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 82.

⁶¹ Ibid., 84.

readership. As stated by an editor at the *Times*, the goal of a newspaper was “to enlighten the minds, and to elevate the character of mankind in general”.⁶² During the latter part of the century, often accredited to William T. Stead among others, a new form of journalism emerged in Britain.⁶³ Commercial interests became more important, political affinity more obvious, and sensationalism a tool frequently employed to draw in readers and resulted in a mass circulation press.⁶⁴ This form of journalism proved successful to the point where other more conservative newspapers were virtually forced to adapt the same strategies in order to stay competitive.⁶⁵ The end result of this transformation is often associated with a number of sensational scandals in the 1880s and the way newspapers such as *Pall Mall Gazette* reported on them. However, the transformation was gradual and took several decades to come to fruition.⁶⁶

The most defining publications of these sensational scandals was “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon”. This was a series of sensational newspaper articles published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* by William T. Stead.⁶⁷ They were published over several days in July of 1885 and detailed the existence of trafficking of young girls for the purpose of prostitution in London. This series of articles resulted in public outrage against the people who would commit such crimes against children. This outrage further fueled the social purity movement and would result in the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 passing through Parliament. Stead began the “Maiden Tribute” by warning its readers of the content that was to follow. Once these articles were published it would go on to heavily influence how *Times* and the *Standard* included. The introductory passage is telling of prevailing sentiments on newspaper publishing to the point where it is worth quoting in full:

But although we are thus compelled, in the public interest, to publish the case for the bill, or rather for those portions of it which are universally admitted to be necessary, we have no desire to inflict upon unwilling eyes the ghastly story of the criminal developments of modern vice. Therefore we say quite frankly to-day that 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 to the horrible realities which torment

⁶² Ibid., 207.

⁶³ Ibid., 209.

⁶⁴ Griffiths, *Encyclopedia of the Press*, 41.

⁶⁵ Gretchen Soderlund, "Sex trafficking, scandal, and the transformation of journalism, 1885-1917." *Sex Trafficking, Scandal, and the Transformation of Journalism, 1885-1917* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 28.

⁶⁶ Martin Conboy, John Steel, and Scott Eldridge, eds., *The Routledge companion to British media history*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 208.

⁶⁷ Gorham, *Maiden Tribute*, 364.

those whose lives are passed in the London Inferno, will do well not to read the Pall Mall Gazette of Monday and the three following days. The story of an actual pilgrimage into a real hell is not pleasant reading, and is not meant to be. It is, however, an authentic record of unimpeachable facts, "abominable, unutterable, and worse than fables yet have feigned or fear conceived." But it is true, and its publication is necessary.⁶⁸

Laden with colorful language, this warning justifies the articles Pall Mall Gazette was about to publish while simultaneously serving as a provocative enticement for curious readers. The following days, the newspaper published articles describing in vivid detail how English girls were part of expansive juvenile prostitution in London and how young girls were being trafficked to continental brothels.⁶⁹

Despite the monumental impact of the "Maiden Tribute", there had already been an increase in awareness of juvenile prostitution in the years before.⁷⁰ Over the years, several versions of the Criminal Law Amendment bill passed in the House of Lords, but never made it passed the House of Commons.⁷¹ Many upper-class men, including those who had seats in Parliament, opposed raising the age of consent and other similar legislation as they believed it could negatively affect themselves or their sons.⁷² It was only when Stead released his "Maiden Tribute" exposé that the public pressure reached a level where Parliament could no longer ignore the issue. The idea that young girls walking the streets of London were being violated by powerful men seemed to incite a reaction among the public which had previously not been seen. Following the "Maiden Tribute" was a period of increased focus on social purity in society in which the NVA and other social purity groups attempted to cleanse the streets of London by shutting down disorderly houses and reforming prostitutes. The movement failed to realize that prostitution was a legitimate financial choice made by girls due to social and economic circumstances which left them few other options.⁷³ The movement's inability to realize that it was not wickedness that caused girls to enter into prostitution meant that they would never achieve great success in their stated mission. No matter what the social purity movement amounted to, the newspaper industry

⁶⁸ William T. Stead, "Notice to our Readers: A Frank Warning", *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 4, 1885.

⁶⁹ Jenny J. Pearce, *Young People and Sexual Exploitation: 'It's not hidden, you just aren't looking'* (Routledge, 2009), 12.

⁷⁰ Gorham, *Maiden Tribute*, 358.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 366.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 376.

was fundamentally changed because of Stead's revelation. 'Loathsome subjects' were clearly of immense interest to the public. Some newspapers embraced this new realm of possibilities, while other more conservative newspapers such as *Times* and the *London Evening Standard* sought to distance themselves from the subject matter.

Chapter 2 – “This Loathsome Subject” in *Times* and the *Standard*

Both the *Times* and the *Standard* report extensively on issues that relate to the purity movement and crimes that are sexual in nature. This takes the form in three primary ways. The first are simple reports on judicial proceedings. These articles are usually written as a summary of the events that transpired at a court. Generally, both newspapers report extensively on all matters of crime. Suicide, robbery, fraud, pickpocketing, and murder are all featured on an almost daily basis. A significant portion of these reports are devoted to “sexual crimes”. Keeping a disorderly house, abducting a child from their parents, and sexual assault are all crimes which newspapers indiscriminately reported on. In these cases, the reporter chooses what information they consider important and would like to pass on to the paper’s readers. Usually, the names of all parties involved, their occupations and age, the charges in question, and the verdict are something all articles will report on without exception. In many cases, the representations found in these articles can appear to be the judges, magistrates, and witnesses. In all cases of reports on court proceedings, the reporter, and the editor of the newspapers have made decisions to include or omit information. As highlighted by a *Times* reporter writing about a sexual assault case, “Two incidents occurred during the trial which are worthy of notice.”⁷⁴ It is in these decisions of omission and inclusion, as well as other markers of discourse, that this type of article begins to reveal the discourses prevailing in newspapers at the time.

Another type of article that features prominently are letters addressed to the editor of the newspapers, usually titled “To the editor” of the newspaper in question. In these articles a range of different opinions are voiced. They can be about any given topic, such as legislature, art, social issues, or more archaically – people trying to reestablish lost connections. These letters to the editor are always curated and chosen by the editors of the newspapers they are addressed to. Although they in and of themselves only represent the original author, taken as a whole, these opinion pieces will reveal patterns of what are considered permissible discourses in a given newspaper, and society at large. Sometimes this can be as transparent as accepting the request to have a notice published, as blatantly put in this tiny article, “We are asked to state that the two women charged at the Thames police-court on Thursday under the Criminal Law Amendment

⁷⁴ *Times*, February 2, 1886.

Act were prosecuted by the National Vigilance Association.”⁷⁵ Letters to the editor can also shed light on prevailing discourses by which people are represented, which issues are given attention and which are not, and how these issues are framed in terms of linguistic choices. A woman writes to the *Standard* complaining about how women lack the opportunity to relieve themselves with grace at English courts. She writes that “Thoroughly respectable women have from time to time to go through this misery and degradation, and to submit to the necessity of asking a constable or a gaoler to conduct them to a place of retirement, which may turn out to be a cell in which half-a-dozen obscene and noisy prostitutes are already shut up.”⁷⁶ Taken alone, this reveals little about newspaper reporting or Victorian society at large. Phrases such as “obscene and noisy prostitutes”, “Thoroughly respectable women”, and “misery and degradation” looked at in combination with other linguistic and editorial choices in the *Standard* can reveal patterns telling of broader themes and discourses.

The final major category of article related to social purity and sexual crime are reports on legislature, annual meetings, statements by public figures and so on. These bear surface-level similarities to reports on court proceedings in that they can appear to simply provide a summary of the actions of other people. However, both newspapers inject commentary and subjective observations interspersed among these summaries. They are not just “passive” relayers of information. Still, most of the time any inferences as to the role of the newspaper in these types of articles are subtle and rely on broader tendencies – such as topics addressed, and the amount of text dedicated to specific types of issues.

Sexual Aversion

The Victorians are famously known for their aversion of any public and even private discussion of sexuality. This resulted in some creative if cumbersome ways of alluding to sexual acts. Some of these phrases are obvious in their intended meaning, being recognizable as words and phrases still commonly in use today. Some of them are so vague as to at times make the reader question exactly what has transpired between the parties mentioned. There are also some terms that have a

⁷⁵ *Times*, April 14, 1888.

⁷⁶ *London Evening Standard*, July 20, 1888.

legal definition and when used refer to specific charges being brought against a defendant. For instance, rape was a serious charge reserved for when physical injury was present during an alleged sexual assault. Even then, the respectability and character of the defendant would dictate whether “rape” or “attempted rape” was the charge regardless of the type or amount of injury the victim suffered.⁷⁷ Indecent assault, another phrase with a legal definition, was defined by one judge as “I cannot lay down the law as to what is or is not an indecent assault beyond saying that it is what all rightminded men, men of sound and wholesome feelings would say was indecent.”⁷⁸ Even when the Victorians based themselves on legal definitions, their aversion to explicitly discussing anything sexual meant that said definitions were almost entirely subjective.

Newspapers made active choices in what to include and what to not include in terms of graphic content. As one reporter put it, “The circumstances of the case were quite unfit for publication, and were of a painful character.”⁷⁹ There was a line of decency that should not be crossed, which reflects not only the fundamental aversion Victorians had to sexuality in itself, but also the concern which arose after the *Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*. One distressed reader wrote in the *Standard* about how “Gems from the *Pall-Mall Gazette* for boys and girls to read” was now a sales pitch commonly heard on streetcorners and wondered “What will be the results of this wholesale dissemination of this literature can hardly be estimated just yet ; but some sensible people are of opinion that the good done by the CLAA will be as nothing against the fearful results of the methods adopted to stir up a fantastic excitement on the subject”⁸⁰ There was a tangible fear that the content in newspapers, especially after the *Maiden Tribute*, could corrupt the pure minds of children and society as a whole.

One of the most characteristic ways the Victorians referred to sexual acts was to use moralistic language. In a case where a man had sexually assaulted dozens of girls in his neighborhood, “there was good reason to believe the Prisoner had corrupted between 15 and 20 others.”⁸¹ What precisely this entails is left unclear, except that the children have been exposed to something which has irreversibly ruined the purity of their minds. The tragedy is not exclusively what the

⁷⁷ Conley, *Unwritten Law*, 94.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷⁹ *Times*, October 31, 1887.

⁸⁰ *London Evening Standard*, August 12, 1885.

⁸¹ *London Evening Standard*, May 12, 1886.

girls suffered and the lasting impact it will have on them both physically and psychologically, but that they have lost the purity which the Victorians treasured. In another case, one of a scandalous nature because the defendant was a Major and thus of respectable character, it was reported that “The deposition of one Witness stated that she saw Defendant commit immoral acts with young girls several times.”⁸² The same language used by social purity groups to refer to prostitution is here used to reference sexual assaults upon girls – the vagueness of the language essentially serving to lump all “improper” sexual acts, regardless of circumstances, into one large group. Another type of sexual crime seldom reported was sodomy. Newspapers rarely touched on this subject, and when it was reported on, it was usually referred to as “unnatural crime”. One of the only instances of this occurring across both newspapers is a short snippet found in the *Times* where a boy, 17 years of age, pleaded “ “Guilty” to an attempt to commit an unnatural crime.”⁸³ “Unnatural crime” is here contrasted to the implied existence of “natural crime”, which must as a consequence include other types of sexual crimes such as rape, indecent assault, keeping disorderly houses and abduction.

While the above examples all illustrate the way Victorians and newspapers used moralistic language to refer to sexual acts, there are also times where the wordage used is vague enough that in and of itself it would not imply that any sexual crime took place. For instance, a man was “charged under the CLAA with a serious offence against a girl between five and six years of age.”⁸⁴ As the CLAA is being referenced, it is more than likely some type of sexual assault which is the “serious offence” he is being charged with. Other examples of vague language that makes it unclear what the precise circumstances of a case are include a case where a man was found in the bedroom of a house with a teenage girl “for the purpose of his having connexion with her.”⁸⁵ Given the context in the newspaper report, there is no doubt about the events that transpired in that bedroom, although the phrasing leaves room for interpretation. Another case, in which a German family immigrated to England and a man was charged with taking a girl from her parents. “It is alleged that soon after she reached this country he induced the girl to leave her mother and to associate with him at hotels and coffee houses in the neighbourhood.”⁸⁶ What

⁸² *London Evening Standard*, January 31, 1888.

⁸³ *Times*, October 29, 1885.

⁸⁴ *London Evening Standard*, April 23, 1888.

⁸⁵ *Times*, December 12, 1885.

⁸⁶ *London Evening Standard*, June 20, 1887.

precisely transpired at these coffee houses and hotels is not directly addressed. Reporting on charges being pressed against the keeper of a disorderly house, a rescue officer of the Reformatory and Refuge Union is reported as saying “he had frequently seen women and men enter and leave together.”⁸⁷ Again, given the context of the article and the charges pressed, the meaning of this phrase is clear. It still goes to show that comparatively innocent phrases were often be used to by newspapers to report on sexual crime without offering clarification and that it was assumed the reader would make the connection as to the precise nature of what was reported on.

When reporting on sexual assault cases, the newspapers usually conceptualized the harm caused to the victim in two ways. The first type of harm caused by sexual assault which concerned the Victorians was the loss of purity and innocence. Girls and women were supposed to wholly ignorant to all sexual matters, and sexual assault could ruin this innocence. The second type of harm they reported on related to whether the victim showed signs of bruising as a result of being restrained or fighting the perpetrator. This type of harm was often a requirement for establishing lack of consent and whether a charge of “rape”, “attempted rape” or “indecent assault” could be pressed against the perpetrator. This conceptualization of harm can often leave certain articles seemingly contradictory from a modern perspective. The *Standard* reports on a schoolmaster who asked a girl, 13 years of age, to join him to pick some apples and pears in the nearby woods. “Upon getting into the wood he asked her to sit down by his side, which she did, and he at once assaulted her.” The schoolmaster gave the girl a small amount of money and then jumped a fence once another man came along. Afterwards, it is noted that “Mrs. Pilgrim stated that a medical man had examined the Complainant, and reported that she had not come to any harm. The prisoner was remanded for a week, bail being refused.”⁸⁸ Despite the fact that the schoolmaster is clearly stated as assaulting the girl, the girl had supposedly not come to any harm. Although this is consistent with the Victorians’ conceptualization of harm as caused by sexual assault, it has the effect of sometimes leaving the nature of events unclear when reporters choose to include some information but omit others.

⁸⁷ *London Evening Standard*, July 27, 1887.

⁸⁸ *London Evening Standard*, August 26, 1887.

As indicated by an article about a sexual assault committed by a soldier against nine-year-old girl, medical examinations were indeed used to confirm cases of sexual assault and were also reported on by newspapers. The girl and the defendant “... were admitted by the female Prisoner, and remained in a bed-room all night. In the morning the male Prisoner gave her a few pence and she returned home.” There is no room for doubt as to what the reporter is insinuating as having transpired – which is confirmed further down in the article where it is stated that “The girl had been examined by Dr. Bagster Phillips, police surgeon, who had come to the conclusion that her statement respecting the proceedings at the lodging-house was true.”⁸⁹ In this case, the specific charges of “feloniously abducting” the girl and also “assaulting” her, the fact that “they remained in a bed-room all night”, and how the police surgeon confirmed the statements of the girl as to the proceedings at the lodging house – all point to the fact that sexual assault took place although this is never explicitly stated.

One of the most frequent types of articles in both the *Times* and the *Standard* are those that report on disorderly houses. These articles are usually highly formulaic in structure and read similarly. They report on the name, age and occupation of the defendant, the charges brought against them and the address of the alleged disorderly house. Sometimes they will include witness testimony or commentary from a magistrate or judge, such as in the *Standard* “ – In passing sentence the Assistant Judge said – Cecilia Palmer, you made your house a scandalous nuisance and a source of intolerable annoyance to your neighbors.”⁹⁰ Or as in the *Times* “... it was one of the worst cases which he had been called upon to prosecute, and there were some features of a peculiar character which it was his duty to bring before the Court.”⁹¹ In another article in the *Times*, the magistrate is quoted as saying “... I have made it my business to go over some of these places, and I say that the sooner they are put down the better. In my humble judgment they are about as unwholesome and unhealthy, as well as dangerous to the community, as can well be. There are places among them where the police dare not enter, and where the criminals hides all day long.”⁹² Generally, this type of commentary is not frequently included in newspaper articles and for the most part they only report on the aforementioned formal details

⁸⁹ *London Evening Standard*, April 8, 1886.

⁹⁰ *London Evening Standard*, December 23, 1886.

⁹¹ *Times*, November 18, 1886.

⁹² *Times*, October 3, 1888.

related to the case. When the two newspapers choose to report beyond these details, it is usually connected to some other extraordinary details in relation to the house.

So far, the examples of aversion to addressing sexual subjects directly do not infringe on the article's ability to convey the intended message, even if it creates some ambiguity. There are other cases where this ambiguous language does leave room for doubt as to what the newspapers are actually reporting on. In a case where a female servant was ultimately charged with making numerous false accusations of sexual assault against men, the police surgeon "found certain bruises which indicated that she had been severely ill-treated, though there were no evidences of an outrage of a criminal nature."⁹³ There is an implicit distinction made between an outrage of criminal nature, and what would be a "normal outrage" in the phrasing being used. This lack of clarity as to what constitutes sufficient evidence as to indicate violence, and then particularly sexual violence, can sometimes severely impede the intended meaning in the reports of newspapers. A four-year-old girl was picked up by a stranger on the street and taken to a lodging house. In the newspapers, it is reported that "No harm had occurred to the girl whilst she was with him. A medical examination of the child was made by Dr. Farr, divisional surgeon, who stated that there were no marks of violence of any kind on her, but she appeared very drowsy, as if she had been supplied with beer."⁹⁴ However, the man was charged with being in unlawful possession of a female child, depriving her parents of custody, and unlawfully assaulting her. There is a seeming unreconcilable contradiction from a modern perspective in stating that the man unlawfully assaulted her, forced her to drink beer, and in witnesses stating that they heard the girl cry – and then the newspaper article reporting that "no harm had occurred to the girl whilst she was with him".

There was little quantifiable difference in the results I received when I searched the two archives for articles using terms related to sexual crimes. Generally, the *Times* appears to be more consistent in primarily using the terms "indecent assault" or variations thereof, and "rape". In cases where the crimes were not considered assault, or the girl was over 16 but below 18 years old, the newspapers generally preferred using phrases such as "improper relations", "seducing", "living together as man and wife". Crimes which related to prostitution usually used phrases

⁹³ *London Evening Standard*, February 20, 1886.

⁹⁴ *London Evening Standard*, August 17, 1886.

based around the word “disorderly”, where a disorderly house is understood to be a place where prostitutes and their customers frequent; a disorderly woman is a prostitute; and disorderly conduct is behavior associated with prostitutes – such as soliciting. This was consistent across both newspapers which reported extensively on cases related to disorderly houses. Sodomy, buggery, syphilis, venereal diseases in general – were all considered taboo to the extent that they were never almost never reported on. *Times* had a few articles referring to unnatural crime – the *Standard* had none in the period in question.

Sensationalism

When newspapers reported on crime, they generally provided all details they thought were relevant to the case. Most reports were concise and concerned themselves mostly with the names, ages, occupations, and addresses of the defendant and prosecutrix. They also provided information such as the name of the magistrate or the judge and what charges were being pressed or considered in the case. “William Johnson, 60, no home, labourer, was charged on remand with attempting to commit a criminal assault on Maud Mary Dyer, a girl under the age of 13 (twelve last February), in a field at Mill-lane, Hampstead.”⁹⁵ This following sentence is a typical opening passage in most reports on court proceedings, regardless of the nature of the crime. Although newspapers might choose to not report on something at all, such as sodomy – when a crime first is reported on, there is no discernible pattern in whether the newspaper choose to publish the name, address or age of the parties involved in the case. Even when the victim is a child of five or ten years old their information is still provided. Where there is variation is in the extent to which newspapers reported on sensationalist details of the crime that took place. In reporting on suicide, for instance, newspapers in the period would often provide detailed descriptions of how the victim took their own life and what the corpse of the diseased looked like when found. The *Maiden Tribute* showed that there was a market for these kinds of stories as they related to sexual crime.

⁹⁵ *London Evening Standard*, July 1, 1886.

In 1887, the *Times* wrote about the attempted murder on a wife by her husband. After her husband threatened to murder her, “She had for fear of him bolted the street door, but he got in by the window and struck and knocked her about. She rushed out into Lower-park-road followed by the prisoner, who seized her by her hair and dragged her to the pavement. He dashed her head several times on the stone, and had it not been for the assistance coming up she would have been severely injured.”⁹⁶ Clearly, the *Times* is not averse to describe the gritty details of “regular violence”. In this case, “Two witnesses were called and proved the assault in the street. Mr. Bison said the prisoner wanted a little taming, and sentenced him to two months’ hard labour.”

Although the *Standard* produces more sensationalist details when reporting on sexual crime than the *Times*, they are generally more concise than what would be expected from other types of crime. The details are always focused on circumstances that lead up to or are focused on the aftermath of the sexual crime itself. For instance, the *Standard* reported on an older man who attempted to assault a girl, “He lay down, and she lay down at some distance from him. He dragged her to him, and she screamed. He then tied a handkerchief and she could see that he had a knife in his hand.”⁹⁷ There is no lack of visceral details in this passage. In a similar vein, the *Times* writes that “She did not submit to the prisoner quietly, but cried to be allowed to go home.”⁹⁸ This testimony is an instrumental part of the court proceedings and in establishing guilt on the part of the perpetrator. Proving a lack of consent often required the victim to have sufficiently resisted the perpetrator, either in terms of physically fighting back or crying out for help. As such, the newspapers choosing to report on these details can be seen as simply reflecting their relevance for the eventual verdict.

The *Standard* and *Times* avoid using aggrandizing language in their articles. Across the hundreds of articles I read, there are only a handful of times when the newspapers themselves explicitly inserted adjectives or phrases to make a moral judgement or take a stance on a matter they reported on. The *Standard* had a short notice on how “Moses Turner was convicted under the most revolting circumstances of an assault upon an imbecile girl named Ellen Avans. – He was sentenced to five years’ penal servitude.”⁹⁹ There are many cases where the newspapers report

⁹⁶ *Times*, April 27, 1887.

⁹⁷ *London Evening Standard*, July 1, 1886.

⁹⁸ *Times*, May 27, 1886.

⁹⁹ *London Evening Standard*, September 18, 1886.

on other people using similar language to this, but it is exceedingly rare that they explicitly do so themselves. Similarly, in a case where a 14 year old girl accused a 21 year old married man of attempting to have carnal knowledge of her, the *Times* writes “The evidence of the girl, and of another girl, who was called to corroborate her, disclosed a most shocking state of facts, and there could be no doubt the girl was a consenting party to whatever occurred, if anything did.”¹⁰⁰ One of the only times a reporter chooses to describe a witness’s testimony as “shocking” is when it reveals that the accusation against the man might be false. Both the *Times* and the *Standard* do on numerous occasions show a fear that the CLAA will enable girls and women to ruin the lives of respectable men, something which this comment ties into.

Respectability

The most obvious way in which the idea of respectability reveals itself is by reporters directly commenting on it. It is one of the only traits, outside of age and occupation which is included as a matter of procedure, which is deliberately included in the newspaper articles. In several sexual assault cases, the respectability of the victim is remarked upon when the verdict of the case is in their favor. In two cases of sexual assault, the victim is described in terms of their respectability, “Isabella Look, a well-dressed young woman, 21 years of age.”¹⁰¹ “The Complainant is a domestic servant, 24 years of age, and was described as a respectable girl, bearing a very good character.”¹⁰² The latter also includes a favorable description of the defendant, but this is contingent on his status as a medical man. Yet another article also introduces the victim in terms of her respectability although it provides no context as to how this judgement was made. “The Prosecutrix was a very respectable young lady named Bull, and on the day the assault was committed she was at Eltham and got into an empty second-class carriage. Just as the train was about to start the Defendant jumped into the carriage and took a seat opposite her. She moved to the other end of the carriage, but the Prisoner subsequently attacked her, and behaved in a most disgraceful manner.”¹⁰³ In this case there is doubt as to where the newspaper chooses to put the

¹⁰⁰ *Times*, October 29, 1885.

¹⁰¹ *Times*, July 5, 1887.

¹⁰² *London Evening Standard*, May 24, 1887.

¹⁰³ *London Evening Standard*, September 21, 1885.

blame. The respectability of the young lady is directly contrasted with the disgracefulness of the defendant. In a case where several children were taken from school due to the mistaken belief that they lived in a disorderly house, the reporter makes an explicit comment on the appearance of their parents, “the parents of the children (three respectably dressed persons).”¹⁰⁴ Again, there is a deliberate choice to inform the reader of the respectability of the people involved in the case since it also ties into the verdict being in their favor.

The newspapers also frequently choose to include commentary from other people as it relates to respectability. The arrest of Miss Cass, a controversial and contentious case in which a young woman was accused of being a prostitute by a police officer, sparked much commentary on the topic of respectability in the summer of 1887. A number of people took issue with the ease at which a police officer could accuse a woman of being a prostitute and then detain her. One commenter noted that “Miss Cass presented a respectable appearance, but not more so than in the case of many unfortunates.”¹⁰⁵ Another person wrote that “... the young woman was in a likely place after nightfall. IT is hard that innocent young women may not walk there at such a time without being suspected, but till the world is better they cannot.”¹⁰⁶ Both commenters seem to agree that Miss Cass had shown a lack of respectability in her choices. One, by not adequately distancing herself from prostitutes in her appearance. The other noting that by being in a “likely place”, she willingly put herself in a position where she could be mistaken for a prostitute.

Witness testimony or a judge’s commentary on the respectability of a defendant is another recurring aspect in newspaper articles on sexual crime. In fact, respectability is one of the aspects they choose to include most frequently in relation to court proceedings. In regard to a man who was charged with keeping a disorderly house, the *Standard* writes that “Mr. Smith is a gentleman of responsible and respectable position. Supposing he comes here and swears that the key of the house was given him on the 9th of October, will you still swear that you saw the Prisoner there on the 14th?”¹⁰⁷ The word of a witness as respectable as Mr. Smith obviously carries more weight in the case – as to warrant someone to reconsider their statement. In the case of two men being charged with rape on a married woman, the *Times* notes that “Upon cross-examination the

¹⁰⁴ *London Evening Standard*, September 14, 1885.

¹⁰⁵ *London Evening Standard*, July 12, 1887.

¹⁰⁶ *Times*, July 8, 1887.

¹⁰⁷ *London Evening Standard*, November 18, 1886.

prosecutrix revealed herself to be what the learned Judge described as an “abandoned woman”.¹⁰⁸ The woman’s status as an abandoned woman, among other things, discredits the charges she brought against the two men. Attests to a person’s character were strengthened if they were also given by someone who had a respectable position themselves. *Times* writes about “William Salisbury, 75, labourer, was charged with having attempted to have carnal knowledge of his granddaughter, a little child aged four years and eight months ...” and then reports how “The Superintendent of Police at Bridgewater said he had known the prisoner for over 40 years, and had never known anything against him.”¹⁰⁹ Among the details the *Times* chooses to divulge in this article, the testimony on behalf of the Superintendent of Police at Bridgewater is considered particularly worthwhile. These examples highlight how respectability is a recurring theme in relation to articles on sexual crime and how both the *Standard* and the *Times* play into the notion that respectability has direct implications for whether a person can be guilty or not of said crimes.

Respectability was also tied to class in Victorian society. This connection was often commented on in opinion pieces expressing fear of the spreading of “social evil”. “I desire to call the attention of your readers to a moral epidemic, little observed by the public, which is spreading with alarming rapidity among the rising generation, mostly in the lower classes in the metropolis and other large towns, polluting their purity and honour, and leading in innumerable instances to their ruin in body and soul.”¹¹⁰ This is how the National Vigilance Association appeals to the readers of the *Times*, pleading for their support in the fight for social purity. The “great moral evil” which they were so concerned with is tied directly to the lower classes and ruins their respectability. In another opinion piece in the *Times*, it is written that “The population in such localities being of the very worst character, surely the first duty of the State is to prevent the increase of it. And this can only be done by withdrawing from such a criminal and vitiated atmosphere the neglected children, of whom there are hundreds in every such locality. Those children are subjected from their very birth to the worst possible influences of drunken, profligate, or criminal parents, and what training can they possibly receive from convicts or

¹⁰⁸ *Times*, November 4, 1887.

¹⁰⁹ *Times*, October 29, 1885.

¹¹⁰ *Times*, August 28, 1888.

prostitutes?”¹¹¹ Here the message is the same – the slums of large cities house swathes of the worst types of people who will pollute and ruin Britain if not dealt with. The latter article believes that children must be forcibly taken from their criminal parents so that they can be brought up within the ideology of social purity. There is a notable difference in the amount of opinion pieces that equate the lower classes and moral evil between *Times* and the *Standard*. *Times* has numerous such opinion pieces, starting from 1885 all way up to 1888.¹¹² I have not found any equivalent article in the *Standard* from the period. The *Standard* does reinforce the same ideas by commenting on respectability and connecting it to factors linked to class, such as in the opinion piece describing how respectable women had to relieve themselves next to obscene prostitutes. Both *Times* and *Standard* clearly participants in the same discourse despite *Times* more frequently allowing the voices of social purists to be heard.

Domesticity: Masculinity and Femininity

Proving that a person had a respectable character was a common way to build a case in court. Likewise, proving that a person lacked a respectable character by focusing on aspects related to domesticity was another way to build a case. For women, this often meant pointing out how their behavior did not comply with idealized gender roles at the time. For instance, in one case the defense argues that because a woman was sexually assaulted as a child, her “her moral condition” had suffered which should be a factor of leniency in her favor.¹¹³ The same could be applied to men. A mother had lost contact with her 17-year-old girl and used the Criminal Law Amendment Act to get a warrant to search a house where she suspected her daughter resided. The daughter in question wanted to marry a slightly older man and run away to Florida – someone the mother did not approve of. The case amounted to whether the mother had proper reason to believe her daughter were held at the premises for an immoral purpose. In the article, the man who pressed charges arguing the warrant was unwarranted is described as: “the Plaintiff exhibited himself in a most pitiable condition, not only as a clergyman, but as a man and a father.

¹¹¹ *Times*, September 26, 1888.

¹¹² *Times*, October 25, 1885; *Times*, July 11, 1885; *Times*, October 3, 1888; *Times*, July 8, 1887.

¹¹³ *London Evening Standard*, September 18, 1885.

He had acted with the most singular weakness and want of sense”¹¹⁴ While women were more commonly judged on their adherence to gender roles, this passage shows that men could also be judged negatively on their behavior in relation to gender roles and expectations tied to these roles.

One of the most frequent ways domesticity is alluded to in newspaper articles is by talking about women and girls’ lack of ignorance and innocence. In this following case, the *Standard* reports on a married quartermaster who got involved with a 17-year-old girl and intended to run away with her to escape numerous debts he had accrued over the years. The article paraphrases the magistrate presiding in the case as saying, the “Prisoner was the youngest quartermaster in the service, with every hope of promotion. It was pure infatuation on his part. He asserted that they (PARENTS) had trained the girl to be immoral. They had encouraged her in the intimacy with this man.”¹¹⁵ Despite the Criminal Law Amendment Act clearly implicating him in the abduction of a minor, the prisoner is shown leniency in the face of an “immoral girl”. This reasoning is evident in how the girl shows a lack of innocence exemplified in this sentence, “Mr Mowll went on to refer to the cool manner in which the girl gave her evidence and answered questions which should bring a blush to the face of any woman.” The girl was not adequately embarrassed when talking about improper topics – she was failing to comply to gender roles as dictated by the ideology of domesticity. Indeed, both *Times* and the *Standard* would often include testimony which related to these types of expectations. In the case of a woman who was allegedly sexually assaulted, the newspapers notes that “... questions were put to her with a view of showing that on the day after the offence was committed she had been guilty of certain improprieties which might have accounted for the appearances deposed to by the medical man”¹¹⁶ The injuries which were put forth as evidence of the assault could just as well be explained by other improprieties the girl was engaged in.

As soon as a woman showed failure to comply to these standards – assumptions were made about the rest of her character. “Since last week, when the case first was heard, inquiries have been made which show that the girl’s character is not a good one. Her mother stated that she had

¹¹⁴ *London Evening Standard*, June 25, 1886.

¹¹⁵ *London Evening Standard*, May 12, 1887.

¹¹⁶ *Times*, May 18, 1886.

had various situations as a servant, but had not kept any of them.”¹¹⁷ Both *Times* and the *Standard* are consistent in that they generally frame accusations of sexual assault with the adjective “alleged” or phrase themselves in other manners to signify the uncertainty related to the accuracy of the charges reported on. In this case, the *Standard* makes no attempt to question the narrative pushed by the magistrate in the case. The girl’s character is simply accepted as being not a good one, and as happens in other cases, this has clear implications for whether the girl will ultimately be believed or not. “Mr Bridge said such charges could only be sustained where the Prosecutrix was a truthful person. In this case the girl could not be believed, and he therefore discharged the Prisoner.” Sexual assault was treated as a very serious charge by the justice system and in the face of a victim who did not fit the expected image of a sexual assault victim the justice system saw itself unwilling to consider other types of evidence.

Social Purity and Vigilance Associations

The way both the *Standard* and *Times* report on sexual crime and its related issues has several similarities to the beliefs the social purity movement had at the time. Despite this, the *Standard* and *Times* diverge noticeably in the extent to which they give representation to these organizations in their newspapers. *Times*, for instance, publishes several opinion pieces on behalf of various social purity groups in the period in question.¹¹⁸ A number of these primarily address comment on the connection between immorality and the lower classes and propose various solutions to fix these issues. Some of them call attention to the work being done by vigilantes and the obstacles they faced. In relation to the Industrial Schools Amendment Act and the “rights of parents”, the *Standard* publishes one of the few articles on behalf of vigilantes, “The obstacles in the way of putting the Industrial Schools Amendment Act in operation are very great, and when augmented by the opposition of Magistrates are well nigh insuperable.”¹¹⁹ They take issue with the difficulty they face in removing children from what they call improper guardianship –

¹¹⁷ *London Evening Standard*, August 25, 1888.

¹¹⁸ *Times*, December 25, 1885; *Times*, April 14, 1888; *Times*, August 28, 1888; *Times*, September 29, 1888; *Times*, October 8, 1888.

¹¹⁹ *London Evening Standard*, September 15, 1885.

such as parents who keep their children in disorderly houses - and how magistrates refuse to listen to their evidence. Other than this, the *Standard* also includes an opinion piece which appears critical to what vigilantism can become if taken to the extreme. The author writes how some of their friends have been given papers and leaflets addressed to unfortunates despite them being respectable people. “A clerical friend on his way to dine has pressed upon his acceptance two of these papers, one addressed to habitual drunkards and the other to immoral men”¹²⁰ The article continues with another example, “A few days since a lady friend of mine, not young looking, and quietly dressed, was waiting on the platform of one of our large stations. Presently a man advanced, stared rudely in her face, and thrust between her hand and the umbrella she was carrying a leaflet entitled, “Come to the Penitentiary,” and containing the story of a reformed prostitute.” This example of an article taking a critical stance as to the nature of vigilantism, even if it is directed at its most extreme variation, is a rare happening which there I found only case of in the *Standard*, and none in the *Times*.

Another way newspapers can increase the representation of a particular group in society is by choosing to report on the actions of that group. *Times* provides recaps of the annual meetings of various vigilance associations, such as the Central Vigilance Association and the National Vigilance Association – the *Standard* does not report on this at all. One of the earlier reports of this kind *Times* does is in the immediate aftermath of the passing of the CLAA. They report on the general proceedings of the NVA’s meeting – noting people in attendance, different resolutions that were put up for vote, and which were passed. There is one comment on the level of attendance at the meeting, a type of comment that is recurring for all the reports *Times* does on the meetings of the vigilance associations. “At the public meeting, convened for the evening, and again held in the great hall, the attendance was not so large as at either of the preceding meetings, and the hall was only about one-fourth filled.”¹²¹ The willingness to report on low attendance signifies that *Times* at the very least does not deliberately push the agenda of said associations. The *Times* does uncritically publish the claims of these associations in their reports of the meetings, “The report did not represent one tithe of the work which the zealous members of the six sub-committees had done, and the diligence and zeal with which they had devoted

¹²⁰ *London Evening Standard*, October 13, 1885.

¹²¹ *Times*, August 22, 1885.

themselves to their delicate and difficult work was deserving of every praise.”¹²² They also spend a considerable portion of the articles publishing the names of important attendees and non-attendees of the meeting, such as with the Central Vigilance Association, “Letters of apology for non-attendance and of sympathy with the object of the institution were received from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of Durham and Truro ...”¹²³ When the *Times* reports on the annual meeting of the NVA in 1887, they continue this trend by again publishing the names of a number of important people in attendance, and then uncritically reporting the organization’s own claims as to their success, “The society had been most successful in the suppression of the foreign traffic in girls.”¹²⁴ Despite the fact that they do comment on unflattering aspects of the meetings such as the relative lack of attendance, the *Times* allow the organizations to make claims that go unquestioned – despite the fact that they have shown their willingness to make comments on the claims made by important people in other instances.

Legal Commentary

Before beginning a court session, the presiding judge exclaims “I am sorry to observe that there are several charges of indecent assault upon female children of tender age. I draw your attention particularly to the case of Harry Rosewell, against whom there are three distinct complaints as to which disproving evidence on behalf of the Defendant was given before the committing Magistrate. Charges of this kind have always to be dealt with very carefully, and now more than ever they will need the closest investigation. There has lately been a flood of obscene literature, the suggestive and corrupting influence of which must have been felt in every court and lane and alley in the metropolis, so industriously has it been brought within the reach of the poorest class of the population.”¹²⁵ These are the words said to a Grand Jury before they are to consider several charges related to sexual assault. The Criminal Law Amendment Bill had recently been passed and there was genuine fear that it could lead to respectable men being punished for crimes they were either not guilty of, or crimes that any man could find themselves guilty of if they

¹²² *Times*, November 17, 1886.

¹²³ *Times*, October 13, 1885.

¹²⁴ *Times*, November 10, 1887.

¹²⁵ *London Evening Standard*, August 25, 1885.

were just unlucky. This fear was directed at two primary aspects of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. First, girls and women could falsify charges of sexual assault against any respectable man and ruin his character with no danger to themselves. The passage quoted above is concerned with this aspect and warns the Grand Jury to take it into consideration. Secondly, there was a fear that a man could sleep with a girl he thought was of legal age and be punished for it if it was later revealed she was not. In regards to the first fear, the quote continues “Certainly they have now become common knowledge for young and old alike, and, without pausing to inquire if they be presentments of fact or fiction, or questioning for a moment the good intentions of those who designed and painted them, it were as idle to expect that they will not injuriously affect the minds of thousands of children of both sexes before whom they have been exhibited, as to hope that people can permanently breathe a foul and vitiated atmosphere without injury to bodily health.” The assistant judge addressing the jury brings attention to how the lower classes consumes obscene literature and how it is likely that this will ruin their moral health akin to how polluted air will ruin someone’s physical health. He concludes, “You will carefully consider the evidence in all these cases of criminal assault, and return each bill for trial if you think there is any foundation for charge, but not otherwise.” The implication is clear. Because the lower classes have had their moral character ruined by consuming the type of literature outlined above, they should not be blindly believed in cases of sexual assault if this could ruin a respectable man’s reputation.

Both the *Standard* and *Times* are involved in circulating these concerns. Most emphatically by publishing opinion pieces that criticize numerous parts of the CLAA. As a whole, the *Times* publish more opinion pieces related to social purity than the *Standard* does, but both newspapers are plainly involved in questioning these aspects of the CLAA regardless. Right before the CLAA is passed, the *Times* publishes an article commenting on the contents of a draft of the bill. In this article, representing the newspaper’s own stance, they applaud the bill for its intentions in protecting women and girls. However, this praise is accompanied by concern, “The danger is that, under the stimulus of praiseworthy feelings, there may be enacted laws which will do at least as much evil as they cure, which will be used as instruments of extortion, and which will be so stringent that they will not be put in force... .”¹²⁶ The *Times* goes on to note their concern that

¹²⁶ *Times*, July 11, 1885.

“the characters of innocent people would be injured”, or how putting the age consent too high at 16 instead of 15, would go beyond public opinion and consequently mean it would not be enforced. They make no comment on the bill’s references to gross indecency between two consenting men. In its conclusion, the article cautions its readers about being too optimistic with the bill fixing the moral ailments of British society. “Only by moral agencies slowly operating, by an increased sense of the value of purity in man and woman, by preventing overcrowding and its demoralizing concomitants, and by trying to keep alive even in poverty a sense of honest pride, which if not exactly virtue, is akin to it, is it possible to contend with an evil which seems to grow mightier, more conspicuous, and less ashamed.” The *Times* concludes its commentary by applauding the bill for giving the judicial systems the tools it needs to punish sexual crimes, especially as it relates to young girls. Yes, the *Times* says, girls and women do need better protection under the law. But make no mistake, the root of the issue lies not with respectable men and they should not be made to carry the brunt of the responsibility in remedying the issue. It is the problems mostly associated with lower classes that is at the core of the issue and it is only in the lower classes that social evil can be fixed.

The day after, the *Times* publish another article where they yet again comment on the overarching issues surrounding the passing of the CLAA.¹²⁷ They explicitly state that “It is time that public discussion of this loathsome subject should cease.” The *Times* believes that “The purity of society is best promoted by individual purity of heart and mind, of thought and language. By the publication and discussion of obscene and disgusting details it can only be hopelessly retarded, and in my cases irretrievably destroyed. Already infinitely more evil has been done than the most sanguine of social reformers can hope to see cured by the passing of the Bill. Men never were made virtuous by Act of Parliament and never will be. But many an innocent mind has been corrupted by knowledge which it never need have acquired, and depraved by revelations of vice, of which in happier circumstances it would have never as much as dreamt.” This line of reasoning is frequently present in the discourse surrounding purity in Victorian society. Exposure to vice and immorality through obscene literature, or even through being sexually assaulted, can corrupt the minds of the young. The *Times* acknowledges that these issues do exist, but disagree that the way to achieve the goals of social purity is through

¹²⁷ *Times*, August 11, 1885.

legislation. They argue, “Individual effort and individual example are the first and indispensable conditions of all permanent improvement ; but much may be done by the association in “ Vigilance Committees “ of men who know and can trust each other.” Nowhere is the *Times* stance on social purity and sexual crime stated as overtly as in this article. The *Times* claims to agree with the sentiments underpinning the CLAA, in that girls and women must be protected – but disagree that legislation is going to have a desirable effect.

The *Times* continue to indirectly comment on the CLAA by reiterating statements and opinions made by others that are equivalent in nature to that described above. For instance, in a case where a 13 year old girl was sexually assaulted by her neighbor, “His Lordship, in summing up to the jury, pointed out how this case illustrated the fear which had been upon the minds of many that this Act, which undoubtedly was a most salutary one, might be used for the purposes of extortion, and the discussion which had been raised upon it might suggest to females of impure mind to bring unfounded charges.”¹²⁸ The parents of the girl, upon learning that she was sexually assaulted, chose to extort the man in question instead of going directly to the authorities. This was clearly meant to serve as an example, as the man charged with assault had admitted to the wrongdoing, although he did not admit to the specific charges brought against him – the judge even stating that “he had done very wrong.” The *Times* makes no attempt to comment on the case beyond choosing to quote and focus on specific aspects – such as the judge’s commentary. In the same vein as above, the *Times* publishes an opinion piece focused on girls and “the weapon each one of these holds, for they could effectually get any ordinary man or boy into real and serious trouble without any certain risk to themselves.”¹²⁹ The author of the article fears that “girls have it in their power to lay themselves out for exciting the passions, perhaps of some wretched boy much younger than themselves, and after succeeding they have only to hand him over to the assizes to be flogged or imprisoned.” The case which prompted the author to write this piece was one in which two girls under the age of 13 were sexually assaulted by seven boys. The author claims that the girls were consenting parties and equally to blame for the events that transpired as the boys involved. The belief that women who were victims of sexual assault

¹²⁸ *Times*, November 7, 1885.

¹²⁹ *Times*, November 3, 1887.

often were complicit in what happened, and that with the CLAA they could abuse the new bill to have innocent men charged is present in numerous articles after the bill was passed.

After the CLAA was passed, cases of sexual assault were dependent on two primary factors if a conviction was to be secured. The first one was a lack of consent on the part of the woman. As established earlier, consent was contingent on the woman adequately resisting the assault. Either by yelling out for help, crying, or fighting off the man himself – and those acquiring bruises to prove that the events in question actually transpired. If this could not be established, as in the case of Isabella Look, a 21-year-old woman, the case could easily crumble. “The defence, as supported by several witnesses from publichouses, was that the prisoners and other men from the Meat Market met the prosecutrix early in the morning, and after drinking with her at Smithfield, the prisoners and another man accompanied her to Highgate by train, and whatever happened was by her consent. The prisoners were discharged.”¹³⁰ Isabella had spent her day drinking in the company of the two men, and due to having done this, whatever transpired later on was likely to have been consented to – in the eyes of the court. The other factor that was important in sexual assault cases was the age of the victim. It was already a felony to sleep with a girl under the age of 13. The CLAA had made it a misdemeanor to sleep with a girl between the ages of 13 and 16. Before this, it was already a misdemeanor to sleep with a girl between the age of 12 and 13, and a felony to sleep with a girl under the age of 12 – as prescribed by the Offences Against the Persons Act 1875.¹³¹ Despite the law making it illegal to sleep with a girl under the age of 16 regardless of consent, newspapers did occasionally comment on consent being present. “When she was only fourteen the Prisoner seduced her, and although she was a consenting party this did not make any difference, as the law made it an offence for a man to have improper relations with a girl who was under 16.”¹³² In this case, the *Standard* goes as far as to remind its readers of the meaning of the CLAA in relation to a case like this. When the *Times* reported on the sexual assault committed by seven boys against two girls under the age of 13, they make the following statement, “The occurrence was stated to have taken place at Uxbridge, but with the girls’ consent.”¹³³ This case is unique in that the seven boys could not be charged with a felony due to

¹³⁰ *Times*, July 5, 1887.

¹³¹ Offences against the Person Act 1875 (38 & 39 Vict. c. 94), *An Act to amend the Law relating to Offences against the Person* (1875).

¹³² *London Evening Standard*, May 10, 1886.

¹³³ *Times*, October 31, 1887.

their age, and the only punishment they received was flogging. Despite this, the *Times* chooses to comment on consent being allegedly present as it relates to a case involving girls under the age of 13 – showing that it was permissible at the time to comment on children’s ability to consent.

In cases where the charges brought against the man depended on the age of the girl, newspaper articles are singularly focused on how old the girl appears physically. “... she appeared to be a well-grown girl, and anyone who saw her would readily have come to the conclusion that she was over sixteen. – The Jury, upon seeing the girl, at once came to this conclusion, and returned a verdict of Not Guilty, without hearing any evidence.”¹³⁴ The reporter is essentially saying that anyone could have made the same mistake as the man charged with assault because of the girl’s appearance. The reporter makes no references to other factors that could indicate the girl’s age beyond her physical appearance. “In opening the case for the prosecution Mr. Stubbins said it would be for the magistrates to decide whether or not Mr. Brockington had good cause to believe that the Prosecutrix was under eighteen years of age. Upon this point the case broke down, as when the young lady appeared in the witness-box the Bench arrived at the conclusion that the Defendant had reasonable ground to believe that the girl was older than was the case.”¹³⁵ The explicitly CLAA makes it illegal to sleep with a girl under the age of 16. Despite this, neither the courts nor the newspapers reporting on cases related to this matter seem to be of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the man to establish the age of the girl. There are cases where a magistrate points out how the man in question would beyond doubt know the age of the girl, such as when they co-inhabit. In these cases, the former defense falls short. However, when this is not the case, it is never mentioned how any other factor which could be an indication of age on the part of the girl should have made the man question the sexual encounter initiated.

Another aspect that receives considerable attention in the *Times* is commentary on legal abnormalities – particularly in relation to the Criminal Law Amendment Act. While the *Standard* often references the CLAA by noting that the charges in question are related to the Act, they do not include commentary on the Act itself to the extent that the *Times* does. If the *Times* first includes this sort of legal commentary on behalf of a magistrate or judge, it can often amount to a third or half of the entire article. A few months after the CLAA is passed, one article on sexual

¹³⁴ *London Evening Standard*, June 5, 1886.

¹³⁵ *London Evening Standard*, January 23, 1888.

assault devotes half its space to talking about how good it is that the CLAA was amended so that prisoners can testify on their own behalf without being charged with perjury.¹³⁶ Two years later, the *Times* quotes a judge criticizing the CLAA for being carelessly drafted, “The effect of the 20th section was that if a man was charged with a rape or with an indecent assault he might give evidence on his own behalf, but if he were charged with an attempt to rape he could not do so.”¹³⁷ Another article includes a long debate on whether “The sixth section applied to any one knowingly suffered a girl to be in the house for the purpose.”¹³⁸ The participants of this debate are particularly concerned with the exact meaning of “knowingly suffered” and “the purpose” and if this meant that a mother who let her daughter sleep with a man could be charged with keeping a disorderly house. In another case where the perpetrator was a minor, the judge states how “He hoped that before long some Act would be passed enabling a judge to order a boy to be whipped and be kept a few days in prison as it would be much better than a long term of imprisonment.”¹³⁹

The *Standard* does not include commentary critical to the CLAA to the same extent that the *Times*. They do at times comment on abnormalities in court proceedings when they are present, such as in a case of sexual assault where a third of the text is devoted to talking about how the prosecution failed to correctly apply for funds from the treasury.¹⁴⁰ In another case, they write about a man who was “charged under the CLAA with a serious offence against a girl between five and six years of age.”¹⁴¹ The article continues, “The girl’s evidence was received, but not on oath, as she was incapable of understanding the nature of an oath.” The *Standard* reports on how the man could be charged for a less serious offense that did not rely on the girl’s evidence being provided under oath. Outside of these two incidents, the *Standard* does not comment as explicitly on the legal minutia surrounding the Criminal Law Amendment Act in the way the *Times* does.

¹³⁶ *Times*, October 29, 1885.

¹³⁷ *Times*, November 10, 1887.

¹³⁸ *Times*, December 12, 1885.

¹³⁹ *Times*, June 8, 1886.

¹⁴⁰ *London Evening Standard*, April 8, 1886.

¹⁴¹ *London Evening Standard*, April 23, 1888.

Chapter 3 – A Lens into Victorian Society

Similarities and Differences between *Times* and the *Standard*

The *Times* and the *Standard* share numerous traits in their discourses on sexual crime and social purity. One such trait is their tendency to avoid explicit depictions and discussions of topics that relate to sexuality. Both newspapers have released statements to the effect of acknowledging newspapers' role in regulating sexuality. They also seem to agree that this is a role respectable newspapers should strive to uphold. When *Times* and the *Standard* report on instances of sexual crime, and particularly sexual assault, this aversion to discussing topics related to sex manifests itself by using a range of different words and phrases to describe the events that took place during the alleged crime. When the articles report on sexual crimes they almost always include the charges that are relevant to the case. "Rape", "indecent assault", "keeping a disorderly house" are common recurring phrases used to describe the criminal charges in question. *Times* and the *Standard* are not consistent in their usage of these terms however and they will sometimes simply write "assault" without clarifying the context of what type of assault occurred. Sometimes this results in the intended meaning of an article becoming obfuscated. Their desire to not discussing aspects of sex publicly directly impedes their ability to accurately report on current events.

The fact that the newspapers also indulge in sensationalism reveals that it is not out of a desire to hide the topic altogether or show respect to the parties involved that motivates this obfuscation. Both newspapers use provocative headlines, colorful language and lengthy descriptions to lure the readers into reading their articles. This is consistent with how articles on other types of crime or events are written at the time. However, with sexual crime *Times* has stated explicitly – and the *Standard* implicitly – their desire for "public discussions on this loathsome subject" to end and this type of sensationalism seems to run contrary to those stated goals. Both newspapers show an aversion to discussing sex, an understanding of their own role in regulating sexuality – but still indulge in some of the behaviors that they criticize their competitors for. This dualism is similar of existing conceptualizations of Victorian sexuality in which it is understood to be multifaceted and not merely a completely repressed topic.

In reporting on sexual crime and social purity, aspects of respectability are factors that are brought up frequently. Newspapers comment on the occupation, appearance and social standing of a person. This is sometimes done by paraphrasing witnesses, judges or magistrates in a case – and sometimes by the reporter including their own observations in the article. The newspapers are thus instrumental in maintaining respectability as an essential quality people are to be judged on. Through several opinion pieces, mainly in *Times*, respectability is also intrinsically tied to class notions that existed at the time. Respectability represents virtues such as purity, cleanliness, and restraint which were associated with the middle- and upper-classes. The fight against social evil, and consequently the fight for social purity, was as such presented as a fight which must predominantly concern itself with the lower classes. Neither *Times* nor the *Standard* question their own role, or the section of society they represent, in contributing to the continuous existence of social evil they so vehemently detest.

Respectability in Victorian society was tied to the idea of “two separate spheres”. Men and women were judged on their ability to comply to the expectations laid down by the ideology of domesticity. Women, who were subject to the private sphere, were supposed to be ignorant to worldly affairs, devoid of sexual feelings, and submissive. This expectation is evident in how *Times* and *Standard* reported on sexual crime by numerous remarks being made on the lack of ignorance on the part of girls. There are also instances where men are criticized due to their failure to live up to the standards placed on them by the ideology of domesticity. Whether it is their inability to control their wives, or simply presenting with an aura of composure and respectability – men are not reserved from similar comments. However, these criticisms are usually reserved for cases where the men are obviously guilty or clearly lack certain characteristics expected of respectable men. As with respectability, gender roles tied to the ideology of domesticity is something *Times* and the *Standard* include commentary on in relation to sexual crime and social purity. The newspapers echo sexist and classist sentiments that were present in Victorian society at the time.

Another notable feature is the inclusion of legal commentary. Some of the longest articles published on sexual crime and many of the letters addressed to the editors of the newspapers are those which comment on events or abnormalities related to the law and parliament. During the 1880s, the Conservative party to which the *Times* and *Standard* leaned ideologically at the time,

came to realize the potential newspapers had in influencing political opinion.¹⁴² Commercial interests and political affinity was also becoming more apparent in newspapers during this time. Whether the legal commentary provided by *Times* and the *Standard* mirror these broader developments is beyond this thesis to say, but both newspapers no matter utilize their medium to influence political opinion. This is most apparent by the unrelenting critique *Times* continually levies against the CLAA. They compliment it on its intentions, but this praise is always countered with critique against one aspect or another. *Times* also publishes numerous letters addressed to the editor on behalf of members of various Vigilance Associations that mirror the sentiments of the newspaper itself. In these letters the same sentiments shown by *Times* is exhibited – such as the necessity of the individual to rise up and fight the decline of society, or fears related to girls abusing the CLAA to have respectable men’s reputation ruined. Both newspapers, but more so the *Times*, are clearly conscious of newspapers’ role in influencing public opinion and there are tendencies in their publishing that indicate political affinity.

The *Standard* and the *Times* are for most intents and purposes part of the same discourses on the themes discussed in this thesis. They are both clearly marked by ideas of respectability, domesticity and social purity in general. Their style of reporting and writing is highly similar – following identical structures across different types of articles. There are some differences that reveal themselves between the newspapers. One of the overarching differences between the newspapers is that the *Times* generally publishes more opinion pieces that are related to sexual crime and social purity than the *Standard* does. Across the period looked at in this paper, the *Times* has multiple such opinion pieces that warns its readers about the threat of social evil – often signed by a member of a social purity group – while the *Standard* hardly publishes a single such article. Similarly, the *Times* also includes far more commentary on the CLAA than the *Standard* does. This is evident both in that they publish multiple articles stating their official position on the matter, but also in that they several times include a judge’s commentary on the faults of the CLAA. The *Times* believes that real change can only come about through the individual and Vigilance Committees. Although the goal of the CLAA aligns with the beliefs of the *Times*, they disagree with the means of achieving said goals. The *Standard* never state their stance on the CLAA explicitly like the *Times* does, but neither do they include the same level of

¹⁴² Griffiths, *British press*, 39.

criticism against it as the *Times* does. Furthermore, whereas the *Times* continually gives a voice to the social purity movement and rarely ever includes voices critical to it – the *Standard* has comparatively few opinion pieces supportive of the movement, and in fact includes a short opinion piece that paints the movement in a bad light.

Notable Omissions from the Newspapers

There are some themes which are hardly present in *Times* and the *Standard* – if at all. Most notably the issue of the Contagious Diseases Acts and syphilis. The CDA was initially suspended in 1883, and then fully repealed in 1886. In this period, sexual crime, CLAA, social purity, and other related issues received considerable attention in the form of reports, opinion pieces and legal commentary – yet the CDA and the issue of venereal diseases did not. Between 1885 and 1888, the CDA is brought up twice in both the *Times* and the *Standard*. The first is when the repeal is brought to parliament.¹⁴³ The second time is when the necessity of the CDA is discussed in relation to the garrisoned forces in India. The *Times* writes on an inquiry conducted on the sanitary measures in place in Indian cantonments, “No examination should be imposed upon women compulsorily, but no person likely to spread disease ought to be allowed within the cantonment except in hospital, and no one who objects to medical treatment ought to be in the cantonment at all.” The *Times* concludes the article by writing, “The result of the latest inquiries has shown the necessity for the regulation of prostitution in cantonments.”¹⁴⁴ Neither syphilis, other venereal diseases, nor prostitution ceased to exist as societal issues after the CDA was repealed. Despite this, the sentiment of “It is time that public discussion of this loathsome subject should cease”, appears to be highly applicable in how both the *Standard* and the *Times* approach the subject in these three years. While the *Times*, and to an extent the *Standard*, allow numerous opinion pieces on the CLAA – there are none on the circumstances connected to the CDA. This could also be explained by there being no one respectable who would dare to bring up such an “unrespectable” topic in a respectable newspaper. No matter, there are clearly aspects to the discourse on venereal diseases that make it a non-topic in both newspapers.

¹⁴³ *London Evening Standard*, April 13, 1886.

¹⁴⁴ *Times*, June 4, 1888.

The other major theme which is not present in the newspapers is the matter of sexual acts between two males. The CLAA included a provision that stated, “Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.”¹⁴⁵ Unlike the *Standard* which does not even make any allusion to the existence of such a topic, the *Times* does sometimes publish short articles referencing “unnatural crime”. Most tellingly, in their criticism of the Criminal Law Amendment Act following its passing through Parliament, the *Times* readily acknowledges the other provisions in the bill, but fails to comment on any aspect related to the provision on homosexuality. As with venereal diseases, both newspapers were clearly influenced by the belief that certain topics should not be addressed. There was a belief at the time that learning of anything sexual could corrupt the mind. A newspaper simply addressing a topic could inadvertently expose innocent and ignorant people to a world of sin and vice and thus cause their moral character to falter. One of the main criticisms the *Times* has against the CLAA is the fact that it publicizes the existence of sexual crime and that this exposure could create an evil cycle in which more similar crime is committed. By not writing about homosexuality the *Times* and the *Standard* might be trying to shield the public from corrupting knowledge under the assumption that newspapers played a role in regulating sexuality. However, the fact that this reasoning did not extend to any other type of sexual crime or even crime in general reveals how there existed some very tangible lines that must not be crossed – even within a subject that was not supposed to be touched at all.

¹⁴⁵ [48 & 49 Vict.] Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885. *An Act to make further provision for the Protection of Women and Girls, the suppression of brothels, and other purposes* (1885).

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined a selection newspaper articles from the *Times* and the *London Evening Standard* that deal with social purity and sexual crime in the period from 1885 to 1888. Both newspapers subscribe to the widespread belief in Victorian society that expressions of sexuality should not be discussed in public. Despite wanting discussions of “this loathsome subject” to cease, both newspapers continue to publish articles on both sexual crime and social purity. I have examined how this was done and if it bares similarities to broader societal tendencies present at the time.

The thesis is structured into three main chapters. Introductory, I give some general context as to the nature of the thesis. I provide a literature review of relevant works related to both social purity, newspaper reporting and sexual crime. I give a brief overview of the methodological approach of the thesis, explaining the process of source selection and how discourse analysis is used. The first main chapter provides historical context of Victorian society as it relates to the thesis. I focus on three main themes: domesticity and respectability as overarching cultural and social ideologies that dictated almost all aspects of life in society at the time; how sexuality was both regulated and repressed and more generally attitudes to it; and finally how sexual crime was treated by both the court and the newspaper. In the next chapter I present a selection of my findings from analyzing newspaper articles in light of this historical context. Some themes that emerge and are presented are respectability, domesticity, social purity, sexism and classism, and focus on legal aspects. Finally, I consider these themes taken as a whole and also take into account some that are not present in the newspapers at all such as the Contagious Diseases Acts and venereal disease.

This thesis has not attempted to explain why the differences between the *Times* and the *London Evening Standard* are what they are. Different editors, reporters, or readership could explain some of the differences outlined in this paper. These differences could also in part be explained as being coincidences and not indicative of any broader patterns between the *Times* and the *Standard*. Further research should account for some of these issues and also look at explaining why some of these differences are present. Furthermore, I do not account for any quantitative aspects in reporting on sexual crime and social purity, nor do I attempt to look at the actual

impact the CLAA and the CDA had on reporting. A comparative analysis looking at how reporting on sexual crime differed before and after the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed – and also a comparative analysis accounting for the impact of Jack the Ripper could be fruitful in providing a deeper understanding to some of the themes established here. An inclusion of liberal-leaning newspapers could also help to establish the impact political beliefs had in how social purity and sexual crime was reported on.

The findings in this thesis are consistent with existing research on the Victorian period. Reporting on sexual crime and social purity reveal the presence of themes that have been comprehensively accounted for in other aspects of Victorian society. Ideals of respectability and domesticity; adherence to ideals of both sexual regulation and repression; and classism and sexism are some themes that are plainly identifiable in how *Times* and the *Standard* report on sexual crimes and social purity. *Times* and the *Standard* also show that they are clearly capable of omitting certain topics from public discussion as well. Venereal disease and homosexuality are topics that are barely addressed in the period, if at all. Despite both newspapers expressing a desire to avoid speaking about topics they consider inappropriate; this thesis has shown that they are similar in that they both explicitly and more subtly continue to do so in the years after. This occurs largely as a result of commonplace articles on court proceedings, reports on legislative processes, or letters to the editor expressing the opinion of some particular individual. However, it is some of the emergent patterns in these commonplace articles that the more expansive discourses reveal themselves. There are also enough differences between the two newspapers to show that even within two conservative, respectable newspapers – factors such as reporters, editors and intended audience could influence what and how topics were reported on. No matter, this thesis argues that newspaper reporting reveals how the Victorians clearly had a layered and nuanced conceptualization of sexuality that allowed a certain degree of flexibility to their purportedly uncompromising principles.

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