

Dismembering Rape Culture:  
Exposing Ghosts of Sexual Violence from London, 1870-1890

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved March 2020 by the  
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2020

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## ABSTRACT

Did the Victorians live in a “rape culture”? London between 1870 and 1890 was certainly a place in which sexual violence was publicly condemned as an overall concept (W. T. Stead’s “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon, for example). Yet, in contrast to the moral denunciation, the historical archive demonstrates excuses constantly condoned sexual violence (as evidenced in parliamentary debates, criminal transcripts, newspaper crime coverage, and social campaigns like those of Josephine Butler). Forensic medical doctors, police, coroners, journalists, illustrators, and editors all contributed and reinforced a system that sustained and condoned rape as evidenced by the newspaper crime reports; but, to blame them for their actions, as if each action was performed with malicious intent, would hide the greater system of oppression that operated both blatantly and in the shadows. When one demographic holds significant power over another – as men did over women in Victorian England – those power relations become embedded into its culture in ways that are never clearly transparent and continue to haunt the future until exposed and rectified. To this end, my dissertation investigates newspaper crime narratives to reveal the heterocryptic ghosts and make their multiple legacies visible.

Murder of women by men are significantly linked via cultural perceptions. Anna Clark discovered this with Mary Ashford’s rape and murder in 1817. Though Ashford died from drowning, the narratives rewrote her death as if it was the rape that had killed her. Based on this correlation, this study focuses on six cases of unsolved female murder and dismemberment. The decision to use unsolved cases stems from the hypothesis that

more gendered assumptions would manifest in the crime narratives as the journalists (and police, coroners, and forensic doctors) tried to discern the particulars of the crime within contexts that made sense to them. Analytical coding of the data demonstrates the prevalence of rape myths operating within the narratives in conjunction with misogynistic and classist beliefs. From initial discovery to forensic inspections to inquest verdicts and beyond a number of myriad historical materializations are exposed that continue to haunt the present.

Dedicated to the victims of sexual violence,  
their support networks, and everyone working to end sexual violence.

Author's Note:

This dissertation has an accompanying Spotify playlist. The playlist can be listened to as you read or anytime after.

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/12xF9Zr9l9ziQopgq6CtmH?si=P9e6YD4xSS6TMYuvlpDEkg>

This dissertation also has a Google map to help readers keep track of the different case discoveries:

[https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1-IAfSQ59s1hxUnKfkEOjOZ6ZUnT\\_QU9r&ll=51.49970054140612%2C-0.026294049999933122&z=10](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1-IAfSQ59s1hxUnKfkEOjOZ6ZUnT_QU9r&ll=51.49970054140612%2C-0.026294049999933122&z=10)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people who need to be acknowledged for their assistance in bringing me to this moment.

First, a small shout out to the amazing academics who mentor students who might not be “theirs,” having not taking a course with them or be a member of their committee (or university for that matter). The encouragement and support you give matters a great deal, especially to marginalized graduate students and first-generation students learning to navigate all the nuances of the program, institution, and scholarly field.

In particular I’d like to thank Dr. Kassie Lamp-Fortuno. She offered a course on the “Rhetoric of Murder” (ENG 554 Gender, Violence and American Modernity) which was my entry into this topic and archival newspaper databases. She was also an invaluable resource providing me the direction I needed to explain why Aristotle’s name kept appearing in Victorian pornography advertising.

Now at the University of Georgia, Dr. Beth Tobin encouraged me to take a class on Victorian Sexuality with Dr. Daniel Bivona. That class was pivotal to my academic career and the materials from that course continue to be indispensable. I would also like to thank Dr. Bivona for the effort he put into giving me feedback on my work and for introducing me to scholars in the field outside of ASU.

Dr. Marlene Tromp and Dr. Mark Lussier are a Co-Chair dream team. Dr. Lussier helped me get back on track after I became mired and was always there to provide encouragement. His visits to my office brighten my day and renewed my focus. Dr. Tromp always manages to ask just the right question to help me see the areas in need of

more consideration and how to tackle it. She is generous of her limited time and manages to be incredibly insightful and supportive.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Ronald and Michelle Boyd, for their unceasing encouragement, my friends for listening to some pretty grim stories as I worked through the intellectual implications and my partner, Erik Bogner, for his unending support.

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## Chapter One:

### Did the Victorians Live in a “Rape Culture”?

London between 1870 and 1890 was certainly a place in which sexual violence was publicly condemned as an overall concept (W. T. Stead’s “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,” for example). Yet, in contrast to the moral denunciation, the historical archive demonstrates that excuses constantly condoned gendered-based sexual violence of women by men (as evidenced in parliamentary debates, criminal transcripts, newspaper crime coverage, and social campaigns like those of Josephine Butler). In addition to the public acts of toleration, a wide array of cultural scripts (like myths and norms) not only upheld gender-based sexual violence but also encouraged it. In this way, the Victorian lived experience meets the current definition of rape culture.

This dissertation analyzes a number of historical discourses, mostly within London newspapers. Shani D’Cruze has rightfully cautioned researchers that “It is very easy to interpret the historical material as incontrovertible evidence of deliberate, explicit and overt oppression, on the part of the law, its officials and, where press coverage is involved, of the journalists and his editor.”<sup>1</sup> However, she also pointed out, and this holds true for my argument, that “the forcefield of power relations at play were too complex to admit any over-simplified interpretation of male conspiracy, or even a class conspiracy.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shani D’Cruze, *Crimes of Moral Outrage*, 172.

<sup>2</sup> Shani D’Cruze, *Crimes of Moral Outrage*, 172.

While there are and were individuals who unequivocally believe in the values that uphold patriarchy, the majority of sexist acts committed within the culture are committed without intentional malice. The acceptance of patriarchal values as a norm and patriarchy's oppression of women precipitated cultural scripts so that the overwhelming majority of forensic medical doctors, police, coroners, journalists, illustrators, and editors within this study all contributed and reinforced a system that sustained and condoned rape; but, to blame them for their actions, as if each action was performed with malicious intent, would hide the greater system of oppression that was and continues to operate both blatantly and in the shadow. The widespread acceptance of oppressive gendered beliefs and values and the impact of that acceptance manifested into a "rape culture."

This dissertation began with an intellectual curiosity into narratives of murder permeated with assumptions about gender and sexuality, where the unknown victim was female and her body found naked and dismembered. Within the dissertation I have argued that these crime narratives went beyond singular "narratives of sexual danger."<sup>3</sup> These narratives were part of a larger Victorian "rape culture" and that investigating this alleged Victorian rape culture would enhance our understanding of rape culture today for reading through the historical archive creates sensations of déjà vu. When one demographic holds significant power over another – as men did over women in Victorian England – those power relations become embedded into its culture in ways that are never

<sup>3</sup> Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London*.

clearly transparent and continue to haunt the future until exposed and rectified.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore it is imperative for scholars who care about human rights abuses today to analyze the historical record to make the heterocryptic ghosts and their multiple legacies visible. Once seen, social justice activists can formulate new strategies to dismantle these systems of oppression. My dissertation focuses mainly on injustices of sex, gender, and class; however, many of the operations revealed in this study have been used even more strongly against other intersecting oppressions, especially race, ethnicity, and concepts of twentieth- and twenty-first-century sexuality (ex. transgender).

While diving into the historical newspaper archives several years ago I stumbled upon a case in which a woman was murdered, decapitated, and dismembered, her body cut up into small sections and cast into the Thames. The initial articles I found, rife with assumptions about gender and class, correlated with a more modern study into femicide and rape myths conducted by Jane Monckton-Smith. Conducting a quantitative analysis of early twenty-first century news reports of rapes and/or murders of women by men, Monckton-Smith found that the news reports significantly linked the concepts of sex and death in these narratives to the degree that *the correlation created the meaning of the criminal event*. Namely, that “the ultimate violence – murder – is linked to rape via cultural perceptions and not statistical reality or legal definitions, with the term ‘rape’ sometimes even supplanted for the term ‘murder.’”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Monckton-Smith. “Deconstructing the House that Jack Built: An Examination of the Discursive Regime of Sexual Murder,” 17 and 11; emphasis added.

Monckton-Smith's work also correlated with Anna Clark's (*Women's Silence, Men's Violence* 1987) investigation into Mary Ashford's rape and murder in 1817. Clark, interested in whether women of the past had always been warned of the sexual dangers of public space, observed within Ashford's death how her rape was represented as being the real instrument of her death in the historical narratives, not the drowning that actually took her life. As Clark demonstrated, the rape and murder of Ashford, in conjunction with a burgeoning rape myth about the perils of public space for women, conflated perceptions about what constituted a 'real rape' and entangled it with murder.

By 1837, this myth had firmly taken hold as demonstrated in a series of assaults perpetrated by individuals dressed up like the folkloric character Spring-heeled Jack. Not all newspaper accounts of these criminal misadventures targeted women; however, when they did, the attacks were brutal. In February of 1838, Jane Alsop was tricked out of her home by a man she initially thought was a constable. Before she could get back to the safety of the house, the man grabbed her, shredded her clothes, and pulled hair from her head.<sup>6</sup> Two weeks later a woman named Lucy Scales encountered another costumed assailant who spurted fire into her face causing temporary blindness and "violent fits, which continued for several hours."<sup>7</sup> In May of the same year *Leeds Mercury* reported a

<sup>6</sup> "Untitled," *The Standard*, 22 February 1838; "Outrage on a Young Lady by the Suburban Ghost," *The Morning Post*, 23 February 1838; "The Ghost Story," *The Standard*, 23 February 1838; "The Late Outrage at Old Ford," *The Standard*, 01 March 1838; and, "The Outrage at Old Ford," *The Standard*, 03 March 1838.

<sup>7</sup> "Lambeth-Street. The Ghost, Alias. 'Spring-heeled Jack' Again," *The Morning Post*, 07 March 1838; and "Lambeth-Street. The Ghost, Alias. 'Spring-heeled Jack' Again," *The Standard*, 08 March 1838.

woman had her clothes torn from her back “and her face much injured and disfigured.”<sup>8</sup> A few years later appeared reports of another assailant attacking women near Camden High-street. One article described the typical attack as a man confining his victims and committing “the most disgusting assaults upon her.”<sup>9</sup> *The Era* elaborated with two instances: an adult woman with whom the perpetrator took “the most indecent liberties” and another, a fourteen-year-old girl, who was “so maltreated and frightened ... [to be] in a very bad state of health.”<sup>10</sup> This young girl became suicidal after her attack and her family, at a loss what to do, sent her to an asylum.<sup>11</sup> All of these victims survived their sexual assaults, better known in Victorian terms as “outrages,” but the descriptions of the physical harm paled in comparison to the haunting insinuation in these articles that these women were mere ghosts of themselves, effectively dead.

It would be far too large an undertaking to look at every instance of sexual violence over the Victorian period and so, because of the work of Monckton-Smith, Anna Clark, and Judith Walkowitz, in combination with my early sampling from the archive, I determined to limit the study to unsolved murder and dismemberment cases to determine if the newspaper articles about these deaths were part of a larger norm or isolated event(s). By working with unsolved cases, I hypothesized that more gender assumptions would manifest as the journalists (and police, coroners, and forensic doctors) tried to

<sup>8</sup> “Spring-heeled Jack,” *Leeds Mercury*, 19 May 1838.

<sup>9</sup> “Another Spring-heeled Jack,” *The Era*, 11 April 1841.

<sup>10</sup> “Another Spring-heeled Jack,” *The Era*, 11 April 1841.

<sup>11</sup> “Tuesday,” *The Bristol Mercury*, 07 August 1841.

make sense of the crime within contexts that made sense to them. My hypothesis proved true.

Over the century, I found a total of nineteen cases of murder, and dismemberment (most were also decapitated) within England and Wales (see Table 1).<sup>12</sup> The one case in which the victim was an adult male turned out to be a hoax (Waterloo Bridge Mystery, 1857). Two involved girls under the age of ten that had been murdered following a sexual assault by an adult male (Fanny Adams, 1867; and, Emily Holland, 1876). Another two were young boys, aged eight and ten, who were also murdered following a sexual assault (John Gill, 1888; and, Nicolas Martin, 1891). The remainder, at 79 percent of the cases, were adult women. The 1870s and 1880s saw an uptick in this kind of murder and this is where the unsolved cases in this study were found. In fact, 63 percent of the overall cases occurred during this period. The numbers reflected Judith Walkowitz's argument in *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992) that the "possibilities for sexual terrorism" crescendoed in the 1880s exposing "deep-seated sexual antagonism, most frequently expressed by men towards women" that warned "no woman is safe."<sup>13</sup> There were only two exceptions to the correlation between gendered-based sexual violence and murder over the century of murder and dismemberment cases: the 1857 Waterloo Bridge Mystery hoax and the murder of Julia Thomas (d. 1879). Thomas was murdered by a female servant recently terminated for fraud and theft. The remaining seventeen cases, or 89 percent of all the

<sup>12</sup> Not including infanticides.

<sup>13</sup> Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 12 and 218.



cases, not only dealt with adult men's violence upon women and children but interlaced sexual violence with murder.

Excluding all the cases in which the victim, perpetrator, or both were identified, I was left with six cases: Battersea 1873, Putney 1874, Tottenham Court 1884, Rainham 1887, Whitehall 1888, and Whitechapel 1889. My research determined that, regardless of any published evidence of an act of sexual violence occurring, these cases were either understood to be sexually-related or the reporting of the crime sexualized the violence that was perpetrated. To understand how this came to be, I investigated the historical context of medical jurisprudence, a burgeoning field during the period of this study; popular fears of doctors, especially for working-class women; and, the legal and social impacts of sexual forensics. This provided vital background information for the investigation into the medical testimony and editorials embedded within the crime narratives (chapter two). The medical jurisprudence played a role in enforcing rape myths – fallacies told about the crime of sexual assault, the perpetrator, and the victim. I have analyzed these myths within the crime narratives, with additional analysis from other institutional and cultural scripts that operated between 1870 and 1890 for added context when needed (chapter three). Regardless of whether or not evidence existed that the victim was sexually assaulted before her murder, the crime narratives about their deaths were sexualized by objectifying the victim's body (chapter four). Between the medical jurisprudence, the rape myths, and the heightened sexualization of these crimes, my dissertation reveals a new lens into Victorian "rape culture" and how its particular manifestation, which we have inherited, continues to affect us today (chapter five).

Table 1.1. Nineteenth-century cases of murder and dismemberment

Year	Location	Victim	Perpetrator
1831	Brighton	Celia Holloway, age not given	John Holloway
1836 - 1837	Edgware Road+, London	Hannah Brown, age about 50	James Greenacre
1842	Roehampton, outskirts of London	Jane Jones, age 24-26	Daniel Good
1851	Norwich	Unknown female, age 16-26	Unknown
1857	Waterloo Bridge, London	Unknown male, age undetermined	Unknown
1867	Alton, Hampshire	Fanny Adams, age 8	Frederick Baker
1873	Battersea+, London	Unknown female, age about 40	Unknown
1874	Putney, London	Unknown female, age undetermined	Unknown
1875	Whitechapel, London	Harriet Lane, age 23	Henry Wainwright
1876	Blackburn	Emily Holland, age 7	William Fish
1877	Merionethshire+, North Wales	Sarah Hughes, age 36	Cadwalader Jones
1879	Richmond, Surrey	Julia Martha Thomas, age 55	Kate Webster
1884	Tottenham Court+, London	Unknown female, age 25-50	Unknown
1887	Rainham+, London	Unknown female, age 26-32	Unknown
1888	Whitehall+, London	Unknown female, age over 24	Unknown
1888	Bradford Inn, London	John Gill, age 8	William Barrett
1889	Battersea+, London	Elizabeth Jackson, age 24	Unknown
1889	Pinchin Street, Whitechapel, London	Unknown female, age 30-40	Unknown
1891	Liverpool	Nicholas Martin, age 10	John Conway

+ Indicates the body was found in multiple locations. The named location is the place most often given when the case was referenced.

### *Data*

All of the newspaper articles used in this study were retrieved from the *British Library Newspaper Collection* and the *Times Digital Archive, 1785-2009*.

The articles were found through multiple methods. Having already identified several “Thames Torso Murder” cases, I used keywords from those specific cases to search for initial articles, limited to relative dates. This allowed for a review of common keywords that occurred in accounts of this type of crime. Those keywords were then used to implement a larger search in the *British Library Newspaper Collection* for more cases throughout the century. I did this to ascertain if there were other cases that were previously unknown and needed to be considered. All the unsolved cases with unidentified perpetrators and victims fell within the period of 1870 and 1890. They also happened to occur within London’s greater metropolitan area and so the results were limited to newspapers published within London. This limiter was necessary in order to control the size of the data pool (from thousands to hundreds) and was determined based on the high frequency in which non-London papers simply repeated the information previously reported in the London papers. Another reason for the limitation was the opportunity to glean a sense of how the community most impacted by the murders reacted. For example, in the Battersea (1873) case, a journalist made reference to crowds gathering where the remains were found to express sympathy for the deceased and that prayers were offered at “open air services in various parts of the metropolis ... that the cause of justice might triumph.”<sup>14</sup> After removing false-positive results,<sup>15</sup> the six cases that met the study’s criteria produced 167 articles to be analyzed.

<sup>14</sup> “The Supposed Murder and Mutilation of a Woman,” *The Morning Post*, 15 September 1873.

<sup>15</sup> Articles removed from the data dealt with accidents, suicides or cases ruled ‘natural death,’ politics, military incidents, and criminal cases that did not involve murder and dismemberment. In some cases, the keywords appeared within a single article. In

No. of Articles in Data Collection by Newspaper

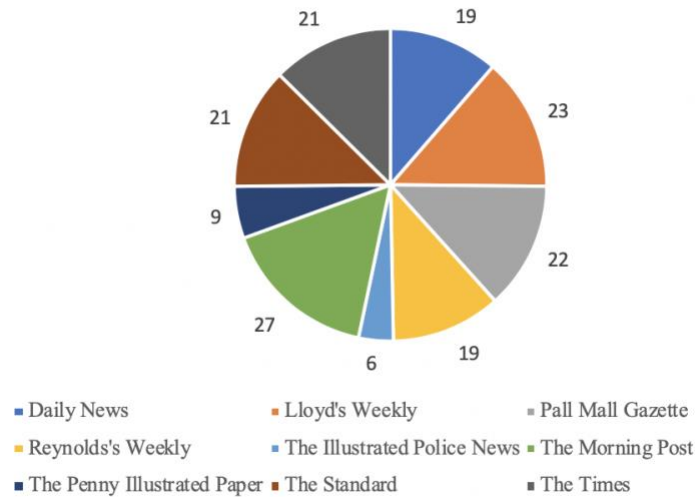


Figure 1.1 Distribution of articles across newspaper sources

The newspapers ranged from weekly to daily and from liberal to conservative in order to collect a wide range of perspectives on murder, dismemberment, and gender. Some of the papers, like *The Times* and *The Pall Mall Gazette*, would change their political ideology during the twenty-year period of this study due to new ownership or editorship.<sup>16</sup> Intended audiences for the papers tended toward middle-class (mainly the dailies) to working-class (typically the weekly newspapers). The intended audience shaped the focus and tone of the paper. For example, *The Illustrated Press* focused on entertaining the working classes with sensational crimes and addressing working-class

most, the keywords turned up within several articles that were grouped together by the database.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Andrew Kent, "Pall Mall Gazette," *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism (DNCJ)* 477-478; John Richard Wood, "The Times," *DNCJ*, 627-628.

hardships. *The Times*, on the other hand, placed more attention on politics, imperial concerns, and economics than it did on crime.

As for the writers of crime reports, little has been discovered; according to Nathan Garvey, “anecdotal evidence suggest that many were freelance, ‘penny-a-line’ writers,” like the ones that created the Waterloo Bridge hoax in order to generate income.<sup>17</sup> A common occurrence for nineteenth-century newspapers, many papers repeated – often verbatim – what had already been printed in earlier papers (from their own and others) with minor revisions. Instead of being excluded from this study, the decision of the editor to “copy and paste” these accounts from other newspapers and previous editions, with or without revision, shaped the discourse of gendered murder among their intended audience and so I determined to include these accounts within the study.

The source articles were then transcribed and imported into NVivo qualitative software for analytical coding. The articles were grouped into their individual events (Batterea 1874, Putney 1874, Tottenham 1884, Rainham 1887, Whitehall 1888, and Pinchen 1889), classified by their source newspaper (*Daily News*, *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, *Illustrated Police News*, *The Morning Post*, *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, *The Standard*, and *The Times*), and then coded by analytical theme (See figure 2 for themes).

<sup>17</sup> Nathan Garvey “Crime Reporting,” *DNCJ*, 153. *The Pall Mall Gazette* published an article crediting the hoax to penny-a-liners: “Occasional Notes,” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 July 1872. See also Tate, Steven. “Getting Rich on Invented News,” *British Journalism Review*, 10 June 2017.

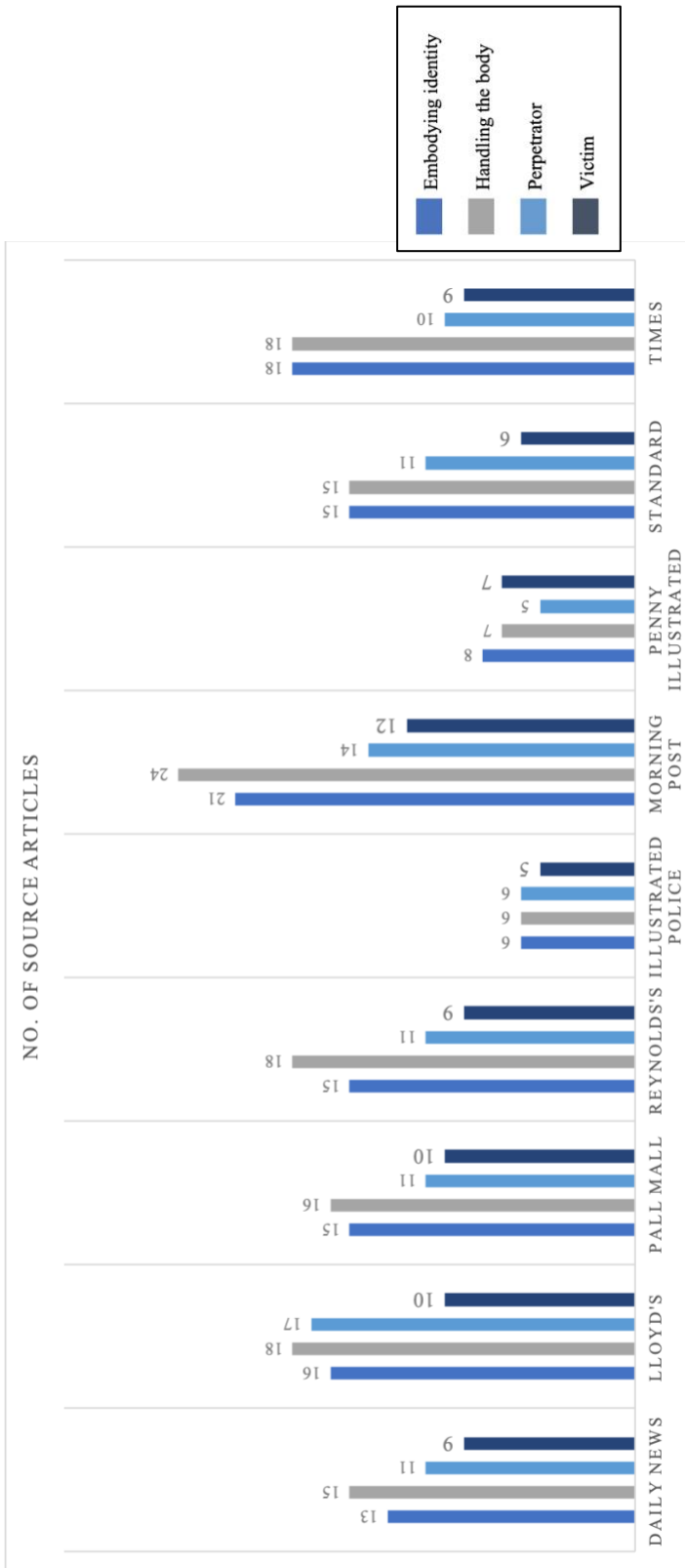


Figure 1.2. Total number of source articles per analytical theme

## *The Cases*

Throughout this dissertation I will be referring to the six cases summarized below. Within the upcoming chapters, the cases will be referenced simply by name and year like so – Battersea (1873). The summaries given here are meant to provide the reader with more details about the individual cases as well as the accumulative affect these cases created during the twenty-year time period of this study.

All the women in the six case studies were found naked. This, in addition to the dismemberment contributed to the difficulty of identification. Clothing aided the identification of many unknown victims, like Elizabeth Jackson (1889), because people owned fewer articles of clothing and were therefore more easily recognized by these items. So, the perpetrators of these crimes had a practical reason for stripping their victims but the spectacle created had other consequences than simply hiding identity. A human sans clothing was uncivilized; the human stripped bare becomes analogue for animality.<sup>18</sup> A female divested of her civilizing garments became sexually promiscuous. By disseminating these bodies in this way, the perpetrators unleashed cultural fears of uncleanliness and disease associated with unregulated female sexuality like those manifested in the creation, practice, defense, and discussions to expand the Contagious Diseases Act of 1864, 1866, and 1869 (suspended in 1883 and finally repealed in 1886).

In addition to the six cases within the study, I have included summaries of other sensational crimes of sexual or sexualized violence because all of these cases were part of a larger system of violence against women (and children) by men, that shaped the

<sup>18</sup> Pamela K. Gilbert, *Victorian Skin: Surface, Self, History*, 201.

narratives of this period of history. The six cases of the study have an asterisk by their name to help differentiate these for the reader. All of these cases, and far too many more, depict a culture similar to our own in which the public narrative loudly clamored disgust at such violence yet simultaneously demonstrated an overall acceptance of male violence toward women as natural, inevitable, and even forgivable.

To get a visual overview of the cases and the neighborhoods they impacted see the Google Maps I created here: <https://bit.ly/2PIiXrR>.

Battersea, September 5-28, 1873\*

For unknown reasons, someone(s) unleashed “considerable violence” upon a woman sometime either late Thursday, September 4, or early Friday morning, September 5.<sup>19</sup> She received two blows to the temple in quick succession, the second blow hard enough to kill.

At half past six on Friday morning, Constable Fane of the Thames Police saw something near the shore. Curious, he asked his mate to help him fetch it. The two discovered the upper left section of a naked human torso. Dr. Kempster, the physician and divisional surgeon of police for the Battersea station, estimated the woman had been murdered mere hours earlier and the dismemberment occurred immediately upon death.

Four hours later Henry Locke, constable for the London and South-Western Railway Company noticed something floating in the water near Brunswick Wharf. Having already heard news that a portion of a woman was found in the Thames, he

<sup>19</sup> “Inquest on the Human Remains Found in the Thames,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 21 September 1873.



wondered if what he saw could be related and went to have a look. He found the corresponding upper quarter of a human torso.

The next morning, Constable John Parker, with the Thames Police, noticed a crowd gathering near the shore in Limehouse. He left the galley to see what was drawing so much attention. Perhaps even more uncanny than the last two discoveries, what had drawn so much attention to the shore was a floating human face sans the structural support of the skull. Over the course of the next ten days, fourteen more pieces of the body would surface along the Thames from Hammersmith to Woolwich. Watermen and lightermen found the majority of the body fragments. The skull, hands, and the lower section of her left leg (ankle to mid-shin) were the only portions never recovered.

The medical officer and surgeon estimated the victim was about forty years of age based on the presence of a little “feminine moustache” though he believed she was still within childbearing years. She had dark, very thin hair that was short (most articles said two inches long but at least one report corrected that information to say nine inches).<sup>20</sup> She was tall, stout, and had been perfectly healthy.

The jury inquest would eventually decide that this was a case of “Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> “The Mysterious Thames Tragedy,” *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 21 September 1873.

<sup>21</sup> “The Mysterious Thames Tragedy,” *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 21 September 1873.

Putney, June 5-14, 1874\*

Nine months after the sensation caused by the Battersea case, Robert Nicholls was out on the Thames when he found a decapitated and partially dismembered torso with a portion of the legs still attached. Again, the body was naked. This time, however, there was only the one discovery. No other body parts ever surfaced.

This victim had been dead for weeks prior to the perpetrator dumping her body in the Thames. The medical examiner, Mr. E. C. Barnes, thought the perpetrator(s) had first tried to get rid of the body using lime. Due to the decapitation and dismemberment, Barnes was unable to determine age or height of the victim. He was also unable to pinpoint the cause of death. Every article mentioned that the victim's intestines were missing, which may have been descriptive or perhaps eluded to an attempted abortion. While everyone agreed this was a case of "grave suspicion," the inquest jury returned a more generic verdict of "Found dead."<sup>22</sup> Very little about this case appeared in the newspapers, which was surprising following the sensation made of the Battersea case and that there were no other major events (like the Tichborne trial during the Battersea 1873 case) to compete for column space.

Meanwhile ...

Murder of Harriet Lane, 1874-1875

Henry Wainwright's business had begun failing; he could no longer afford to maintain multiple mistresses. As he was ready to move on to a new mistress, his current

<sup>22</sup> "Another Thames Mystery," *Lloyd's Illustrated Newspaper*, 14 June 1874.

one (and the mother of two of his children), Harriet Lane, had to go. Only she was not going to leave of her own accord. He murdered her on September 11, 1874.

After Wainwright murdered Lane he hid her body in a building he owned in Whitechapel.

A year later, worried that complaints about a foul smell emanating from the building would draw an investigation, he moved the body. To ease the transport of the body, he cut her up into no fewer than fourteen pieces, and wrapped her remains in a cloth. He enlisted the aid of the building's caretaker to load the parcels into a cab that was to convey both Wainwright and his wife. Catching a glimpse of what was inside one of the packages, the man followed the cab and alerted police. Because of the way in which the body was discovered, both Wainwrights were detained by police. Mrs. Wainwright would be cleared as an accessory. Wainwright was convicted of murder and hanged on December 21, 1875.

Harriet Lane was twenty-three years old. She had auburn hair, stood approximately five feet tall. She left behind a father, mother, sister, and two children.

#### Indecent Assault of Kate Dickinson, 1875

On June 17, 1875 Miss Rebecca Kate Dickinson said good-bye to her mother and two sisters and boarded the train to London to meet up with her married sister and her sister's husband. She rode in a first-class carriage where Colonel Valentine Baker joined her a few stops later. During the course of their travel his manners drastically altered from a respectable gentleman, who had put her at her ease, to a rapacious sexual predator. The guard did not hear her cries for help and Baker would not desist. The only way to evade him was to step out onto the ledge, clinging to the carriage, while the train sped

along. When Baker was picked up, his bail was set at 500£. As the case made its way through the legal process bail would be raised to 4,000£ and then 8,000£. The jury found Baker guilty. Not surprisingly, a plea for leniency was submitted “on the ground of Colonel Baker’s high reputation” and a list of his military services recited.<sup>23</sup> The judge, Mr. Justice Brett, sentenced Baker to a year in prison, without hard labor, and fined 500£. While in prison, Baker had extra rooms for his comfort and paid another prisoner to do his cleaning while he wrote a book. The War Office retired him without compensation for his commission. Brett’s sentencing decision stemmed mainly from Baker failing to adhere to his masculine role as an officer and gentleman – not for criminally attacking a woman.

#### Murder of Emily Holland, 1876

Tom Fish, barber, sexually assaulted and murdered seven-year-old Emily Holland of Blackburn in Lancashire. She had been walking by his shop and he asked her to go fetch him some tobacco. When she returned with the tobacco, he asked her to go upstairs, where he followed. His attack on her left her “nearly dead,” so he decapitated and dismembered her, burning her arms and head in the fireplace, and taking her legs to Lower Cunliffe and her torso to Bastwell.<sup>24</sup> A portion of her skull remained so he hid it in a chimney, where it was found by a police-hired bloodhound. Upon learning of her

<sup>23</sup> No title, *Daily News*, 03 August 1875.

<sup>24</sup> “The Outrage on and Murder of a Child,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 23 April 1876.

husband's confession, Mrs. Fish said, if he indeed by the guilty one "let him be hanged."<sup>25</sup>

#### Murder of Sarah Hughes, 1877

Sarah Hughes and Cadwalader Jones both worked at a place called Coedmwsoglog in North Wales. She left home the evening of June 4, heading to the town of Dolgelley where she was last seen alive. Around July 16-18, pieces of a human body surfaced on the river Arran. No less than eleven different people discovered separate portions. Hughes sister identified her based on articles of clothing found with the body. A few days after the murder Jones attempted to hide the body by distributing small pieces of it in the river, burying others, and stuffing what remained in a sack. Hughes had been pregnant, allegedly by Cadwalader Jones, but had chosen to marry another. Her rejection of him as lover and father of the child was thought to be the motive for murder. Doctor Edward Jones reported that the right side of her face was severely bruised. Jones was hanged in November 1877.

The horror was not quickly over for the local inhabitants, though, as parts of Hughes' body continued to surface over the next year. Indeed, poor Elizabeth Roberts, who lived near the river where Hughes' body was found, would be admitted to an asylum before the end of 1877 so affected was she by this case.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> "The Outrage on and Murder of a Child," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 23 April 1876.

<sup>26</sup> *The Madness of North Wales: The History of Mental Health in North Wales* The North Wales Mental Health Research Project. Department of Psychological Medicine.

## Murder of Julia Martha Thomas, 1879

This is the only case in which a sexual frame was not applied for the murderer was Thomas' servant, Kate Webster. Thomas lived in Richmond, a village just outside of London. She had given Webster notice and Webster had negotiated to stay on three more days. On the last day, the two fought after Thomas rebuked Webster and again when Thomas returned home from church. During this second fight, Webster threw Thomas down the stairs and, fearing the chance that Thomas might be still be alive and scream out, Webster slammed her head upon the ground killing Thomas. Webster posed as Thomas for two weeks selling off her belongings. Neighbors grew suspicious and Webster fled to Ireland. Thomas' body was found and Webster was arrested and returned to London for trial. She was convicted and hanged.

## Tottenham Court, October 23-December 9, 1884\*

On Thursday, October 23, after trash had been collected from the areas of Bedford Square and Alfred-mews, it was taken to the Great Northern railway yard for sorting. It was here that workers discovered parcels wrapped in paper. This in itself was apparently not unusual as several journalists noted that sweepers so commonly found deceased cats or dogs in this manner that they often did not even unwrap them to see what was inside. While being sorted at the Great Northern Railway yard, however, workers found these parcels to be far from the usual – a human skull and bits of flesh.

Almost simultaneously, a gardener in Bedford Square found another package under some shrubs that contained an arm. Dr. Lloyd, the divisional surgeon for the police, examined the lime covered remains and determined that they belonged to one woman,

murdered at least four months prior. Six days later a police constable, walking his beat, discovered the last portion of the victim's body that would be found, a portion of the lower trunk. This particular location was constantly patrolled by the police. Based on the timing of the patrols and reports of a foul smell, the police estimated the fragment was deposited between ten and quarter past ten o'clock at night during a shift change.

Very little of this victim was found. Medical officers estimated her age as anywhere between twenty-five and forty. She had dark brown hair. Despite a key identification mark – a red line tattooed on her wrist like a bracelet – the victim was never identified.

Journalists focused mainly on the discovery and examination of the body. Yet, there must have been something more left unwritten for the inquest jury stated that, given the circumstances, “death did not result from natural causes, but that an illegal operation [abortion] had either been completed or attempted before death, with which some person or persons unknown were chargeable.”<sup>27</sup>

Rainham, May 11-August 6, 1887\*

To the east of London, in a village called Rainham, a man named Edward Hughes discovered a sewn-shut parcel that had washed up on the shores of the river. He unwrapped the bundle and discovered the lower part of a human torso, minus its internal organs. According to the medical examiner, the woman died fourteen days earlier though the body may not have been in the water that long.

<sup>27</sup> “Inquests,” *The Standard*, 09 December 1884.

The coroner for Essex, Mr. Lewis, opened an inquest on the body on May 14. He adjourned the inquest without a verdict and re-opened it on June 3, this time with the presence of Scotland Yard. Assuming foul play but unable to find any leads to pursue a case the inquest closed with an open verdict.

Only two days later a corresponding thigh, sewn into another sack, would be found, this time within London. The Coroner, Mr. Langham, declined to hold an inquest. Upon questioning, he explained that a thigh was not a body and it was reasonable to assume the thigh belonged to the body found in Rainham, where an inquest was already opened. Journalists would describe Mr. Langham's decision and what happened afterwards as nothing short of scandalous. Mr. Langham told reporters that he thought the thigh should be sent to Rainham and told his assistant, Mr. Saxby, to place the thigh in a sealed glass jar of wine for preservation. Further scandal arose when the thigh disappeared. It never made it to Rainham and it was no longer stored in the City's mortuary. A City morgue officer later admitted that the thigh had been placed into a pauper's coffin and sent to Ilford to be buried. Though never explained, the thigh was eventually retrieved and included as part of the medical examination the following month.

While the above confusion was happening, the upper torso was found near Battersea Pier. This perpetrator(s) had removed the woman's breasts, unlike all the other cases. Logic would suggest the perpetrator did so to hide a mark that would aid in identifying the victim. However, identifying marks on and near the breasts of the victim from 1873 (moles, scar) proved insufficient for making an identification. Was the perpetrator being careful - removing a mark of some kind on her breast that someone



would have recognized and gone to the police to identify her - or was this an attack on female sexuality? Regardless of any practical concern, the spectacle created was certainly chilling and carried a sense of misogyny.

Approximately three weeks later a boy ran to the lockkeeper at the St. Pancras Locks, Regent's Canal, to inform him that an arm had been pulled out of the canal. The next day, as part of two different discoveries, the other arm and the legs were found, also in Regent's Canal. Like the other portions of the body found, these pieces were sewn up into canvas packages.

Despite a number of post-mortem examinations, no cause of death was ever found and very few descriptors were released of the victim. The medical examiners estimated that she was twenty-six years old though the jury from the second inquest in Middlesex extended her age from anywhere between twenty-five and thirty-five. Her lungs were present but multiple internal organs were missing. The inquest jury in Rainham returned an open verdict indicating the circumstances were suspicious but they were not able to reach any other verdict. The Middlesex inquest jury simply said there was not enough evidence to determine by what means (suicide, accident, or murder) the woman had died and chose not to consider what happened to her body post death into their verdict.

Public Outcry over the wrongful arrest of Miss Elizabeth Cass for prostitution.

In June and July of 1887 a case drew considerable public attention. On the night of June 28<sup>th</sup>, Constable Endacott arrested a woman, Miss Cass, for prostitution on Regent's Street, a popular shopping area. The woman was a milliner for a Regent St. shop and, with the support of her employer, denied the charge. The charge was dismissed

by the magistrate, Mr. Newton, with a caution that no respectable woman would be out in public at nine o'clock at night. In doing so, he incriminated the reputation of all the women who worked in the shops. Indignation rose quickly prompting a discussion of the magistrate's handling of the case in Parliament, Constable Endacott was suspended for review, and Sir Charles Warren, the police commissioner, adopted new measures for the police to follow in cases of women who seemed to be loitering in the shopping districts of Regent Street, Oxford St. and Piccadilly.

#### Murder and mutilation of Mary Ann "Polly" Nicholls, 1888

A carman found a murdered woman's body in front of a gated stable entrance in Buck's Row, Whitechapel, at 3:40am on 31 August. An early police assumption was that the murder was related to a local gang, who were known to blackmail and abuse prostitutes. Mary Ann Nicholls, estranged wife and mother of five children, did support herself by means of prostitution but her death was not at the hands of this gang. Nichols would become recognized as the first canonical murder victim of a perpetrator that would become known as Jack the Ripper. Her throat was slit, from the left ear nearly to center and another beginning by the right ear with such violence that the cuts went clear back to the vertebra. The perpetrator also stabbed her multiple times in the abdomen, with one cut beginning at the base of the abdomen and reaching up to the breast bone. Despite these wounds, there was very little blood at the scene. Her body was still warm when found. Similar to the lower trunk discovery in the Tottenham Court case. Nicholls' body appeared sometime within the half hour it took the police constable to walk his beat, which went right past this spot.

### Murder and mutilation of Mary Ann Chapman also known as Annie Sievy, 1888

Another mutilated female body was found in a back yard of a boarding house on Hanbury Street, Whitechapel just a week and a half after Mary Ann Nicholls was found. One of the tenants, who lived at the lodging house with his family, discovered the body at six a.m. on September 7. According to the medical examiner, there were bruises on her right temple and eyelid down to her chin and her tongue was swollen as if she had been suffocated. Yet, he testified there was no evidence of a struggle. The perpetrator slit the woman's throat and she bled out from the wound. The perpetrator then opened her abdomen, removed her organs, and arranged the body into a gruesome spectacle for someone to find. A female companion identified the victim soon after her body arrived at the morgue. Mary Ann Chapman had been estranged from her husband after the two suffered from the loss of two of their three children. Her husband continued to support her but after he died in 1886 she had to find other means of supporting herself, like selling flowers, crochet work, and, when necessary, her body for sex. Like Nicholls, Chapman had gone out to earn money for lodging the night of her murder.

### Murder of Elizabeth Stride, 1888

A jewelry salesman's path through Dutfield's Yard was blocked. He assumed the blockage was a drunk or sleeping person and went inside the International Working Men's Educational Club to get help to move the person out of the way. The salesman returned with two men and they discovered the person was not drunk or sleeping but murdered, her throat slit. It was generally believed that the salesman's presence

interrupted the murderer from any further mutilation of the body. The medical examiner pronounced the victim, Elizabeth Stride, dead at 1:16 am on September 30, on Berner-street, Whitechapel. She had been seen alive only a half hour earlier by a police constable walking his beat. Stride had been born in Sweden. On moving to London in 1866, someone recorded on her Certificate of Change that she could read tolerably well. She was married for about ten years before the two separated. She supported herself by sewing, charring, and prostitution.

#### Murder and mutilation of Catherine Eddowes, 1888

Catherine Eddowes had been taken to Bishopsgate Police Station earlier that night for intoxication. She was released at 12:55 am on September 30. Within an hour – just a half-hour after Stride was found near Berner-Street – Eddowes would be found dead, her throat cut, in Mitre-Square. Like Chapman, after the fatal strike the perpetrator opened her abdomen from breast bone to mons veneris, and pulled the intestines out. Unlike with the previous canonical Ripper victims, this time the perpetrator also cut her thigh upwards to the groin and sliced up the victim's face. Eddowes had gone to school until about the age of thirteen, when her mother died. Her aunt had sent her to school for at least two more years before Eddows ran off with a man named Conway. She and Conway had three children; they parted ways after sending one child to a home for specialized medical care and another died.

Whitehall, September 11-October 22, 1888\*

The origins of this case remain murky, as you will see.

On Monday, September 11, Frederick Moore noticed something lying in the mud of the river when the tide was going out. He found a ladder and climbed down to the bank of the river below the wharf to discover an arm lying there, wedged among some timber, bare except for a string tied tightly round its upper part. He was unable to detect any other remains in the mud nearby. Moore carried the arm back up to the embankment and transferred it to the police.

This discovery recalled a previous case from August 24 in which a parcel containing a foot and a leg were found in the Guildford railway station. Police thought the parcel had been thrown either from a passing train or a nearby bridge. A journalist for *The Standard* stated the two cases were unrelated as the arm found on September 11 was fresh, separated from its body not more than four days prior. Eventually the police would fetch these remains and bring them to London for examination where they were discovered to not be human at all but possibly bear. The bones had definitely been boiled.

A *Reynolds's* journalist reported an arm found near Grosvenor Railway Bridge on September 12 was first seen entangled among some timber. This was a day after Moore found the arm on the bank of the Thames amongst the timber near Messrs. Ward's timber yard, Grosvenor-road. According to the *Reynolds's* journalist, a number of boys were amusing themselves by pelting it with stones assuming it to be the carcass of a drowned dog. This was the only account of this discovery and therefore may be a false reportage.

Sometime between September 19 and 29 yet another arm was found. *The Morning Post* journalist claimed the arm was found on the nineteenth. *The Standard*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Reynolds's*, *Daily News*, and *The Illustrated Police News* pushed the discover date back to sometime during the week of September 23. The arm was found on

the grounds of the Blind Asylum in Lambeth-road. A *The Pall Mall Gazette* journalist would later publish an update on this arm, following the post-mortem examination. He reported that the medical experts declared the arm found at the Blind School, Southward, “had nothing whatever to do with this crime” as it had been dissected, not dismembered, and was supposed to have been placed at the school, perhaps as a terrible joke.<sup>28</sup>

On Monday, October 2, a worker at the building site of the New Scotland Yard noticed something odd down in the vault where the workers often stored their tools to prevent theft. The location was difficult to get to unless you knew your way around the site. He reported it the next day to the assistant foreman who then ordered the object be brought out for inspection. George Budgen went down into the vault and found an object wrapped up in cloth secured with three or four strings. After bringing it out into the yard, he cut the strings and removed the cloth to reveal a woman’s trunk. A *Lloyd’s* journalist added to the discovery account that the trunk was missing “important lower portions.”<sup>29</sup> The workers swore that the trunk could not have been present there for more than a few days. No one had seen or smelled it. However, based on the degree of bodily decomposition and the corresponding stain where the trunk had been found, it had been in that spot for anywhere between six to eight weeks.

The vault as well as the rest of the construction site was searched for any additional discoveries but nothing more was found. After police first denied the request, a journalist petitioned the owners of the construction company to allow him to bring his

<sup>28</sup> “The Post Mortem Examination at Westminster,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 04 October 1888.

<sup>29</sup> “The Whitehall Mystery,” *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 07 October 1888.

dog onto the site to aid in the search. The owners agreed. It did not take long for the dog to take a particular interest in a mound of earth down in the vault where the trunk was found. Workers uncovered a portion of the victim's leg. After this the police brought in bloodhounds but no further discoveries on the site were made.

The medical examiners and their consultants estimated the victim to be between the ages of twenty-four and thirty years of age, approximately five feet and eight inches tall, with fair skin. They said she was "thoroughly plump and fully developed," with a chest measuring thirty-five and half inches and a waist at twenty-eight and a half inches. Medical examiners, police, and journalists alike made much of the shape of her hands in trying to aid in the woman's identification. One of the woman's lungs had severe pleurisy. No cause of death could be found. At the close of the inquest on October 22, the jury simply concluded she was "Found dead."

#### Murder and mutilation of Mary Jane Kelly, 1888

This was the last canonical murder attributed to Jack the Ripper. It was also the most gruesome. The perpetrator worked in a private room, undisturbed, to carry out his desires. Mary Jane Kelly was approximately twenty-five years old, much younger than the previous victims. Kelly had been living with a man named Joseph Barnett. He moved out a couple months earlier because Kelly would offer prostitutes lodging who needed shelter for the night. Thomas Bowyer found her in her room at 13 Miller Court on November 9 when he came to collect rent money on behalf of her lessor.

The perpetrator began as he had previously, cutting the neck so that the victim bled out. Then the perpetrator flayed her thighs and abdomen and removed her breasts

from her body. Unlike the Rainham case in which the removal of the victim's breasts could attributed to hiding any identifying marks on the body, the removal of Kelly's breasts had nothing to do with concealment and everything to do with destroying the female body. The perpetrator then emptied the contents of her abdomen and rearranged them, the removed skin, and breasts around the body. He also sliced up her face, left calf, and arms. The Ripper would continue to be the lead suspect of most unsolved murders, especially of women, in London until February 1891. His name was also cried out globally whenever grisly murders were found, from Managua to Austin, Texas to Chicago to New York to Paris to Moscow.

#### Murder and dismemberment of John Gil, 1888

December 29. John Gil, an eight-year-old boy, was found dead in a stable on Mellor-street and Thorncliffe-road in Manningham, a suburb of Bradford, West Yorkshire. A *Pall Mall Gazette* journalist claimed that what befell this young boy was "worse than the worst of the East-End crimes," which says something following the gruesome mutilations committed upon Mary Jane Kelly.<sup>30</sup>

The cause of death was two stab wounds to the left chest. Then the mutilations began. The perpetrator cut out the boy's heart and set it near his throat. He cut off the boy's ears and genitals, then stuffed them, along with the boy's boots, into the opened abdomen cavity. The intestines were partially removed to accommodate the dismembered portions and boots. Both the arms and legs were removed and tied to the body making the

<sup>30</sup> "Fearful Murder and Mutilation," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 January 1889.



form more compact. What was done to this boy was indeed horrendous but I cannot help wonder what made his death worse than Mary Jane Kelly's as the journalist for the *Pall Mall Gazette* claimed. Was it his age, or, more likely, bias based on gender (and fear of castration)?

A local milkman, friendly with the boy and seen with him that morning, was the main suspect. Before he was murdered and dismembered, it was revealed during the inquest, the boy was "outraged." Twelve of fourteen inquest jury members submitted a verdict of "willful murder." W. Barret, the milkman, was arrested. The Magistrates, however, discharged Barret for the murder.

#### Murder and mutilation of Elizabeth Jackson, June 1889

Often included as one of the Thames Torso Mysteries, Elizabeth Jackson's death was much like the other unsolved cases examined in this study. She was killed, decapitated, dismembered, and her body found on the shores of the Thames from Battersea to Horseleydown. The main difference between this case and the others was that police were able to identify this victim based on a piece of clothing found with the body. She was twenty-four years old and had been pregnant when she went missing. Family and friends testified to the abusive domestic relationship she had been in so police went to great lengths to find her lover. However, they confirmed beyond a doubt that he had been nowhere in or within traveling distance of London when she was murdered.

Whitechapel, September 10-24, 1889\*

Constable Pennet was walking his beat in Whitechapel the morning of September 10. It usually took him a half hour to walk the full route which included Pinchin-street. Around half-past five, before the break of day, he paused to look at the railway arches. It was a habit of his to check these as drunks and homeless tended to use the arches as resting places. Two of the arches were boarded up but the others had had their fencing removed by local inhabitants to be used for heat. On this occasion, before he got to the arch, he noticed a bundle. Upon drawing closer he found the bundle was a woman's trunk, with arms attached, and with what he took to be two or three pieces of rag on it. He had looked at the arch a half hour earlier and there was nothing there. During the half hour while he was walking his beat he saw no one with a bundle, cart or vehicle that could have transported the body.

This was the only portion of the body discovered. The medical examiners estimated the woman had been between thirty and forty years old. She was about five feet and three inches tall with fair skin and dark brown hair. Her waist measured thirty-three inches. Her hands were soft and her fingernails well-kept. The medical examiners determined she had been murdered the day prior to when she was found. Cause of death was probably blood loss.

The victim was beaten before she died with defensive bruising on her arms and back. The bruises on her arms looked as if she had been tightly grasped. The bruises on her back looked like she had been kicked. Probably to pass the murder off as another "Jack the Ripper" case, the perpetrator(s) slashed her open from the inside of the left thigh up to her breastbone. Aside from rope marks around her waist, there were no visible distinguishing marks or peculiarities to help with identification. The pieces of rag on her

turned out to be an under slip that had been shredded. Alas, it proved to be no help in trying to identify her.

The inquest jury determined that this was a case of “Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.”<sup>31</sup>

### *Exposing Ghosts*

What follows next is a look into the portrayal of how these mutilated bodies were handled, which predominately focuses on newspaper descriptions of medical expert testimony. Because of the medical emphasis, chapter two also includes relevant cultural impressions of those who studied and practiced medicine and their relationship to the law as these cultural perceptions altered the way the forensic actions were discursively understood and encoded into the practices and precedence of the medio-legal system. Chapter three investigates the newspaper articles to identify myths about rape employed in discussions of murdered women. Like our contemporary moment, there were three main categories of these myths: myths that dealt with the event itself, myths about who commits such crime, and myths about the victims. Chapter four turns the investigative lens toward the heightened sexualization within the articles and its role in creating a rape culture. The chapter concludes by exploring eruptions of women’s voices amongst the male-dominated journalistic and editorial narratives, challenging the unjust system and men’s roles within it. The concluding chapter brings you back to the contemporary

<sup>31</sup> “The Whitechapel Mystery,” *Daily News*, 25 September 1889.

moment in which we find ourselves – haunted by the cultural legacy of the nineteenth-century and compounded by ahistorical application to defend and uphold an oppressive system.

## Chapter Two

### Crime, Forensics, and the Press

This chapter will focus on “Handling the Body,” the coded theme that appeared in 82 percent of the articles, more than any other theme. Within this theme I included parts of articles that specifically addressed viewing and touching the deceased. These included: 1) witness, police, and medical examiner statements describing the discovery and transport of the body, 2) medical reports and testimony detailing the condition of the body, and attempts to deduce cause of death, 3) public viewings of the body (i.e. attempts to identify the body, scientific curiosity and consultation, coroner and jury viewing at the beginning of the inquest), and 4) preservation and other bodily manipulations. In order to put the four aspects of the theme into context for the analysis, I have first provided some key historical background information.

#### *Anatomical Science*

During the first half of the sixteenth century, royal law granted a limited number of the bodies of executed felons to anatomists for study. Until this time, English and Scottish citizens interested in the workings of the human body either traveled to Italy, to learn from the new anatomical and medical schools, relied on Galen’s writings on the physical humours from the second century, or applied observations from studying non-human animals. England’s new law recognized the need for scientific study. However, by offering convicted criminals as a source of supply for that study, medical science, and

particularly dissection, became culturally entwined with government-sanctioned punishment: “dissection became recognized in law as a punishment, an aggravation to execution, a fate worse than death.”<sup>1</sup>

Religious belief held that on Judgement Day the dead would rise and the Christian God would determine whether the individual would either live in eternal joy in Heaven or suffer in Hell for the rest of eternity. Dissection, it was feared, would negatively impact that judgement and thus the fate of a person’s soul for the person would not be capable of respectable presentation before their divine judge. Ruth Richardson described the care and treatment of the dead as both a mourning process for the living and preparation for the deceased’s eternal existence. Because of this, “[h]ad Britain lacked a consensus attaching deep importance to the *post-mortem* care and integral burial of the corpse” punishments that mutilated the body post death “could have held no cultural meaning. The very fact that such methods were enlisted and maintained in the armoury of judicial terror – and against the worst of transgressors – reveals the cultural importance of the taboos such punishments violated.”<sup>2</sup>

For an example, see the engraving (left) from 1782 that depicted William Hunter’s (1718-1783) museum in Windmill Street on the day of resurrection. The engraver depicted Hunter surrounded by skeletons and bodies, some of whom are searching for their missing parts. “Where is my head?” asks one. Two others argued over

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Richardson, 29.

to whom an amputated leg belongs. But perhaps more important for discussion here, the female corpse demanded the surgeon restore her virgin-honour.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 2.1. William Hunter in His Museum on the Day of Resurrection.

A satirical comment about eighteenth-century anatomy studies, the lone woman in the image above crying out for her virginity - rather than a physical piece of her anatomy like her male compatriots - implied a sexual act of indecency transpired around the time of or after the woman's death. Indeed, Richardson wrote in *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute*, that at least part of the indecency of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dissecting room was sexual, stemming from the anatomists's and their students's "rude gaze" upon the naked corpse and "the INDECENT JESTS of unfeeling men."<sup>4</sup> Corpses

<sup>3</sup> H. Humphrey, "William Hunter (1718-1783) in his museum in Windmill Street on the day of resurrection, surrounded by skeletons and bodies, some of whom are searching for their missing parts," 1782 engraved print, Wellcome Library.

<sup>4</sup> Richardson, 95; emphasis in original.

were believed to be in a transitional state, neither living nor dead.<sup>5</sup> Exposure of the body (nakedness) and the possibility of assault upon it were very real threats of dissection along with the destruction of the corpses identity for eternity.<sup>6</sup>

During William Hunter's career, an Act – for better Preventing the Horrid Crime of Murder – bestowed upon English judges the option to add dissection to a convicted murderer's sentence. The purpose of this government-sanctioned dissection was foremost a punishment employed to create “popular imaginative apprehension of ‘justice’ and judicial retribution”<sup>7</sup> with an ancillary benefit to anatomists. However, as the number of medical students increased they, as well as surgeons investigating new surgical methods, put a strain on the limited number of cadavers available for dissection. Bodysnatching, the act of stealing corpses and selling them to anatomists, arose as a means to meet the increased demand for surgical training that exceeded the legally-sanctioned supply. In 1828, William Burke and William Hare abandoned the customary bodysnatching practice of waiting for a person to die. Fresh corpses made for a higher profit and they brought the freshest, murdering sixteen people within ten months and selling the deceased to the Edinburgh Medical School. They were arrested for murder and during the trial of William Burke, Burke suggested Dr. Robert Knox, to whom he sold his victims' bodies, kept the body of Mary Paterson “preserved in alcohol, apparently because she was pretty.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Richardson, 15; emphasis in original.

<sup>6</sup> Richardson, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Richardson, 36.

<sup>8</sup> George MacGregor, *The History of Burke and Hare*, 69.



Burke's suggestion spread, it would seem without much skepticism, for Henry Lonsdale attempted to recover Knox's reputation in his biography on Knox, arguing that Knox preserved Paterson merely out of a desire to have "the best illustration of female form and muscular development for his lectures"<sup>9</sup> and not out of a desire to look upon a beautiful, naked body of a woman. Lonsdale lamented the excitement Burke's suggestion caused for it became "the basis of many imaginative stories, and one novel ... in the London penny miscellanies."<sup>10</sup> Yet, Lonsdale also mentions that Paterson's body "could not fail to attract attention by its voluptuous form and beauty" as evidenced by the "students crowded around the table on which she lay, and [the] artists [that] came to study a model worthy of Phidias and the best Greek art."<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Hunter and Dr. Knox were two instances that reinforced a cultural sense of apprehension surrounding anatomists and their position over and conduct toward naked bodies, especially female naked bodies. Thanks to the Anatomy Act, and buttressed by new Poor Laws, working class and destitute women were objects of study more than any other class of women. This manifested culturally through a "persistent suggestion in [working class] penny fiction that the snatching and dissection of the female corpse constitute[d] a rape."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Henry Lonsdale, *A Sketch of the Life and Writings of Robert Knox*.

<sup>10</sup> Lonsdale.

<sup>11</sup> Lonsdale.

<sup>12</sup> Sally Powell, "Black Markets and Cadaverous Pies: The Corpse, Urban Trade and Industrial Consumption in the Penny Blood," 46.

During the period of this study, a pornographic novella was published titled *The Amatory Experience of a Surgeon* (1881). Like many other popular pornographic stories of the time, this one employed the narrator's career as a village physician to achieve the "sexualization of all reality,"<sup>13</sup> as Steven Marcus referred to it. The first two chapters do not involve the narrator's profession but, beginning with the third chapter through the novella's conclusion, the narrator used his position in order to gain the confidence and trust of unsuspecting patients and, in some cases, their parents or spouses. He also, on occasion, referred to his professional knowledge as providing him insight into whom to target and how to keep his "experiences" private. For example, upon finding the hymen intact on one of his targeted victims, the narrator diverged from his tale to discuss the unlikelihood of finding a "perfect maidenhead" on a young girl well "before they reach the age of fourteen."<sup>14</sup> There was also added an editor's note in which the narrator wanted to clarify erroneous information he had provided about pubescent girls and pregnancy.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, when a young, unmarried female victim/patient becomes pregnant he performed an abortion, "brought away the foetus, and removed with it all danger of discovery."<sup>16</sup>

The position of the medical doctor – the growing trust placed upon them by the bourgeoisie as the century progressed, the access their work provided to the human body,

<sup>13</sup> Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, 241. Marcus mentions, in addition to the surgeon of *Amatory Experiences* attorney, hotel manager, and traveling salesman.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Campbell Reddle, *The Amatory Experiences of a Surgeon*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> Reddle, 33.

<sup>16</sup> Reddle, 27.

and the still lingering fear of the abuse of that trust – was an ideal one for a pornographic narrative. Part of gaining societal respect laid in the carefully crafted discourse that suggested medical expertise was necessary to read signs upon the body and interpret them for others.<sup>17</sup> The narrator from *Amatory Experiences* frequently “read” his patients bodies and acted as if he had a better understanding of what she was feeling, both sensorily and affectively. He would use this knowledge, as he asserted, so that “All my patients who showed the least susceptibility were overcome by my potent argument, and vigorously fucked.”<sup>18</sup>

This same ability to read the body was used in debates over whether or not to use anesthesia on female patients. Whether for or against using anesthesia on women, all doctors interpreted a woman’s physical responses during surgery while unconscious as sexual despite the “newly dominated views in medicine and science that [held] normal women did not experience sexual desire or sexual pleasure.”<sup>19</sup> However, Mary Poovey noted how the medical definition of female sexuality was obviously a projection. She also argued the difficult position medical men faced: “Without even the underpinning of scriptural authority medical men found the very conditions of their labor enmeshed in the

<sup>17</sup> Ivan Crozier and Gethin Rees. “Making a Space for Medical Expertise: Medical Knowledge of Sexual Assault,” 285-304.

<sup>18</sup> Reddle, 28.

<sup>19</sup> Sharon Marcus, “The State’s Oversight’ From Sexual Bodies to Erotic Selves,” 520.

sphere of the sexual, which remained problematically suspended between physiological and moral governance.”<sup>20</sup>

In the newspaper accounts of the six cases of murdered and dismembered women studied here, the efforts of the medical examiners as well as those who discovered the bodies are all presented as having the cause of justice as their moral guide. Nonetheless, the newspaper accounts that document those honorable efforts also intimated lingering unease with the authority granted to these medical professionals and whether their actions were always appropriate as will be discussed later in this chapter.

### *Sex, Women's Bodies, and the Law*

When concerns over sexually transmitted diseases among the military became grave enough by the 1860s that the government needed to act, the decision was made to apply the legal provisions only to women because “the general opinion in all ranks of the Army” was that having a man examine a man for sexual disease was “disgusting” and “repugnant to every feeling.”<sup>21</sup> The Contagious Diseases Acts required police surgeons to routinely examine for women identified as prostitutes by a specially-dedicated police force as prostitutes. The special police rounded women up off the street where they may have been working, shopping, or heading home. There were no appeals for judgement errors the police may have made. All women detained were examined and, if determined

<sup>20</sup> Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, 49.

<sup>21</sup> “The Contagious Diseases Acts,” *The Times*, 24 June 1875, 6. Sir H. Johnstone’s statement from “Contagious Diseases Acts (1866-1869) Repeal,” Tuesday, May 24, 1870, Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates, 4.

to be infected – and the examination process was often inadequate to make such a determination<sup>22</sup> – the women were placed in a lock hospital anywhere between three weeks and nine months until she was diagnosed as cured.<sup>23</sup> Supporters of the Acts claimed that the women received great care by medical staff, a point opponents like Mr. Fowler disputed.

Fowler read an obstetric surgeon's letter who stated all women, under any circumstances, found such a private examination offensive, just as men did. Even respected middle-class women concealed the exam, when their health required it, out of shame and disgust. The surgeon's letter went on to criticize the examination en masse for a number of reasons including the use of the speculum which, he argued, could inflict great pain and permanent injury if not used with great care – care, he claimed, that could not be exercised at the speed in which these examinations were being conducted.<sup>24</sup> From the surgeon's description, it was no wonder that the Act's critics called the examination "instrumental rape." Additionally, since the dates of the inspections were publicly known and spectators showed up just to see the women rounded up, he added public humiliation to the list of affronts women suffered in the attempt to improve military men's sexual

<sup>22</sup> Victoria Bates, *Sexual Forensics in Victorian and Edwardian England*, 52-54. "Contagious Diseases Acts (1866-1869) Repeal," Tuesday, May 24, 1870, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Jane Jordan, "Prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Acts," 4. "Contagious Diseases Acts (1866-1869) Repeal," Tuesday, May 24, 1870, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Letter written by Mr. Baxter Langley, "Contagious Diseases Acts (1866-1869) Repeal," Tuesday, May 24, 1870, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 5.

health.<sup>25</sup> As early as 1867 debates began on whether or not to expand the Acts to the wider public, not just towns near military encampments. The popular medical journal *The Lancet*, read by medical and nonmedical professions, was a supporter of expanding the Acts.<sup>26</sup>

The Acts created a special police force that could arrest any woman they suspected of being a prostitute. If those women did not consent to an examination (which meant publicly and legally registering herself as a prostitute), they faced imprisonment. Again, we see the law, criminal punishment, and medical practice entwined as the Acts forced targeted women to be examined by police surgeons. While the law stated – and its proponents argued – only prostitutes were impacted, in reality who was and was not a prostitute was far less clear as assumptions about class, occupation, and other biases meant women who may occasionally or never traded sex for money were judged by the special police force to be prostitutes. Every two weeks these women were brought before police surgeons of garrison towns for inspection.

Furthermore, there were no medical tests to prove venereal disease. Gram staining (to detect gonorrhea) was not developed until 1884 and it would not be recognized in medical textbooks for another twenty-one years. Additionally, Wasserman testing (to detect syphilis) would not be developed until 1906.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, “proving” a woman had

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Jordan, 2-3.

<sup>27</sup> Bates, 52.

a venereal disease required “naked eye observation,” a highly interpretive process.<sup>28</sup> Much of this interpretation was based on the doctors’ observations about physical variabilities of the human body and assumptions about class and gender. As Victoria Bates pointed out, “‘abnormal’ signs only made sense in relation to the ‘normal’ body or behavior ... these norms represented not only the typical female but also the *ideal* female, in both body and behavior; physical ‘womanhood’ was thus inextricably woven with embodied and performed ‘femininity.’<sup>29</sup>

It was physically impossible to rape an infant, medical experts claimed, at the same time arguing that only in cases of infant rape was the victim unable to consent or defend themselves. In cases where a female victim was under the age of legal consent, medical experts weighed in about the child’s development, undermining the victim’s legal protections by suggesting that the child was sexually precocious, even to the extent that she pursued the man for sex. Girls, particularly working-class girls, were thought to mature faster than boys. In fact, one physician claimed that a girl of twelve was physically stronger and fully capable of defending herself from the sexual advances of a fifteen year old boy.<sup>30</sup> Drs. William Guy and David Ferrier, writers of medical jurisprudence textbooks, admitted that “the crime of rape is most frequently committed on the person of a female who has not had sexual intercourse.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, their textbooks also

<sup>28</sup> Bates, 52-53.

<sup>29</sup> Bates, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Bates, 111.

<sup>31</sup> Horatio R. Storer, “The Law of Rape,” 55.

taught of the variability of the human body and that the medical examiner was required to interpret the physical signs to establish whether the victim was a virgin or not<sup>32</sup> (which should be immaterial in cases of rape but they believed that once an individual was sexually active, the likelihood that a rape occurred decreased substantially). Teaching medical examiners to interpret the body and present their evidence to the jury, weakened the legal protections for these young victims.

Male medical professionals generally thought it was impossible for women to be raped. Dr. Lawson Tait, a gynecologist, wrote in 1894 that “No sane man can believe, that a woman of average height and strength, and not overcome by drugs, could be violated by one man.”<sup>33</sup> He also published widely on what he believed was the prevalence of women falsely charging men with rape. And he was not alone. A writer for *The Medical Press* related that “few medical men of experience believe much in rape in the case of a moderately healthy and vigorous woman.”<sup>34</sup> Perhaps most famously, Dr. Horatio R. Storer, an American obstetrician, said that “it is physically impossible for any real penetration to occur, and that ordinarily it is impossible for a man without assistance to gain access to the penetralia of an unwilling woman, as the wise queen’s illustration of an attempt to sheathe a sword in a vibrating scabbard well exemplifies.”<sup>35</sup> These medical

<sup>32</sup> Bates.76-94.

<sup>33</sup> Bates, 105.

<sup>34</sup> Bates, 105.

<sup>35</sup> Bates, 105.



men believed, promoted, and set legal precedence that would sabotaged women's attempts at justice for over a century.

Considering the heavy skepticism and distrust of women of any age, it may be surprising to learn that Parliament debated the role of sexual consent. They determined that individuals who had been drugged, were sleeping, or otherwise unconsciousness were incapable of giving consent as were the mentally disabled. However, within individual criminal cases, consent tended to be considered a factor of consideration mainly by judges. Medical testimony could not provide evidence of whether or not a person granted permission. "Medical literature showed awareness that 'against the will' might mean more than physical resistance ... but emphasised that the social and legal dimensions of such questions were beyond the remit of sexual forensics."<sup>36</sup> Yet they could – and did – attempt to interpret consent through physical evidence that limited consent to "signs of struggle" as an indication that consent was not given. And, expecting the victim to physically fight back, the "signs of struggle" had to correspond to bruising and wounds found on the perpetrator. If these signs were perceived as not sufficiently present or unclear then medical examiners testified in court that consent was presumed to exist – even though the exams occurred well before or after such visible manifestations would be present. This limited conception of consent had a significant impact. Juries tended to focus on the physical evidence and medical testimony forgoing the broader definition of consent.<sup>37</sup> The wide-spread and deep belief in "signs of struggle" meant that

<sup>36</sup> Bates, 118.

<sup>37</sup> Bates, 122.

women had often had to be killed for the case to be seen as evidence of rape, which made the laws to protect them mere pretense. Magistrates and grand juries dismissed cases before going to trial for insufficient signs of resistance. Newspapers tended to print stories only of the most violent cases. The outcome was a narrowing of the concept of what “real” rape or sexual assault looked like.<sup>38</sup>

### *Women, Violence, and Narrative in the News*

In early September of 1873 (Battersea), the inhabitants of London learned of a “Supposed Murder and Mutilation of a Woman.” Merely the mention of the victim’s gender, “of a woman,” changed the way the audience would read the case. The assumption that the case would be tied to a sexual relationship was so dominant – by the majority of writers and, they assumed, their readers – that one writer lightly chided his audience that just because the victim was a woman did not mean nongendered motives should not be considered. Still, the lead theories in all of these cases proposed that the murder was the outcome of an unfortunate transgression that fell within the boundaries of normative sexual-gender relations and behaviors: a violent bargemen, known to abuse his wife, finally killed her; a foreign gentleman that took a special (i.e. feigning romantic) interest in a widow (and her inheritance); a prostitute killed by a client; a fallen woman who dies after a bungled abortion; and, a discarded mistress.

In over 160 articles on the six cases of this study, only three other motives were mentioned that did not deal with sexual-gender relations of some kind. One was simple

<sup>38</sup> Bates, 118 and 122.

greed, killing the woman for money and jewelry allegedly in her possession at the time of death. The second, having exhausted all of the usual justifications, suggested the victim was murdered by an infamous escaped criminal from Broadmoor Asylum whom the police had been unable to recapture. The third appeared frequently and stemmed from a continued distrust of anatomists going back to the period of bodysnatching and the desperate ways anatomists acquired bodies for study and training. The latter two theories were more often than not couched in language that bespoke contempt for anyone who might believe such a ridiculous premise. Predominately, the default motive for the murders assumed that victim and killer were in some kind of sexually-related relationship.

The consequence of limiting the motive to one related to a romantic or sexual relationship was that it shifted the focus of the case from the criminal act to what she did to provoke her killer, similar to how the onus of adult women who charge rape had to prove their victimhood rather than the defendant having to prove his innocence.<sup>39</sup> (A close examination of the various victim-blaming and other identity-constructed motives appears in the next chapter.) This gendered and sexualized limitation of the cases also reinforced the association between murders of women and sexual assault (and vice versa), which Monckton-Smith would later observe connected women's fear of rape with a fear of death.<sup>40</sup> Remember the female victims of the Spring-heeled Jack victims mentioned in chapter one? The physical violence was horrific but the narrative's essence

<sup>39</sup> Bates, 106.

<sup>40</sup> Monckton-Smith, 2.

was that following the attacks these women were now mere ghost of themselves. The loss of bodily autonomy in either instance was the same.

The relevance for this argument stemmed from the way this gendered and sexualized narrative placed added emphasis on the victims' bodies, an emphasis that was made all the stronger by heavy repetition of information from previous editions, as was standard practice for newspapers.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, there was little else to focus on than the bodies when every possible lead dried up. This resulted in stunting the usual formula for reporting crime – discovering the body, describing the crime scene and the injuries, recapping the inquests, updating on the status of police pursuits, and, if there was a magistrate's indictment, covering the trial and sentencing.<sup>42</sup> Without a perpetrator or a crime scene, let alone a magistrate's indictment, the narratives fell into a loop that concentrated on describing the body – as it was found, as it was transported, as it was examined, as it was preserved, as it was viewed – and speculating on the motive for murder and the dismemberment.

These two genre characteristics for crime reporting placed added emphasis on the victims' bodies, bodies that were already exceedingly sexualized because of their state of undress and gender. The emphasis appeared more than usual because of the lack of developments in the case. There were no crime scenes to provide clues nor did any possible suspects lead to any strong developments. In contrast, for example, in the case of Harriet Jones, Henry Wainwright was caught conveying Jones' dismembered body to a

<sup>41</sup> L. Perry Curtis, Jr., *Jack the Ripper and the London Press*, 95.

<sup>42</sup> Curtis, 95.

new location. From the very beginning, a suspect was in hand. Identification of the victim was accelerated because family and friends testified to Jones' uncharacteristic

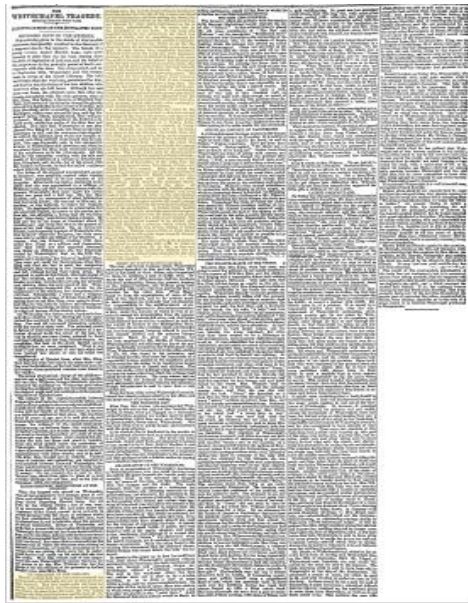


Figure 2.2. "The Whitechapel Tragedy," Lloyds's Illustrated Newspaper, 19 September 1875.

disappearance the year before, and Jones relationship with Wainwright. Reports included questioning Wainwrights associates, including his wife, who was with him when he was conveying the body to a new location, along with his current mistress, and police investigations into his properties. In a four and a half column spread in *Lloyds' Illustrated Newspaper*, less than half a column was spent discussing Jones' body (see

Figure 2.2 on

left). In comparison to Figure 2.3 below, one of the unsolved cases from this study, the difference was extreme.

### *Analysis of the Cases*

*The Times* ran an article, nearly two columns long, on the first unsolved murder and dismemberment case (Battersea, 1873) that had 171 specific textual references to the victim's body. Compared to Figure 2.2 above (with only 24 N-count for bodily terms), the majority of text in Figure 2.3 (on the right) focused



Figure 2.3. "The Thames Murder," The Times 16 September 1873.

exclusively on details about the body dominated the article. Both women had been murdered and dismembered but because there was a perpetrator and strong indication of whom the victim was in the example given in Figure 2.2, the focus of the story was elsewhere. In the six unsolved cases, there was little else to focus on but her body if the editor chose to keep reporting on the case. N-count calculations provided an indicator of coverage (24 in Figure 2.2 compared to 171 in Figure 2.3) yet were insufficient to really encompass the sheer scale of what that individual word count amounted to within a single article.

In 1873 *The Morning Post* included long excerpts on the (Battersea) case as reported in both *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*. The only new piece of information offered in *The Lancet* article was a description of the uterus as “very small and firm” and the “areolæ around the nipples are pale.”<sup>43</sup> While these reproductive parts were mentioned in several articles, this author was the only one to describe them. Ivan Crozier and Gethin Rees observed in their study on medical expertise in sexual assault cases that the most compelling evidence presented in the cases was the evidence provided by doctors that detailed female genitalia. The medical profession, exempted from social censure of detailed descriptions of the female body, was excused out of necessity and because they were thought to be the only ones who could discuss the female body “with even a modicum of decency.”<sup>44</sup> Through the reporting – or copying and reprinting – of

<sup>43</sup> “The Thames Mystery,” *The Morning Post*, 19 September 1873.

<sup>44</sup> Ivan Crozier and Gethin Rees, “Making a Space for Medical Expertise: Medical Knowledge of Sexual Assault,” 289.

medical discussions, the public was given access to imagine the body in broken but minute detail that, by any other source, would have been considered pornographic.

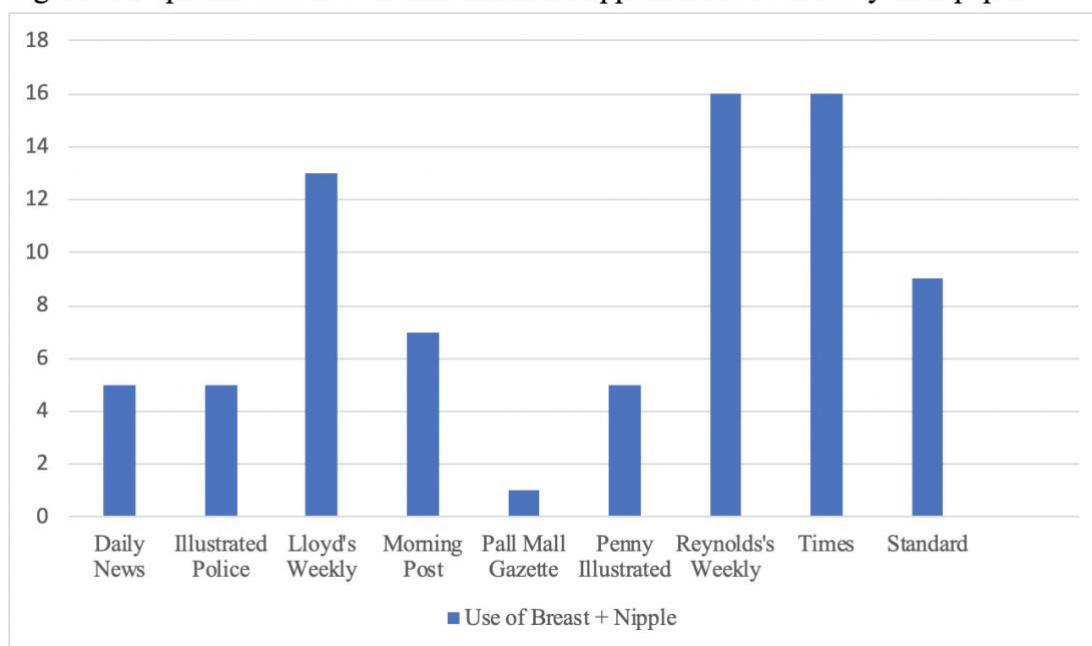
The majority of newspaper writers avoided using terms like breasts in favor of more oblique language like “upper-right quarter.” The word breast mainly appeared when quoting a medical officer or witness. Despite the taboo, the word breast was specifically mentioned a total of seventy-seven times across all cases.<sup>45</sup> Adding the word nipple to that count, as the two were not always used together, increased the number to ninety-two.<sup>46</sup> To give that N-count greater perspective, the bulk of the body parts mentioned – specific organs, bones like the pelvis and spine, and other explicit smaller portions of the body – appeared less frequently than breasts and nipples. Much like Figure 2.3, the coverage within any given article discussing the body was greater than any total calculation of a specific word as that part could, and often was, referred to obliquely as well as specifically. Only in one instance was the use of the word breast not referring to the victim’s breast(s); during the Battersea (1873) case one article claimed to have found a note detailing the murder in which the perpetrator said he “may as well make a clean breast of it.”<sup>47</sup> Whether considered a conservative or sensational paper did not make a difference, as Figure 2.4 below shows.

<sup>45</sup> This total is not limited to within the “Handling the Body” node. Most of occurrences outside of the “Handling the Body” node are descriptions given by the authorities to either aid identification or in requests for information with a reward leading to conviction.

<sup>46</sup> In the fifteen articles that use the word nipple, seven of those articles do not include the word breast.

<sup>47</sup> “The Supposed Murder and Mutilation of a Woman,” *Daily News*, 10 September 1873.

Figure 2.4. Specific mention of the breast and nipple across all cases by newspaper



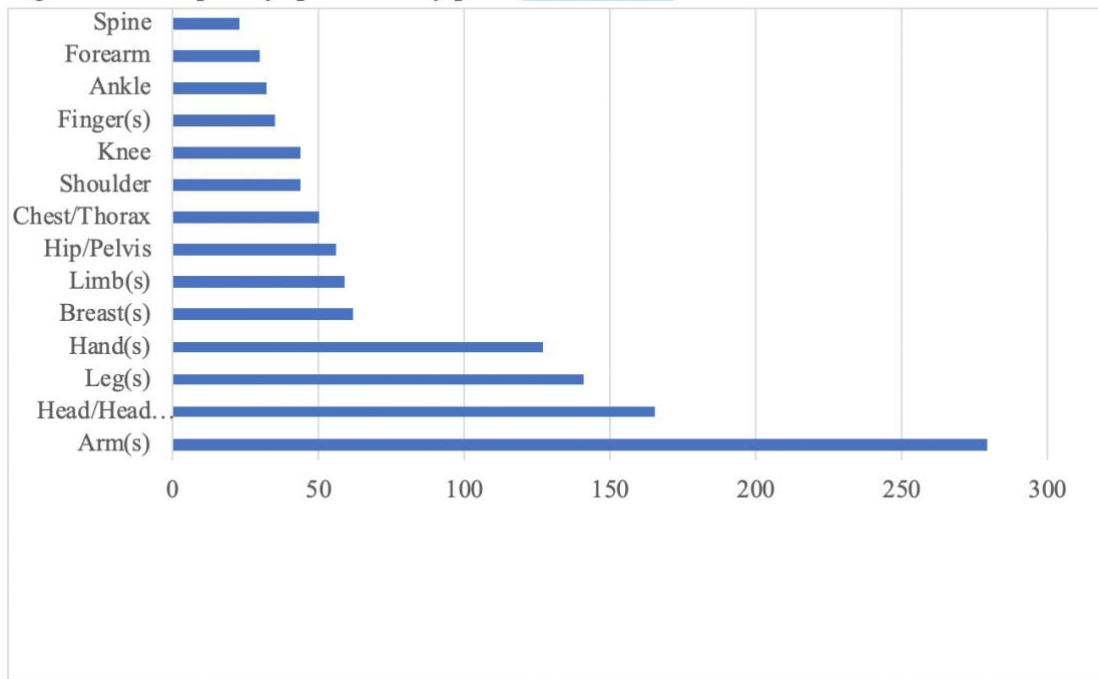
Considering the chest portion of the body was not found in Putney (1874) and Tottenham Court (1884) and therefore do not contribute to the N-count, a frequency of ninety-one occurrences about the victims' breast was high. To give that N-count greater perspective, the bulk of the body parts mentioned – specific organs, bones like the pelvis and spine, and other explicit smaller portions of the body – appeared less frequently than breasts and nipples. In just one article from Battersea (1873), the word breast was mentioned a total of thirteen times. In fact, the only body parts mentioned more than the breasts were the head (165), leg(s) (141), and hand(s) (127) (see figure six for full breakdown).<sup>48</sup> Justly slightly more discussed, and thoroughly as intimate, were the thigh(s) at

<sup>48</sup> A partial list of body parts specifically named with less frequency than the breast(s) and nipple: face (71), and neck (66), limb(s) (59), hair (49), shoulder(s) (44), knee(s) (44), elbow(s) (35), nose (36), finger(s) (26), and eyes (10).



an N-count of 98. For an example of just how intimate the thigh was, consider the coroner in the Battersea (1873) case who had to correct a witness who mislabeled the pelvis as the thigh. William Bennet, a platelayer, identified his lower side when asked to describe what he called his thigh. The part he found was where the thigh and leg were cut off from the trunk of the body. Here are two very intimate body parts with notable N-counts, especially when considering all six bodies were decapitated and the neck was only mentioned 66 times. Furthermore, the breasts were only mentioned in four of the six cases.

Figure 2.5. Frequency specific body parts were named across all cases



With such a heavy emphasis on the breasts, the lack of their mention when removed from the body in the Rainham (1887) case does seem odd, especially if the author from *The Illustrated Police* was being truthful when he wrote that the discovery of the breastless torso “created considerable sensation in the neighbourhood, and, indeed,

throughout the whole country.”<sup>49</sup> Only one article, printed in *The Times*, mentioned the breasts were intentionally removed.<sup>50</sup> Possibly any discussion of the deliberate removal of the breasts was a stronger taboo, something too horrible to mention even for newspapers that seemed to revel in the horror caused by the violence to the body. The lower part of the trunk was also missing its reproductive organs. Neither the removal of the breasts or the reproductive organs stopped the medical examiners from making claims about the victim’s maternal status, however.<sup>51</sup> If it could be proved that the woman had had a child – and therefore was sexually active – eliminated any chance that she could be a victim – regardless of what happened to her. Hence, discovering whether the woman had had a child served two purposes: it helped with identification but more than that it determined whether or not the victim was considered complicit in her own undoing.

The manner in which the victims were found further affixed a sexual motive to the crime as all victims were unclothed. Some were found nude while others were concealed to varying degrees. Only the final victim (Whitechapel, 1889), covered in a bloodied chemise rent from bottom to top, was found with an item of clothing, which offered no coverage to the freshly washed body. The torn and bloody chemise discovery supported the assumption that the murder was sexually-driven all the more because of the intimate association of the chemise to the naked female body. That it was rent and bloodied further tainted the body with a strong animalistic carnality. The medical

<sup>49</sup> “The Horrible Discovery,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 14 September 1873.

<sup>50</sup> “Horrible Discovery,” *The Illustrated Police News*, 21 May 1887.

<sup>51</sup> “The Discovery of Human Remains,” *The Times*, 13 July 1887.

examiners described all the victims as fully-developed women and noted their observations of the women's shape and skin. The word "plump" frequently occurred – a word used for prostitutes.<sup>52</sup> Whether or not these women were "respectable" before, their honor was now severely questioned. Their bodies were now tainted with impressions of sexual immorality. Even those victims that were wrapped in canvas or muslin would have that covering ripped open as the people who found the package opened it to see what was inside, often leaving the covering open for a gathering crowd to witness as in the case of Rainham (1887). Many of these body parts would then be conveyed to the police station, where strangers' hands held naked female flesh, and all recounted within the newspapers for salacious effect.

Because of the extent to which the victim was dismembered and the manner in which her body was disposed, the Battersea (1873) case included a great deal of testimony of witnesses and officers physically handling the naked body. The repeated cataloguing of who found which portion of the naked body and to whom they gave it to haunted the articles with a sense of promiscuity despite no direct language of the kind. While it was normal for the inquests to hear from each person who handled the body as part of the chain of evidence, with this case even the Coroner exclaimed at its excessiveness.<sup>53</sup> For example, the first portion of the body found, which was the naked "left breast entire," was discovered by Richard Fane and two other officers. Fane then took the piece to his superior on the Thames Police station-ship who then directed him to

<sup>52</sup> Pamela K. Gilbert, *Victorian Skin*, 299-300.

<sup>53</sup> "Horrible Discovery," *The Illustrated Police News*, 21 May 1887.

take it to the Battersea station. Once there he had to wait while an inspector sent for the medical examiner. There was no mention of covering the breast throughout this process – as was occasionally mentioned with other anatomical parts - meaning that anyone Fane passed would have seen the exposed piece of flesh. The other breast was similarly seen/touched by no less than four individuals before finally being secured with the medical examiner. The newspapers did not have to print (and reprint) the discoveries and testimony from the inquests with such detail. Not every shocking death received this kind of coverage; the women’s body found in Putney (1874) received very little coverage. For the Battersea (1873) victim, regardless of the woman’s level of social respectability prior to her death, the circumstances of her death and the way the newspapers editors handled it treated her like a low category of prostitute. It was the “rude gaze” the public feared with the early anatomists but on a much, much larger scale. The perpetrator may have destroyed the women’s body and her identity for eternity but the newspapers made it a spectacle in which the audience could imagine not only the perpetrator’s actions, but those who discovered her, and the medical examiner’s scrutiny of her body too.

The extensive dismemberment of the Battersea (1873) victim made identification near impossible. To ease this challenge, Mr. Edward Hayden, the resident medical officer, was said to have taken several measures: preserving the pieces in wine, arranging the pieces together, next sewing the pieces together and placing it in a bathtub of wine, and, finally and uncannily, positioning the pieces together onto a mechanical form, one that allowed the body to be re-positioned in a lifelike seated pose for a photograph.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> “The Horrible Discovery in the Thames,” *The Standard*, 9 September 1873.

From the newspaper descriptions, the victim became a macabre doll in Hayden's hands. The intimacy of holding the naked pieces while sewn or fixed to a metal form (not to mention the total control over the body) contrasted with the skillful destruction of the body by the perpetrator. Yet both Hayden and the victim's murderer ultimately and intimately possessed her body, shaping her to their will. Hayden's described protectiveness over the body – his screening of applicants to identify the body as well as fiercely guarding who was permitted to see the photograph – imbued Hayden's actions, especially those who were still uncomfortable with the amount of power doctors had over their patients, with a sense of impropriety. That the laying out of the dead had traditionally been performed by women, and often still was by the lower classes that could not afford the full services of a funeral undertaker, contributed to the unspoken unease, real or manufactured, reflected in the author's recording of Hayden's actions with the body.<sup>55</sup>

In 1896 *The Lancet* published an article that suggested the working classes still viewed the post-mortem as an “assault on the body.”<sup>56</sup> In addition to spiritual beliefs – the lingering of the spirit for an indeterminate amount of time after death and the need to maintain the physical integrity of the corpse for Resurrection Day – Julie-Marie Strange expressed another possible factor that could have had an impact on the working classes' negative perception of the post-mortem. She argued “that the high-handed conduct of

<sup>55</sup> “The Thames Murder,” *The Times*, 16 September 1873; “The Thames Mystery,” *The Standard*, 15 September 1873; and “The Mysterious Thames Tragedy,” *Lloyds' Illustrated Newspaper*, 21 September 1873.

<sup>56</sup> Richardson, 17-22.

some professionals in dealing with the bereaved created ill-feeling towards institutional medicine and raised questions over the degree to which the dead would be treated with respect.”<sup>57</sup> Yet, in cases of crime, there was a growing dependence on the physical examination to interpret physical signs on the body that would indicate what had transpired. This examination was all the more necessary when the victim was female, for her involvement in a crime, even as the victim, tainted her with suspicions of feminine impropriety. Unless her assailant met the middle-class cultural definition of masculinity – and that could only happen if there was a suspect – medical examiners searched her body for bodily “truths” needed to fill in the corresponding narrative, often focusing on her culpability.

As the victims in these six cases were all adult women, several assumptions were made about them by the medical community. Once girls reached puberty, they were thought to develop more quickly so that a girl of twelve was thought capable of defending herself against a boy aged fifteen.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, a child might not recognize an act was wrong but an adult female was expected to, despite cultural language that purposefully obscured such knowledge on the grounds of safeguarding feminine morality. Kim Stevenson has argued that the ambiguity and anodyne language used relating to sex hid distinctions between seduction and violation.<sup>59</sup> The problem with explicit language and idealized feminine innocence also made it more difficult for women

<sup>57</sup> The *Lancet*, 30 May 1896, as quoted in Julie-Marie Strange’s *Death, Grief, and Poverty*, 92.

<sup>58</sup> Bates, 111.

<sup>59</sup> Stevenson, 238-239.

to discuss what happened to them in court. If they had the language, then judges and juries interpreted that knowledge to mean they were sexually active and therefore wanton. If the women did not have the language, then judges and juries were more likely to see them as innocent but, by not being able to communicate to the judges and juries what happened, the women were unable to convince them through their testimony alone, if they testified at all. Linguistic ignorance helped prove the victim's innocence, which was often necessary to counter medical experts assumption that women – and even girls nearing puberty – possessed enough innate sexual knowledge to understand what was happening during a sexual assault as if all the intricacies related to sex came with the physical maturation of the body.

In all the cases there was some discussion about signs of struggle. As discussed earlier, for medical examiners, the presence or absence of defensive wounds equated to whether or not the victim had consented. In a few of the cases, there was insufficient evidence for the medical examiners to make such a determination, either because the portions were so small or there just was not enough of the body found. Even in these extreme circumstances, the lack of data was interpreted as suggestive of consent. For example, in September of 1888 (Whitehall) townspeople found an arm floating in the river near Pimlico. *Reynolds's Newspaper* reported that the medical examiner found “no bruises suggestive of violence but there were one or two slight abrasions, caused probably by contact with bridges or floating timber”<sup>60</sup> from its time in the water. *The*

<sup>60</sup> “Another London Tragedy,” *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 16 September 1888.

*Standard* said that the arm “bore no bruises or signs of violent usage.”<sup>61</sup> This could imply that the women did not fight back when the perpetrator attacked. From that implication another followed: the victim and perpetrator were in an intimate relationship, one in which the perpetrator would be able to get close to the victim. This was made all the more salient when the torso, minus the pelvic section, was retrieved a couple weeks later and was also found lacking in defensive marks. Despite Dr. Bond, the medical examiner, testifying to bruising around the neck, which indicated the victim was strangled, neither he nor any of the newspaper reporters including this bruising when discussing signs of a struggle. For the doctor and the journalists, at least, the victim should have known what the perpetrator intended. She should have fought until her dying breath. Because they could not see the evidence they required of her innocence, they determined she must have done something that prompted her undoing.

Similarly, the Battersea (1873) victim’s possible role in her death was also often questioned. The bruise most frequently mentioned was the blow to the temple. Whether or not it was a killing strike or one that would render the victim insensible, the medical examiners could not agree but they did agree that the bruise was caused by two strikes in immediate succession and delivered with considerable violence.<sup>62</sup> A great deal less emphasis appeared on the bruise to the victim’s right thigh which happened shortly before death.<sup>63</sup> Authors who chose to sympathize with the victim stressed the ferocity of

<sup>61</sup> “Strange Discovery in the Thames,” *The Standard*, 12 September 1888.

<sup>62</sup> “The Thames Mystery,” *The Morning Post*, 16 September 1873.

<sup>63</sup> “The Thames Mystery,” *The Morning Post*, 16 September 1873.



the blow to the temple and what effect it would have. Authors with less sympathy for the victim – those who saw the lack of bruising on her arms as a sign she did not fight back – mentioned the blow as the natural outcome of the poor choices this woman had made. They said: she should have known better than out so late a night, she should have known not to go near the park at that time, she should have known better than confiding into working-class men that she was going to be coming into money, etc.

The newspaper coverage depicting the bruising from the Whitechapel (1889) case, on the other hand, showed quite a bit of bruising. The medical examiner detailed a total of four bruises on the back, eight bruises on the right arm, and seven bruises on the left that were all caused shortly before death.<sup>64</sup> The mention of the freshness and location of the bruising was key to demonstrating active resistance. The bruises were located in a place where the victim “would not be likely to inflict [them] on herself, but which are easily accounted for on the supposition that she has struggled ... These bruises are most likely to be found on the groins, thighs, wrists, or breasts, or about the throat.”<sup>65</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, the court (and wider culture) expected victims’ bodies to display these signs of resistance to demonstrate that she did not consent or acquiesce. Particularly in regards to a common sexist myth that women said no to sex when they really meant yes. The only way women could show they did not consent – and even fighting back could be interpreted as part of the “game” women played – was by physically and vocally

<sup>64</sup> “The Whitechapel Mystery,” *Daily News*, 25 September 1889.

<sup>65</sup> Medical jurist Francis Ogston as quoted in Bates, 113.

resisting, “as much as she could, so as to make the [perpetrator] see and know that she was really resisting to the utmost” and not just feigning a struggle.<sup>66</sup>

*The Times* reported on the Whitechapel (1889) inquest that the surgeon’s assistant hypothesized the bruises on the victim’s right arm “would have been caused by the arm having been tightly grasped.”<sup>67</sup> *Reynolds’s Newspaper* added to *The Times* report that at least one of the bruises on the victim’s back appeared as if she had been kicked.<sup>68</sup> Despite some articles suggesting this victim was a prostitute like Jack the Ripper’s victims, there were efforts made to make this victim seem more worthy of public sympathy. The tension over who was and who was not a “true” victim will be investigated more deeply in the next chapter. However, the importance here is the entwinement of forensic medicine with victim-blaming rape myths. The act of imbuing legal precedent and forensic training for generations with these kinds of sexist beliefs created ghosts within the system that has continued to haunt women for over a century.

The spectacle made of the bodies within the newspaper articles on these cases were enmeshed with gendered assumptions that held very real consequences that sexualized violence against women and deepened the cultural myth associating rape with murder. By limiting the scope of the crime to an interpersonal struggle within a heterosexual frame, the newspaper audience, and indeed the wider culture, would limit the multiple ways of

<sup>66</sup> Quote is from *Regina v Rudland* (1865) 4 F and F 495 as quoted in Bates, 109. On the same page Bate discusses the distinction women had to prove that they were actively resisting their attacker and not just acting to maintain a sense of respectability.

<sup>67</sup> “The Whitechapel Murder,” *The Times*, 25 September 1889.

<sup>68</sup> “The Whitechapel Murder,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 29 September 1889.

understanding the murder. With such little evidence to work with, these murders could have been viewed in a variety of ways, but instead one reporter had to remind his audience that other motives besides a relationship gone wrong might have been the cause.

Given the above – limited gendered rationale, lurid details of discovery, medical details that in any other context would be immoral – the violence inflicted upon these bodies, and everything that happened to it afterwards, was sexualized. There was insufficient evidence to deduce what happened to these women and yet the newspaper reports of these cases implied the murder and dismemberment were the consequence she suffered for being the victim of a sexual assault. Thorough forensic examinations by multiple doctors analyzing her reproductive organs further supported the cultural connection between sexual assault and murder. The only thing left to do was to determine whether or not the victim was of loose morals (she brought the crime upon herself) or steadfast virtue (she was a “real” victim), as will be shown in the next chapter on embodying identity.



## Chapter Three

### Rape Myths

The previous chapter demonstrated that gendered assumptions embedded within crime reports by (primarily male) editors, journalists, and medical professionals, particularly the spectacle made of the victims' bodies, sexualized violence against women, deepened cultural myths about rape and associated myths about rape with women murdered by men. Based on that chapter's evidence, which established a cultural association between rape and women murdered by men, this chapter takes the next step to analyze the textual data to discover the presence of any "rape myths" – widespread beliefs and assumptions about gender, sexuality, and violence – that operated as rationales for the murders.<sup>1</sup> Because these myths are widespread, their acceptance would

<sup>1</sup> Anette Ballinger (2012) observed an increase in sexual violence scholarship, particularly "feminist analyses of the gendered nature of sexual murder," following the 1981 conviction of Peter Sutcliffe for the murder of thirteen women (312). She quoted Jill Radford's (1992) claim that femicides are "a recurring expression of male sexual violence; that women-blaming explanations for this crime are used so frequently that they have become a creditable part of mainstream discourse, even encoded in law ...and that media representations of the perpetrators of this crime as psychopaths or mad beasts masks the sexual politics of femicide" (Radford quoted in Ballinger 313-314). Despite a shift in crime category from sexual assault or rape to murder, the same rape-myth acceptance is employed. Confirming a conflation between the offences of rape and murder, especially when committed against women by men, Jane Monckton-Smith (2006) found that "murders of women are routinely gendered and sexualized by both the media and the police which powerfully links fatal or potentially fatal violence with sexual assault and vice versa" (2). Not only was there a link, she found that "murders of women can be and are considered, in some circumstances to be 'virtual rapes'" (2) and that, problematically, in cases "of homicide where the female victim cannot give an account of the circumstances ... a gendered motivation is merely assumed ... [e]ven where the crime scene indicates no immediate evidence to suggest a gendered motivation" (231). While admitting there are statistical grounds for this assumption, Monckton-Smith pointed out that by assuming a gendered motivation, police and the media shift the focus from

have embedded them into social structures and institutional practices so that they often went unquestioned even when appearing in newspaper articles on crime.

The term “rape culture,” as it is understood today and as part of the #MeToo Movement, means a culture that morally condemns gender-based sexual violence – in the abstract; while the social reality of that same culture continues to find excuses for such actions whenever they arise while also reinforcing a wide array of cultural scripts, like rape myths, that support, even encourage, sexual violence. This is not a term the Victorians would have used but it is something that they dealt with in courts, in Parliament, in newspapers, and in social movements. I have no doubt that when Florence Fenwick Miller wrote her letter to the *Daily News* editor, “Woman Killing No Murder,” in 1888 that, had she known the term, she would have used it. Instead, she has to forego the summative term and describe the frustration of living within a rape culture:

Yet week by week and month by month women are kicked, beaten, jumped on till they are crushed, chopped, stabbed, seamed with vitriol, bitten, eviscerated with red-hot pokers, and deliberately set on fire—and this sort of outrage, if the woman dies, is called “manslaughter;” if she lives, it is a “common assault.” Common indeed! And men who would not themselves lay a hand on a woman except in kindness ... are content to know that other men treat other women so, and that demoralized judges and magistrates throw the shield of the law and the authority of their office, not over the victim, but over the crime.

Miller goes on to argue that brutal assaults on women are of little consequence in the social reality of the Victorians despite the cries of “horror!” and “outrage!” Despite laws

assessing the seriousness of the offense or the dangerousness of the offender to instead examining to what degree the offender is accountable for their actions (232). Such a frame “reduces many acts of violence against women to being sexual in origin, either by motivation or a sexual history between the victim and offender” (234). If always viewed within an interpersonal sexual context, other contexts, such as a hate crime, are never factored into consideration.

that “theoretically” protect women, “the ‘discretion’ of judges and magistrates [in addition to] the cowardice or indifference of juries makes the law’s protection a pretence.”<sup>2</sup> Miller’s piece concentrated mainly on gendered violence; however, her letter was in response to the 1888 “Autumn of Terror,” Whitechapel murders, murders that were read as sexual violence. For Miller, and for many of her compatriots, sexual violence was just another form of gendered violence; both were used to dominant and control women.

The prevalence of these myths meant they only needed to be signaled rather than stated outright. This subtle messaging was one concern given by Kim Stevenson for modern examinations of the prosecution and reception of cases involving sexual violence “because at first glance the true nature of the crime reported is not always apparent. A range of contextual issues, particularly in relation to Victorian gendered expectations, must be taken into account when attempting to ‘read’ and comprehend the ‘truth’” within court or press reports.<sup>3</sup> Examining 167 articles from the six cases provided an adequate data pool to identify different myths being signaled, while the twenty-year span revealed a couple trends. Since rape myths typically operated by means of a “vocabulary of motive” that sought to neutralize the crime, I first coded the articles looking for motives.<sup>4</sup> This reduced the number of articles in the sample to 125 and excluded articles, for example, that merely updated the public that there was nothing new to report on the case.

<sup>2</sup> Miller.

<sup>3</sup> Kim Stevenson, “‘Crimes of Moral Outrage,’” 244.

<sup>4</sup> Irina Anderson and Kathy Doherty, *Accounting for Rape*, 10 and 21.

Feminist activists and scholars have been working to understand rape myths since the 1970s. Much of that work has focused on the present but some scholars, like Ivan Crozier and Gethin Rees, Anna Clark, and Victoria Bates, to name just a few, have proved the existence of rape myths in Victorian England, too. However, while rape myths themselves are not new, recognizing them, seeing a larger pattern of violence and the collective impact these myths have had on culture – what we refer to today as “rape culture” – is relatively new. This study is limited to newspaper articles mostly (if not all) written and edited by men. Still, within these articles can be seen larger patterns, patterns that shaped women’s everyday lives, that sustained sexual violence at their expense.

When rape myths are amassed together, they create an environment tolerant of sexual violence, despite any explicit cultural claim that sexual violence is abhorrent. Because of the widespread nature of these beliefs, they have become infused into institutional practices. These fallacious beliefs, structurally embedded, become largely invisible to people and more difficult to eradicate. This is one of a myriad of unseen ways that power differentials continue to haunt the marginalized long after any initial myth begins to circulate and become commonplace. For example, the rape myth Clark identifies taking hold in the early decades of the nineteenth century – that the public sphere is dangerous for women, especially at night – manifests in twenty-first-century arguments that women need to carry weapons (ex. guns, mace spray, keys held between fingers like spiked brass knuckles) to protect themselves when in public spaces,



especially at night and in “dangerous” neighborhoods. The danger in these threats is rarely to the body *in general* like a mugging but almost always specifically sexualized.<sup>5</sup>

Rape myths fall into three general categories: the act, the perpetrator, and the victim (see Table 1). Each category contains multiple myths. All of the myths are deeply entwined in gender and sexual norms with other power differentials, like class, ability, nationality, etc., intersecting depending on the parties involved. The three major categories are:

1. Myths about the act itself tend to recast the criminal offense into something less dangerous that will not threaten cultural beliefs. A common way this has been done is to downgrade rape into an interpersonal misunderstanding or a poor decision (like drinking too much alcohol). These myths act to divert attention away.
2. Perpetrator myths limit perceptions of who commits this kind of crime. These myths absolve suspects that do not fit the narrow definition. Those believed capable of this crime are often marginalized within systems of power, which means there are cultural scripts already present to portray individuals within this group in a threatening manner.
3. Myths about the victim are the most ubiquitous. All disparage the victim’s character or behavior as a means of incriminating the victim – and therefore mitigating the perpetrator’s crime – in the wrongdoing.

<sup>5</sup> Ann J. Cahill, “Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body,” 55.

Unlike the two preceding categories that rely on definitional arguments that limit what constitutes rape and who rapes, the third category of myth relies on causal arguments – what the victim did to cause the event to happen. The logic within this type of argument assumes that had the victim been “good” or “moral,” then violence would not have touched them. It also means that, not functioning as a limiter like the two previous myths, any women may find herself in the position of victim and having to defend herself not only from her attacker but also ad hominem attacks from police, magistrates, and her community. Because victim myths are causal, not definitional, they also effectively signify that perpetrators are triggered to violence whereas victims provoke the violence. This distinction of argument type means that perpetrators do not cause the violence; their actions are merely a response either to the victim, a demon(s), a disease, or emotion or feeling. Overwhelmingly these myths support the interests of those with the most power – middle-class, heterosexual, white men – at the expense of others – men with less social power and women. Table 1 below breaks down the myths that appeared in the data into their respective categories. The individual myths as they appeared during the time period of this study.

Table 3.1. Overview of rape myths that manifested within the 1870-1890 cases

The Act	Rape was rare. Rape was always accompanied by visible, physical violence. It was impossible to rape someone who physically resists.
The Perpetrator	True rapists were well-recognized as disreputable individuals.
The Victim	The victim was a liar or false accuser. The victim was disreputable. The victim’s behavior caused her to be attacked.

	The intersection of other factors like the victim's class, age, family situation, etc. discredited her as a true victim.
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## THE ACT.

### *Rape Was Rare.*

Within the cases of this study, and as a general rule for this category of myths, rape myths about the act were inclined to downplay the nature of the crime by finding exceptions within the specific cases that would exclude them from the category of sexual assault or, more specifically for these cases, murder. Indeed, despite the way the victims were found, only two out of the six inquest juries determined the women were murdered (Battersea (1873) and Whitechapel (1889)). The definition for crimes of sexual violence were so narrow that the most prominent myth to appear within the data dealt with denying the act itself even happened. Notwithstanding the two cases that did come to murder verdicts, within my coding for the motives I found that all three myths of this category appeared in five out of six cases, often acting in tandem with each other. They were: the act itself was rare; it was always accompanied by visible, physical violence; and, it was impossible to rape someone who resisted, etc.

Myths that fell under “rape is rare” attempted to redefine the act into something less reprehensible. It may seem odd to think anyone would recharacterize murder and dismemberment as less criminal; however, it could be easier to accept the violence that happened if the victims were medical cadavers or even a deceased loved one whose body was mishandled by a duplicitous undertaker rather than murder victims. More succinctly, it was easier to accept that the discovery of human body parts over the city was due to incivility rather than immorality. This was the single most frequent myth employed

appearing in 61 percent of the articles that touched on motive. The process was similar to the common practice of downgrading a sexual assault to the less serious crime of common assault. Reclassifying crimes into lesser offences acted to hide crimes that challenged beliefs about gender, sex, and violence. Reclassifying crimes also helped establish a system that reified the belief that sexual violence was heinous, upheld social power differentials that made sexual violence a common crime, and provided precedent to help those with social privileges commit those crimes with little to no penalty. After all, if records show low numbers of a crime, a common deduction would be to assume the crime was infrequently committed. By reclassifying crimes of sexual violence to more common misdemeanors and felonies (like simply finding the woman was “found dead,” which could mean accident, murder, or suicide) the system hid the higher rate of occurrences of hate crimes committed against women. Each reclassification, legal or narrative, provided the opportunity to distract the public away from the crime at hand and shift attention elsewhere.

At least half of the cases analyzed here specifically raised the possibility of a medical student hoax rather than a murder. Whenever this happened, journalists treated it like this was the default motive considered by the common populace: “There is a rapidly-growing opinion amongst the public, and to a more or less extent it is shared in by the more experienced of the police, that they have been the victims of a hoax.”<sup>6</sup> Yet, throughout my research notes of archived murdered and dismembered crime reports extending back to John Holloway murdering his wife Celia in 1831, I only came up with

<sup>6</sup> “The Supposed Murder and Mutilation of a Woman,” *The Morning Post*, 13 September 1873.

one discovery of a dismembered body dismissed as an actual medical student hoax.<sup>7</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette* stated an arm found in front of the Blind School, Southwark, originally thought to be part of the body found at Pimlico and Whitehall, was “supposed to have been placed where it was found for a hoax.”<sup>8</sup> Upon examination, the medical officers said it had been dissected and was the work of a medical student. Notably, after this singular report, the arm found in Southwark was never mentioned again. Whenever the medical student hoax theme arose, the narrative would change with significant consequence to the narrative. Each time this theme was raised it provided the opportunity to distract the public away from the crime at hand and shift attention elsewhere such as the legal regulations set in place to prevent this kind of insult to the dead or the implausibility of medical students as perpetrators.

*Rape Was Violent/Impossible to Rape Someone Who Resists.*

The previous chapter discussed medical examiners’ search for signs of a struggle upon the victims’ bodies. The medical examiners’ biased assumption was rooted in the that it was impossible to rape someone who physically resisted and their bias manifested in their “scientific observations” of the bodies. This assumption ignored all other forms of nonconsensual rape. One consequence of this assumption and the medical examiners’ practice was that they limited perceptions of rape to only cases with extreme violence. As

<sup>7</sup> There was another possible dismembered body hoax (Waterloo Bridge Mystery (1858)) perpetrated by newspaper penny-a-liners looking to make some cash.)

<sup>8</sup> “The Post-Mortem Examination at Westminster. Important Medical Conclusions.” *Pall Mall Gazette* 04 Oct 1888.

their authority grew over the century, their observations – and biases – became more culturally embedded. While reports for sexual crime grew during this period, the conviction rate dropped significantly.<sup>9</sup> Bates reported that the national trial rates increased from 1.5 per 10,000 to 4 in 1885. She added that the statistics do not necessarily show an increase in crime but rather higher rates of reporting and prosecution. As for the dramatic drop in convictions, she attributed this to sexual forensic practices that upheld a “growing mistrust of complainants and anxiety” about female sexuality.<sup>10</sup> What she failed to specify was with which demographic this growing mistrust and anxiety emanated, probably because the answer seemed so evident it did not need to be stated. The increased reporting reflected women’s efforts to effect change – contesting the Contagious Diseases Acts, promoting Married Women’s Property Acts and the Criminal Amendment Act of 1885, for example. The growing mistrust and anxiety along with the decline in conviction rates were suggestive of both a conscious and unconscious backlash by middle-class men who felt their position, especially with its privileges of access to women’s bodies and her labors, threatened by the legal and cultural grounds gained by women (who had no right to vote until 1918 and no members in Parliament until 1919).

For an example, Mr. Fowler, a strong supporter of women’s rights, raised the possibility during a parliamentary committee meeting for the Criminal Law Amendment Bill of 1885 that a perpetrator of a sexual crime using intimidation, threats, and extortion

<sup>9</sup> Victoria Bates, *Sexual Forensics in Victorian and Edwardian England*, 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

as a means to force women into sexual acts – means that do not leave physical marks upon the body but achieve the same ends. Some members admitted that they had had some trouble conceding the plausibility of Fowler’s point.<sup>11</sup> In part, the difficulty rested in the persistent belief that rape must be violent so that even the threats must be violent (i.e., placing a gun to the woman’s head).<sup>12</sup> Repeatedly, discussions of non-physically violent rape devolved into how to protect men from false accusations rather than the act itself or even the purpose of the law being written. Mr. Edward Clarke charged that sexual crimes by intimidation was “an accusation which *no man* could combat or defend himself against – an accusation which there was not the least occasion in this Bill for the first time to turn into a crime ... and ... it had nothing to do with the protection of women or children.”<sup>13</sup> Clarke spoke from a position of entitlement and fear. Unconsciously or not, he refused to see how male intimidation to gain access to the bodies of women and female and male adolescents had any role in a bill designed to protect women and children from predatory men. All he saw was the possibility that he *could* be charged, not the real perpetration of sexual crimes committed in this manner. And because the overwhelming perception of rape was that it was physically violent, Mr. West could assert that, “such a case [as intimidation] was very rare, as such threat or intimidation must be of such a character as to deprive a woman of her power of resistance ...” again

<sup>11</sup> Hansards Parliamentary Debates. Committee on Criminal Amendment Act, [Progress 30<sup>th</sup> July.] HC Deb 31 July 1885 vol 300 cc686-994. Criminal Law Amendment Bill [Lords.]—[Bill 159.] Hansards 1803-2005.

<sup>12</sup> Hansards Parliamentary Debates.

<sup>13</sup> Hansards Parliamentary Debates.

bringing the act of rape to the physical body.<sup>14</sup> This Parliamentary discussion was just one example of many instances documenting middle-class men's distrust of and anxiety about women and female (including prepubescent) sexuality. Throughout the creation of the Criminal Amendment Act of 1885 men demonstrated time and time again that they were extremely uncomfortable with granting women any further protections, particularly at the risk of undermining a system that protected them and their associates from sexually criminal behavior.

### PREPETRATOR MYTHS

The data results indicated that just as it was easier for the community to accept these cases of murder and dismemberment as acts of uncivil bad behavior (i.e. hoax or illegal dumping by funeral directors) instead of murder, it was also easier to accept the perpetrator was an immoral demon or an animalistic brute, usually coming from the working-classes. Figure 3.1 below provides an overview of all suspected perpetrators. Discussions of the perpetrator arose in 103 of the articles within the 167 data set. Notably, while women were more than capable of committing murder (and did as Katie Webster's murder and dismemberment of Julia Martha Thomas in 1879 shows), in all but one of the articles within the dataset, the perpetrator was assumed to be a man. The assumption may have stemmed from statistics that men committed the majority of violent crime but the narratives explained the perpetrator in terms of gender norms, the physicality of dismembering and transporting the body to the various dump sites and the

<sup>14</sup> Hansards Parliamentary Debates.



tendency to conceive the crime within a heterosexual narrative frame.<sup>15</sup> Notions about gender, sexuality, and class provided an easy explanation as to why women were murdered, a logic further supported, though perhaps fallaciously so, by the naked state in which the women were found.

Respectable men, according to the narratives, were exempt from the usual suspects because it was believed by the dominant social class that such men did not commit such indecent crimes – despite evidence to the contrary. And pretty much every man within the dominant social class was considered respectable. Bates found that medical testimony tended to believe that respectable men had developed a “power of will” that came with reaching sexual maturity and prevented them from acting on such base desires.<sup>16</sup> These men wore their markers of civility – middle-class fashion and manners – for all to see. These markers acted as evidence that supported the belief in their stronger will. Whereas, because it was assumed that they possessed deficient ancestral lines and less moral training, the public narrative expected lower class men to experience lapses in control that would lead to violence like rape.

<sup>15</sup> “The Whitechapel Murders,” *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 29 September 1889 suggested a letter received by the police claimed the murderer was “a tall, strong woman [who] has for some time been working at different slaughter-houses dressed as a man.”

<sup>16</sup> Bates 167.

While increasingly respected in society, the medical profession was not trusted by all, especially by the lower classes. Either speculating or refuting the possibility that the



Figure 3.1 Suspected Perpetrators

victim was dissected appears in all six cases. In five out of the six cases, the concern that the victim had suffered from a medical man’s indecent behavior comprised at least half of all discussion of the perpetrator. This would seem to counter the privilege garnered to respectable men (or suggest that medical men were not quite seen as respectable in society). However, in these discussions, the focus always remained on the act and not the

perpetrator. Focusing on the act divorced surgeons from the crime and created the possibility that the body was a medical cadaver instead of a murder victim (i.e. the myth that “rape is rare”). The consequence meant changing the narrative frame from a morally horrendous act to one a little less foul since the crime was committed to the dead and not the living.

And if the body was a medical cadaver, medical students were the assumed culprits, not surgeons. For medical students, still young and perhaps having not fully grown into their “power of will” yet, were more at risk to experience a lapse of control. But that lapse in control would only amount to an inappropriate joke, not murder. Still, every mention that the perpetrator might be a medical student, the author provided some argument to vindicate them: “The possibility that the mutilated portions of a human body recently found in the Thames might be the remains of a subject supplied to some worthless medical student, of morbid habits and revolting practices, is one which can never have been seriously entertained by persons knowing with what precautions the supply of subjects for dissection is surrounded.”<sup>17</sup> The journalists, before or after dispelling medical professions from the list of suspects, had other, more socially disempowered suspects at the ready to replace those they were protecting.

In the earliest cases, efforts to absolve anyone from the medical community pointed to the Anatomy Act, hospital records, the cost of a cadaver, and whether medical student training was in session. Beginning with the Tottenham Court (1884) case a new suspect slowly began to arise, one skilled with a knife, not medically trained, and from

<sup>17</sup> “The Thames Mystery,” *The Morning Post*, 19 September 1873.

one of the lower classes. Anatomical knowledge and knife skills no longer implied medical surgeons but butchers, taxidermists, and any *working class* laborer experienced with dissecting or operating on animals. *Lloyd's* wrote the Tottenham Court (1884) victim was “divided by someone skilled, but not for the purposes of dissection.”<sup>18</sup> In the Whitehall (1888) case, authors clarified that the perpetrator “knew what he was doing—not by an anatomist, but by a person who knew the joints ... The work was not the work of the dissecting room – that was obvious. A piece of paper was shown to me as having been picked up near the remains, and it was stained with the blood of an animal.”<sup>19</sup> The connection between knife-skill and experience cutting up animal bodies continued in Whitechapel (1889): “the mutilations ... were effected by some one accustomed to cut up animals or see them cut up.”<sup>20</sup> Suspects with particular knife skills were alluded to in 2 percent of the articles in Rainham (1887), 17 percent in Whitehall (1888), and 35 percent in Whitechapel (1889). Journalists (and the rest of the medical and jurisprudence officials) discovered a working-class scapegoat to explain how a perpetrator might dismember a body so expertly that surgeons, when asked, would express “that had he been asked to dissect the body ... he could not have done it more neatly and skillfully.”<sup>21</sup>

When considering trends across the twenty-year span of data, the only noticeable shifts appeared in myths about the perpetrator. In the 1870s the main suspects were

<sup>18</sup> “A London Mystery.” *Lloyd's Newspaper*, 16 November 1884.

<sup>19</sup> “The Whitehall Mystery,” *Lloyd's Illustrated Newspaper*, 14 October 1888.

<sup>20</sup> “Inquest Concluded,” *Daily News*, 25 September 1889.

<sup>21</sup> “Another East-End Murder.” *The Morning Post*, 11 Sep 1889.

mostly connected to a locale. A bargeman, a butcher, and a violent, escaped criminal were all considered viable suspects due to their assumed proximity to the Thames. The myth of the “dangerous classes” held that the area was a breeding ground for evildoers.<sup>22</sup> As a writer for *The Times* observed, “The strongest suspicion ... attaches the perpetration of the deed to the hands of some waterside characters.”<sup>23</sup> In the Battersea (1873) case, “waterside characters” accounted for 43 percent of articles in which a suspect was mentioned compared to only 8 percent from the general working classes. The only other suspect in the 1870s was a foreigner, stemming from xenophobia and the Victorian concern for English identity and “a fear that self and other/foreigner could or might merge.”<sup>24</sup>

In thirty-one percent of the articles that mentioned the perpetrator, the journalist intimated the perpetrators were from the lower classes. In the 1870s journalists used more generic language to include all men from the working classes. During the 1880s journalists began to use more specific language connecting the perpetrator to specific professions and locations. For example, in the Battersea (1873) case, the presence of a butcher manifests not because of his skills with a knife but rather the close proximity of his shop to the river and nearby warehouses. Furthermore, his alleged association with the victim served a different narrative purpose. He was used as an example of the supposed victim’s poor judgement by trusting such an obviously disreputable character.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, “Beyond the Bounds of Respectable Society,” 5.

<sup>23</sup> “The Suspected Murder,” *The Times*, 18 September 1873.

<sup>24</sup> Tromp, Bachman, and Kaufman, “Coming to Terms with Xenophobia,” 2.

By the 1880s, however, the butcher's profession would become the signifier to his guilt as it was assumed, next to a surgeon, a butcher would have the greatest anatomical knowledge and, as a member of the working class, would not have the "strength of will" that a surgeon possessed.

During the 1880s, however, the suspects became slightly more defined. They were still often tied to place, especially Whitechapel, but now specific skills and employment were added to the reasons why they were likely candidates. Additionally, changing views about the various working classes during this time also impacted which members of the working classes became suspects. For example, the perpetrators' employment might require them to carry or cart large bundles like a costermonger or a textile worker – which would account for how the body was moved undetected – but not someone who worked in construction, despite pieces of a body being found on a construction site. In the Whitehall (1888) case, men from the working classes were the lead suspects 41 percent of the time. The only greater suspect was someone with medical training which always shifted the case from a crime of murder to an inappropriate joke.

The Thames also continued to cast a shadow on potential suspects. In three of the six cases, journalists speculated the crime was committed by a bargeman, a crew member on an international ship, or "waterside people." This was strongest in the Battersea (1873) case, in which men associated with the river – bargemen, sailors, ship crew, dredgers, and the like – were suspected in 43 percent of the articles compared to just 8 percent of articles suspecting someone from the general lower classes. In the other two cases, Rainham (1887) and Whitechapel (1889), the percentages were much lower, 13 percent and 21 percent respectively. Interestingly, the Whitechapel (1889) victim was found on

land, not water like the others. Yet, as soon as her body was found, journalists reported that the Thames police were searching all barges and foreign ship crews for the perpetrator. Note, nothing was mentioned of passengers, only crew members. The proximity of Whitechapel to the docks and negative views toward dock workers based on the recent dock strikes may have been contributing factors for the increase in percentage for the Whitechapel case.<sup>25</sup>

Another trend that appeared was the idea of a serial killer. The idea of a serial killer did not manifest in the data until the final years, notably coinciding with and following the murders thought to be committed by “Jack the Ripper.”<sup>26</sup> Jack’s murders coincided with the Whitehall (1888) murder. That case and the Whitechapel (1889) case were frequently linked to the canonical murders attributed to Jack the Ripper. Whether “Jack” was thought the culprit for the final two murders or the “Chelsea Miscreant,” the

<sup>25</sup> A journalist for the *Daily Mail* wrote on 11 Sep 1889 that dock directors and corn merchants begged and prayed the Home Secretary to “help them to triumph over the dock labourers.” Indeed, there were an influx of police in Whitechapel when the Pinchen St. victim was found but many of them were stationed down near the docks. The fear, in part, lay with the sheer numbers of strikers, supporters, and gawkers congregating, as described in *The Standard* on 26 August 1889. The chairman for the London and India Joint Docks Committee referred to the leaders of the strike as “unreasonable” and that “there was every danger of the movement becoming widespread and most alarming in its dimensions” in order to create fear against the strikers.

<sup>26</sup> My research confirms what Stephen Kern states in his *Cultural History of Causality*: “The archetype of the serial sex murderer took shape in Western culture around five brutal murders of prostitutes in the Whitechapel district of London in 1888 ... Recent feminist scholars concerned about the rise of male sexual violence against women have focused on these murders as the moment when such acts entered popular consciousness...” However, my analysis also provides new insights. Kern wrote that these cases contained “unprecedented descriptive detail” and that the “most popular motive was sexual, because the Ripper’s victims were all sexually mutilated prostitutes.” And yet my research demonstrates that this was also true fifteen years earlier.

narratives shifted to think of the crimes not as something that happened but as something that might continue to happen. “Jack” was by no means the first ever serial killer or even the first Victorian serial killer<sup>27</sup> but something about the “Autumn of Terror” produced the notion. Journalists, and perhaps a majority of the citizens of London, thought the perpetrator of the Whitechapel (1889) unsolved case was also the murderer of Elizabeth Jackson, who was found in pieces along the Thames in June. She was identified by a scar on one of her wrists but her killer was never found. The unsolved murders from Rainham (1887), Whitehall (1888), and Whitechapel (1889) (including Jackson) were, with growing suspicion, thought to be linked to one perpetrator rather than distinct cases. My research confirmed Stephen Kern’s statement in *Cultural History of Causality* that the Whitechapel murders from the fall of 1888 awakened the archetype of the serial sex murderer. Prior to Jack the Ripper, these cases were not seen as linked but as distinct cases. After Jack the Ripper, journalists (and later researchers) would develop theories on a single perpetrator for “The Thames Torso Mystery.”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> For example, Dr. William Palmer (1824-1856) who poisoned friends and relatives, usually for monetary gain (ex. to collect on life insurance policies). With a similar motive (monetary gain) Mary Ann Cotton (1832-1873) was hanged for poisoning her stepson; she was suspected of killing four husbands to collect life insurance and eleven of thirteen children. Margaret Waters (1835-1870) was a “baby-farmer” – a person who fosters other women’s children for money. Waters was suspected of poisoning and starving nineteen children, often continuing to collect money from the mothers long after the child’s death. Dr. Thomas Neil Cream, (1850-1892) known as “The Lambeth Poisoner” murdered several men and women (estimated between 5-8) while framing other men whom he then blackmailed.

<sup>28</sup> Two most cited works on the “Thames Torso” cases are R. Michael Gordon’s *The Thames Torso Murders of Victorian London* (2015) and M. J. Trow’s *The Thames Torso Murders* (2011). A new work published last year argued that the “Thames Torso” murders were committed by the same perpetrator as the “Ripper” murders – Drew Grey’s and Andrew Wise’s *Jack the Thames Torso Murders: A New Ripper?*



## VICTIM-BLAMING MYTHS

There was very little change over the twenty-year period with regard to myths about the victim. However, these myths are more numerous and tend to be the main explanation for motive when the crime cannot be contested and the suspect either does not match the usual suspects or remains elusive. All of these myths sought to find blame in the victim for what happened to her based on patriarchal values and Victorian gender norms. Patriarchy held that men were the protectors of women, which clashed with the fact that men were also the abusers and murders of women too. To deal with the cognitive dissonance, cultural norms tended to link the unacceptable behaviors with “other” men or creating a distinct line between women worth protecting and women who were not. Women who were seen as fulfilling the “Angel in the House” ideal were worth saving, until they lost their wings, that is. And it was often easier to remove her wings than it was to charge a “respectable” man with what was considered in the abstract to be a heinous crime. All it took was one lie, one naïve (in)action, or just a circumstance of birth (ex. class) to discredit her as a victim and instead make her an accomplice. Causal arguments were only applied to the victim – what she did to be attacked – and not her perpetrator.

All women were hindered by their gender in bringing a charge of sexual offence against their offender. Their main avenue of defense required that their character and behavior be unimpeachable within all assumptions of white, middle-class, femininity so as to be impugnable. Middle-class respectability was perceived (at least by those with the

most social power) as the foundation of social stability.<sup>29</sup> Fallen women, adulteresses, prostitutes, the presumed promiscuous girls and women of the working-classes were all seen as sexually deviant from the ideal of true womanhood. These women were seen as part of a separate moral class from respectable women, and considered nearly impossible to rape because of their perceived immorality. Mr. Hopwood, debating the Criminal Amendment Act of 1885, cited a jail chaplain as saying (lower class) girls “began a life of immorality” as young as seven or eight.<sup>30</sup> To appease the Act’s detractors, Mr. H. H. Fowler asserted that “no conviction of rape would be obtained” in a case of statutory rape “except on medical proof that the crime had been committed.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, as Victoria Bates’ *Sexual Forensics in Victorian and Edwardian England* argued, the medical “proof” that Fowler referred to was frequently distorted by misogynistic views that contributed to a drastic drop in conviction rates.

In the cases analyzed here, the victims’ identities were unknown so, in an attempt to discover their identities, their bodies were measured on conceptions of “physical womanhood.”<sup>32</sup> How well the bodies met with ideal feminine gender norms affected the narratives surrounding their deaths as evidenced, for example, in the newspaper articles trying to determine whether the Whitehall (1888) victim’s hands belonged to a genteel woman of the middle class or a rough woman from one of the lower classes. *Lloyds’*

<sup>29</sup> Nead, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Hansards Parliamentary Debates.

<sup>31</sup> Hansards Parliamentary Debates.

<sup>32</sup> Bates, 8.

*Weekly*, among others, held that the hand of one victim was of a “long and delicate construction.”<sup>33</sup> This victim possessed fingernails that met the embodiment of ideal femininity: clean, smooth, rosy pink ovals with short, white crescents in a filbert-shape that required careful maintenance. This nail style held significant social and economic value clearly marking anyone who possessed it as a respected, middle class woman who had servants to do domestic labor for her. Using this classed and gendered reading of the body, many of the articles’ authors attempted to create a sympathetic response from their audience, portraying her as virtuous and, more importantly, as a “real victim.”

In contrast, an author from *The Standard* discarded the medical testimonies given at the inquest. Instead he repositioned the victim in a lower socio-economic class and dehumanized her. This author stated that “the theory that the victim of the crime was a lady, or at any rate, a person of good position, which has been asserted, is not much countenanced by the police or doctors. It is much more likely that she was a person of the unfortunate class, or a servant, for ... the hand showed indications of hard work, the skin being rough and hard, and the fingernails begrimed with dirt.”<sup>34</sup> According to *The Standard*’s journalist, this was just another dead prostitute or a servant. In either case, she and what happened to her were not worthy of their audience’s concern.

If journalists or editors thought that the victim was a prostitute, a fallen woman, or a lower-class woman – all targets of predators and easily discounted by the middle class as morally guilty – then that impacted how much space and attention was given to the

<sup>33</sup> “A Whitehall Mystery,” *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 07 October 1888.

<sup>34</sup> “The Shocking Discovery at Westminster,” *The Standard*, 05 October 1888.

case in the newspaper. These immoral woman, it was assumed, brought their horrible deaths upon themselves based on the lives they led. Otherwise, how could they have ended up naked, murdered, and dismembered, according to the male-dominated editors and journalists. In the Whitehall (1888) case, for example, a journalist for *The Morning Post* contended that the victim was chaste based upon the medical testimony. The journalist for *The Times*, on the other hand, did not. *The Times* dropped the story after that whereas *The Morning Post* would continue to publish articles about the case for another two weeks. According to the cultural narrative, rape was rare and the rape of a disreputable women even rarer still. On the occasion when a disreputable woman was recognized as a victim of sexual violence, the narrative assumed she deserved what happened to her.

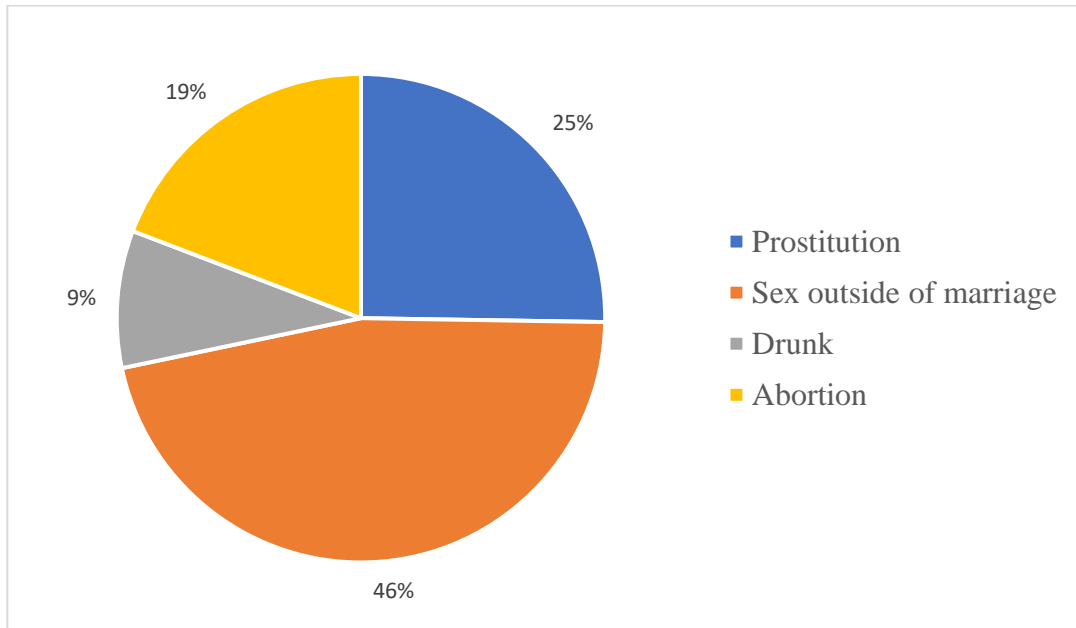


Figure 3.2. Victim Behavior Caused Her Death<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Eighty-six articles were coded under the theme that mentioned the victim as a person (in contrast to just her body). The highest reference count belonged to Battersea

Just as the hands in the Whitehall (1888) case were read disparately, so too were other victim's bodies. Male editors and journalists controlled the narrative and skewed it, purportedly using the victim's body evidence, to suit their ends. Journalists during the Whitechapel (1889) case could not agree if the victim was muscular, nourished, or dissipated from a life of hard drinking. In the first instance, that made her working-class. She could be a respectable working-class woman but more than likely the journalist would have found her to be immoral by his standards for respectable women (that feminine ideal haunting all these women). The author from *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, however, left no doubt what he thought of the victim. She clearly was not a "real" victim, seeing as she was a drunkard. Common belief held that women who drank to excess were of the working classes, prostitutes, and fallen women. Remember the two flaneur-inspired journalists exploring Whitechapel the morning after the 1889 murder? They had overheard of family and friends looking for a woman they called respectable. At the end of the journalists' stroll through Whitechapel the woman had been found. As an added aside to the middle-class readers of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, the journalists noted that the woman had "only been on drink" and, he added, "when she had a bit o' drink inside her—well, no doubt she might have gone along of 'Jack' then."<sup>36</sup> In other words, if she was a drunk, she was a prostitute, and she would have gone off with her murderer willingly because of her fallenness.

(1873) at forty-nine. Next was Whitehall (1888) at forty-two, then Whitechapel (1889) at 27, followed by Tottenham Court (1884) at twenty-three, and Putney (1874) with five.

<sup>36</sup> "Murdering Morning in Whitechapel by Two Occasional Correspondents," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 September 1889.

Yet, even if thought to be from respectable society, the victim was never blameless. The main cultural assumption held that a respectable woman would never be in a situation where something so horrid could happen to her and thus that the victim must have done something that caused this to happen. This logic put the victim on trial, as her body and life (if there was a possible identity) became evidence to explain what happened to her (and warn other women of the dangers such missteps can lead to too!). In the case of Miss Emily Barker – a potential victim in the Whitechapel (1889) case – this was not very difficult. A runaway, Miss Barker had made her way from Northampton to London in 1889. It was not clear if she had left home alone but by the time she went to a missionary for help she was penniless and friendless. Nowhere to go, Miss Barker (note that journalists rarely actually wrote her name as Miss Barker, marking her lower in social status) turned to a Whitechapel missionary asking for aid in returning home to her parents. He refused. He told her the only place she could go was a home for fallen women but, much to his frustration, she steadfastly refused this status. When the missionary was interviewed about Barker in connection with the murder and dismemberment case, he expressed no guilt or concern for what might have happened to her. The *Daily News* writer ended this account stating that Miss Barker's father did not want her to return home because it would only make things more difficult for him.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps trying to soften the indifference of the missionary, *Lloyd's Weekly* writer offered physical evidence that would suggest the victim was not Miss Barker after all.<sup>38</sup> The

<sup>37</sup> "The Last Whitechapel Murder," *Daily News*, 30 September 1889.

<sup>38</sup> "The Whitechapel Tragedy," *Lloyd's Illustrated Newspaper*, 06 October 1889.

consistent message from the journalists to the missionary to the victim's father was that Miss Emily Barker, no matter what happened to her, would never be a true victim. Her apparently irredeemable life choices would lead, if they hadn't already, to a tragic end.

In contrast, the missing and possible murder victim Miss Cross would appear to be the definition of innocent. She was middle class, unmarried which suggested the possibility of chasteness, and living with her mother. Additionally, she had a mental disability, what the journalists referred to as "weak intellect." The writer for *The Penny Illustrated* clarified that "she was somewhat strange in her mind at times, and had an impediment in her speech."<sup>39</sup> According to the law, a mental disability would complicate issues of consent, possibly excusing a victim from any culpability from sexual violence.<sup>40</sup> Except, even that was not enough to completely exonerate the missing Miss Cross. For you see, she had a bad habit of absenting herself from home for several days at a time, usually near the barges on the canal, which had a cultural association with the criminal classes. Like a possible identified victim from the Battersea (1873) case, Miss Cross was accosted in public shortly before she disappeared in 1887. She was returning home from the shops, alone, when a man came up to her and offered to escort her. After some distance, he threatened to cut her throat if she did not give him her packages and money. As soon as he left, she ran to the police but the man was never found. However, from the point of view within the newspaper narratives, her victim status was at risk from the moment the man approached her. If he tried anything, she would have been at fault for

<sup>39</sup> "A Thames Mystery," *The Penny Illustrated*, 11 June 1887.

<sup>40</sup> Mead and Bodkin *The Criminal Amendment Act, 1885*, 49; Bates 17.

allowing him to accompany her (“contributory negligence”). If she had not allowed him to escort her but was attacked by someone else, she would have been at fault again for refusing the earlier man’s protection. On the one hand, Miss Cross was depicted as incapable of expressing consent due to her mental condition but that portrayal was negated by her disappearing for days, “get[ting] upon any barge or boats which might happen to be moored” – which were considered high risk environments for crime – and a previous claim to being accosted in which she demonstrated she had the wherewithal to run to the police to report the crime to the authorities<sup>41</sup> Despite the law that absolved Miss Cross from culpability due to her mental disability, journalists could not resist blaming her for her behavior and correlating that behavior with any crime of which she might be a victim. Being a twenty-something woman, regardless of her mental state and especially absent the protection of a father/husband/brother, meant she was liable to the “innate faults of womankind,” namely “infidelity, violence, deceit, envy, [and] extreme avariciousness.”<sup>42</sup>

Only 4 percent of the articles coded about the victim explicitly suggested the crimes involved sexual violence. Instead the narratives focused on “making implicit judgements on the correct behavior of the various participants.”<sup>43</sup> In the six cases presented here, journalists concentrated upon questions of motive that centered upon the

<sup>41</sup> “The Rainham Mystery,” *Illustrated Police News*, 11 June 1887; “A Thames Mystery,” *The Penny Illustrated*, 11 June 1887; and, “The Rainham Mystery,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 05 June 1887.

<sup>42</sup> qtd. in Bright, “Correspondence on Women’s Suffrage.”

<sup>43</sup> Stevenson, 242.



victim's sexual behavior in 46 percent of the articles. Forty-five percent claimed or implied that the woman was murdered because of a romantic or sexual entanglement. Whether the murder was to hide a sexual assault, an unwanted pregnancy, because she did not return his affections, or she triggered his anger, all of the stories created a larger, cautionary narrative that recast the criminal act into an unfortunate interpersonal altercation that could have been prevented if the victim had behaved differently. In this way, the culture as a whole could repudiate sexual violence while tolerating it at the expense of victims.

This chapter set out to identify rape myths that functioned within six cases of murder and dismemberment. Based on a growing male mistrust and anxiety about the growing women's rights movement and female sexuality more generally, the actions of middle-class men – as demonstrated by the editors and journalists plus their portrayals of police, surgeons, and coroners – suggested a backlash against women. This attack stemmed from what these men saw as their rightful position in society. The decline in conviction rates despite increased rates of charges of sexual violence<sup>44</sup> combined with the manipulation of the narrative shown in this chapter - creating myths about who (and who does not) commit rape, what conditions define sexual assault or rape, and developing methods to redirect blame to the victim – demonstrates the deepened negative attitudes towards female victims. The consequence of these actions hindered justice, created systems prejudiced against women, set precedent that would be used against women for over a hundred years, and reinforced cultural myths that are still deeply entrenched.

<sup>44</sup> Bates, 5-6.



## Chapter Four

### Salacious Details

The editor for *The Illustrated Police News (IPN)* published the image to the right on October 13, 1888. It was the center image of a triptych panel. In the illustration, two men appeared to be raising an alarm, while a third unwrapped a dismembered, bare

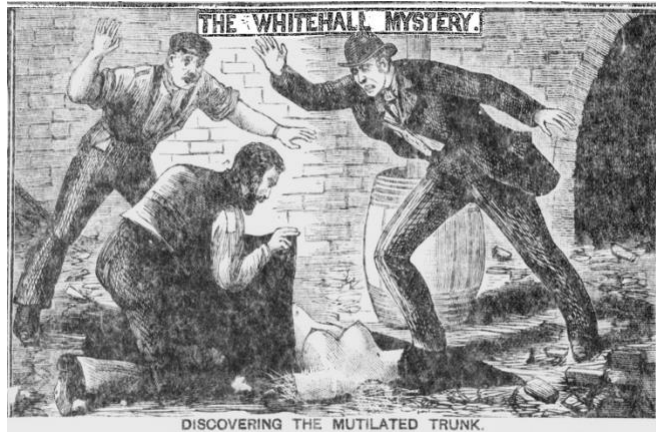


Figure 4.1. The Illustrated Police News, October 13, 1888.

corpse. The man in the coat on the right looked as if he had been running to try and stop the third man from unwrapping the corpse or, perhaps in his shock, his fight-or-flight instinct kicked in and his body was indicated a desire to flee from the spectacle before him. The man to the left looked like he was paused in mid-action, like you could knock him over with the slightest touch, due to shock. This illustration was not the most gruesome on the front cover that week. In fact, the cover overall made for an interesting case to examine how violent crimes against women were portrayed.

Above the triptych panel on the Whitehall Mystery was a multipaneled piece titled, "Sketches of the Fiendish Work of the Monster of Whitechapel. His Six Crimes." These sketches included moments from the night of each murder, accompanying death scenes that emphasized the wounds the perpetrator inflicted upon the victims, and an

image of six coffins covered in wreaths. The sketches in this panel focused on the physical violence; for example, one image depicted a victim with her nose cut off, another with thirty-nine stab wounds. Despite some sketches suggesting the victims had been solicitating sex earlier in the evening, all of these women were fully clothed. The victim with multiple stab wounds may have had her jacket or dress bodice open. The way the figure was laying in the illustration made it difficult to discern. Two other victims, lying on the ground with their legs bent, had their calves exposed. While rough drawings, the illustrator seemed to have been going for authenticity, at least in the deathbed sketches. In contrast, the illustration for the Whitehall discovery was a purposefully staged spectacle.

Based solely on this image, the reader would assume the body found in the vaults of Whitehall had very recently been among the living, with, minus the areas of dismemberment, its skin otherwise unmarred, breasts that defied gravity, and even erect nipples. However, upon learning the details of what befell the victim, the viewer would learn the body was anything like the illustration discover that those who found the body suspected it had been in the vaults for three to four days and the medical examiner would quickly change that estimate to six to eight weeks due to the significant amount of decomposition. The body pictured for the newspaper was not the horror unveiled to the construction workers, nor was it like the gruesome images above it, though after six to eight weeks the body most certainly should have been. Instead it looked like a nude sculpture of a beautiful woman.

The alignment of the body appeared off too, as if the illustrator either did not have training or purposefully distorted the figure to enhance certain features. To begin, the decapitation of the head looked as if it was an afterthought and not worth the illustrator's attention to go back and correct. The violence committed to the body clearly was not a concern nor was the accuracy of showing the decomposition. Instead it appeared that the illustrator focused his attention on drawing the body in a shape and position that would entice a male audience, opting for a fabricated aesthetic over reality. The difference between the written and illustrated description indicated two different functions of these distinct elements. The textual description granted credence to the newspaper editor's claim of possessing "special access to the truth,"<sup>1</sup> through the detailed descriptions of the corpse that the public would not have access to. Through these details, the newspaper's audience would assume it possessed greater authenticity and "commitment to factuality,"<sup>2</sup> then perhaps other print editions. In contrast, the illustration served as entertainment, a mixing of fact and fiction manufactured with the main intent to sexualize this very violent crime committed upon a woman.

While visual pornography transformed the industry beginning in the 1880s, according to Lisa Sigel, one thing remained the same, women remained the focus as objects of desire.<sup>3</sup> A recurrent theme within visual pornography was women as passive, waiting. This was not new but a solidification of "visual tropes that earlier, more

<sup>1</sup> Sari Edelstein, *Between the Novel and the News*, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Edelstein, 41.

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Sigel. "Filth in the Wrong People's Hands," 859 and 885.

expensive photographs had established. In the [pornographic post]cards, the placement of women's genitals, their breasts or vulvas, slightly off center as the focal point confirmed women's sexuality as genitally located"<sup>4</sup> – just as the victim was positioned in this *IPN* from October 13. Sigel also noted how the “cards showed women in a variety of poses that cemented their place in relation to the viewer” including lying down in a manner that lifts the breasts.<sup>5</sup> Even if the viewer did not immediately catch the naked torso at the bottom of the illustration, the men's gazes direct the viewer straight to the woman's exposed, voluptuous breasts. Yes, the illustration denoted the violence done to the body through the decapitated head and missing arms but rather than focusing on the horror as in the depictions of the Jack the Ripper's crimes in the scene above, the violence here reenacts a style of pornography known as the honeymoon shot, which eliminated all “unnecessary” body parts like arms and legs to focus exclusively on the genitals, in this case the victim's breasts.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Sigel, “Filth,” 864.

<sup>5</sup> Sigel, “Filth,” 864.

<sup>6</sup> Sigel, *Governing*, 105..

Furthermore, the way the illustrator positioned the body took liberties again with the realities of the human form, not unlike photographers who carefully staged the human

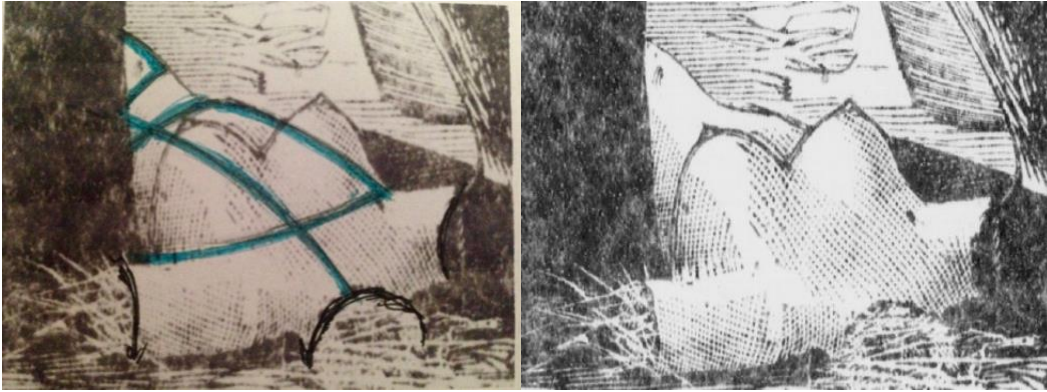


Figure 4.2. Left image shows the body deconstructed into basic shapes used in beginning life drawing. Right image shows close-up of unmarked illustration.

form using angles to highlight curvatures that would otherwise be lost to the flattening aspect of the photographic technologies.<sup>7</sup> Note the image on the left (Figure 4.2) and how the blue lines indicate the body was twisted into this pose. The unmarked illustration on the right looked as if the body was broken near the eighth thoracic vertebrae allowing it to contort into this unnatural position. It would also appear from the illustration on the right that the body was lying flat on the ground. Yet in order to achieve the twist and tilt in the hip seen in the marked-up version on the left, something would have had to be placed under the right hip. A corpse would not normally be found in this position unless staged. The small uncovered area just under the left breast was smooth, adding to the illusion the body is laying flat, instead of sharply curved as would be necessary to get that silhouette. The foreshortening for perspective combined with the tilting and twisting of the hips made the breasts the focal point. All of the choices the illustrator made served to

<sup>7</sup> Sigel, *Governing*, 104.

present a pleasing image to the viewer of what most certainly was not a pleasing figure to behold. The reason Sigel gave for this within photographic pornography was to make “Women’s specific body parts, such as breasts or buttocks, [a] pictorial synecdoches for female sexuality. The fixation on body parts allowed them to be separated and ritualized as the tokens of sexuality, with women’s bared breasts the central token of female sexuality”<sup>8</sup> Here the illustrator treated the victim not as someone who had suffered a horrible fate but as a sexual object to be enjoyed by the masses.

That this particular victim had been wrapped up tightly in a black brocade fabric added another pornographic aspect to the illustration. Sexual postcards often depicted women in varying states of undress. In “underwear” cards, as Sigel referred to them, viewers gazed upon women photographed while (un)dressing. The idea was to capture the woman in a vulnerable, private moment – a moment that, unless otherwise indicated, suggests her respectable status while also threatening to take it away. In the case of “honeymoon” cards – photographs where women’s wedding dresses were in a disheveled state revealing breasts, buttocks, or mons veneris or posing women partially wrapped up in wedding veils – the images “underscored sexual defloration as imminent.”<sup>9</sup> That the illustrator chose to highlight the scene in which the construction men unwrapped the Whitehall victim, that she was naked under that brocade, and the way he contorted her body all serve to frame this case and this victim into a sexual spectacle.

<sup>8</sup> Sigel, “Filth,” 864; *Governing*, 47.

<sup>9</sup> Sigel, “Filth,” 866.



The victim who was first found in Rainham (1887) the year before was likewise unveiled on the cover of *IPN*. In this instance, the illustrator exposed small-orbed, gravity-defying breasts on an armless and headless trunk. Like the Whitehall (1888) cover illustration, the illustrator ignored certain facts. In the Rainham (1887) case, for example, the perpetrator(s) removed the victim's breasts. They were never found. Strangely, despite several illustrations that portrayed violent crime committed against women as nothing more than nude figure drawings in shocking settings, *IPN*'s editor,



Figure 4.3. The Illustrated Police News, May 28, 1887.



Figure 4.4. The Illustrated Police News, September 21, 1889.

George Purkess, Jr., chose to print an illustration of the Pinchin Street (1889) victim prone, as she was found, but also clothed, which she was not. This discovery was a great deal more public than the others with a crowd quickly gathering as police investigated the scene. This may have impacted Purkess tendency to sexualize these murdered and dismembered women cases. It certainly was not due to any change of mind, given *IPN*'s track record of sexual provocation.

In fact, the combined advertising for pornographic and birth control materials was *IPN*'s largest category of overall advertising, second only to advertising of popular

literature.<sup>10</sup> Over the course of nearly six decades, the sale of pornographic ads remained fairly constant.<sup>11</sup> This did not go unnoticed by the public. One letter to *The Times* editor “contained some of the usual criticisms of the *IPN*’s visual depictions of crime” but the main condemnation was the products advertised within its pages that acted “as a gateway to more marginal or illicit cultures.”<sup>12</sup> The edition from May 28, 1887 – the same four-page edition with the naked torso of the Rainham victim on its cover – included adverts for tracts on birth control; abortifacients; a reprint of an illustrated erotic piece of fiction, *Confessions of a Lady’s Maid*; an illustrated edition of *Aristotle’s Masterpiece*, a sex and midwifery manual;<sup>13</sup> a pamphlet on the notorious nineteenth-century “femme fatale” *Cora Pearl*; and an illustrated copy of M. G. Lewis’ gothic novel *The Monk*, which Collette Colligan categorized under the category of harem fantasies in *The Traffic of Obscenity*.<sup>14</sup> Many of these same titles appeared during the reporting of Whitehall (1888) and Whitechapel (1889).

It should also be noted that legal sexual postcards were not allowed to show women’s nipples, as depicted in the illustrations from both Rainham (1887) and

<sup>10</sup> Alice Smalley. *Representations of Crime, Justice, and Punishment in the Popular Press*, 80.

<sup>11</sup> Smalley, 89.

<sup>12</sup> Smalley, 71-72.

<sup>13</sup> See Vern L. Bullough’s “An Early American Sex Manual, Or, Aristotle Who?” *Early American Literature* Vol. 7 No. 3. 1973. And Mary E. Fissell’s “Hairy Women and Naked Truths: Gender and the Politics of Knowledge in ‘Aristotle’s Masterpiece’.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Vol 60 No 1. 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Colette Colligan, *The Traffic of Obscenity from Byron to Beardsley*, 48.

Whitehall (1888), unless the subject (or should that be object?) was a “foreign; or ‘colonial’ subject, particularly people of color.”<sup>15</sup> Or, apparently, certain murder victims. Because of the state these two victims were found in, it would have been difficult to assume with any kind of certainty that either was foreign. In the corresponding article to the Whitehall illustration, the journalist mentioned one particular missing woman of interest, Miss Lily Vass. Vass was a young, working-class English woman who had left her place of employment working as a domestic but told her mother that she was going away with her mistress for a few weeks. Then she disappeared. The usual victim-blaming rape myths appeared: the young woman lied, her behavior suggested indiscretion, and she was a servant. The murder of fallen women was a boon for sales, according to Sari Edelstein. These victims, typically white, urban, and poor

were women for whom the notion of separate spheres was never a reality, as they worked outside the home and did not have the privilege of cultivating piety or domesticity. Their visibility in the city disrupted the ideas about gender on which white middle-class society depended, and newspaper editors and social reformers alike prescribed their deaths as lessons to women about the violence of the city streets and the dangers of sexual promiscuity.<sup>16</sup>

Even though the journalist comes to the conclusion that the victim was not Vass, the implication that the victim was not a respectable, “true” victim remained. And if she was not a true victim then perhaps, in death, she does not warrant the same level of respect granted to subjects of legal domestic sexual postcards. As a murder victim in a crime

<sup>15</sup> Sigel, “Filth,” 861.

<sup>16</sup> Edelstein, 41.

already assumed to be sexually-based, illustrating the victim's nipples served to hyper-sexualize both the victim and the case.

Also appearing in that newspaper article was a statement that was either so common it required no further elaboration or purposefully employed anodyne language to obfuscate something unspeakable: "Constables have been stationed outside the mortuary since the remains were deposited there on Tuesday, in order to prevent any unauthorized person entering the premises."<sup>17</sup> In two other cases, Battersea (1873) and Whitechapel (1889), journalists specifically mentioned the phrase "morbid curiosity" in regards to individual requests to review the remains while in police custody. Mr. Edward Hayden, the resident medical officer for the Clapham and Wandsworth Union Workhouse where the body was examined and kept for identification, screened every applicant that requested to see the body for identification. According to a report in *The Morning Post*, Mr. Hayden had turned away several persons who had failed to convince him from their descriptions that "a person of that appearance had been lost."<sup>18</sup> Some people needed to be kept away from the corpses but why?

I have determined two possible meanings for the phrase "morbid curiosity" within these accounts. The first stemmed from the work of Ruth Richardson in *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* (1987). She mentioned "morbid curiosity" as a classist denigration, one created when middle-class values began to embrace more private funeral rites as opposed to lower-class public wakes. There was certainly an element of classism

<sup>17</sup> "The Whitehall Discovery," *The Illustrated Police News*, 13 October 1888.

<sup>18</sup> "The Thames Mystery," *The Morning Post*, 16 September 1873.

present within the writing of the phrase “morbid curiosity” that appeared in these cases. It was used almost exclusively for the working classes with the exception of a group of medical students who asked to see the Whitechapel (1889) victim “to ascertain how the work of severing the head and limbs had been performed.”<sup>19</sup> However, there was a more salacious interpretation of “morbid curiosity” too. It most clearly manifested in a 1889 *Morning Post* article where the journalist wrote only those who could show they were motivated by “something more ... desired than the gratification of a morbid curiosity.” *Desire* and *gratification* situated the implied meaning as unseemly, tied with the baser sensations.

Repeated in three different articles of the Battersea (1873) case was the story of a working-class gentleman who, from the tone of the articles, concocted a story that the victim was his daughter in order to see the remains:

He was permitted to see the remains, and if morbid curiosity had led the old man to travel this distance, he had all the horrors he could have desired. He was taken to the deadhouse, where the severed breasts were taken from a shell and put together ... The bust was that of a woman in the prime of life, and in robust health ... <sup>20</sup>

*The Times*, furthermore, offered even more detail to this side story, describing the breasts set before the man as having the appearance of being “suckled at some distant time.”<sup>21</sup>

Connected to the class bias about this older man and his intentions, the audience was led

<sup>19</sup> “The East-End Murder,” *The Morning Post*, 12 September 1889.

<sup>20</sup> “The Horrible Discovery of a Mutilated Body in the Thames,” *Reynold’s Newspaper*, 14 September 1873.

<sup>21</sup> “The Suspected Murder,” *The Times*, 09 September 1873.

to infer from the way the breasts were presented to him that his morbid curiosity goes beyond the working-class customs to view the dead and included a carnal desire to see the victim's naked and horribly disfigured body.

That the articles all specifically used the word "breast" as opposed to other terms like trunk, torso, or thorax highlighted the lewdness of this type of curiosity as well as further sexualizing the crime. In writing about the crimes attributed to "Jack the Ripper," Perry L. Curtis reminded his readers that every part of a woman's body was sexualized and so, reading about dozens of men viewing and touching pieces of a naked woman's body as it was discovered, taken to the mortuary, examined, and discussed at the inquest cannot but have had a sexual aspect that would have cast the victim, respectable or not, into a position not unlike a prostitute, as Shani D'Cruze observed in the newspaper portrayal of Harriet Novelli's murder in 1849, in which the London papers in particular cast Novelli among the fallen.<sup>22</sup> Upon Novelli's death, her position as a respectable woman who upheld all the hallmarks of true womanhood "did not excuse her body from this kind of imaginary and actual display."<sup>23</sup> Novelli, however, had defenders, who were able to push the medical-examiners to vindicate her reputation. The unknown victims of the six cases analyzed here had no such defenders.

For the six unidentified victims, their treatment may more closely resemble a scene from the penny blood *Wild Boys of London*, reprinted in the early 1870s. A woman

<sup>22</sup> Perry L. Curtis, *Jack the Ripper and the London Press*, 95. And Shani D'Cruze's "The Eloquent Corpse," 181-197.

<sup>23</sup> D'Cruze, *Corpse*, 185.

named Margaret had jumped into the Thames and was quickly retrieved by bodysnatchers. While prepping Margaret's assumed dead body for the buyer's inspection, the bodysnatchers undressed her and bandy about coarse jokes "freely as the eyes of the low-minded fellows fell upon the rounded breasts."<sup>24</sup> After her body was sold – with both buyer and sellers knowing full well that she was merely unconscious – the buyer took her home and excitedly inspected his new purchase, including placing his hand upon her breast. Without a defender to uphold her honor, any prior respectability Margaret may have had, like these murdered women, was dismissed. The compromising position they were found in cast them alongside prostitutes, available for editors to use as sexual entertainment.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *The Wild Boys of London* Reprint. Ch.10, p28. The scene may call to mind Dr. Robert Knox, who purchased the body of Mary Paterson from bodysnatchers/murderers William Burke and William Hare. Burke wrote in his memoirs that Knox preserved Paterson's body in alcohol "because she was pretty." Henry Lonsdale would attempt to recover Knox's reputation after the scandal stating that Paterson's body simply served as "the best illustration of female form and muscular development" and not out of a desire to look upon a beautiful, naked female body. Despite this defense, Lonsdale noted that Paterson, even in death, "could not fail to attract attention by its voluptuous form and beauty." See chapter 2 of this dissertation and George MacGregor's *The History of Burke and Hare* (1884) and Henry Lonsdale's *A Sketch of the Life and Writings of Robert Knox*. (1870).

<sup>25</sup> Lynda Nead's *Myths of Sexuality* (1988) notes the mid-Victorian period's dubious cultural attempts to differentiate fallen women from prostitutes as well as the Magdalen Hospitals maintenance of separate wards for women who had been seduced by false promises and those who traded in sex. However, by the 1870s "the lines of respectability were becoming blurred. The coded stereotype of prostitution could not accommodate changing definitions of femininity. The existing categories failed to work – the prostitute, it seemed, could not be distinguished from 'respectable' society" (p. 96, 181).

As protective of the Battersea (1873) victim as Mr. Hayden seemed to be – a protection from such “morbid curiosity” that journalists commended – his protection and work with the body also made him suspect to that same “morbid

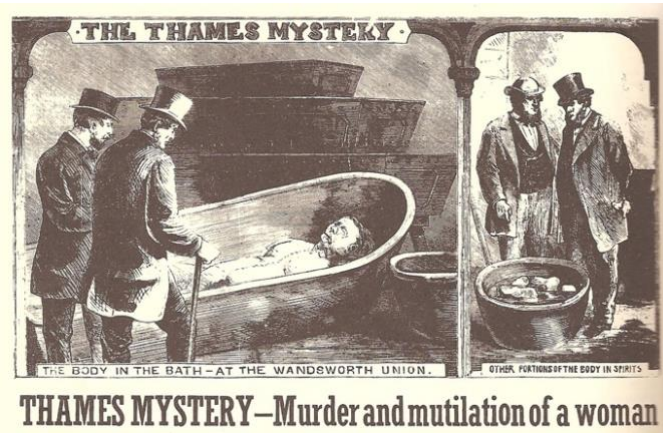


Figure 4.5. The Illustrated Police News, September 27, 1873.

curiosity.” Some journalists kept the descriptions of Mr. Haden’s actions with the body to the routine – he cleansed and preserved the pieces by soaking them in an alcohol bath, he examined the body for evidence and identification, and he skillfully pieced the body back together for identification purposes. But there were occasional additions that revealed the tensions between his actions as accepted clinical procedure, forensic science experimentation, and culturally inappropriate. In the above list of Hayden’s actions in conjunction with the body, the overall aim was to solve the case – determine what happened and identify the victim. In doing so, however, Hayden “skillfully” stitched the more than fifteen pieces of the body back together.<sup>26</sup> Purkess would publish an illustration of the stitched corpse laying in a bathtub of alcohol on the cover of the September 27 edition, right in the center of the page. But not only did Mr. Hayden hand sew the body back together, he also fitted it onto a metal form “so as to give an idea of

<sup>26</sup> “Crimes and Disasters,” *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, 27 September 1873.



the figure of the deceased when alive.”<sup>27</sup> This model, furthermore, was posable and Mr. Hayden could adjust various parts of the body, again allegedly for identification purposes. Yet, the addition of these statements mixed astonishment at what could scientifically be done with an underlying apprehension as to whether this was too intimate a measure. The deceased was not a mannequin in a shop window, after all.<sup>28</sup>

As the weeks went by without identification, the Battersea (1873) investigative team deemed it necessary to photograph the body so they could enter the body. Either the professional photographer or Mr. Hayden determined that the bathtub would not make a suitable setting for the photograph. According to *Reynolds's Newspaper*, Mr. Hayden took the “horrible collection” out of the bathtub and placed it, not simply supine on a table, but, owing to the metal frame the body had been fashioned with, posed in a sitting position.<sup>29</sup> As chapter two revealed, there was a long history suggesting why this level of intimacy with the deceased by the medical community was so problematic and why Mr.

<sup>27</sup> “The Suspected Murder,” *The Times*, 10 September 1873; “The Horrible Discovery,” *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 14 September 1873; and “The Horrible Discovery in the Thames,” *Daily News*, 15 September 1873.

<sup>28</sup> Department store mannequins from the nineteenth century were designed to be as lifelike as possible with glass eyes, wigs, and heads made from wax to achieve a realistic effect. For more on the mannequins see Lucy Wallis’s “The fall and rise of mannequins that look like real women” BBC News, 22 January 2014. The uneasiness of Hayden’s relationship to the victim foreshadows Oskar Kokoschka’s (1886-1980) life-size female fetish doll modeled on Peter Paul Reben’s wife, Helen Fourment. Kokoschka brought his doll, that had real pubic hair, along with him around town and to numerous social events until one day when he determined the doll could not live up to his expectations and he destroyed it. Kokoschka and his doll contributed to the artistic inspiration of Hans Bellmer (1902-1975). See Therese Lichtenstein’s *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer*. University of California Press, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> “The Thames Mystery,” *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 21 September 1873.

Hayden's actions here reinforced the cultural anxiety that continued to surround medical men and their position over and conduct toward naked bodies, especially female naked bodies. Mr. Hayden did not simply forensically examine the corpse as did Dr. Kempster. His actions went beyond the clinical search for cause of death and identification. Hayden knew this body *intimately* like no one else. He would also pull this body out of its bath and pose it, like a doll, for others to view (and photograph). If every part of a woman's body was sexualized, it would be difficult to not see his actions as transgressing sexual propriety, even if journalists lauded his skill and paternalism.

After the photograph of the body had been taken, editors and journalists clamored for access to it, with different motivations. For example, the journalist from *The Standard* wrote that "Clearly it would be in the interest of the police to give every facility to the public to view these photographs and remains, such being the surest means of fixing the identity.<sup>30</sup> This journalist opted to overlook any crisis of decency and instead took a more practical view. He noted how Scotland Yard was already paying for those who made applications to see the body but could not afford to travel to the Wandsworth and Clapham Union Workhouse. For *The Standard* journalist, publishing the photograph saved time and expense as well as increased the chances that someone might recognize the victim.<sup>31</sup>

A journalist for *The Times* certainly did not agree. He wrote that "There have been attempts made by the dealers in horrors to obtain a sketch of the remains, but Mr.

<sup>30</sup> "The Thames Mystery," *The Standard*, 20 September 1873.

<sup>31</sup> "The Thames Mystery," *The Standard*, 20 September 1873.

Haden would not permit any, and the police have supported him in this course. The photograph taken is for the use of the Scotland-yard department, and will not be allowed to come under the inspection of any unauthorized person.”<sup>32</sup> The “dealers in horror” most likely referred to the *IPN* and publishers of violent crime pamphlets. The more salient point here was in the differing opinion between these two journalists – both writing for conservative, traditional papers – on who should be permitted to view the remains. The two conservative journalists had different priorities. For the journalist from *The Standard*, the economics outweighed any moral objections but the journalist from *The Times* objected on moral grounds. Under no conditions would *The Times* journalist consider it appropriate for the general public to view the mutilated, naked body of the woman. Two days after stating no unauthorized persons would be permitted to have access to the photograph, *The Times* reporter clarified that those who pass inspection – those who “have proper reasons” for viewing the remains – would be permitted to see the photograph.

The unstated fear for the *Times* journalist laid in exposing the weak-minded, less educated working classes, women, and children who might not “see” the photograph correctly. Also, that the photograph would become a public (rather than private) commodity, adding further indecency to the viewing. The subject matter was by no means high art, more like an illustration to accompany the novel *Frankenstein*. However, as one chief constable declared when comparing a photographic imitation of a famous work of art sold in a shop to the original nude painting housed in a museum, the

<sup>32</sup> “The Thames Murder,” *The Times*, 18 September 1873.

difference between Art and obscenity was that obscene works were “placed in the windows and sold to youths and sold on the streets.”<sup>33</sup> Greater public access and the act of selling made the once cultural artifact offensive. No longer framed within the sanctity of the museum, the context of the piece degraded. For *The Times* journalist, publishing the photograph transformed it from a piece of police evidence to a work of rather macabre pornography.

Surrounding articles could also be problematic. For example, just below a report of a sexual assault the next article began “The fund for the erection of a new organ ...”<sup>34</sup> The only connection between the story about sexual assault and the story about a musical instrument was this puerile pun and juxtaposed layout, which sexualized and sensationalized an unsensational and nonsexual story not to mention lessening the violence of the sexual assault case above. In another instance, in a single column, appeared an update on one of the six murder and dismemberment cases, assumed suicide of a woman found in the Thames, and an alleged experiment from the United States that recorded the number of movements a woman’s tongue was capable of making in one minute (no mention of an equivalent study being performed with a male subject). Despite the two stories before it, this one exclaimed how “horrible!” it was and how the assumed male reader should “Think of that and weep” because misogyny prefers women to be silent. That editors would purposively choose – which the penis joke shows was intentional – to use sexual jokes or humor deprecatory of women mitigated the reports

<sup>33</sup> Sigel, “Filth,” 876.

<sup>34</sup> “Atrocious Outrage,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 26 October 1884.

about male violence toward women while upholding a belief that men had a right to women's bodies.

Men, as the dominant authors and editors of newspapers, had developed a narrative for reporting crime. This narrative formula allowed for ease (and speed) of writing copy and had been shaped by newspaper sales and middle-class male interests. Articles of in-depth coverage “depended on the social standing of the principles and the amount of violence, intrigue, or mystery that reporters could wring from the story.”<sup>35</sup> Journalists and editors hid explicit sexual matters that “might offend readers” through euphemism, circumlocution, and elision<sup>36</sup> - but, as we've seen, that obfuscation did not erase the sexual content. Instead, this narrative merged sexuality with violence creating a discourse with real consequences, especially to women. A sexual assault committed against a woman might simply be reported (or for that matter even legally charged) as an assault. The concealment obscured a very important distinction, one that was recognized in law (compare sections 47 for common assault with sections 48 for rape and 52 for indecent assault in the Offences of the Person Act 186) though not necessarily practiced. But when women had the chance to enter into the larger public discourse, their narrative countered the dominant male one by revealing the cost of structural inequality embedded in the male-dominated cultural narrative.

During the Rainham (1887) case, another case arose that captivated a great deal of public interest during the month of July, the arrest of Miss Cass, a milliner for a shop on

<sup>35</sup> Curtis, 92.

<sup>36</sup> Curtis, 93.

Regent's Street, for prostitution.<sup>37</sup> The arresting officer allegedly overheard a man complain that he had been "three times stopped in this street" by prostitutes. With that, Endacott marched Cass to the station on the charge of solicitation. Before the court, Endacott swore he had seen Miss Cass soliciting twice before on Regent's Street to bolster his case against her, which had no complainant. Cass' employer, a well-respected woman named Mary Ann Bowman, defended her employee saying this is the first time in three-weeks – since Miss Cass began working and living with her – that Cass had left Bowman's place alone. The magistrate, Mr. Newton, dismissed the charge but before he did so, he implied Miss Cass was not as innocent as she claimed by the use of a victim-blaming rape myth cautioning her that "no respectable woman would be found on Regent Street at nine in the evening."

On the charge sheet, the police had written that Cass was a common prostitute – something they were not supposed to do unless she was a repeat offender. Testifying before Home Secretary Sir Charles Warren, Superintendent Cutbush stated that the constable had no right to assume that without knowing it. Endacott swore he had seen Cass soliciting on the street multiple times before he arrested her. Police-Sergeant Cumber completed the charge sheet based on what Endacott said to him, despite the fact that Cass had never been brought into the police station before. Cumber also did not question why Endacott had not brought Cass in before if it were true that he had seen her

<sup>37</sup> See Judith Walkowitz's "Street Harassment in Late Victorian London," 1-30 for more information about the tension of women's conflicting roles within changing urban spaces and its tensions as portrayed by W. T. Stead in his newspaper *Pall Mall Gazette*.

soliciting on the street multiple times before. Instead, he believed and recorded his colleague, whom he had known for five years, without any evidence to support his statements. In addition to defaulting to his peer, he ignored Bowman and Cass entirely, who both audibly denied the charge. Having tuned the women out, Cumber therefore failed to record any of their statements.<sup>38</sup> At least three separate times while in the charge-room Cumber failed to hear the defendant protest the charge against her.<sup>39</sup> Yet, he testified she appeared “sullen” when he afterwards asked her what she had to say about the constable’s charges.

Newton’s use of a victim-blaming rape myth when he dismissed the charge upheld Endacott’s charge and thus acted just as damning as if he had convicted Cass. As Bowman wrote Warren, Cass “left the court morally guilty of the charge brought against her.”<sup>40</sup> Those concerned with how easy it was for the police to ruin a respectable woman’s reputation urged for either an amendment or policy change to protect women from “the unsupported word of a single policeman ... with no possibility of reparation except by costly legal proceedings.”<sup>41</sup> Because, since she was not charged with any crime, Cass had no means to appeal and, in turn, restore her honor. Furthermore, since Newton did not doubt Endacott’s testimony against Cass (apparently to the extent that he

<sup>38</sup> “The Regent-Street Case,” *Daily News*, 12 July 1887.

<sup>39</sup> The Regent-Street Case,” *Daily News*, 13 July 1887.

<sup>40</sup> The Regent-Street Case,” *Daily News*, 13 July 1887.

<sup>41</sup> “The Cass Case,” *Saturday Review*, 30.

refused to hear Bowman's testimony on Cass's behalf) there were no avenues for internal police review by the Commissioner's office either.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, according to Warren, the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 "expressly laid down for the protection of women and children that they could not be convicted on the evidence of one man." Apparently, police procedure did not count constables as men as Superintendent Cutbush responded that it was the custom "for the evidence of a constable in such cases as these to be accepted, and many hundreds of women are convicted on the evidence of a constable."<sup>43</sup> Many hundreds. Cumber testified that the Cass case was no different in circumstances than the other cases.<sup>44</sup> What was to say that the police and magistrates were just as deaf to the women in those cases as they were to Cass and Bowman? Where women would not be heard and their frustration at not being heard read as uncooperative (i.e. improper and therefore supporting the belief that the woman was not respectable and properly guilty of the crime).

This was why the small eruption of female voices that broke through the male dominated public domain to complain about the current circumstances continues to be so important. (Remember how "Horrible!" it was that a woman was even capable of moving her tongue 1,620 times a minute?) In fact, the first of the letters published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, by "A lady, signing herself 'Indignation,'" stated that women facing trial should have "the presence of one of their own sex having equal authority with the

<sup>42</sup> "The Regent-Street Case," *Daily News*, 12 July 1887.

<sup>43</sup> "The Regent-Street Case," *Daily News*, 12 July 1887.

<sup>44</sup> "The Regent-Street Case," *Daily News*, 13 July 1887.



magistrate.”<sup>45</sup> This author believed that women needed their peers to counter the imbalance of power that men held over women. An imbalance that went beyond the trial to the procedures within police stations according to a writer for *The Englishwoman’s Review*, who wrote that there are frequent complaints by women and girls “of assaults or improper solicitation made while detained in the police stations at night” because there were no women on duty to look after these detained women.<sup>46</sup> A complaint that, despite admitting these charges existed, a male author brushed off as “without the least truth,”<sup>47</sup> because the first assumption of victim-blaming rape myths is that women are lying.

Another unsolicited short article by a woman in the *Women’s Penny Paper* perhaps best tapped into the frustration women felt in regards to court actions: “In cases of assault by men on women the magistrate makes the stereotyped remark that nothing could justify the outrage ; or he launches into well-worn metaphor and declares that the conduct of the prisoner makes one’s blood boil. But he immediately proceeds to justify the assault ... [and imposes] a fine so ridiculously small in proportion to the offence that it is but nominal.”<sup>48</sup> This author continued to elucidate how fines were more stringent in cases of animal cruelty than they were when women were the victims of violence.<sup>49</sup> Here,

<sup>45</sup> “Going to the Root of the Matter,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 July 1887.

<sup>46</sup> “The Desirability of the Appointment of Police Matrons.” *The Englishwoman’s Review*, 15 July 1887.

<sup>47</sup> “The Desirability of the Appointment of Police Matrons.” *The Englishwoman’s Review*, 15 July 1887.

<sup>48</sup> “Leaderettes,” *Women’s Penny Paper*, 27 October 1887.

<sup>49</sup> A man convicted of gross cruelty of a cat received twenty-one days hard labor and no option for a monetary fine. In comparison, a man who assaulted a woman three

in this rare occurrence, women's voices, which were normally sublimated into narratives edited by and for men, bypassed the gatekeepers and entered the mix of published commentary thus temporarily disrupting the male-dominated discourse with the very real threat women lived in their daily lives.

For instance, women were blackmailed with accusations of prostitution by men who accosted them on the street, held a grudge, and even by the police. Blackmail was a theme that appeared frequently as a major concern to street harassment, for both genders. In July of 1887 during the Cass case, the predominant concern was police blackmail: "the continuous blackmailing of unfortunates by the police has been a notorious fact in such thoroughfares as Piccadilly, Pall Mall, Waterloo Place, Regent Street, &c. for some years past;<sup>50</sup> "there was a system of blackmailing among the police;"<sup>51</sup> "nevertheless, even if it was only an error of judgement on the part of the Police-Constable Endacott, and not an attempt to extort blackmail, as is so frequently the case, it shows the necessity of additional protection;"<sup>52</sup> and, "Poor Annie Webb, who was run in by the perjurer Kavanagh to pay off an old grudge, although her captor expiated his crime by a month of

times as she returned to her home was fined forty schillings; two other men, who had purposefully released a dog to attack a woman, each received fines of thirty schilling or less.

<sup>50</sup> "The Police and the Public." *Saturday Review*. 16 July 1887: 75.

<sup>51</sup> "The State of Regent-Street," *The Standard*, 15 July 1887.

<sup>52</sup> "The Desirability of the Appointment of Police Matrons," *The English Woman's Review*, 15 July 1887.

hard labour ...”.<sup>53</sup> Unless women had money or someone with enough social standing to garner the sympathy of the newspapers and members of Parliament, and thus force the Home Secretary to act as in Cass’ case, most women had no recourse when this happened.

Another growing threat came from amateur photographers with small “detective” cameras. By the late 1880s amateur photography was becoming a popular pastime, “practiced by thousands upon thousands of people.”<sup>54</sup> The right to privacy and the fear of being caught and preserved in an unguarded moment led to one English comedian to describe the handheld camera as “an instrument of torture.”<sup>55</sup> When male Kodakers targeted unwilling women as their photographic subjects the language morphed into that of a sexual hunt with the men “knights of the camera” and the women their “natural prey.”<sup>56</sup> Yet newspaper editors thought women had no right to be annoyed at having their picture taking without their consent, and not always with their knowledge, for these were just “boyish pranks.”<sup>57</sup> In one instance from New York in 1888 an amateur photographer sold prints of naked women that he had developed with the face of other, nonconsenting,

<sup>53</sup> “The Police Outrage in Regent-Street,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 July 1887.

<sup>54</sup> Robert E. Mensel, “‘Kodakers Lying in Wait’: Amateur Photography and the Right of Privacy,” 28.

<sup>55</sup> Mensel, 29.

<sup>56</sup> Mensel, 34.

<sup>57</sup> Mensel, 34.

women (reminiscent of revenge porn today).<sup>58</sup> At a time when privacy was paramount, though perhaps not legally protected, here was a potential mass-producible threat to a woman's reputation, unlike any women had faced before.

And, lastly, there was the physical threat behind any man who approached a woman outside of proper channels. "I have known gentlemen affirm that many men in thus addressing an unknown lady have no insulting intentions whatever and only hope for a little pleasant chat. I can only say that it is impossible for a lady to read a man's intentions at a glance, and that she is bound in self-defence to ignore his conversational efforts," wrote one woman in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. It was (and is) a frequent narrative: men just wanted conversation or to compliment a woman. Meanwhile, women lived in terror, constantly on the defense. For example, one woman wrote that upon realizing she was being followed "felt the blood recede from my face."<sup>59</sup> Another woman recounted how her sixteen-year old sister was approached by a man while she waited for an omnibus: "she ran in sheer fright, and he followed her till a lady interfered."<sup>60</sup> Another letter-writer wrote of witnessing a woman burst into a room in fright. The woman, it turned out, had been accosted by a man in Hyde Park. "In vain she tried to avoid him, till he made some indecent move, when a policeman interfered, and she, terrified, ran as fast as she could till she came to [name of governess agency]."<sup>61</sup> These men were not

<sup>58</sup> Mensel, 29, 31, 34, and 35.

<sup>59</sup> "How Ladies Are Annoyed," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 July 1887.

<sup>60</sup> "How Ladies Are Annoyed," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 July 1887.

<sup>61</sup> "How Ladies Are Annoyed," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 July 1887.

“knights of the camera” but women were still their “natural prey.” And told by a woman the narrative has a different message. No longer was the narrative about men’s innocent intentions but about the toll living as sexual prey had taken upon women.

But if men only wanted conversation – as they claimed – why were woman so frightened? The case of Edith Mary Smith should help explain. In October of 1884, days after the discovery of the Tottenham Court victim, Smith was walking home from the Guildford neighborhood in Bloomsbury – the same vicinity where the Tottenham Court (1884) victim was found – when a man, James Hardon, started to call out “good evening” to her. She followed proper etiquette, ignored the man, and tried to get away from him. He pursued her as many of the men did in the women’s testimony from 1887. When he caught up with her, he struck her, knocking her to the ground where he sexually assaulted her, then stole her purse when he fled the scene.<sup>62</sup> Or, another published example from October 1884, William Parker who laughed at Jeannette Corlette and then attempted to rape her when she refused his invitation to go somewhere with him.<sup>63</sup>

Women writers like those heard above or Florence Fenwick Miller challenged the male-dominated narrative. Miller accused “ordinary, decent-minded men” as “shelter[ing] their consciences behind the fact that the law theoretically protects women while the ‘discretion’ of judges and magistrates and the cowardice or indifference of

<sup>62</sup> “Atrocious Outrage,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, October 26 1884.

<sup>63</sup> “A Peril of Railway Travelling,” *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 11 October 1884.

juries makes the law's protection a pretence.”<sup>64</sup> With the majority of mainstream newspapers written by and for men, this brief interruption of women's voices was shocking. The shock value was on par to the eruption of #YesAllWomen in 2014 in which women bypassed the media gatekeepers and told their lived experience directly to the masses on social media. In both instances a criminal incident, one that had happened many times before, became a watershed moment that led to women temporarily removing a cultural gag that ordinarily silenced them. At least, that was how many participants of #YesAllWomen felt as they shared their experiences of sexual harassment and assault and the emotional toll of living in a state of constant vigilance. Similarly, “Indignation” wrote to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1887 that “[t]he unnatural and cramping restraints imposed on women in general by the evil habits of vicious men is one of the greatest evils this world of ours groans under.”<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Florence Fenwick Miller, “Women Killing No Murder,” *Daily News*, 2 October 1888.

<sup>65</sup> “Going to the Root of the Matter,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 July 1887.

## Chapter Five

### Hauntings

*January 18, 2015 – June 2, 2016.*

An unconscious woman is sexually assaulted behind a fraternity, next to the garbage bins. Two cyclists witness the scene and rush over. The perpetrator runs away and the woman taken to the hospital. The police arrest the perpetrator, a white, upper-middle-class potential Olympic swimmer on scholarship at Stanford. He is indicted on two counts of rape, two for felony sexual assault, and one for attempted rape. The jury finds him guilty of three charges of felony sexual assault. Those charges carried a suggested maximum of twelve years to a minimum of two years in state prison. The jury recommended the judge sentence the defendant to six years in state prison. The judge, following the advice of the county probation department, sentenced the defendant to six months prison in county jail, including time already served, with probation after serving three months of the sentence.

*October 5 – November 8, 2016.*

A video is leaked of a presidential candidate, well-known to speak offensively toward and about women, casually and crudely discussing sexual harassment of women.

Shrugging off criticism, the candidate says it was just “locker room” talk. Members of the

candidate's party begin to criticize him.<sup>1</sup> Candidate preps his lawyers for a libel case as soon as the election ends, "'but one problem arose,' Trump added. 'I won the election.'"<sup>2</sup> Despite the criticism, despite the hashtag #notokay rapidly spreading across social media, Trump garners enough electoral votes to win the presidency. As of June 2019, twenty-two women have come forward charging Trump with sexual misconduct.<sup>3</sup>

*July 12, 2017*

Candice E. Jackson, acting assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Education claims that "90 percent" of accusations of sexual assault on college campuses stemmed from the accuser experiencing "regret."<sup>4</sup> After her remarks cause an explosion of outrage she recants and apologizes for being "flippant." Ms. Jackson was hired by Trump appointed Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos who rescinded the Obama's administration's Title IX guidance to replace them with rules that narrow college's ability to act to protect their students. Men's Rights Activist groups were among those with

<sup>1</sup> David Fahrenthold, "Trump Recorded Having Extremely Lewd Conversation about Women in 2005" *The Washington Post*, 8 October 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Morgan Gstalter, "Billy Bush Reflects on Release of Trump 'Access Hollywood.' Tape Two Years Later," *The Hill*, 08 October 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Megan Garber, "The Cruel Paradox at the Heart of E. Jean Carroll's Allegations Against Trump," *The Atlantic*, 24 June 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Fernanda Zamudio-Suaréz, "Civil-Rights Official Apologizes for Saying 90% of Campus Rape Cases Stem from Regret," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12 July 2017.



whom DeVos met prior to establishing the DoE's new guidelines.<sup>5</sup> Ms. Jackson is among those who assert that the women who have made allegations of sexual violence against Trump are fake victims. She also argues that sexual harassment laws and policies ignore the reality that unwanted sexual advances are difficult to define.<sup>6</sup> In this position, Ms. Jackson oversees Title IX and sexual assault on campus. It should not be surprising then to read that students say they do not trust campus Title IX processes.<sup>7</sup>

*September 27, 2018.*

A woman comes forward during a U.S. Senate hearing for a Supreme Court candidate. She feels it is her civic duty to disclose how he sexually assaulted her when the two were adolescents so that they have more information about the man before electing him into a lifelong position where he will be setting precedents for all judicial rulings in the country. She does not want to, though. This is a story she has rarely ever shared. She says the events she remembers from that night “have been seared into my memory, and have haunted me episodically as an adult.”<sup>8</sup> Before an audience, both live and mediated, she tells how the candidate/perpetrator and his acquaintance pushed her into a room and

<sup>5</sup> Erin Dooley, Janet Weinstein, and Meredith McGraw. “Betsy DeVos’ Meetings with Men’s Rights’ Groups over Campus Sex Assault Policies Spark Controversy.” *ABC News*. 14 July 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Jake New, “Betsy DeVos Hired Candice Jackson, Who Once called Trump’s Sexual Assault Accusers ‘Fake Victims’,” *Teen Vogue*, 17 April 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Nell Gluckman, “Students Say They Don’t Trust Campus Title IX Processes. And They Doubt Their Own Reports Would Be Taken Seriously,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 October 2019.

<sup>8</sup> “Transcript courtesy of Bloomberg Government. ‘Kavanaugh Hearing: Transcript,’” *The Washington Post*, 27 September 2018.

locked the three of them in the room together. The candidate/perpetrator pushes her onto the bed, climbs on top of her, gropes and grinds his pelvis on her, and tries to remove her clothing. When she tries to yell for help he puts his hand over her mouth. The two boys laugh drunkenly throughout the event. When the other boy accidentally topples them off the bed, the girl escapes. Other victims begin to come forward. The Senate votes the nominee onto the Supreme Court.

...

The majority of people would agree that sexual violence is heinous. And yet, in the four events detailed above, justice for the victims is thwarted. Even when convicted, the perpetrator's criminal actions are downplayed in an effort to protect him. At the sentencing of the swimmer in 2016, his father asked the judge to consider the boy's whole life in comparison to the "twenty minutes of action" of which he was being convicted. Neither the father nor the defendant ever acknowledges what the swimmer did to the victim or the impact those "twenty minutes of action" will have on the victim's life. Sexually assaulting an unconscious victim becomes simply "twenty minutes of action," like twenty-minutes on the treadmill. The judge, when giving the sentence, states that serving even the minimum recommended jail time for the offences *he has been found guilty of* would have a "severe impact on him." Again, shielding the perpetrator with no regard for the person who he has hurt because his status and gender (and who he represents) is more important than hers (and who she represents).

In her memoir, *Know My Name*, the victim of the swimmer's assault makes the following observation as she learns what he did to her that night and how he and his

lawyers are planning on avoiding justice: “He’d seen me as a body but would attempt to destroy me as a person.”<sup>9</sup> Both parts of this sentence are crucial. Let’s begin with the first part and take a moment to consider it along with Eliot Rogers. Before going on a killing spree, Rogers would write a manifesto in which he bitterly listed numerous perceived insults to the rights he intensely thought owed him to do his male status. He believes, based on the circumstances of his birth, that he possessed unequivocal access to women’s bodies and was seething with resentment that the women he desired had refused him. He protests, “I am the true victim of all of this. I am the good guy.”<sup>10</sup> This twenty-two-year old man thinks his thwarted desire was such an injustice that people deserved to die. He would kill six and injure thirteen others because he thought he had the right to women’s bodies. He also became a martyr for a group of misogynistic men who have appropriated the term ‘incel’ (involuntarily celibate) to exclusively represent heterosexual men who feel they are being denied their right to women’s bodies. Women who deny these men access to their bodies “are committing a heinous – and punishable – crime.” Retribution via murder for denied sex wouldn’t stop with Rogers.<sup>11</sup> In this mindset, women are first and foremost bodies, not human beings with rights of their own.

<sup>9</sup> Chanel Miller, *Know My Name*, 46.

<sup>10</sup> Rogers, Eliot. Manifesto. PDF.

<sup>11</sup> Van rampage in Toronto (2018) and Florida yoga studio shooting (2019). Allegedly, the perpetrator of the Umpqua Community College shooting posted a manifesto that included the lament he was a virgin without a girlfriend. See: Steve Hendrix. “How Male Supremacy Fueled Scott Paul Beierle’s Incest Attack.” *Washington Post*. 07 June 2019.

Hatred for women mixed with heterosexual desire exists among several different male subcultures – PUAs (pick-up artists) who are willing to undermine women’s consent via sexual coercion, the incels or involuntary celibates, “red pill” adherents – in the “manosphere” – the name given to communities on the internet who believe their “true” place of social power is threatened by “cultural conditioning” that wants to steal their privileges for less worthy members of society. The majority of members are men who base a great deal of their beliefs on biological determinism. Depending on which community, that belief may be limited to just sexism or it may combine sexism with racism. All communities within the broader manosphere have grown substantially through aggressive online recruitment of mostly young males, not unlike tactics of other hate and terroristic groups. A PUA, incel, or red pill adherent may never commit sexual violence but all of these groups advocate for sexual violence and that violence spills out of the manosphere into the rest of the internet through online harassment (including revenge porn) and into real life through abusive relationships, harassment, rape, and even mass murder. At the core of all the groups is a belief in biological determinism and a deep faith in patriarchy.

Rape myth acceptance<sup>12</sup> (often referred to as RMA and can be found throughout society and its cultural artifacts) has been significantly correlated with traditional,

<sup>12</sup> There is over forty years of research on rape myth acceptance. You may choose to begin a review with: Anderson, Cooper and Okamura, “Individual Differences and Attitudes Toward Rape: A Meta-Analytic Review,” *Personal Social Psychology Bulletin* (1997); Anderson and Doherty, *Accounting for Rape*, Routledge (2008); Burt, “Cultural Myths and Supports for Rape,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (1980); Chapleau, Oswald, Russell, “Male Rape Myths: The Role of Gender, Violence and Sexism,” in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2008); Earnshaw, et al., “Intended

restrictive beliefs about women's social roles, "a finding true of not only the United States but also England, Israel and West Germany."<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that when researchers and their participants refer to "traditional" gender social roles, they are often referring to perceptions of Victorian separate spheres ideology – ideology that holds men and women as "opposites" as if the two genders (ignoring all nonbinary forms of gender) can have little in common with one another. Those who believe in "traditional" gender norms assume that the nineteenth-century construct of gender and sexuality was/is static across all of human existence. It should be little wonder then that these traditionalists justify their beliefs (and actions stemming from those beliefs) on nineteenth-century misogynistic and racist texts as exemplars of and rationale for a (a)historically-rooted, cultural identity. Whether through untrained or intentional misuse, those exemplars, more often interpreted ahistorically, have been weaponized to diminish the humanity of women, especially the humanity of nonwhite women where- and whenever misogyny and racism intersect.

Responses to Rape as Functions of Attitudes, Attributions of Fault and Emotions," *Sex Roles* (2011); Edwards, et al., "Rape Myths: History, Individual and Institutional-Level Presence, and Implications for Change," *Sex Roles* (2011); Johnson, Kuck and Schander, "Rape Myth Acceptance and Sociodemographic Characteristics: A Multidimensional Analysis," *Sex Roles* (1997); Lonsway and Fitzgerald, "Rape Myth Acceptance: Exploration of Its Structure and Its Measurement Using the *Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale*," *Journal of Research in Personality* (1999); Lonsway and Fitzgerald, "Attitudinal Antecedents of Rape Myth Acceptance: A Theoretical and Empirical Reexamination," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (1995); and, Suarez and Gadalla, "Stop Blaming the Victim: A Meta-Analysis on Rape Myths," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2010).

<sup>13</sup> Irina Anderson and Kathy Doherty, *Accounting for Rape*, 37.

Some of what traditionalists and much of what members of the “manosphere” community – online subcultures of misogynistic men (and a small number of women) – employ as evidence for their beliefs stem from twisted applications of biological determinism. Of course, none of them question the embedded misogyny within such texts; that such adds to the validity of the source. For example, Margaret Jackson’s investigation into early sexology finds that sexologists, biologists, anthropologists, and other mostly male scientists from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, constructed “a model of sexuality which purported to be objective and scientific but in fact reflected and promoted the interests of men in a sexually divided society”<sup>14</sup> in which women were campaigning for what we would call sexual autonomy. The authors of these texts undermine women’s arguments that men’s power over them is social and political by framing it within “factual” scientific models grounded in nature.<sup>15</sup> If gender and sexuality are natural, so the logic goes, then it cannot be political. It was a very effective red herring. And in the decades that followed solidified myths about gendered sexual roles and violence.

Championing the separate (but not equal) gender/sex construct, Havelock Ellis would argue “that sexual intercourse between men and women was based on animal courtship, which he defined as the pursuit and conquest of the female by the male.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Margaret Jackson, “‘Facts of Life’ Or the Eroticization of Women’s Oppression? Sexology and the Social Construction of Heterosexuality,” 52.

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, 55-56.

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, 56.

Ellis' ideas, published in 1913, certainly are not new. It is a narrative told going back at least to patriarchal Middle English Romances like the tales of Sir Gawain. The difference being that the late Victorian and Edwardian scientific writing is not presented as fiction but fact. In the hands of these scientists, women's fear at being sexually targeted is not only part of a "game," but, to the many male authors, her pain and suffering enhance her attractiveness to her pursuer. And somehow these authors make the logical leap that because the 'law of natural selection' means that men can (and do) successfully and repeatedly conquer women sexually then it must therefore also mean that women derive sexual pleasure from being conquered, correlated with pain, from that repetitious violence. In other words, these scientific men ignore the numerous protestations against and campaigns Victorian women orchestrated and theorize that women, because she is so often the victim of men's violence, must derive sexual gratification from their oppression. From this argument, women enjoy being raped.

Within many of the manosphere's subcultures Victorian theories still hold influence. Darwinian-like, there are "alpha" males who are recognized for being sexually, physically, and economically successful and their less successful "beta" brothers who struggle for the success that seems to come so easily to their alpha brothers. PUAs (pick-up artists) are alphas who do well using methods to attract the opposite sex for quick sex. Betas will pay PUAs to teach them how to "score" women like they do. A website for a Phoenix, AZ PUA warns that his clients should consult with a minimum of three attorneys before using the methods he teaches and to call a lawyer after a successful encounter to protect themselves in case the preyed upon woman files rape charges.

Though PUAs generally do not rely on physical force, their methods are manipulative and their actions do infringe consent laws. Roosh V., a prominent leader of PUAs advocates for the legalization of rape on private property, teaches men “When Her No Means Yes,” as well as fostering belief in “The Intellectual Inferiority of Women.”<sup>17</sup>

“Incels,” short for involuntary celibate, are a type of beta male who, try as they might, cannot convince a woman to have sex with them. This group grew out of the PUA movement whose strategies failed them. There is a great deal of anger at women for denying them access to women’s bodies amongst this group. These men believe that, as men, they have the right to women’s bodies and that women are beyond cruel for denying them that right. Eliot Roger, so irate over his denied “right,” kills six and injures thirteen others in 2014. The incel community, rather than being shocked and aghast, celebrate Roger and make him a “martyr” for their cause. The deaths should be blamed on women, and especially feminism, they argue, for rejecting the men: “Had one of those ‘wicked bitches’ just fucked Elliot Rodger he wouldn’t have had to kill anyone.”<sup>18</sup>

Three years later the platform Reddit shut down the incel forum consisting of 40,000 members after implementing a new policy prohibiting content that “encourages, glorifies, incites or calls for violence.” Over the years of its existence, users increasingly “raged against women and the ‘noncels’ and ‘normies’ who get to sleep with [women].”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “Male Supremacy,” <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/male-supremacy>.

<sup>18</sup> Arnia Srinivasan, “Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?” *London Review of Books*, 22 March 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Srinivasan.



Users frequently advocated rape. A different forum, trying to avoid being disbanded by its platform host told its users that they could not promote rape but they could argue that “rape should have a lighter punishment or even that it should be legalized and that slutty women deserve rape.”<sup>20</sup> To these men, women are “genetically inferior, inherently treacherous or unwilling to provide them with the sex and submission they see as their birthright.”<sup>21</sup> Since Roger there have been more deaths at the hands of those identifying as incels: ten in Toronto in 2018 and two in Tallahassee, FL in 2019. In fact, the situation has gotten so dire that the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) added male supremacy, including all of the manosphere, to its list of hate groups in 2018.

But it is not just about taking/wanting sex. Proud Boys and NoFaps harken discourses of the dangers of male masturbation in Victorian boarding schools. On a #nowanks forum, the commentators boast about and encourage one another to forgo masturbation for periods of time. Those who abstain tell of possessing more energy and focus in their activities. One poster credits not masturbating with making him smarter, giving him the energy to go to the gym every day, healing his body’s aches (which is probably a side effect of going to the gym but he credits not masturbating), and going on adventures with friends.<sup>22</sup> An 18<sup>th</sup> century text still popular in the Victorian period, *Onania*, also suggests that masturbation will rob the body of energy leaving the body

<sup>20</sup> Srinivasan.

<sup>21</sup> Steve Hendrix, “How Male Supremacy Fueled Scott Paul Beierle,” *Washington Post*, 7 June 2019.

<sup>22</sup> KingK. “Over 2 Years of NoFap that Completely Changed My Life!” *NoFap: Get a New Grip on Life*. 1 December 2019 at 6:33am.

weakened, cause erectile dysfunction, and make men “unfit for Procreation.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, even the obsessive thoughts that the men on the #nowanks forum describe which prevent them from spending time with friends or doing homework appears in this older text.<sup>24</sup> The connection here with male supremacy may not seem evident at first but the tenets of these groups combine symbolic violence with the repression of women under the guise of empowering masculinity.

Again, using rhetoric of victimization like the incels, the men (and a few women) of the manosphere blame feminism and women in general for “most of the problems” they allegedly face.<sup>25</sup> The injustice they claim to suffer stems from a balancing of long-standing social inequities. Male supremacists and antifeminists see the slow demise of patriarchal culture – with its access to and dominance over women – as an assault upon the rights as men. They want a return to the Victorian ideologized separate spheres that put “men and women back in their rightful place.”<sup>26</sup> This is true for all the male supremacy groups in the manosphere. Some groups, including the Proud Boys, want to limit that power to only white, heterosexual men. Their militancy has become so strong that not only have they specifically been named by the SPLC as a hate group, the FBI has

<sup>23</sup> *Onania. The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> *Onania. The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> CV Vitolo-Haddad, “The Blood of Patriots: Symbolic Violence and “The West,” 288.

<sup>26</sup> Vitolo-Haddad, 287.

listed them as an extremist group too.<sup>27</sup> (The British anti-extremism charity Hope not Hate included the manosphere in its “State of Hate” report for 2019). MRAs – Men’s Rights Activists – have also moved from asserting the rights of the father in the 1990s and early 2000s (they prefer to erase most if not all family law going back in England to the Custody of Infants Act of 1839 and in the United States to at least the 1904 ruling in *People ex rel. Sinclair v. Sinclair* which granted guardianship to “fit” mothers after a separation or divorce) to heavily promoting the myth that women lie about sexual assault and rape in the 2010s. In fact, Donna Zuckerberg, in her book *Not All Dead White Men*, pinpointed the coalescence (and later splintering) of many of these groups to the creation of the Red Pill<sup>28</sup> community around 2012 in which community members bonded over deeply held beliefs: “that all women throughout history share distinct, immutable

<sup>27</sup> Andy Matarrese, “FBI: Proud Boys recruiting in the Northwest,” *Tribune Content Agency*, 20 November 2018.

<sup>28</sup> The Red Pill was one one community among many of the manosphere. It takes its name from the 1999 movie *The Matrix* in which one character, Morpheus, offers another character, Neo, a choice: “You take the blue pill – the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill – you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember, all I’m offering is the truth.”

In the movie, to take the blue pill is to return to the induced hallucination that humanity is the top of the food chain and dominant influencer on the planet. In contrast, the red pill is to see the world as it really is – humans have become nothing more than batteries for machines – and to fight against that oppression.

To those in The Red Pill community, the blue pill represents accepting marginalized narratives and working to make society more equitable. They believe this is a mass hallucination that deprives them of their rights, as men and also, overwhelming though not exclusively, as white men. Taking The Red Pill is to wake up to “reality” where white male privileges are confused with basic human rights and equity translates into oppression for men by their inferiors.

qualities that make them promiscuous, deceitful, and manipulative.”<sup>29</sup> As Zuckerberg shows in her book, these digital misogynists rely on uninterrogated assumptions that act as powerful rhetorical tools to defend their beliefs that they are the natural inheritors of all that patriarchy offers.<sup>30</sup> But these assumptions crumble under more intense scrutiny by post-colonial, feminist, queer, and other scholarly methods of analysis.

The numbers of individuals in these manosphere communities grew to woefully high numbers in the 2010s. Prior to shutting the subreddits related to the male supremacy groups in November 2017, these various subreddits (think discussion boards) had tens to hundreds of thousands of members. Forty thousand members subscribed to the Incels subreddit.<sup>31</sup> The Red Pill subreddit dedicated to discussing (and organizing harassment campaigns) had over two hundred and thirty thousand members.<sup>32</sup> Considering these numbers and the early news stories that appear at the beginning of this chapter, the disparate groups that make up the manosphere unofficially decided to double-down on challenging narratives of sexual violence. Not all members of the manosphere are extremists but those who consider themselves members hold sexist beliefs and regressive notions of femininity (and biological science).

<sup>29</sup> Donna Zuckerberg, *Not All Dead White Men*, 13-15.

<sup>30</sup> Zuckerberg, 189.

<sup>31</sup> Olivia Solon, “Incel: Reddit Bans Misogynist Men’s Group Blaming Women for their Celibacy,” *The Guardian*. 8 November 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Zuckerberg, 13.

What does all this have to do with the research of this study or even the sensational cases given at the beginning of this chapter? I have tried to indicate how many of the justifications given for those who believe in Rape Myth Acceptance are rooted in Victorian ideologies of gender and sexuality, whether benevolently or malevolently sexist. Those who uphold myths of rape – be they members of the mansphere or just traditionalists – believe in the Victorian idea of True Womanhood as evidenced in the responses to a hashtag call to action for men to post #HowIWillChange to end rape culture. Researchers analyzed over 3,000 original content tweets and found three key themes among the responses: indignant resistance to the existence of a problem and hostile resistance/backlash against women amongst active engagement to dismantle rape culture.<sup>33</sup> Among the responses that wanted to deny sexual violence as a problem – the primary rape myth that manifested in the data from chapter three – some social media users argued for renewing patriarchal ideals and “traditional” gender/sexual roles as the antidote to any potential problem. An example of one of these posts, claimed that “I will help end the abuse of women by returning them to the domestic sphere where they have flowered.”<sup>34</sup> These responses were completely ignorant of the Victorian women who, living within the reality of the very idealized society these social media users desire, were still terrorized by sexual violence and even created very public social campaigns in an attempt to change it.

<sup>33</sup> Morgan PettyJohn, Finneran K. Muzzey, Megan K. Maas, and Heather L. McCauley, “#HowIWillChange: Engaging Men and Boys in the #MeToo Movement,” 614-618.

<sup>34</sup> Pettyjohn, et al., 617.

In a more modern sense of women's social campaigning to end sexual violence, women have been using social networking platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. While some people talk about #MeToo as if it came from out of the blue, it did not. There was #YesAllWomen, #AllMenCan, #YouOKSis, #BlurredLines, and #RapeCultureIsWhen in 2014. Many of these tried to convey to the larger public the sheer volume of women whose lives were impacted by sexual violence. 2015 saw #RedMyLips go viral along with #EverydaySexism, #GrowingUpAGirl, #TheEmptyChair, #ImWithHer, and #DistractinglySexy. The latter hashtag arose after a man claimed women did not belong in science because he could not concentrate on his work due to his attraction to women. #MaybeHeDoesn'tHitYou, #WhyIStayed/#WhyILeft, all dealt with relational abuse in 2016 and #NotOkay was a direct response to Trump's comments about sexual assault in which he stated that his social power entitled him to grab women "by the pussy" and kiss them whenever he wanted. In response to learning of Alabama's Republican Senate nominee Roy Moore having committed statutory rape on a fourteen-year old girl, social media exploded with #NoMoore/#NeverMoore and #MeAt14. 2017 also saw the beginning of #MeToo, which would be joined with #TimesUp in January 2018 as the movement began to demand action – perpetrators punished and policies changed. Other hashtag movements from 2018 included #WomensReality, #WhyIDidntReport, and #BelieveSurvivors because denying the widespread occurrence of sexual violence and blaming the victim are still the default.

Throughout all of these hashtag campaigns there were also campaigns that called attention to unequal coverage and justice for marginalized victims of sexual violence, usually by reference to their names (mostly black, latinx, and indigenous cisgender and transgender women) in combination with hashtags like #SayHerName, #RedDress, #MMIW, #AmINext, #NiUnaMenos, #Cuéntalo, #BlackLivesMatter/#BLM, #RememberMe, #AccessToJustice, #TransLivesMatter, and #StopKillingBlackTranswomen. #YourSlipIsShowing began when a group of African American women uncovered and exposed a racist, misogynistic hoax created by “men’s rights activists, pickup artists, and miscellaneous misogynists hoping to capitalize on previously existing rifts in the online feminist movement related to race and class”<sup>35</sup> on 4chan, an anonymous online forum that was rife with hate. Most of these hashtags continue to be used and are often combined to better convey the writer’s intent. So, no, #MeToo did not come from out of the blue. Each of these hashtags has gone viral. The public outcry against sexism has been building, globally, across diverse groups of women. And while some say that hashtag feminism has no effect, they would be wrong.

#MeToo may have gone viral after actress Alyssa Milano used it in a tweet but the “me too” movement began much earlier, in 2006, when Tarana Burke decided to turn her guilt for silencing a thirteen-year old girl who tried to share her story of molestation. At the time Burke had been coping with her own trauma but seeing how her actions effected the adolescent will forever haunt her: “I will never forget the look [on the girl’s

<sup>35</sup> Rachele Hampton, “The Black Feminists Who Saw the Alt-Right Threat Coming,” *Slate* 23 April 2019.

face] because I think about her all of the time ... I could not find the courage that she had found, I could not muster the energy to feel her that I understood, that I connected, that I could feel her pain ... I watched her put her mask back on and go back into the world like she was all alone and I couldn't even bring myself to whisper ... me too.”<sup>36</sup> #MeToo brought a surge of interest, action, and support for the Me Too movement but it wouldn't have without the viral hashtags that had come before it.

Critics have argued that nothing changed after each of the viral hashtags. They would be wrong. What is changing is a greater awareness through “transformative empathy.” Transformative empathy promotes actually listening, self-reflexivity, and potential transformation of one's own assumptions as opposed to othering the speaker.<sup>37</sup> That awareness is shifting perspectives. Even as late the early 2000s the majority of the population believed that sexual violence was a problem of individuals. A Pew Research survey indicates that is no longer the case: “Two-thirds of Americans overall (66%) attribute the (sexual harassment) allegations mainly to widespread problems in society.”<sup>38</sup> Pew also identifies a cultural shift in sexual violence in general with 74% of the public reporting the issue as “very important,” second only to changes in the federal tax system

<sup>36</sup> Michelle Rodino-Colocino, “Me Too, #MeToo: Countering Cruelty with Empathy,” 97.

<sup>37</sup> Rodino-Colocino, 97.

<sup>38</sup> John Gramlich, “10 Things We Learned About Gender Issues in the U.S. in 2017,” *Pew Research Center*, 28 December 2017.



as the top issues needing to be addressed.<sup>39</sup> The viral hashtags and national reports are channeling women's, men's, and nonbinary's anger into action.

All of the cases that began this chapter – Brock Turner, the leaked video of Donald Trump, Jackson's flippant comment about college sexual assault victims, Brett Kavanaugh – demonstrate that the Victorian patriarchal systems that shaped our laws, allegation processes, court verdicts, methods of medical care, and so much more continue to operate and haunt us today. The misogynistic beliefs of the manosphere make plain what lies more subtly within these systems.

The fastest way to silence the abhorrence of sexual violence is to deny it. For example, the case mentioned at the beginning of the chapter – Candice Jackson, acting assistant secretary for civil rights at the U. S. Department of Education, tells a reporter that ninety-percent of accusations of sexual assault on college campuses stem from the accuser's regret over a sexual interaction. Jackson would later apologize and even related that she had been sexually assaulted once in order to make her apology more convincing. False reporting continues to be a major fear for the patriarchal system, just as it was for Parliamentary members during the 1880s when discussions over the Criminal Amendment Act kept derailing into how to protect men from such allegations. Today, Great Britain has the highest rate of charging rape complainants with false allegations than any other western industrialized country. Most false reporting charges arise in cases where police have failed to undertake a thorough and well-resourced investigation into

<sup>39</sup> J. Baxter Oliphant, "Women and Men in Both Parties Say Sexual Harassment Allegations Reflect 'Widespread Problems in Society'," *Pew Research Center*, 7 December 2017.

the original complaint.<sup>40</sup> In some areas of the U.S. the number of “unfounded” cases far exceed the national average. Oxnard, California had the highest number at 54 percent. Scottsdale, Arizona wasn’t too far behind at 46 percent. The national average is 7 percent.<sup>41</sup> And then there are some states, like North Carolina, in which victims are not allowed to withdrawal consent set in precedence by a 1979 state supreme court ruling that victims cannot revoke consent after sexual intercourse begins and are therefore legally barred from filing a sexual assault complaint.<sup>42</sup> For the patriarchal system to continue, the prevalence of sexual violence needs to be censored and, when it cannot be, heterosexual men’s concerns outweigh those of any other demographic.

The majority of socially promising or powerful white men are protected from the full weight of the consequences of their actions. While Bill Cosby expects to serve the full ten year sentence for three counts of aggravated indecent assault, Olympic-hopeful Brock Turner served three months, Kavanaugh was elected to the United States Supreme Court bench, and Donald Trump was elected as the President of the United States of America. Middle- to upper-class white men are simply not rapists by conventional thinking. Like the medical professions from the late Victorian period, these men are

<sup>40</sup> Lisa Avalos, “The Chilling Effect: The Politics of Charging Rape Complaints with False Reporting,” 811-812.

<sup>41</sup> Alex Campbell and Katie J.M. Baker, “This Police Department Tosses Aside Rape Reports When a Victim Doesn’t Resist ‘To the Best of Her Ability’,” *Buzzfeed News*, September 8, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Monica Vendituoli, “N.C. Law: Woman Can’t Back Out of Sex Once Underway,” *The Fayetteville Observer*, 21 March 2019.

assumed to have more self-control and stronger moral values than their counterparts in more marginalized groups.

In the meantime, over three million American women say their first sexual experience was nonconsensual. The average age of this forced sexual initiation is fifteen. Women who experienced forced sexual initiation are less likely to be white (only 65.3 percent were white compared to 74.7 percent of women who engaged in voluntarily chose their sexual initiation)<sup>43</sup> or have completed college. Meanwhile on college campuses, rates of sexual assault reports have been increasing. This may be due to a number of reasons including greater student awareness, which the feminist hashtag movement has been credited with doing, and new mandatory reporting policies. Sara Hackenberg explains in a presentation at the *North American Victorian Studies Association* how San Francisco State University turned the mandatory reporting policy into a positive force by empowering students to change the narrative by amassing data that more closely reflects the reality and disproves RMA narratives.<sup>44</sup>

However, the handling of those reports is still a problem as the latest survey from the Association of American University demonstrates. Students do not trust their colleges to take their reports seriously or to conduct fair investigations: “There have been decades of institutional betrayal at many of these schools ... Students speak to each other about

<sup>43</sup> Laura Hawks et. al., “Association Between Forced Sexual Initiation and Health Outcomes Among US Women,” 1551-1558.

<sup>44</sup> Sara Hackenberg, “Untitled,” Narrativizing Victorian Violence in the #MeToo Era. *media. genre. the generic*. 19 October 2019. North American Victorian Studies Association.

the difficulty of going through a Title IX process”<sup>45</sup> and changes to federal government guidelines have not helped with that. Victims are coming forward more and more to dispel the myth that rape is rare but many fail to see any justice. The injustice embedded in her experience is why Chanel Miller, the woman Brock Turner assaulted, was invited to write a memoir. In her book she testifies how the system twists and reduces victims of sexual violence into whatever one-dimensional caricature it needs them to become in order for it continue operating. The system only accepts fuller characterizations when supporting one of its valued members, who are, more often than not, powerful men.

This dissertation has confronted rape culture on several different fronts: within the early formation of sexual forensics, cultural myths that existed to excuse sexual violence between 1870 and 1890, the sexualization of male-upon-female violence during that same period, and how these different parts of a larger system operate within today’s inherited patriarchal system. The current system may include more minorities than the system did a hundred and fifty years ago but the scales of justice remain out of balance. When one demographic holds significant power over another, those power relations become embedded into its culture in ways that are never clearly transparent and continue to haunt

<sup>45</sup> Neil Gluckman, “Students Say They Don’t Trust Campus Title IX Processes. And They Doubt Their Own Reports Would Be Taken Seriously,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 October 2019. See also: Sarah Brown, “More Than 1 in 4 Undergraduate Women Experience Sexual Misconduct in College,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 15 October 2019; Sarah Brown and Katherine Mangan, “What You Need to Know About the Proposed Title IX Regulations,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 16 November 2018; and, Katherine Mangan, “What you Need to Know About the New Guidance on Title IX,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 22 September 2017.

the future until exposed and rectified.<sup>46</sup> Today's #MeToo movement is challenging these shadowy forces where they are seen. This dissertation seeks to help advocates by revealing a little bit more of the myriad historical materializations that entrenched these sometimes blatant, sometimes shadowy patriarchal forces. Through scholarship like this – that counters the ahistorical myths created by those who seek to uphold the patriarchal system – activists have more resources to exorcise these shadows that continue to haunt us for a more just present.

<sup>46</sup> Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 3.

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The references have been organized for the reader's ease. Select primary sources from the data are separated out from the remaining references and grouped by the database in which they were found (Sections 1 and 2). All the remaining references appear in Section 3.

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