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Dr. Philip Harling, Major Professor

Dr. David Hamilton, Director of Graduate Studies

RENT:
SAME-SEX PROSTITUTION IN MODERN BRITAIN, 1885-1957

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Jonathan E. Coleman

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Philip Harling, Professor of History

Lexington, Kentucky

2014

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

RENT: SAME-SEX PROSTITUTION IN MODERN BRITAIN, 1885-1957

Rent: Same-Sex Prostitution in Modern Britain, 1885-1957 chronicles the concept of "rent boys" and the men who purchased their services. This dissertation demonstrates how queer identity in Britain, until contemporary times, was largely regulated by class, in which middle-and-upper-class queer men often perceived of working-class bodies as fetishized consumer goods. The "rent boy" was an upper-class queer fantasy, and working-class men sometimes used this fantasy for their own agenda while others intentionally dismantled the "rent boy" trope, refusing to submit to upper-class expectations. This work also explains how the "rent boy" fantasy was eventually relegated to the periphery of queer life during the mid-century movement for decriminalization. The movement was controlled by queer elites who ostracized economic-based and public forms of sex and emphasized the bourgeois sexual mores of their heterosexual counterparts. Sex between adult men in private was decriminalized, but working-class men selling sex suffered harsher laws and more strictly enforced penalties under this new, ostensibly "progressive" legislation.

KEYWORDS: homosexuality, queer, prostitution, Great Britain, sex work

Jonathan E. Coleman

4/22/14

RENT:
SAME-SEX PROSTITUTION IN MODERN BRITAIN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements …………………………………………………………………………iii

Chapter One: The Problems and Possibilities of Same-Sex Prostitution……………………1
Problems and Possibilities…………………………………………………………7
Chapter Synopses……………………………………………………………………19

Chapter Two: Lambs and Panthers: Queer Sex and Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Britain ……………………………………………………………………………………28
Queer Sex and Prostitution up to 1885………………………………………………30
Cleveland Street and Oscar Wilde……………………………………………………51

Chapter Three: "Perfidious Official Guardians": Same-Sex Prostitution, Imperialism, and the Nation…………………………………………………………………………………68
The Dublin Castle Scandal…………………………………………………………71
The Lives of Roger Casement………………………………………………………89

Chapter Four: Queer Men and the Rent Boy, 1918-1939…………………………………109
"Like Any Possessive Housewife": Queer Men and the Rent Boy Fantasy………111
"That's Why I Did It": Working-Class Men and Same-Sex Prostitution…………138

Chapter Five: Wolfenden's Queers: The Death of the Rent Boy…………………………158
The Growing Rift …………………………………………………………………163
The Wolfenden Report………………………………………………………………179

Chapter Six: "The Present State of Whorecraft": An Exploratory Conclusion……………203

Bibliography ……………………………………………………………………………229

Vita…………………………………………………………………………………………249

Chapter One

The Problems and Possibilities of Same-Sex Prostitution

In 2006, the now-defunct *News of the World* published a shocking article, accusing a Liberal-Democrat MP of soliciting "rent boys." Mark Oaten, an aspiring party leader, admitted to his affair with a twenty-three-year-old sex worker and promptly stepped down as the home affairs spokesman of his party.[1] The usual media circus ensued. Oaten was denounced as the hypocritical family man and a disgrace, while every aspect of his sexual life was combed over—including accusations of "three-in-a-bed" sex and coprophilia. Oaten resigned his seat, jumped a back fence to escape the press, and headed to Wales—the media reporting his every move. *The Times* christened him the "byword for scandal."[2] Oaten, without protest, embraced the moniker. He wrote an in-depth account of the scandal's wake for *The Independent*.[3] In a rather cheeky move, he reviewed the play, *Life After Scandal*, for *The Guardian.*[4] And in 2009 he published a tell-all book. Mark Oaten, repeatedly, told his side of the story, wherein he mused on the fluidity of sexual orientation, his general fears of dying, and his "DNA-encoded" obsession with youth.

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[1] "Oaten resigns over rent boy claim," *BBC News* 21 January 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4635916.stm, accessed 26 November 2013.

[2] Andrew Clark, "Oaten ready to be pelted in public again," *The Times* 22 July 2013, http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/business/industries/retailing/article3821974.ece, accessed 26 November 2013.

[3] "Mark Oaten: On the scandal that ruined him," *The Independent* 15 September 2009, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/mark-oaten-on-the-scandal-that-ruined-him-1787299.html, accessed 26 November 2013.

[4] "Mark Oaten on Life after Scandal," *The Guardian* 1 October 2007, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/oct/02/politicsandthearts.theatre, accessed 26 November 2013.

His partner, the sex worker, however, remained virtually silent. His only words were quoted in *The News of the World*, and they described Oaten: "a very troubled man living a very dangerous double life."[5] The young man may have wanted to remain silent in order to keep himself out of the scandal, but that would have been difficult to achieve if the press were interested in talking to him. The anonymous twenty-three-year-old was certainly talked about, but it seems he was never spoken to. If he was unwilling to tell his story, then apparently any sex worker could fill in the details. *The Independent,* for example, found an Irish escort, dubbed Erin Smith, to act as a representative. The first thing Smith asserted was his annoyance with the term "rent boy," which he and his friends considered a "derogatory term" meant to describe "a 'crack whore' who charges £10 for a blow job." Regardless, *The Independent* referred to Smith as a rent boy, and even titled the article "A Rent Boy's Story."[6] Oaten, in his glut of media output, provided a lengthy description of his partner as "polite, friendly, businesslike and in total control." He gave "no sense that [Oaten] was exploiting him." Indeed, Oaten was the envious one, envious of the man's good looks and youthfulness. But Oaten had "no real concept of the risk," giving his phone number and going to the man's flat in his "work clothes." He therefore could not feel angry with the young man "for selling his story," although it is unclear, and in hindsight doubtful, that the *News of the World* uncovered the scandal through the escort himself.

[5] "Oaten quits over '3-in-bed' rent boy scandal," *Daily Mail*, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-374756/Oaten-quits-3-bed-rent-boy-scandal.html, accessed 26 November 2013.

[6] "A rent boy's story," *The Independent* 24 January 2006, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/a-rent-boys-story-524365.html, accessed 26 November 2013.

As Oaten wrote, "This was entirely my fault," and, seemingly it was entirely Oaten's story to tell.[7] Oaten, as a prominent politician, occupied the center of the scandal, while the concept of prostitution—and those sex workers who practiced it—swirled in an abstract haze around him. Oaten's sexuality was dissected, explored, and commented upon; his future political prospects were questioned and lamented. The twenty-three-year-old appeared only as a second-hand portrayal of a pretty young thing, willing, for the right price, to destroy a man's life.

The fall of a third-party MP in the midst of a rent boy scandal may sound thoroughly modern, but the exposure of this particular affair in 2006, with its heady mix of power and sexual excess, is part of a much longer trend. Same-sex prostitution often provided men with a discreet avenue to queer sex that, if revealed, exacerbated whatever social opprobrium was held toward the sex acts alone. More importantly, same-sex prostitution was dependent upon tropes, that of the "rent boy" in particular—a stock character whose personal identity was consumed by his profession. Although a trope, the rent boy was a particularly malleable one, riddled with contrasts. Like Oaten's partner, he was enviable and dangerous, "totally in control" yet "exploited." The rent boy was talked about, but rarely ever allowed to speak. It is this phenomenon of same-sex prostitution and the figure of the "rent boy" that is explored throughout this work.

The history of same-sex prostitution and the rent boy in modern Britain is a tumultuous one, yet extraordinarily revealing. In relating this tale, I am making two overarching arguments. First, the social construction of prostitution informed how queer men and British society at large understood queer sex. While men engaged in queer sex

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[7] "Mark Oaten: On the scandal that ruined him."

in various contexts, from fumbling boarding-school romps to life-long affairs, those acts exposed by the British press were conceptualized, almost always, as assumed instances of prostitution that followed an established narrative of exploitation and ruin. Recognizing the correlation between prostitution and queer sex in the public imagination explains legislation like the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 with its infamous Clause 11 that criminalized all sexual acts between men. It is the same association of queer sex and prostitution, with its connotations of anonymous, public, fleeting encounters, that was attacked by elite queer men in the 1950s, in an attempt to decriminalize same-sex acts. By disassociating the monogamous, private, love-based "homosexual" from the "perverts" having paid sex in dark streets, the Wolfenden Report of 1957 codified a distinction in which "homosexuals" were tolerated and "perverts" were further castigated.

Second, I argue that the rent boy represented a sexualized fantasy inscribed on the bodies of the men who practiced same-sex prostitution. The rent boy never existed, except in fantasy and imagination. In those fantasies he represented a narrow, specific type wherein unassailably masculine, working-class men, with broad and brawny bodies and unabashed sexual appetites, had sex with, maybe even loved (but not too fervently), queer men. They were independent, yet grateful and dutiful to their upper-class partners. But this figure, as is always the case with fantasy, was an impossible paradox. Literal examples of same-sex prostitution, recorded in court records and personal memoirs, quickly dismantled the imagined "rent boys." Many men who sold sex enjoyed and sought after the encounters themselves and preferred male partners over female ones. Their masculinity was often assailable, performing passive, not just active, sex acts with regular frequency. Many of them lacked broad and brawny bodies, and were more like

boys than strapping young men. Sometimes, as one queer man recorded, their feet smelled.

Yet, despite the inability of the rent boy to be realized, the fantasy still displayed the desires of upper-class men, and the rent boy was not a fantasy created by sexuality alone. The rent boy was constructed by a unique juxtaposition of multiple signifiers such as class, nationhood, gender, economic exchange, and the established narrative of heterosexual prostitution—all of which informed the eroticism that surrounded him. These analytics transformed male bodies into rent boys as much as any sexual act did. Concepts like social class, gender, and nationality became embodied in the same-sex prostitute, creating a fluid, more complex form of queer identity and sexuality than that expressed by simple hetero/homo, masculine/feminine, or even class-based dichotomies.

These arguments are fleshed-out in the following four chapters that survey same-sex prostitution between the years 1885 and 1957. 1885 witnessed the passing of the well-studied Criminal Law Amendment Act, which, while ostensibly about child prostitution, resulted in the criminalization of all sexual contact between men. Similarly, 1957 produced another government intermediation in British sexuality with the issuing of the Wolfenden Report. This departmental committee report eventually led to the decriminalization of most homosexual acts but also prompted a severe censuring of prostitution.

Chapters Two and Three demonstrate how the larger British public approached exposed queer acts as prostitution scandals, transferring the assumed dynamics of heterosexual prostitution to explain and understand the workings of sex between men. As explained in Chapter Three, these conversations carried immense weight, in which same-

sex prostitution could be used as a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses, not only of individuals, but of whole nations.

The dissertation takes a slight thematic turn in Chapter Four, away from public discourse to the more private and contained fantasy of the rent boy as crafted in the minds of queer men. Focusing on the interwar period, what constituted the complexities of the rent boy fantasy are laid out, exposing the extraordinarily classed assumptions on which the rent boy fantasy was based. And, much to the frustration of many queer men, these assumptions proved false and were in some cases actively thwarted by the working-class men they encountered.

Chapter 5 explains the way these class assumptions played against same-sex prostitutes in the mid-century fight for decriminalization. Returning to public discourse, the construction of the Wolfenden Report in 1957 represented the crystallization of the "homosexual" as a rigid sexual identity into which the same-sex prostitute did not fit. Instead, the rent boy and his literal counterpart, the same-sex prostitute, were ostracized to the periphery of sexual expression, deemed perverse and unfit for the respectability desired by "true" homosexuals.

The chapters, individually, give an episodic look into the concept of same-sex prostitution, mostly in London, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. But as a whole, the dissertation charts the centrality of prostitution to the perceptions of queer sex in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—held by both the larger public and by many queer men themselves—and its eventual decline in the mid-twentieth century. Same-sex prostitution and its attendant rent boy fantasy reflected many larger social trends, influenced by attitudes on such themes as nationality, respectability, and, of

course, sex. It particularly reflected changing attitudes of social class. Prostitution, both queer and heterosexual, was perceived as inherently inter-classed interactions, although they certainly did not always involve people of different classes. Yet how queer sex was supposed to work, in both desire and literal sex, was based on class difference, a meeting of the two engendered, as were most inter-classed meetings, by the act of economic exchange. But assumptions and perceptions change, and so did the centrality of same-sex prostitution in defining queerness. Congenital homosexuality came to dominate queer identity, bringing with it the nascent possibilities of decriminalization and social tolerance. Elite queers intentionally shed economic-based forms of sex from the "true homosexual" in order to obtain decriminalization and respectability. Sexual identities in turn became dichotomous and static, while the same-sex prostitute became, and in many ways remains, a perverse anomaly occupying the urban shadows.

Problems and Possibilities

Historians have long sensed that same-sex prostitution and queer identity were intertwined. In 1979, when the history of sexuality was still in its infancy, historian Jeffery Weeks wrote a short article that tentatively explored the relationship between "male prostitution" and the emergence of a homosexual identity in modern Britain.[8] Admittedly, it is a work without many answers. He ruminates on how historians could theorize male prostitution and homosexuality. He hypothesizes on what specific social

[8] Jeffrey Weeks, "Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Annes: Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries." First published in the *Journal of Homosexuality*, 1980. Reprinted in *Hidden From History*, eds. George Chauncey, Martin Duberman, and Martha Vicinus (Dutton Adult, 1989).

circumstances brought about the two. He questions if "homosexuals" and "male prostitutes" ever identified themselves by their sexuality at all. Throughout the entire argument, Weeks seems sure of only one thing: homosexuality and male prostitution are inseparable. They form a "close, indeed symbiotic, relationship."[9] The questions lie, not in the existence, but in the nature of the relationship. For Weeks, the entanglement of homosexuality and male prostitution is self-evident—a sexual axiom. It is clear that he assumes a forthcoming queer history of modern Britain in which the male prostitute will be an essential component.

However, the intervening thirty years of queer study did not follow his expectations. Few other works on same-sex prostitution have appeared, despite Weeks's early recognition of its importance. That is not to say that historians ignore incidents of same-sex prostitution; indeed, almost all of the well-studied events of Britain's queer history since 1800 involve the exchange of wealth for sexual access. But historians rarely examine these events as instances of economic exchange. Most often, they focus on the more identifiable (proto)homosexual—such as Oscar Wilde—leaving the "straight," gay-for-pay characters on the proverbial sideline. Out of all this literature, only a handful of published works employ same-sex prostitution as a central point of analysis, two of which merit mentioning. The first, Matt Houlbrook's "Soldier Heroes and Rent Boys," examines the dual identity of the British soldier as a bastion of masculinity and as susceptible to the monetary/sexual advances of other men.[10]

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[9] Ibid., 197.

[10] Matt Houlbrook, "Soldier Heroes and Rent Boys: Homosex, Masculinities, and Britishness in the Brigade of Guards, circa 1900-1960" *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Jul., 2003) 351-388.

Houlbrook demonstrates how London's Guardsmen came to represent two dissonant fantasies of nationalized masculinity and queer desire. He writes, "These fantasies were unstable and contradictory, existing in a constant tension through which one persistently threatened to disrupt the other."[11] According to Houlbrook, an established masculinity allowed the Guardsman to maneuver in the underworld of queer spaces relatively freely, taking advantage of his symbolic erotic allure. But by taking advantage of his widely-perceived masculinity he simultaneously demonstrated its instability and that the symbol of British masculinity, for the right price, could "be had."

The other article, "Who's Afraid of John Saul?," develops the idea that the "professional sodomite" appeared intermittently in discourses of desire in Victorian Britain—his appearance resulting in a great deal of anxiety.[12] Morris Kaplan explains that John Saul, as a witness during the Cleveland Street Scandal and as the protagonist of a pornographic novel, embodied both the revulsion and titillating eroticism of queer sexuality and of same-sex prostitution in particular. Unlike the Guardsmen of Houlbrook's article, John Saul was met with public ridicule and eventually dismissed from the stand as a discredited witness in the libel trial of newspaper editor Ernest Parke, who accused Lord Euston of patronizing an all-male brothel on Cleveland Street. Saul openly admitted to being a "professional sodomite," scandalizing the courtroom with detailed descriptions of his sexual encounters with Lord Euston. Although the courts listened to his testimony, Justice Hawkins struck Saul's statement, and Parke spent a year

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[11] Ibid., 2.

[12] Morris B. Kaplan, "Who's Afraid Of John Saul? Urban Culture and the Politics of Desire in Late Victorian London" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 5.3 (1999) 267-314.

in prison for unjustifiable libel. Yet, despite the public disgust and rejection, within months Saul's life became the basis of an explicit—and successful—pornographic novel in which he was portrayed as a queer equivalent of Don Juan.

The paucity of same-sex prostitution in British historiography is intriguing, especially when one considers the vast amount of work already published on the history of British sexuality. Even the study of homosexuality is relatively rich, with numerous monographs covering the topic throughout the entire span of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Perhaps the lapse of studies on same-sex prostitution is simply a matter of scholarly focus, where writers had other questions in mind. But same-sex prostitution is also a terribly difficult concept on which to write, and it requires that a substantial theoretical framework be in place.

The study of same-sex prostitution poses several problems for the historian. First, sources are difficult to find and difficult to interpret. As the UK's National Archives warns in its research guide, "gay and lesbian history is still a time consuming and difficult task, presenting considerable problems for anyone working in the field." Traditional sources, like police records, news reports, and personal correspondence, were often created in moments of exposure and scandal, when participants were under duress. Even personal memoirs, photographs, and letters of individuals who avoided detection were created in a time when same-sex acts, for money or not, were illegal. Perhaps the greatest disadvantage is that very little material from men who could be considered same-sex prostitutes has survived. Sources that do quote the actual words of same-sex prostitutes were usually drafted under compulsion, resulting from interrogation by investigators or prosecuting attorneys.

The inequality of sources is more clearly demonstrated by female same-sex prostitution. Although I had hoped to find some instances when I began my research, the material simply was not there. That is not to say that sex between females, engendered by some form of economic exchange, did not occur. But it apparently occurred in spaces less public than those acts between men, leaving nothing with which historians could work. That being the case, this current work deals solely with sex between men.

Secondly, while sources must be collected and considered carefully, how one interprets those sources is particularly problematic. One hurdle is terminology. Those who were selling sex, consuming sex, and those observing and commenting, are difficult to mark with a set taxonomy. To clarify distinctions, I have primarily used the phrase "same-sex prostitution" to describe the phenomenon of sex performed between men for financial compensation. To describe the literal men who performed same-sex acts for compensation, I have used the term "same-sex prostitute." The use of "same-sex" removes the identity politics attached to "homosexual" and focuses on these sexual transactions as being between people of the same bodily sex and not between people of a socially-constructed sexual orientation. As John Howard argues in *Men Like That*, by refraining from "homosexual" we avoid making assumptions about the conceptualization and organization of sexuality (a point I am trying to complicate) during a period in which a homosexual identity would not have existed in the same way it does today.[13]

While I find the phrase same-sex prostitution preferable, I do not find it perfect. Like "homosexual," "prostitution" may not accurately reflect the dynamics of the relationships that appear in this work. Prostitution conjures up images of fleeting,

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[13] John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) xviii.

anonymous encounters and simple monetary exchange. While those types of encounters certainly occurred and are discussed, many of the relationships in this dissertation were much more complicated. Some lasted for years; some were dependent on less-explicit forms of wealth, such as prestige, education, and better employment. "Prostitute" is also a problematic term as it was a descriptor only sporadically applied to men. Like "homosexual," "prostitute" ascribes an identity that many of these men would have rejected or avoided entirely.

The other recurring designation in this text is "rent boy." When I use the term "rent boy," I am describing the fantasized figure of the man who sells sex. While "same-sex prostitute" is used to denote the literal men participating in the acts, the rent boy denotes the desires, dreams, and perceptions inscribed upon the bodies of "same-sex prostitutes." Throughout this dissertation, I have been careful to use both terms judiciously to distinguish between the man who did sell sex and the type of man who was *believed* to sell sex.

I chose the term "rent boy" for several reasons. First, it has some history of usage throughout the time period covered in this work. In the Oscar Wilde case in the 1890s, bystanders referred to the men with whom Wilde had paid sex as "renters."[14] However, it is unclear if the term decidedly meant someone who was paid for sex. A "renter" could also describe a blackmailer, and this duality regularly appeared in conversations around same-sex prostitution. By the interwar period, the term rent boy appears frequently, but it is not ubiquitous. The terms used to describe "normal" men who had queer sex for some

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[14] William Butler Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (New York: MacMillan, 1953) 174.

form of remuneration were varied. “Trade,” with its clear class connotations was commonly used and was sometimes combined with the adjective “rough” to denote a man known for beating and/or robbing his partners. Trade by the 1930s, however, could simply mean sex of any kind.[15] The phrase "dilly boy” appears, referencing Piccadilly Circus, a public space where men would often solicit. But a dilly boy may sometimes be a “quean,” an effeminate queer man who was solicited by “normal” men for sex. Queer men also employed “Jolly Jack Tar,” a well-known term for a sailor, and its use by queer men to name men-selling-sex emphasizes the role sailors and soldiers played in same-sex prostitution.

Though I had an array of choices, I ultimately chose a singular term out of necessity. To make the work coherent, I needed a phrase to describe the phenomenon of the fantasized man who sold sex. “Rent boy” does that especially well. Its dissonance with reality—the men were rarely ever “boys” and rarely ever “renters”—speaks to the malleability, the fantasy, of the figure. The lack of a singular, universal term used by queer men to describe these men they assumed existed highlights the inherent fluidity of the erotic fantasy itself. The figure I am calling the “rent boy” was a socially constructed identity created in a specific time and milieu.

As a socially constructed identity, the rent boy shares a history with the “prostitute.” According to historian Judith Walkowitz, the prostitute developed into a rigid, classifiable social type as the nineteenth century progressed.[16] The woman who

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[15] Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918*-1957 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005) 169-70.

[16] Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

exchanged sex for money became "incorporated" with her sex acts, acquiring "an exclusive and distinct sexual identity."[17] The emergence of a prostitute "species" resulted from "the increased official concern over prostitution as a dangerous form of sexual activity, a form whose boundaries had to be controlled and defined."[18] These fears were most explicit in the Contagious Diseases (CD) Acts of the 1860s, which attempted to regulate venereal disease with intrusive, state-sanctioned exams and the incarceration of infected female prostitutes. With the resulting repeal movement, the CD Acts amply revealed the classed and gendered assumptions Victorians held toward prostitution.

Along with increased regulation, stunning exposés, such as W.T. Stead's *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*, ascribed to the prostitute a common narrative characterized by working-class deprivation and victimization by upper-class consumers. This repeated narrative, coupled with increased regulation, resulted in substantial changes to the sex trade. Prostitution could no longer be an occasional source of supplemental income available to many working-class women. Casual prostitution became less attractive as its consequences became more severe with the now permanent label of "prostitute." As the identity of prostitute rigidified, working-class communities were less likely to accept women who participated in the sex trade, even if they did so only periodically. Prostitution was transformed into a full-time occupation and a full-time identity, with prostitutes becoming a distinct, ostracized group in Victorian society. It was within this moment of substantial change that the rent boy himself appeared.

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[17] Ibid., 4.

[18] Ibid., 3.

While the social construction of prostitution is crucial to the understanding of same-sex prostitution and the "rent boy," acknowledging it is not enough to fully understand the complexities of this particularly queer phenomenon. More was at work than simply the story of prostitution with the female character replaced by a man. London's same-sex prostitutes uniquely complicated sexual understandings because they occupied two stigmatized identities—prostitute and queer—but yet they were, in many respects, neither. Much of the sexual value attributed to same-sex prostitutes originated from the belief that they were removed from both prostitutes and queers, creating an ambiguous identity—the rent boy—that allowed for fantasy, exploitation, and malleability. In simple terms, it was the lack of a distinct sexual identity that allowed rent boys to have sex with men for money yet remain distant from queers and prostitutes.

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Sedgwick explores the dichotomous nature of the heterosexual/homosexual divide, arguing that it developed over time and under specific social circumstances. This dichotomy, in which sexual orientation is based on the bodily sex of one's partner, is not the only possible sexual orientation. But it is this orientation that comes to dominate the others and becomes reified in our current understanding of sexuality. The "rent boy," I argue, represented a contestation to this then burgeoning dichotomy of sexual orientation based upon the bodily sex of one's partner.

Same-sex prostitution aptly reveals that a more complicated sexual paradigm was at play. Matt Houlbrook offers a description of this "other" sexual orientation in his book *Queer London*, stating that there is a "massive distance" between what constituted sexual normality and queerness in early twentieth-century London and what constitutes the same

conditions today.[19] Houlbrook argues that modern queerness "articulates a difference predicated solely on men's exclusive sexual and emotional attraction to other men."[20] This specific "form of selfhood and cultural practice," created within a bourgeois understanding of sexuality and masculinity, would eventually come to dominate all other forms of sexual understanding. These middle-class assertions emphasized privacy, monogamy, and gender normativity in the creation of the "respectable" homosexual.[21] It was this bourgeois idea of the homosexual that would become codified in the Wolfenden Report of 1957.

Yet the domination of a distinct heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy was not secured until, at least, mid-century and even later for those outside of the middle class. According to Houlbrook, for the working-class male, sex with both men and women was an acceptable, even commendable, outlet so long as the expected gender performance (or its appearance) was maintained. If working-class men remained assertive and dominant with their partners, no matter their partner's sex, then the "normality" of the working-class man was intact.

As Houlbrook points out, working-class homosex encounters could involve friends, but often they were inter-class affairs that were frequently, but not always, dependent on financial exchange. Once again, working-class men could engage in same-sex prostitution, even lining their pockets without reproach, as long as they remained within prescribed gender roles. On the other hand, middle-class men (the "true" queers)

[19] *Queer London*, 169.

[20] Ibid., 195.

[21] Ibid.

were automatically feminized by their sexual desires and, to an extent, by their social class.[22] But it was not as simple as Houlbrook claims. Gender roles were difficult to maintain when the specters of dependence and need were made explicit by the exchange of wealth. Same-sex prostitution could allow working-class men to retain a sense of masculinity and "normality" (in fact, I believe this fantasy gave the same-sex prostitute much of his desirability), but patronage insinuated a form of gender disruption that had to be, in some way, corrected.

It is, therefore, more fruitful to think of same-sex prostitution neither as a gendered system nor a sexual orientation, but as a system determined by its inherent inter-classed nature. Historians such as Jose Harris and Gareth Stedman Jones argue that class became a more distinct line as the nineteenth century progressed, and the workings of same-sex prostitution reflected this trend. Class differences, which were strongly gendered and sexualized, sustained while they simultaneously problematized erotic inter-class relationships. Gender and class became embodied in the same-sex prostitute, along with his affiliation with nationality, race, money, and labor, creating a much more complicated basis of sexual desire than a simple hetero/homo or masculine/feminine dichotomy. The same-sex prostitute and his consumer were codependent entities who practiced a sexuality eventually subsumed within the heterosexual/homosexual divide.

It is the messiness, the inability to be categorized in a way that seems coherent to contemporary understandings of sexuality, that makes the study of same-sex prostitution and the rent boy fantasy intellectually rich. The study of gay and lesbian history, or even queer history, tends to be genealogical—an attempt to discover traces of contemporary

[22] Ibid., 175.

sexual identities. But as Laura Doan argues, the "retrieval" of a gay, lesbian, or queer past "elides the variations, deviations, and complications of actual lives of individuals who resist that fixity or who were unaccustomed to sexual self-reflexivity."[23] Doan's recent work makes an intervention in my own study. Same-sex prostitution, which consisted of literal transactions as well as fantasy, was its own form of personal sexual practice, but one that still resists categorization as a sexual orientation. Subjects, especially "rent boys," were organized by their social class, gender performance, and even their sexual availability, but these never coalesced as a particularly *sexual* identity. It is difficult to find evidence of men who sold sex identifying themselves by the practice. However, as I argue in Chapter Four, men of higher social classes did inscribe a sexual identity on men selling sex. This act of nomenclature, in which men selling sex were turned into a trope, reflected larger tendencies in sexual categorization specific to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As middle-and-upper-class queer men became more associated with their sexual acts and desires, forming the identity of "homosexual," men selling sex were more clearly designated as well, but by others. However, the rent boy identity—of the "normal" man selling queer sex—was an uneasy fit when homosexuality was concerned primarily with bodily sex as its central designator.

Same-sex prostitution and the rent boy found no place in the newly-constructed, narrow boxes of modern sexuality. It is an example of what Laura Doan calls "queer messiness."[24] This version of same-sex prostitution, and its resident practitioner the "rent

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[23] Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) 21.

[24] Ibid., 15.

boy," problematizes gay and lesbian history, and even queer history, because it disrupts the "search for similarity or continuity." A practice that did not make it into modern concepts of sexuality is, therefore, inherently "open to plurality and strangeness," an example of "discontinuity, alterity, and rupture."[25] As this dissertation attempts to demonstrate, queerness, and the possibilities of queer theory, extend beyond sex between men or between women. It can extend beyond sexuality, showcasing the importance of struggles with and dissonance toward any form of normality.[26]

Chapter Synopses

The next chapter of this dissertation, "Lambs and Panthers," delineates the dissonant relationship between prostitution and queer sex in the public imagination. Through press reports, criminal trials, and legislation, queer sex and heterosexual prostitution were forged as analogous vices, comprised of the same characteristics, and creating similar problems. The social narrative of prostitution, already established by the mid-nineteenth century, was recycled and applied to the increasingly visible world of sex between men. Public representations of queer sex, like those of prostitution, were represented as inter-classed, public, and economically driven, while inherently destructive for participants. The reiteration of queer sex as always akin to prostitution resulted in the enactment of Clause 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885—legislation that outlawed all sexual contact between men. A component of anti-

[25] Ibid., 16.

[26] Matt Houlbrook, "Thinking Queer: The Social and the Sexual in Interwar Britain" in *British Queer History: New Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. Brian Lewis (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2013).

prostitution legislation, Clause 11 marked the state codification of queer sex as a form of prostitution, and was later used in the most infamous cases of queer sex, such as the arrest of Oscar Wilde. Later scandals were replete with inter-class sex and monetary exchange, and easily replicated the prostitution narrative. But on closer inspection, they also presented discrepancies. No case was a simple, straightforward incident of exploitation, corruption, and victimization, as portrayed. Therefore, when facts proved contrary to the expected prostitution narrative, they were altered to sustain the storyline.

The correlation between prostitution and queer sex would have far-reaching consequences. Chapter Three, "Perfidious Official Guardians," expands upon one strand of these consequences. The inherent victimization, exploitation, and ruin assumed to be part and parcel of queer sex were utilized in nationalistic discourses. When queer sex scandals erupted, they often became platforms on which to question and reaffirm nationalistic superiority. In one such instance, the 1884 Dublin Castle Scandal, Irish nationalists seized on English bureaucrats accused of paying young Irish men for sex, implementing queer sex-for-pay as a means to criticize English occupation. The solicitation of young Irishmen was used as a metaphor to elucidate the perversity of colonization, highlighting the extent of English corruption. As such, the sexual practices of a few were transformed into a devastating condemnation of British rule. Yet such arguments could work both ways, as demonstrated in the life of Irish nationalist Roger Casement. Government officials branded him a pervert who spread his corrupt sexual practices, as well as his political ones, among the Irish and throughout the Empire. The British successfully dismantled attempts to transform Casement into an Irish martyr by distributing Casement's "black diaries," a chronicle of his sexual activity while a consul

in the Colonial Service. Casement's sexual exploits in the empire, where he used his relative power and wealth to solicit men, became an example of what Irish independence would look like, according to the English. The English used Casement's predilection for same-sex prostitutes to criticize Irish attempts at self-governance, and, as had been done in the Dublin Castle Scandal, transformed the sex acts of an individual into a condemnation of an entire national movement. As Chapter Three demonstrates, same-sex prostitution helped conceptualize larger social problems, such as Ireland's struggle for independence. Often extending beyond the sexual practices of two individuals, same-sex prostitution and its assumed nature of exploitation and ruin represented vice, corruption, and abuse in various other forms.

The dissertation shifts its focus in Chapter Four, transitioning from the unequal relationships engendered by British notions of empire and nationalism to exploring the class inequalities that defined the rent boy fantasy created by British upper-class queer men at home. The rent boy represented the man who had sex with men and expected some form of remuneration in return, but his identity, and his desirability, was built upon much more than a simple set of sex acts. "Queer Men and the Rent Boy" dissects the complicated fantasy of the "rent boy." The rent boy was the working-class man—strong, virile, masculine, rapaciously sexual—that could be "had." Because of his social class, with its presumed innate traits of masculinity, the "rent boy," while having queer sex, was incapable of *being* queer, a paradox resolved by the act of prostitution itself. It was the working-class relationship with wealth, and the lack thereof, that created rent boys in the minds of their middle-class partners. Yet the role of economic exchange as the catalyst of these relationships purchased more than the bodies of working-class lovers. It

was this notion of class, with its assumed bodies, gender performances, and sexual practices, that comprised the specifics of the rent boy fantasy. As an inter-classed act, the rent boy fantasy reaffirmed broader notions of upper-class control and manipulation, wherein queer men exercised a familiar sense of class-engendered power over their working-class partners. Indeed, queer men articulated their relationships in classed, commercial ways, determining how such ventures were best initiated and maintained, as well as calculating the benefits and costs of having working-class lovers. In turn, working-class men were transformed into fetishized goods consumed by their upper-class patrons.

However, many men failed, or refused, to play along with the expectations of queer men, practicing sex work in ways that contested the upper-class rent boy trope. Working-class men sold sex for a multitude of reasons, forming varied relationships to the work and the men they encountered and often manipulating the financial outcome of their services. In doing so, these men deconstructed the rent boy fantasy, asserting a sexuality and identity of their own. The rent boy fantasy cultivated by upper-class queers did not, therefore, reflect the reality of same-sex prostitution in interwar London. Inter-class queer relationships were as nuanced as any sexualized or romantic encounter, with a range of power structures, experiences, and motivations.

The tension between the increasingly rigidified “homosexual” and the more ambiguous rent boy was played out in the post-war years, especially during the creation of the Wolfenden Report. Published in 1957, the Wolfenden Report encouraged the decriminalization of homosexual acts, provided they were performed in private by two consenting adults twenty-one years of age and older. But this piece of ostensibly

progressive work was ultimately rooted in a conservative view of human sexuality. While the Report's recommendations reified monogamy, privacy, and love-based sex, albeit including homosexual forms for the first time, it further castigated all forms of sex that existed beyond its boundary of the respectable. In the end, men who sold sex were more liable to arrest and harsher punishments. In Chapter Five, "Death of the Rent Boy," I argue that the construction of the Wolfenden Report occurred in a moment of intense shifts in the understanding of homosexuality as an identity. The nascent chance for social tolerance encouraged queer men to present a conservative sexual culture. The few publicly queer men along with their allies present during the Wolfenden committee meetings conveyed a singular form of homosexuality that emphasized an intra-classed, love-based form of sex more familiar to their heterosexual counterparts. To reinforce the homosexual's respectability, the practice of same-sex prostitution was systematically removed as an acceptable part of queer life, along with its more fluid forms of class and gender identities and sexual practices. What emerged was an increasingly dominant hierarchy wherein respectable homosexuals gained greater social tolerance at the expense of those they now ostracized as "perverts": those whose sexuality was still characterized by public spaces and economic exchange.

The Wolfenden Report epitomized this crystallization, redeeming a limited interpretation of homosexuality while rebuking the rest. In privileging specific sexual relationships above others, the Wolfenden Report reinforced the idea that only one monolithic homosexual type genuinely existed and would be condoned by the state. To emphasize this point the Wolfenden Report encouraged harsher penalties on public and consumerist forms of sexuality, both straight and queer. While the practice of

prostitution between men certainly continued, it continued under greater scrutiny and was relegated to the perverse periphery of gay life—a poor substitute for those incapable or unwilling to find monogamous, intra-classed, life-long love. Peter Wildeblood, a former reporter who openly admitted his homosexuality in 1954, represented this tendency to divide queer sex acts into the respectable and the perverted. As one of the few open homosexuals called to testify before the Wolfenden Committee, his perceptions had an immense impact. Wildeblood presented a hierarchy of queer sex, arguing that the law, as it stood, forced queer men into perverse forms of anonymous, cash-based sex, which would disappear with reform. Wildeblood, advocating for love-based, monogamous, private sex free of economic motives, represented the homosexual whom the Wolfenden Report would reprieve while the rent boy became even more criminal, and between these two queer figures emerged a distinct gulf. The rent boy was increasingly characterized more by his act of prostitution than his act of homosexual sex. Same-sex prostitution was removed as a central practice of queer desire while its working-class practioners were burdened by further repression and state harassment.

Just as the fantasy of the rent boy had been constructed within a specific historical milieu, it was disassembled when sexual attitudes and beliefs changed. The concept of the rent boy—the working-class man who participated in queer sex, not out of an innate sexual desire but for compensation, and who was emphatically not queer himself—was unable to find a place in a dichotomous system of sexual belief that contained only heterosexuals and homosexuals. Same-sex prostitution, as practiced in the period covered by this dissertation, did not hinge its identity on bodily sex alone, as did the burgeoning sexual dichotomy. Social class and gender performance, and the act of

monetary exchange itself, all contributed to the experience and to the rent boy trope. As a sexual orientation based on bodily sex became the dominant organizing principle of human sexuality in Great Britain, same-sex prostitution was dismissed as a perverse sexual act having little to do with congenital, "true" homosexuality.

The conclusion of this work, "The Present State of Whorecraft," asks if a sense of continuity and similarity in the practice of same-sex prostitution can be traced from 1957 to the present day. There are some similarities. Same-sex prostitution is grounded in economic inequality, a fact that has only been exacerbated by recent changes to sex work, such as the predominance of digital spaces, which require a minimal level of capital, over street work, which does not. The rent boy still remains a trope, but what he represents has changed drastically. In the liberation of the 1960s and 1970s, he represented sexual freedom and excess. No longer straight, the rent boy was a confident, self-identified gay man who used his sexuality for both pleasure and profit, enjoying sex with an almost innocent enthusiasm. However, in the conservative turn of the 1980s, and the backlash of AIDS, the rent boy became dangerous, the harbinger of disease and death. It was in this moment that men who sold sex began to organize, mostly with heterosexual sex workers, identifying themselves increasingly by their labor and not their particular form of sexual practice.

Conclusion

The Mark Oaten scandal in 2006, although replete with the term "rent boy," concerned a sexual practice and identity trope that, while sharing some similarities, was quite different from the phenomenon studied in this work. Yes, the young men selling

sex had certain assumptions made about them, and at the heart of the experience itself was a series of monetary transactions. But the cultural understanding of same-sex prostitution now differs widely. The twenty-year-old was decidedly gay, and it was his partner, Mark Oaten, whose sexuality was difficult to define. Same-sex prostitution, for both Oaten and the press, did not speak to a common queer sexual practice, but was an act of sex work in which homosexuality was secondary.

Same-sex prostitution, between 1885 and 1957, was distinct to its own context. Before the solidification of a congenital homosexual identity, same-sex prostitution, informed by the social construction of prostitution, was a central component in understanding queer sex, both for queer men and British society at large. When sex acts between men were exposed, they were translated by using the established narrative of prostitution, with its tropes of inequality, exploitation, and ruin. Men like Peter Wideblood tried to dismantle the association between queer men and prostitution during the investigations of the Wolfenden Committee in the 1950s. By relegating anonymous, public, fleeting encounters as acts of perversion, not acts of homosexuality, elite queer men utilized conservative discourses of love and sex in order to achieve decriminalization. In the end, the Wolfenden Report followed suit, granting a codified distinction in which "homosexuals" were tolerated and "perverts" were further reproached.

Central to the practice of same-sex prostitution was the idea of the man who sold sex, the "rent boy." He was not only of a particular sexed body, but, just as importantly, of a particular social class, by which queer men drew out assumed characteristics. The "rent boy," then, was a fantasy in which middle-and-upper-class queer men thought of

working-class bodies as fetishized consumer goods. Some working-class men used this fantasy for their own agenda while others intentionally dismantled the rent boy trope, refusing to submit to upper-class expectations. This more fluid, less categorical expression of sex between men, while it flourished until the mid-twentieth century, was intentionally shed from queer identity, and the ensuing gay rights movement left these working-class practitioners in the semi-darkness of the forbidden, the ostracized, and the criminal.

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Chapter Two

Lambs and Panthers: Queer Sex and Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Britain

It was the trial of the decade. Despite the insufferably hot and crowded courtroom, spectators swarmed to hear the verdict in the case of Oscar Wilde. Wilde, at the height of his theatrical success, had been leveled by a failed libel trial and an indictment for gross indecency. His first criminal trial ended in a stalemate, but the second jury proved more decisive. Wilde swayed, his eyes filled with tears, as Judge Wills sentenced him to the harshest punishment the law allowed—two years with hard labor. Cries of "shame" erupted from Wilde's few friends in attendance, but they were soon drowned by thunderous applause as wardens took charge of the newly-convicted man. The news of the verdict was swept outside and carried along the teeming streets. But even as moralists declared victory, prostitutes and "renters" took advantage of the gathered throng. Young women, heavily painted and shabbily dressed, kicked up their skirts and "danced upon the pavement" when they heard of Wilde's conviction.[1] Alongside them, working-class youths winked, smiled, and smoked their cigarettes.[2] Wilde knew these men and their "sweetest and most compromising smiles,"— as witnesses for the prosecution, they helped send him to prison.[3]

It is fitting that prostitutes and renters were present at the tragic fall of Oscar Wilde. Indeed, by 1895 such a trio was expected. To the British public, prostitutes,

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[1] William Butler Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (New York: MacMillan, 1953) 174.

[2] Robert Harborough Sherard, *Oscar Wilde: The Story of an Unhappy Friendship* (London: The Hermes Press, 1902) 200.

[3] Oscar Wilde to Robert Ross, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2000) 1058.

queer men, and rent boys were interrelated figures of urban vice, connected by their shared sexual immorality. Queer sex, throughout the nineteenth century, was habitually represented as linked to prostitution, and by the time Oscar Wilde stood in the dock, this relationship was firmly established in the British imagination.

Through the constant characterization of queer sex as a sort of prostitution, the interconnectedness of the two became naturalized. In press reports, criminal trials, and legislation, queer sex and heterosexual prostitution were forged as analogous vices: comprised of the same characteristics, creating similar problems. The social narrative of prostitution, already established by mid-century, was recycled and applied to the increasingly visible world of sex between men. As was believed of prostitution, queer sex was represented as inter-classed, economically driven, innately public, anonymous, and operating by inequality. Even more central was the sincere belief that queer sex, like prostitution, was inherently destructive for its participants, always resulting in victimization, corruption, and exploitation.

The constructed parallels between queer sex and prostitution appeared as early as the mid-nineteenth century. News reports from the 1860s and 1870s portrayed sex between men as mimicking the dynamics of heterosexual prostitution already familiar to British readers. The enactment of Clause 11 of the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, legislation that outlawed all sexual contact between men, crystallized the public's correlation between the two. Included as a component of anti-prostitution legislation, Clause 11 marked the state codification of queer sex as a form of prostitution. It was this law that was invoked in the most widely-publicized trials of queer sex that were to follow: Cleveland Street and Oscar Wilde.

The male brothel on Cleveland Street and the trials of Oscar Wilde further entrenched the association between queer sex and prostitution. The scandals, replete with inter-class sex and monetary exchange, easily replicated the prostitution narrative. Yet, while the Cleveland Street and Oscar Wilde cases reaffirmed this relationship, they also presented contradictions. Neither case was a simple, straightforward incident of exploitation, corruption, and victimization, as they were portrayed. Therefore, when facts proved contrary to the expected narrative, Britons, through the press and other public airings, altered the facts to sustain the storyline.

The correlation between prostitution and queer sex had profound consequences. As the modern concept of homosexuality emerged in the twentieth century, societal reactions continued to reflect the assumed relationship between queer sex and prostitution. This prevailing understanding of sex between men would, in turn, directly affect how queer men themselves understood and practiced their sexuality well into the twentieth century.

Queer sex and prostitution up to 1885

The House of Commons on August 6, 1885 was a harried place. Members of Parliament had been on the floor since early morning, attempting to pass last-minute legislation before the upcoming elections. As the session drew into the evening, Henry Labouchere stood to propose a short addendum to the bill under consideration. This bill, formally called the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, allowed increased regulation over prostitution by extending police powers and raising the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen. Labouchere's contribution broadened the bill's scope considerably.

The Labouchere Amendment, titled Clause 11, introduced the crime of gross indecency, which criminalized all sex acts between men. Debate over Clause 11 was minimal; there was only one point of contention—whether to make the punishment two years instead of one. The clause was effortlessly approved, read a first and then second time, and quickly buried under the more controversial aspects of the bill, namely the raised age of consent. The next morning, as the Criminal Law Amendment Act was ratified, Clause 11 never stirred a word of debate.

The rather mundane passage of Clause 11 was somewhat ironic. The Labouchere Amendment would prompt a number of high-profile scandals and later become the major focal point of homosexual activism. Yet the fairly perfunctory inclusion of Clause 11 in 1885 was telling in itself. Passed, almost mindlessly, as part of anti-prostitution legislation, Clause 11 marked the formal, and unquestioned, recognition of queer sex as intrinsically linked to prostitution. This link, however, began long before the passage of Clause 11. As early as 1862, and probably earlier, newspaper reports and criminal trials relied on evolving perceptions of prostitution, centered on inequality and deprivation, to understand and verify incidents of queer sex. By 1871, the infamous trials of the cross-dressing Boulton and Park demonstrated how closely bound the two sexual vices had already become.

Victorians were well acquainted with the selling of sex. Prostitution had long been a popular and recurring source of social anxiety, but the nineteenth century, as Judith Walkowitz argues, saw a particularly manic flurry of public discourse and increased regulation. Prostitution became "a dangerous form of sexual activity, whose

boundaries had to be controlled and defined."[4] As the century progressed, women who sold sex were "incorporated" into the rigidifying sexual identity of "prostitute."[5]

The Victorians created a monolithic character out of the prostitute, turning the woman selling sex and her trade into social tropes. Their rendering was two-sided; the prostitute was "the object of class guilt as well as fear," the victim of wealthy dalliance and the harbinger of social collapse.[6] She was, most importantly, a poor, often abused girl from the lowest social circumstances, easily manipulated by the wealthy and depraved.[7] Therefore, with their perceived inherent powerlessness, these girls needed the protection offered by moral hygienists and members of Parliament. This protectionist tendency was most explicitly seen in W.T. Stead's famous 1885 exposé, *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*, in which he chronicled his own lurid experience of purchasing a thirteen-year-old virgin for five pounds. Stead's series of articles painted the girls as "bleating lambs," victims of "London Minotaurs": upper-class men "whose whole lives are dedicated to the satisfaction of lust."[8] Stead's accusations transcended the sexual into the political. These "minotaurs," by their social rank and wealth were, according to Stead, given relative immunity, if not outright protection, from a corrupt

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[4] Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 3.

[5] Ibid., 4.

[6] Ibid., 4.

[7] Ibid., see Chapter 10.

[8] W.T. Stead as quoted in Morris Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames: Sex, Love, and Scandal in Wilde Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005) 172.

government dependent on their deep pockets. Stead's newspaper campaign resulted in a moral panic and eventually incited Parliament to pass the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

But the prostitute, while deserving sympathy and assistance, also represented the danger of illegitimate interactions between social classes. The prostitute was a conduit of pollution, personifying fears of filth and contagion capable of infecting the upper classes, and thus had to be contained.[9] Prostitution as contagion was embodied in the Contagious Disease Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869, which were "intended to supply disease-free women" for Britain's garrison and naval towns.[10] Women suspected of prostitution were required to register with local authorities, were susceptible to vaginal examinations, and, if found diseased, were subjected to incarceration in hospitals. The Acts proved controversial from the start, igniting a repeal campaign that united moralists and feminists who argued that the Acts were not only biased in favor of men, but even encouraged the continued use of prostitution.[11] The "purity movement," as Frank Mort describes it, rejected state regulation of prostitution, calling instead for state restriction. The repeal movement was eventually successful, and the Acts were abolished in 1886.

The Victorian fixation on prostitution resulted from a larger social trend: an increased preoccupation with "extramarital sexuality as the primary area of dangerous sexual activity."[12] The manner in which Victorians perceived prostitution conveniently warranted their preoccupation with "dangerous" sex. Although their narrative was

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[9] Ibid., 4.

[10] Trevor Fisher, *Prostitution and the Victorians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) x.

[11] Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830* (New York: Rutledge, 1987) See sect. II, part 5.

[12] Ibid.

inaccurate—the reality of prostitution was much more complicated and ambiguous—it nonetheless successfully demonstrated the destructive power of sex, realized in the ruined prostitute and her debauched partners. When Britons were confronted with another form of extramarital sex, this time between men, the prostitution narrative, built specifically to corroborate Victorian moralistic expectations, was easily transposed and utilized.

The arrest of Augustus Cordner and Robert Godbold in November of 1862 was an early example of the intertwining of queer sex and prostitution. Historian Sean Brady, when recounting this incident, argues that Britons were left "to form their own judgments" concerning the men's guilt.[13] But a closer analysis reveals that, although the facts of the encounter were uncertain, the implementation of prostitution tropes, such as class disparity, anonymity, and public sex, led officials to assume that sex had occurred, despite the lack of concrete evidence.

The arrest of Augustus Cordner and Robert Godbold was haphazard, to say the least. The two men were discovered in the watercloset of The Grapes, a Clerkenwell pub. Around two in the morning, Mr. Henry Penny, a local globemaker, witnessed two men going "to the yard." After fifteen minutes, a fellow patron asked for Godbold, and Mr. Penny, in search of him, "went to the yard and found the door of the watercloset fastened." Mr. Penny returned with the other patrons and broke open the door, finding Godbold and Cordner inside. Cordner escaped, but Godbold was apprehended and "given into custody." Cordner was soon arrested, as well, and the pair were brought before Mr. Barker of the Clerkenwell Station.[14]

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[13] Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 62.

[14] *The Times*, 27 November 1862.

The dynamics of the assumed sexual encounter were made quite clear by *The Times*.[15] The disparity of class between the two men was immediately noted. Cordner was identified as a gentleman, "well-dressed" and a writer of poetry. Godbold, on the other hand, was a cab driver; his badge number was reported for the readers. Reports also intimated that the encounter was anonymous. Godbold, according to *The Times*, was unable to identify his partner. It was the public house patrons, not Godbold, who gave Cordner's name to the authorities. Furthermore, though the two were behind closed doors, reflecting some semblance of privacy, the incident itself was deemed inherently public. The reaction of the patrons, who literally broke into the closet, reinforced this notion that the presumed act was essentially a public one.[16]

Cordner and Godbold, who claimed innocence, were remanded, charged with sodomy, and scheduled for trial. It is unclear if a trial ever took place; if so, newspapers failed to report it. Perhaps the case was dropped since the burden of proof for a sodomy conviction was high. Indeed, unless there was a third-party witness, it was practically impossible to secure a sodomy conviction against consenting men, despite recent law reforms. Sodomy, criminalized by Henry VIII with the sixteenth-century Buggery Act, required proof of seminal emission until 1828, when Robert Peel's Offences Against the Person Act lessened the burden of proof to penetration. These pieces of legislation carried no explicit ties to sex between men, although anal sex between men was certainly included. The laws also technically criminalized sex acts as diverse as heterosexual rape

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[15] Press accounts are all that are available. Depositions and court transcripts for the trials discussed in this section, with the exception of Boulton and Park, are not known to exist.

[16] *The Times*, 27 November 1862.

and bestiality. In 1861, only one year before the arrest of Cordner and Godbold, capital punishment was replaced with life imprisonment in the hope that convictions would be more easily obtained. However, convictions remained unlikely until 1885 with the introduction of Clause 11 and its lesser charge of gross indecency.[17] Simply discovering two men in a bathroom was not the sufficient proof needed to secure a sodomy conviction in 1862. Yet the context of the incident alone, with its intimations of anonymity, publicness, and class disparity, was enough to have the men arraigned on charges of sodomy, even when convictions were so difficult to obtain.

The presumption of queer sex in the case of Cordner and Godbold was likely encouraged by the simultaneous scandal of George Rogers. As in the case of Cordner and Godbold, queer sex was reasonably assumed by invoking the traits of prostitution. The case began when a gentleman, George Rogers, accused a soldier, George Morris, of stealing his gold watch, chain, and pin. In his defense, Morris claimed that Rogers "incited him to indecency," and the watch, along with 2s, was "given [to] him after Mr. Rogers took improper liberties." Morris used the context of their relationship—class disparity, anonymity, and a somewhat-public cab ride—to convince the Court that the watch was exchanged for sexual favors, not taken in theft. Rogers and Morris both testified that they had just met; Rogers even admitted to buying drinks for the soldier. But while Rogers claimed he was simply being sociable, Morris recalled different intentions. He testified that Rogers approached him with an invitation to dinner, unaware of Rogers's "common habit" with soldiers. Morris innocently accepted, while Rogers called for a cab. It was inside the cab that, according to Morris, "indecent acts" occurred,

[17] Brady, 61-62.

instigated by Rogers. Afterwards, Rogers gave Morris money and the items as compensation. Through his testimony, Morris essentially cast himself as the sexual victim of a wealthy, predatorial man. He was not, as Rogers claimed, a thief, but the unwilling victim of "improper liberties" who was partially compensated by his wealthy assailant. The Court favored Morris's interpretation of events. By evoking components of the prostitution narrative, Morris successfully built his defense and, despite Rogers's denials, was acquitted and released.[18] Indeed, Morris's argument was so broadly accepted that Rogers began receiving sexual offers by post from men who had read of the incident.[19]

Twenty years later, the tropes of prostitution continued to be used to verify and understand incidents of sex between men. In 1881, Count Guido zu Lynar, secretary to the German ambassador, was accused of committing "unnatural acts" with a twenty-one-year-old, working-class soldier. The younger man in this case was John Cameron, a corporal with the Scots Guard. Although the Count did not previously know Cameron, he nevertheless invited the young officer to join him at a coffee house in Chelsea. Later that evening, the pair was "arrested for committing an unnatural crime." *The Times* report was unclear, but apparently a third party was responsible for alerting the authorities, since both men were arrested.[20]

Unsurprisingly, the press's interpretation of events followed a familiar tale. Once again, the extraordinary class difference between the Count and Cameron took center

[18] *The Times*, 7 November 1862.

[19] *The Times*, 19 November 1862.

[20] *The Times*, 9 July 1881.

stage; so too did the admission that the two men were strangers to one another. Reports also included the location of the act: the coffee house in Chelsea. Although the actual location within the coffee house was left unreported, the sex was effectively considered a public act, assumedly observed by an unnamed witness. These circumstances alone allowed *The Times* to confidently state that "the evidence was conclusive."[21]

Cameron's defense was strikingly similar to that used by Morris in the Rogers case. Like Morris, Cameron portrayed himself as the victim of a degenerate gentleman. Cameron testified to the police that he was unaware of the Count's intentions, and had he known, "he would have knocked [the Count's] brains out."[22] *The Times* depicted Cameron as an unwilling participant who was previously innocent of the Count's debauched ways. This explanation was weak, as it failed to explain Cameron's rather queer choice to join an unknown German count for an evening alone. Yet the story resonated because it was congruent with the accepted dynamics of sexual perversion. As Stead's exposé would argue four years later, one of prostitution's greatest and most prevalent dangers was the corruption of the innocent, working-class victim. Like the "soiled doves" and "bleating lambs" described in accounts of prostitution, queer sex was portrayed as operating by the same system of inequality: wealthy, debauched men luring innocent, poor victims into devious lifestyles. Despite the "conclusive evidence," Cameron was considered more a victim than a culprit, leading to his eventual acquittal.[23]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, 2 August 1881, trial of John Cameron (t18810802-714).

Of course, the story mainly revolved around the Count's governmental position. The German ambassador eventually intervened on the Count's behalf, claiming diplomatic immunity for his secretary.[24] Stressing the Count's nationality clearly marked Guido zu Lynar as non-English, but interestingly enough, the press did the same to Cameron. Despite his position as victim and British soldier, Cameron was decidedly rendered as foreign. *The Times* portrayed him as thoroughly Scottish; so Scottish, in fact, he was unable to even converse in English. Sean Brady argues that Cameron's reported ignorance of English was extraordinarily unlikely. But, as Brady notes, by emphasizing Cameron's inability to speak English, the young man was presented as "not fully British, or at least on the margins of acceptable Britishness."[25] Ascribing queer sex to other nationalities was a familiar practice, as H.G. Cocks argues. Homosexual desire was routinely distanced from "common life," including the institution of "Englishness."[26] The same attitude was taken toward prostitution. Moral campaigners argued that prostitutes were "increasingly foreigners" and that the trade itself was "Eastern in its origin."[27] Prostitution and queer sex were once again linked, this time by the presumption that both vices were inherently non-English.

The tendency to link prostitution and queer sex was integral to the most infamous scandal before 1885: the trials of the cross-dressing Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park. In order to secure a conviction for conspiracy to commit sodomy, the prosecution argued

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[24] *The Times*, 9 July 1881.

[25] Brady, 54.

[26] H.G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the 19th Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010) 7.

[27] Stefan Petrow, *Policing Morals: The Metropolitan Police and the Home Office, 1870-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 137.

that the two men paraded as female prostitutes, and, therefore, attempted, probably successfully, to commit sodomy. However, Boulton and Park's inconsistencies with Victorian expectations of prostitution led to the pair's acquittal.

Ernest Boulton and Fredrick Park, young men from wealthy, respectable families, were arrested in April 1870 while leaving the Strand Theatre. The two were charged with offending public decency by parading as women. The arrest was not impulsive; in fact, the police had been observing "Fanny" and "Stella," as Boulton and Park were called, for over a year. After the couple was arrested, the two were subjected to anal examinations reminiscent of the exams associated with the Contagious Disease Acts. The police then searched the pair's rooms, where they confiscated clothing, jewelry, photographs, and letters. During their search, police discovered amorous correspondence that connected the two young men with Lord Arthur Clinton, a Member of Parliament. The rather sexualized letters prompted the authorities to alter the charges to the more serious "conspiracy to commit the felony of sodomy."[28]

With these new charges, the prosecution would have to prove that Boulton and Park had engaged in anal intercourse or made an attempt to do so. Faced with this difficult task, the prosecution built its case not by proving intercourse per se, but by emphasizing the insinuation of prostitution. For the prosecution, it was logical to assume that if they proved the two men were would-be street walkers, then a jury would be convinced that they were also trying to commit sodomy. Despite Boulton and Park's well-paid barristers, the prosecution's case seemed likely to succeed, and for several

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[28] A more detailed case history can be found in Morris Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames: Sex, Love, and Scandal in Wilde Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005) Part I.

reasons. First, the evidence was relatively plentiful. Numerous witnesses testified of Boulton and Park's questionable behavior and dress. The prosecution also had the incriminating love letters and the results of the anal examinations. Second, the logic behind their strategy was sensible. Foregrounding characteristics of prostitution was a common and successful way to reasonably convince the British public that queer sex had occurred. However, the prosecution's case was unsuccessful. Boulton and Park, by their social class and respectability, failed to mimic the Victorian perception of the ruined prostitute. With the prosecution unable to classify Boulton and Park as prostitutes, the case resulted in the young men's acquittals.

The case against Boulton and Park began by stressing the men's queer habit of cross-dressing. The prosecution displayed sixteen silk dresses, thirteen petticoats, a dozen bodices, garters, stockings, two long curls, powder, even a gray beard—all of which had been found during the search of Boulton and Park's rooms.[29] The attire worn by Boulton and Park on the night of their arrest was also given as evidence, with each particular piece of clothing detailed, from Boulton's "cherry-colored evening dress" and bare arms to Park's low-necked satin paired with black lace.[30]

Boulton and Park's extensive wardrobe produced a fairly successful ruse. The prosecution introduced numerous witnesses who were sincerely convinced the two men were young ladies. Women in service at the boarding house where Boulton and Park kept a set of rooms ironically testified that they believed the pair to be women dressed as men. As recounted by *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, a kitchen maid at the boarding house

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[29] "The 'Gentlemen' in Female Attire," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 15 May 1870.

[30] *The Times*, 30 April 1870.

still suspected the two were women even after Boulton's parents came to visit their "son."[31] Another witness, this time a policeman named Chamberlain, attested to the pair's convincing mimicry. Having seen Boulton and Park on his beat, the policemen stated, "I believed they were women. I had been told they were men, but I did not believe it."[32]

Perhaps the strongest evidence came from the somewhat comical testimony of Mr. Mundell, a gentleman arrested with Boulton and Park at the Strand Theatre. Mr. Mundell's statement epitomized Boulton and Park's talent for deception. Mundell's testimony recounted several theater trips he took with the couple. During each visit to the theater, someone would approach to inform him that his female companions were actually men. He always disagreed, arguing that Boulton and Park were respectable ladies. When Boulton and Park were arrested, Mundell still remained convinced and refused to leave "the ladies" by themselves. As he stated, amid courtroom laughter, "I have never been taken in so in all my life."[33]

Despite Mundell's assertions, the prosecution portrayed the men as anything but respectable ladies. The two were not aping women; they were performing as prostitutes to the fullest extent. The prosecution argued that the pair was "walking in the Haymarket plying for men" with such success that other prostitutes were "complaining that [Boulton and Park] were interfering with their profession, taking the bread out of their mouths."[34]

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[31] "Trial of Boulton and Park," *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 21 May 1871.

[32] "Trial of Boulton and Park," *Illustrated Police News*, 13 May 1871.

[33] "The 'Gentlemen' in Female Attire," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 15 May 1870.

[34] PRO DPP 4 6 "The Queen v. Boulton and Others" 9 May 1871, 10.

Boulton and Park's street-walking was not "the occasional frolic or escapade, but […] the occupation and business of their lives."[35] The prosecution could not have been more explicit: "they went upon the town for the purpose of male prostitution."[36]

As the prosecution argued, Boulton and Park's behavior and clothing certainly pointed to prostitution. Scarlet dresses and plunging necklines were calling-cards of the female prostitute. Especially telling were the public places with which Boulton and Park were associated. Theatres, like The Strand, were notorious haunts for both queer men and prostitutes.[37] Chamberlain's testimony noted that the pair loitered in places frequented by "low women."[38] Another witness testified that the two defendants walked around the Alhambra Theatre "looking over their shoulders as if enticing men." Boulton and Park would "make noises with their lips […] the same heard made by females when passing gentlemen on the street."[39] The most direct accusation of prostitution came from George Smith, a former policeman who was fired for accepting bribes from prostitutes on his beat at Burlington Arcade. Smith witnessed Boulton "turn his head to two gentlemen who passed them, smile at them, and make a noise with his lips, the same as a woman would for inducement."[40]

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[35] Ibid., 8.

[36] Ibid., 998.

[37] Cook, 26.

[38] "Trial of Boulton and Park," *Illustrated Police News*, 13 May 1870.

[39] "The 'Gentlemen' in Female Attire," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 15 May 1870.

[40] "Trial of Boulton and Park," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 22 May 1870.

Such contextual evidence convinced a large number of Britons. Pamphlets were published that detailed "the outrages" of which Boulton and Park were "guilty," and asserted that "these misguided young men deserve[d] the heaviest punishment which the law can possibly afford."[41] The widespread assumption of guilt was also made clear by the public outcry over the men's acquittals. *Reynolds's Newspaper* referred to the case as a "scandalous miscarriage of justice."[42] Boulton and Park were "the bad fruit that grows upon a rotten and corrupt tree."[43] To *Reynolds's*, the acquittal had nothing to do with a dearth of evidence but with social privilege. Newspapers argued that Boulton and Park were released because they were connected to powerful people, a sentiment also reflected in letters to the editor. One letter read: "The very nature of the charge against Boulton and Park […] would appear, at first sight, to preclude them from any favour; but there is no crime committed amongst the upper circles but what gold will gild the offence."[44] The pair's guilt was such a foregone conclusion that Boulton and Park lingered in the British imagination as male prostitutes for years to come. A decade after the trials, one pornographic novel devoted an entire chapter to a fantasized homosexual orgy in which Boulton and Park took the lead.[45]

Regardless of the public's convictions, Boulton and Park were acquitted. Boulton and Park's defense successfully reworked the pair into pranksters—young men out for a

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[41] "The Unnatural History and Petticoat Mystery of Boulton and Park," (London: George Clarke & Co., 1870) 2.

[42] "Scandalous Miscarriage of Justice," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 4 December 1870.

[43] Ibid.

[44] "The Late Judicial Miscarriage," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 17 July 1870.

[45] *Sins of the Cities of the Plain*, originally published in 1881 (The Olympia Press, 2006) 53.

lark, nothing more. The cross-dressing and saccharine-letter-writing were dismissed as a performance taken too far by actors who had performed as women on the legitimate stage. Furthermore, the defense intensely questioned the medical examination. They argued that it was not only intrusive—perhaps even illegal—but also inconclusive as evidence of anal intercourse. The room was too dark and the attending physician untrained. This argument proved especially successful, leading the presiding judge, Lord Chief Justice Alexander Cockburn, to dismiss the medical evidence as "without probative value."[46] Indeed, Cockburn practically demanded an acquittal from the jury, instructing them that the prosecution was "wanting in proof of the purpose which is alleged in this indictment."[47] After less than an hour of deliberations, Boulton and Park were free men.

As a number of historians have asked, why, in spite of the prosecution's ample evidence, did the case against Boulton and Park fail? One widely-accepted argument comes from Jeffrey Weeks, who argues that Boulton and Park represent a time before a homosexual identity had fully formed. Although they cross-dressed, wrote love letters to men, and behaved in a generally effeminate manner, these were only beginning to be concretely connected with same-sex acts.[48] However, this argument is unsatisfactory. In 1865, *Lloyd's Weekly* reported the case of Herman Skaper, a man arrested while cross-dressing "for some unlawful purpose." The report immediately connected Skaper's cross-dressing with same-sex acts. As Brady points out, "it is significant that the

[46] "The Queen v. Boulton," 1000.

[47] Kaplan, 96.

[48] Weeks,101.

supposed connection between male cross-dressing and male prostitution was made, in a lower class journal, some years before the […] 'Stella and Fanny' trial."[49]

The prosecution did not fail because Britons were ignorant of queer sex, or even ignorant of the connotations of cross-dressing. Indeed the opposite was true. Boulton and Park were acquitted because they did not match Britain's privileged understanding of queer desire: that queer sex always resembled prostitution. When the prosecution failed to cast Boulton and Park as prostitutes, they failed to prove the men were guilty of sodomy. Although Boulton and Park's dress, behavior, and location hinted at prostitution, the pair was too far removed from what Victorians believed were the inherent traits of prostitution and its consequences. Boulton and Park simply were not poor, orphaned, or diseased, as prostitutes were always assumed to be.[50] Perhaps more important, Boulton and Park failed to replicate the imperative inequality of queer sex and prostitution. They were wealthy young men with families willing to vouch for their respectability, far from the victimized George Morris or John Cameron. Although the pair's charades were prostitute-like, the two failed to exhibit the distinct characteristics Victorians had come to expect of the sex trade.

In the trial of Boulton and Park, the correlation between prostitution and queer sex was never questioned. The prosecution relied on this association in order to build its case, and it was this same assumption that influenced the public's response. Moreover, Boulton and Park won their acquittal by manipulating this correlation, distancing themselves from the traits of destruction and victimization assumed of the two vices.

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[49] Brady, 65.

[50] Walkowitz, 4.

As cases like Boulton and Park demonstrate, by August 6, 1885 it was not surprising that legislation to curb prostitution would also curtail queer sex. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, with its infamous Clause 11, originated from the assumption that prostitution and queer sex were always intrinsically tied.

The passing of Clause 11 itself was in direct response to increasing public concern over prostitution, and W.T. Stead's July exposé in particular. *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* resulted in a moral panic, culminating in a public demonstration in Hyde Park, where 250,000 demonstrators called for an end to the "slave market."[51] W. T. Stead used his platform to go beyond exposing the problem of prostitution; Stead pointed fingers. He laid the blame not only at the feet of the debauched wealthy, but also at the government, which he claimed turned a blind eye to the dalliances of the rich. In response to this criticism and public outrage, Parliament, in a matter of days, passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The Act raised the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen. It also extended police surveillance of suspected prostitutes and brothels by relaxing search restrictions. And, of course, it included Labouchere's unnoticed amendment.

The Labouchere amendment itself was quite short, consisting of less than a hundred words. It read:

> Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures, or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted shall be liable at the discretion of the Court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.[52]

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[51] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight,* 121, 82.

[52] Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 42.

In spite of its brevity, the clause has long been a topic of debate among historians of sexuality. Jeffrey Weeks, one of the first to write on the topic, highlights the clause as evidence of changing governmental tendencies toward the regulation of sex. To Weeks, the Labouchere Amendment demonstrates how queer sex was no longer perceived as a temporary aberration but as a "more closely defined" and "more directly controlled […] individual trait."[53] With Clause 11, British law—for the first time—specifically criminalized sex between men. According to Weeks, previous sodomy laws were non-gender specific; sodomy between men and women was criminalized, as well. Therefore, Clause 11 marked the emergence of the modern system of sexual orientation, wherein a man who has queer sex becomes the distinct homosexual. This new "species" of man, defined by his sexuality, was immediately confronted with societal endeavors to regulate and control his sexuality. Clause 11, in Weeks' view, was one of these first attempts at regulating the new homosexual.

Recently, the significance of Clause 11, as purported by historians like Weeks, has been seriously challenged by scholars. Historians of sexuality are reevaluating Clause 11 in an attempt to construct a homosexual history before 1885. Historians like Charles Upchurch have shown that, although there was no unified understanding of queer sex, it was still prosecuted, publicized, and acknowledged throughout the nineteenth century, and long before the Labouchere Amendment.[54] The most substantial revision of

[53] Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*, sec. ed. (London: Longman, 1989) 102.

[54] Charles Upchurch, *Before Wilde: Sex Between Men in Britain's Age of Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010) 2.

Clause 11 comes from historians H.G. Cocks and Sean Brady. They argue that the perception of queer sex changed little with the advent of Clause 11. By using various legal manipulations, such as conspiracy to commit a felony, all sexual acts between men, not only sodomy, were already prosecuted. Cocks writes that the Labouchere Amendment "did not change the law in a dramatic fashion," as it was "possible to prosecute all kinds of homosexual behavior, consenting or otherwise, in public as well as in private, long before 1885."[55] Clause 11 simply supported the existing legal practice by explicitly outlawing all sex acts between men. It was not a transitory piece of legislation derived from new beliefs concerning sexuality, as Weeks argues, but a strengthening and continuation of established patterns of prosecution.

The latest scholarship convincingly argues that the passing of Clause 11 was probably not a major turning point in the way originally hypothesized by Weeks. Various types of queer sex, along with sodomy, had been prosecuted before 1885, as Upchurch, Brady, and Cocks have shown. British society was indeed aware of queer desire and manifested that awareness in press reports, arrests, and prison sentences. Though it did not represent the inception of a new sexual species, the passage of Clause 11 was still significant, albeit for a different reason. Clause 11 legitimized the way British society approached queer sex through its assumed similarities with prostitution. The Labouchere Amendment was included because the amendment corresponded to the spirit of the Criminal Law Amendment Act itself—Labouchere's new law curtailed, if not prostitution itself, then something comparable. Clause 11 is best understood as legislation to curb not homosexuality, but a vice much akin to prostitution, one that

[55] Cocks, 16.

shared similarities in behavior and should share similarities in consequence. Therefore, while Clause 11 did not introduce the distinct homosexual, it did formally recognize the British belief that queer sex, in all its various forms, was essentially prostitution.

Connotations of prostitution were not only central to the passing of Clause 11, but also influenced the language that Labouchere chose for his new law. By inscribing the crime as indecent, Clause 11 replicated the tone used elsewhere in the Act to describe the prostitution of women, words such as unlawful, carnal, and defilement. The term "procurement" was used to label both vices. Although female prostitution was explicitly absent from Clause 11—it only concerned sexual acts performed between men—the crime, at least in nomenclature, remained the same.[56]

In the Criminal Law Amendment Act, queer sex not only resembled prostitution in its taxonomy, but also in its consequences. Imprisonment for "two years with or without hard labour" was enacted in at least six other clauses, all of which dealt with female prostitution.[57] Sex between men was punished exactly as the procurement of a woman by threat or drugs, attempting to defile a girl under 13, and the defilement of girls under 16.[58] Even the abduction of women for use in a brothel was met with the same fate.[59]

By legislating queer sex as prostitution, Clause 11 reinforced the believed relationship between the two vices. Intimations of this relationship appeared as early as

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[56] Frederick Mead and A.H. Bodkin, *The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885* (London: Shaw and Sons, 1885).

[57] Ibid., 68.

[58] Ibid., 43, 51, 57.

[59] Ibid., 58-59.

mid-century and were continually invoked until, and beyond, the passing of Clause 11. By foregrounding British correlations of queer sex and prostitution, historians are provided with an alternative way to think about the significance of Clause 11 in the history of homosexuality. Clause 11 was produced by, while it simultaneously legitimated and sustained, the belief that queer desire and prostitution were inherently linked. While the Labouchere Amendment may not have acknowledged a new homosexual species, it did crystallize the assumed relationship between queer sex and prostitution.

Cleveland Street and Oscar Wilde

Within the next decade, Clause 11 would be invoked in the two most notorious sex scandals of the late nineteenth century: Cleveland Street and Oscar Wilde. These cases were especially significant because of the long shadow they would cast. The memory of Cleveland Street and Wilde lingered within the public consciousness and within the minds of queer men for decades. Even after forty years, queer men could identify themselves by simply asserting they were "of the Oscar Wilde sort."[60]

These two long-remembered cases were explicit incidents of same-sex prostitution, and as such further solidified the constructed relationship between queer desire and prostitution. With their overt financial overtones, the scandals effectively confirmed British suspicions that sex between men replicated the characteristics of heterosexual prostitution. With the continued use of prostitution as a guide, the cases of Cleveland Street and Oscar Wilde were distilled into the familiar story: the powerful and

[60] E. M. Forster, *Maurice: A Novel* (New York: Amereon House, 1989) 134.

debauched taking advantage of the weak and desperate. This simple narrative was most easily applied in the Cleveland Street scandal, in which young, working-class telegraph boys were the sexual partners of wealthy, sometimes aristocratic, patrons. A similar relationship was superficially rendered in the Wilde trials, with Oscar Wilde cavorting alongside working-class rent boys.

But even in these seemingly straightforward cases of exploitation, the prostitution narrative constructed by the Victorians proved false. The moral tale of poor and innocent youths lured by the debauched wealthy, only to end in destruction, simply did not hold true. It was difficult, sometimes impossible, to construe the young men as the innocent, "soiled doves" of Stead's exposés. Furthermore, the Victorian assumptions of entrapment were, in practice, much more complicated. Many of the witnesses engaged in queer sex long before any introduction to wealthy benefactors. Moreover, the young men actively lured the wealthy men, contrary to images of the "London Minotaur." Wilde would famously equate his experience to "feasting with panthers," not as devouring "bleating lambs."

Yet, despite the contradictions, the public retained the same story of sexual exploitation and ruin. Press accounts simply ignored much of the contrary evidence. Courts summarily dismissed witnesses who failed to be reconciled as victims. Barristers, judges, and reporters altered the interpretations of unavoidable inconsistencies, but always in a way that upheld the underlying moral: deviant sex originates in menace and ends in destruction. Regardless of the contradictions exposed, both scandals became confirmations of the destructive phenomenon of illegitimate sex. The male brothel of Cleveland Street and the trials of Oscar Wilde were essentially portrayed as reckless,

orgiastic feasts where men were bleating lambs or ravenous panthers, and sometimes both.

The scandal surrounding the house at 19 Cleveland Street began during a routine theft investigation by the London Central Post Office. In July 1889, when investigators interviewed Charles Swinscow, a telegraph messenger boy, they were not searching for anything as racy as a male brothel. Swinscow was simply questioned after being observed with more money than his salary allowed. He admitted to having the extra money, but denied it was stolen. Swinscow reluctantly revealed that he earned the cash at a house on Cleveland Street. There he and several other post office employees supplemented their incomes by sleeping with gentlemen.

The investigators alerted the London Metropolitan Police. Swinscow provided names and disclosed that the messenger boys were procured by slightly older messengers, G.D. Veck and Harry Newlove. However, the police arrived at the house on 19 Cleveland Street too late. Its proprietor, a Mr. Charles Hammond, had somehow been forewarned and escaped to France. Veck and Newlove were arrested for gross indecency, pleaded guilty, and were given light sentences of four and nine months, respectively. Swinscow and the younger messenger boys were dismissed from their posts but never charged with crimes.[61]

The arrest and conviction of the two men garnered little public attention. It is likely the entire incident would have gone unnoticed had it not been for a statement made by Newlove. Newlove claimed he could expose numerous prominent patrons of 19

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[61] For a thoroughly researched narrative of the Cleveland Street Scandal, see H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Cleveland Street Scandal* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1976).

Cleveland Street, including Lord Arthur Somerset and even Victoria's grandson, Prince Albert Victor. Newlove was telling the truth, at least in part, as a stakeout of 19 Cleveland Street confirmed that powerful men, including Lord Arthur Somerset, were frequenting the brothel.

Newlove's statement was quickly seized on by the press. W.T. Stead, only four years after his publication of *The Maiden Tribute*, editorialized that "the wretched agents are run in and sent to penal servitude: the lords and gentlemen who employ them swagger at large and are even welcomed as valuable allies of the administration of the day."[62] Ernest Parke, editor of the *North London Press*, named Lord Euston as one of the swaggering gentlemen, prompting Lord Euston to sue Parke for libel. The scandal provoked another trial, this time against solicitor Arthur Newton, whose client, Lord Arthur Somerset, fled to Europe before a warrant was issued. Newton was found guilty of obstruction of justice for bribing several messenger boys to leave London before giving their testimony.

In many ways, the dynamics of the Cleveland Street scandal perfectly followed the standard prostitution narrative—attractive, working-class youths victimized by the rich. The messenger boys ostensibly personified the "maiden tribute," being young, poor, and corrupted by the licentiousness of the wealthy. Reports consistently listed these characteristics throughout the trials. In one example, Algernon Edward Allies, a messenger-boy witness in the Newton trial, was described as "a good-looking, curly-haired youth of twenty [whose] parents are wretchedly poor."[63] Almost all the men

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[62] *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 September 1889.

[63] *North London Press*, 11 January 1890.

employed at 19 Cleveland Street were described in a similar fashion: young men from poor families and with lowly jobs. They were young men whose circumstances left them vulnerable to the whims of the dissolute wealthy. Men like Lord Arthur Somerset menacingly used their wealth to entice innocent boys to join them in their sexual depravity. Henry Labouchere, author of Clause 11, described the messenger boys as "more sinned against than sinning."[64] The dynamics of the Newtown trial only seemed to reinforce a sense of manipulation. Even from France, Lord Arthur Somerset apparently still controlled the young men. Through his solicitor, Somerset used his wealth to tempt the boys into migrating to the United States in order to prevent their testifying. Although witnesses, such as Algernon Allies, accepted the money, none of them actually fled.

The class disparity among the company of 19 Cleveland Street could not have been more extreme. Lords, perhaps even a prince, engaged the impoverished youths. As was typical, newspapers portrayed these aristocratic patrons as debauched consumers who relied on the advantage of their wealth and position. *Reynolds's* repeatedly referred to the wealthy men as "The Culprits" and the young men as "The Boy Victims."[65] While the working-class Veck and Newlove took the brunt of the punishment, the government gave the truly guilty parties, the patrons, relative amnesty and perhaps even governmental protection. *The Pall Mall Gazette* reported that when "the names of many persons of good birth, though of indifferent morals" were found in connection to Cleveland Street, "the Home Office refused to allow anything to be done until the matter was considered by the Prime Minister." This delay, accused *The Pall Mall Gazette*, was "carefully

[64] HC Debates, Vol. 341 Col. 1541 28 February 1890.

[65] "Horrible Charges Against Peers," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 29 September 1889.

conceived in order to give time for the accused to depart, so as to avoid the exposure which was dreaded."[66] The same accusation was repeated by Labouchere on the floor of the House of Commons. He accused the Government of "conspiring to defeat the course of justice" by purposefully allowing men of means, such as Lord Arthur Somerset, to escape.[67]

On the surface, the Cleveland Street scandal presented the ideal dichotomy—poor youths manipulated into the sexual service of wealthy, corrupted men. However, things were not as they seemed. The actual facts of Cleveland Street exposed a much more complicated incident. The messenger boys admitted to the police that they already engaged in sexual activity amongst themselves in the Post Office lavatories. George Wright confessed that he first "behaved indecently" four months before he visited 19 Cleveland Street. He even engaged in sodomy in the Post Office lavatories, for which, he noted, he was never given any money.[68] Furthermore, the messenger boys were introduced to selling sex not by wealthy patrons, but by their Post Office colleagues. According to the young men's depositions, Newlove introduced Wright to Cleveland Street, who in turn introduced Ernest Thickbroom.[69] If the testimony of one accused gentleman can be believed, it was the young men of 19 Cleveland Street who lured aristocrats to the premises, not *vice versa*.[70] Yet newspapers remained conspicuously

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[66] "The Scandal of Cleveland Street," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 November 1889.

[67] HC Debates, col. 1534.

[68] PRO DPP 1 95 3 "Police Statements of Charles Thomas Swinscow, George Alma Wright, and Charles Ernest Thickbroom," 6 July 1889, File 5.

[69] Ibid.

[70] The court testimony of the Earl of Euston, 25 November 1889, as quoted in H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Cleveland Street Scandal* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1976), 114.

quiet about these rather messy aspects of the scandal. Instead, they published a simplified and familiar story of victimized, impoverished youths ravished by wealthy rakes.

Messenger boys often engaged in queer sex, both for pleasure and money, a notorious fact among Post Office circles. As Matthew Cook notes, telegraph boys were a "key component" in homosexual scandals of the late nineteenth century.[71] In 1877, the Central Post Office explicitly tried to stamp out the vice, producing a forty-page report that exposed a "well-developed youth sexual subculture" among the young men.[72] Cases where messengers were led astray "by men of evil habit" were "exceptional."[73] Instead, the report argued, boys worked out of their own "greediness for money, and a willingness to prostitute themselves even for very small sums. They had no particular liking for the vice, as a vice, but whatever dislike they had for it, was entirely and easily overborn by the money." Some youths came to the post office already "utterly corrupted."[74] The tale of innocent lads accosted in London's streets, central to the press representations, was not corroborated by the bureaucrats charged with curtailing the telegraph boys' trade.

Perhaps the most contradictory element of the Cleveland Street scandal was the appearance of Jack Saul, whom *The Star* deemed a "professional sodomite."[75] Jack Saul

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[71] Cook, 38, also see note 184.

[72] Katie Hindmarch-Watson, "Male Prostitution and the London GPO: The Internal Investigation of "Immorality" among Telegraph Boys, 1875-1877." (Unpublished) 5.

[73]"Immorality Among Boys," POST 30 1052 File 1,5, British Postal Heritage Museum and Archive.

[74] Ibid.,12.

[75] "Euston Libel Case," *The Star*, January 15 1890.

was a defense witness in the libel trial against editor Ernest Parke. Saul testified he had slept with Lord Euston on numerous occasions at 19 Cleveland Street, thereby justifying Parke's libelous editorial. Saul, by his testimony, destroyed the image of exploited innocence. Unlike the rest of the witnesses, Saul was not a messenger boy, but a full-time resident of 19 Cleveland Street. He openly admitted to having "earned [his] livelihood as a Sodomite" for the past seven years.[76] Saul recounted his experience with such openness and "levity" that he was reprimanded by the presiding judge, Justice Hawkins. Even more troubling, Saul did not recount harrowing tales of lustful gentlemen having their way. Instead he described pleasant nights filled with sexual play, "champagne and drinks," and "very comfortable" lodgings.[77] Saul, although well-acquainted with prostitution, was neither victimized nor exploited.

Unable to completely ignore Saul, news reports subsequently cast him, not as a lamb, but as a minotaur. He was, according to *Reynolds's Newspaper*, "unquestionably a filthy, loathsome, detestable beast," who "played no inconsiderable part in the abominable orgies of Cleveland Street."[78] Saul was described as a predator who smiled and winked at men in Piccadilly Circus.[79] Saul was not a victimized boy "more sinned against than sinning;" his past was reported as "too horrible, brutal, and disgusting" to detail.[80]

[76] PRO DPP 1 95 4 "Statement of John "Jack" Saul" 10 August 1889, File 2.

[77] As quoted in Colin Simpson, et al., *The Cleveland Street Affair* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976) 81.

[78] "The West End Scandal, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 12 January 1890.

[79] As quoted in Simpson, et. al., 163-164.

[80] *The Star*, 9 May 1890.

Jack Saul was not only open about his occupation; he also had a condemning testimony. He described, in exacting detail, how he met Lord Euston in Piccadilly, where "[Euston] laughed at me and I winked at him."[81] He was capable of describing Euston's appearance, and with an "effeminate voice," identified Euston in the courtroom.[82] Despite the feasibility and detail of his testimony, Saul's statement was disregarded completely, with Justice Hawkins calling the testimony "as foul a perjury as a man could commit."[83] It was the oath of innocence given by Lord Euston that the jury was instructed to take seriously. Jurors were to ignore the "melancholy spectacle" of "that creature," as Hawkins described Saul's testimony.[84] Unsurprisingly, the jury convicted the editor and salvaged Lord Euston's reputation.

Jack Saul destroyed the simplistic narrative of the Cleveland Street scandal. Unlike the easily reconcilable messenger boys, Hawkins and the attendant reporters did not perceive Saul as a curly-headed, victimized youth, but as a vicious monster whose experience was only worthy of dismissal. Despite contradictory evidence, the portrayal of Cleveland Street, by emphasizing the assumed act of corruption engendered by class disparity, maintained the same narrative presented in Stead's *Maiden Tribute*, with "bleating lambs" succumbing to "London Minotaurs," a narrative strengthened by its repetition.

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[81] "Euston Libel Case," *The Star*, 15 January, 1890.

[82] *The Star*, 9 May 1890.

[83] "Central Criminal Court," *The Standard*, 17 January 1890.

[84] Ibid.

One famous act of such repetition occurred a decade later with the arrest of Oscar Wilde. Like Cleveland Street, the newspaper-rendered trials of Oscar Wilde reinforced the perceived inequalities produced by sexual deviance. Reminiscent of the earlier reaction to Jack Saul, the dynamics of the Wilde case required a more fluid interpretation of the prostitution narrative. Wilde and his sexual partners traversed the line between victim and aggressor. Wilde was certainly accused of corrupting young minds and morals, but news reports did not portray his partners as victimized innocents, as in the case of the messenger boys of Cleveland Street. The young men connected to the Wilde trials were instead villainous and greedy, preying on those, like Wilde, who were already inherently weak. Yet, despite the mobility of labels, the essential characteristics of prostitution—namely exploitation, corruption and victimization—remained intact.

A series of trials, beginning in April of 1895, brought about the downfall of Oscar Wilde. Wilde, suing the Marquess of Queensberry for libel, was himself thrown into the dock when Queensberry produced numerous young men who testified to sexual misdeeds with Wilde. Indeed, Queensberry's libelous statement, scrawled on a calling card, was intended to bait Wilde to press charges. Queensberry, a paranoid, irrational man, was convinced that his eldest son, Francis, committed suicide during a homosexual affair with then-Prime Minister Lord Rosebery, and was determined to end the relationship between Wilde and his youngest son, Lord Alfred Douglas. Unbeknownst to Wilde, Queensberry's private detectives had collected evidence of his affairs, mostly statements from Wilde's working-class partners. When it became apparent that rent boys were to be called as witnesses, Wilde dropped the charge of libel in hopes of avoiding the scandal,

but it was too late. With Queensberry's collected evidence given to the police, Wilde was arrested the same evening for acts of gross indecency.

Wilde's first criminal trial began on April 26. As with Cleveland Street, much of the testimony came from young, working-class men who claimed to have slept with Wilde. But unlike the messenger boys, the press wrote no sympathetic portrayals of Wilde's partners as victimized young men. W.T. Stead contended they were "young rascals" who were "very well able to take care of [themselves]," unlike the "dozens, innocent simpletons of girls" who are "destroyed by lawless lust."[85] *Reynolds's Newspaper* asked, "Who has been injured? Who is any the worse? Who, being young and weak, has been cruelly treated and forced into anything against his will? And the answer we must give is nobody!"[86]

The young men implicated in the Wilde trials could not be victimized—for reasons similar to Jack Saul's situation. Many of them, like Alfred Wood and brothers Charles and Frank Parker, came with questionable pasts. By loitering at places like the St. James Restaurant, where Wilde met two of the witnesses, the young men "out of place" were most likely soliciting.[87] This was corroborated by the men's preexisting acquaintance with Alfred Taylor, who, according to *The Illustrated Police News*, kept "a type of male brothel."[88] *Reynolds's* eventually called the witnesses outright prostitutes.[89]

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[85] W.T. Stead, *Review of Reviews*, as quoted in "About Oscar Wilde," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 23 June 1895.

[86] "About Oscar Wilde," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 16 June 1895.

[87] "Oscar Wilde," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 7 April 1895.

[88] "End of the Oscar Wilde Case," *The Illustrated Police News etc.*, 1 June 1895.

[89] "About Oscar Wilde," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 16 June 1895.

However, the criminality of the witnesses did not stop at simple prostitution. Wilde, in an attempt to discredit the witnesses, admitted that Wood and the Parkers had unsuccessfully blackmailed him—testimony that widely reverberated in the press. *Lloyd's Weekly* deemed the men as "not only accomplices" to the sexual acts, but guilty of having "levied blackmail."[90] *Reynolds's* accused the men of the same, reporting that they "attempted to extort money by menace."[91]

Corrupted and criminal, the men were discredited and condemned. The first criminal trial, during which the prosecution relied heavily on statements from the young men, resulted in a hung jury. It was only after a second trial that included more respectable but less-involved witnesses, such as maids and hotel managers, that the prosecution obtained a conviction. Newspaper editors argued that none of the men, who "worked steadily at their profession of blackmailing," could be considered a "serious witness."[92] Justice Wills, who presided over the criminal trials, described Wilde's partners as "belonging to the vilest type of men which great cities produce."[93] Such sentiment was repeated in newspapers like *The Illustrated Police News*, where they were called "young men of the most hideous kind."[94]

Although unable to construe the working-class participants as innocent victims, newspapers were able to maintain the dichotomous tale of lamb and panther. Unlike

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[90] "Trial of Oscar Wilde," *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 28 April 1895.

[91] "About Oscar Wilde," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 16 June 1895.

[92] Ibid.

[93] "End of the Oscar Wilde Case," *The Illustrated Police News etc.*, 1 June 1895.

[94] Ibid.

Cleveland Street, it was the upper-class Wilde who was, in some instances, portrayed as the victim of predatorial prostitutes. This interpretation corresponded to Victorian notions of the prostitute as a conduit of pollution and corruption, unleashed on the upper classes. The opportunity to solicit and blackmail, argued one newspaper contributor, "brought together about as disgraceful a gang as ever bad laws furnished with the means of preying upon Society."[95] A female respondent satirically argued that Wilde was convicted only because "everyone, apparently, was so ready to believe in those incorruptible spirits—those high-souled, honorable gentlemen."[96] Another writer compared Wilde's trial to the Spanish Inquisition—a farce of justice reliant upon disreputable witnesses. Indeed, he argued, it was the young men, in their readiness to indulge Wilde, who were truly "immoral and indecent!" These dissolute men "robbed gentlemen's pocket books" only to "appear at court to bear witness against their benefactors."[97] With the young men represented as aggressive predators, Wilde could in turn be depicted as a victim of their degenerate ways—an outstanding example of the pollutant prostitute ensnaring upper-class victims.

However, the portrayal of Oscar Wilde as victim was certainly not universal. Newspapers simultaneously described Wilde, with his relative wealth and prestige, as using his influence to entice working-class partners. Some news reports drew him as the stereotypical procurer in the style of the gentlemen at Cleveland Street, offering drinks, dinners, and expensive gifts that working-class men could not afford.[98] *The Telegraph*

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[95] "About Oscar Wilde," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 16 June 1895.

[96] "About Oscar Wilde," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 23 June 1895.

[97] "Oscar Wilde in Prison," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 9 June 1895.

[98] Ibid.

complained that Wilde inflicted "as much moral damage of the most offensive and repulsive kind as any single individual could well cause."[99] Although Wilde's sexual partners may have been "young men of the most hideous kind," Wilde was a "London Minotaur" preying on the flesh of the powerless poor. Wilde attempted to distance himself from this image by arguing that the relationships in question resulted from genuine, platonic concern. But the sexualized connotations of class disparity were too well-established for such hollow excuses. Edward Carson, barrister for the prosecution, repeatedly mentioned the occupations of the young men, asking Wilde, "Did you know one was a gentleman's valet and the other a gentleman's groom?"[100] Carson even accused Wilde of hiding the social class of his sexual partners in an effort to avoid detection. Alphonso Conway, described as having "no occupation or profession of any kind," received a new suit from Wilde, which Carson argued was an attempt to make the boy "look more like [Wilde's] equal."[101] By disguising Conway's social class, Wilde, Carson contended, was concealing the blatant sexual component of the relationship.

The scandals of Cleveland Street and Oscar Wilde crystallized the assumed relationship between queer sex and prostitution. As these cases show, the scandals, as depicted, upheld a particular narrative. The public airings of these cases represented queer sex, like prostitution, as inter-classed, economically driven, and, as a result, operating on inequality. Even when the facts often differed, sex between men was only fathomable when someone was shown as exploited, corrupted and victimized. The

[99] *The Telegraph* as quoted in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 14 April 1895.

[100] "Marquess and Oscar Wilde," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 7 April 1895.

[101] Ibid.

messenger boys at Cleveland Street and their wealthy partners most easily exemplified this model. Yet even the messenger boys were not the innocents portrayed by the press. If facts failed to meet expectations, Britons altered them to maintain the simplistic narrative. When Jack Saul challenged the image of the bleating lamb, the press simply transferred Saul to the other side, making him a "detestable beast." Such fluidity was even more prominent during the trials of Oscar Wilde, where all the participants were both victims and aggressors. Yet, despite the shuffling, newspapers successfully retained the truly important moral that the Victorian imagination demanded—illegitimate sex resulted from menace and ended with ruined lives. With an appropriate narrative already constructed for the prostitute, the British press easily recycled the same story for incidents of queer sex.

Conclusion

Queer desire and prostitution remained linked long after Oscar Wilde was escorted from the courtroom. Only three years later, in 1897, the Vagrancy Law Amendment Act explicitly criminalized men who publicly and persistently solicited and importuned for "immoral purposes."[102] Again, in 1912, legislation increased the punishment for male solicitation and importuning. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, even the decriminalization of homosexual acts in 1967 was due, in part, to the findings of a committee assigned to reassess prostitution laws.

Newspapers remained eager to publish incidents of queer sex in ways that reinforced its ties to prostitution. 1906 proved a fruitful year for such stories. Early in the

[102] Cook, 43.

year, the famous actor Arthur Mellors was arrested for gross indecency with a working-class man.[103] In June, the Mellors incident was spectacularly overshadowed by the death of artist Archibald Wakely, who was murdered in his home by a soldier he had picked up in Hyde Park.[104]

These early twentieth-century trends originated in the late nineteenth century, when British legislators and reporters intrinsically tied queer sex to the vice of prostitution and publicly perceived and portrayed the two in similar ways. Like prostitution, Britons believed queer sex operated by certain characteristics, such as class disparity and economic motives. Even more central was the belief that queer sex, like prostitution, was, without exception, ruinous, resulting in victimization, corruption, and exploitation.

The ties between queer sex and prostitution appeared as early as the 1860s. The British relied on the tropes of prostitution to understand and verify incidents of queer sex. With queer sex continually being associated with prostitution, the relationship between the two became naturalized, so much so that it was codified by law. Foregrounding the believed relationship between queer sex and prostitution clarifies the origins and motives behind Clause 11. Clause 11 did not signify a new sexual species, but it was, in the Victorian mind, a logical extension of prostitution legislation. Following the passage of Clause 11, the cases of Cleveland Street and Oscar Wilde only confirmed the existence of these ties. Even when facts proved contradictory, the association between queer sex and prostitution was upheld, with the problematic points either manipulated or ignored. As

[103] Ibid., 58.

[104] Ibid., 63.

subsequent chapters will discuss, the belief that queer sex was always inherently akin to prostitution would significantly inform the public reaction to queer sex and the ways in which queer men regarded their own sexuality.

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Chapter Three

“Perfidious Official Guardians”: Same-Sex Prostitution, Imperialism, and the Nation

On a warm, late-summer’s day in the yard of Pentonville Prison, a small procession makes its way to the gallows. A priest walks beside the frail-looking, thin prisoner convicted of sabotage, espionage, and treason against the Crown. The convict’s name is Roger Casement, an Irish nationalist who had traveled to Germany in hopes of securing aid for the 1916 Easter Uprising. His pleas for aid, mostly ignored by the Germans, had fallen on English ears, and when Casement arrived back on Irish soil in April of 1916, the British were waiting to arrest him. His trial, while sensationalized, was half-hearted. There were no grand manifestos written in an attempt to save his life. Even the Irish-Americans, so quick to criticize the harsh treatment of Irish nationalists, were unusually silent. But why? In the days leading to the trial, small sheets of paper, ripped from an account book, were passed by British agents into the hands of important Irish journalists and Irish-American representatives. The writing, in Casement’s own cramped style, recounted almost incomprehensible horrors for his would-be intercessors. The pages revealed Casement’s profuse sexual escapades, which had taken place throughout the Empire where he paid local men for sexual favors, subsequently fastidiously recording the experiences. With his penchant for paid queer sex exposed, how could such a man be idolized as an Irish martyr now? Any calls for leniency were quickly quieted. On the third day of August, 1916, Roger Casement was hanged, his corpse buried in a shallow, unmarked grave covered in quicklime. Here the body of this unspeakable hero of Irish independence would lie for the next fifty years.

The death of Roger Casement exemplified how sex between men carried nationalistic connotations—both on the public stage and in personal practice. Queer sex

was a way to think about the nation, while nationality informed the practice of queer sex. This chapter weaves together the chaotic, sometimes inseparable strands of queer sex, prostitution, and nationhood in Great Britain at the turn of the century—a period rife with colliding nationalistic and sexual struggles. Ireland, and its evolving status, was a major site of nationalistic and sexual conflict, and, as such, provides the context for this chapter.

Links between homosexuality and nationalism have been recognized by historians before, most often in state attempts to codify "sexual deviancy" in order to express emphatically, in terms of sexual practice, what the nation and its citizens were *not*. Yet, the relationship between nationalism and queer sex was more nuanced than outright, universal disowning. Homosexual experiences were sometimes selectively acknowledged in nationalistic discourses to further larger objectives. The Dublin Castle Scandal of 1884 was one such case, when English leaders of the Irish bureaucracy were charged with soliciting young Irishmen. While Irish nationalists decried the sexual misdeeds of the British bureaucrats, they also consistently referenced and acknowledged Irish involvement. The young Irish participants, lured by British wealth into sexual perversion, gave Irish nationalists a powerful metaphor to argue against the collective perversion of British occupation. As such, the sexual practices of a few were transformed into a devastating condemnation of British rule.

Yet the ties between nationality and queer sex existed outside of great political struggles as well. The public, nationalistic concepts of sexual citizenship, like the ones at work in the Dublin Castle Scandal, influenced the private sexual practices of individual queer men. Nationality was an active component of queer fantasy, prompting British queer men to eroticize themselves and their sexual partners by way of their nationality.

Queer men, like Roger Casement, conceptualized sex between men as possessing a strong nationalistic component that impacted how queer sex was performed and by whom.

The two spheres of nationalized sexual beliefs and private queer practices often met, sometimes in fantastic scandal. The life of Roger Casement displayed, in spectacular fashion, how nationhood appeared in sexual practice, as evidenced by Casement's own sexuality, while it also exhibited how queer sex, once again, became part of the public conflict over Irish nationalism. Casement's sexual experiences in the British Empire were heavily impacted by the sexualization of his own "Britishness" and the power, along with the vulnerability, which being British could afford. Yet Casement was in a sort of nationalistic limbo, being Irish as well. When his involvement in the Easter Uprising of 1916 ended disastrously, his sexual history was laid bare before the world. Government officials branded Casement a pervert who spread his corrupt sexual practices, as well as his political ones, among the Irish and throughout the Empire. When the British disseminated Casement's "black diaries"—a chronicle of his sexual activity—they successfully dismantled attempts to transform Casement into an Irish martyr. However, the British used Casement's sexuality not only to label him personally as a pervert, but also to exemplify what Irish independence would look like. Because Casement's partners were poor, often non-white, and paid, the British were able to construct Casement as especially vicious, one who took advantage of his wealth and position to corrupt and abuse those in his charge. If Ireland's best and brightest, such as Casement, failed to govern and restrain even their own bodies, how could the Irish expect to govern a just and legitimate independent state? The English successfully utilized Casement's predilection for same-sex prostitution to further criticize Irish aspirations of

self-governance, and, as had been done in the Dublin Castle Scandal, transformed the sex acts of an individual into a condemnation of an entire national movement.

The ways in which nationality informed incidents of same-sex prostitution provide more than simply another perspective from which to view sex between men. Rather, it demonstrates how the history of sexuality has implications far beyond the personal practices of individuals. As this chapter reveals, same-sex prostitution played a previously underestimated role in what is, in the British context, one of the most turbulent political crises of the long twentieth century. Queer sex was utilized more than once and by both sides as the Irish struggled for independence and as Britain attempted to keep the Union together. Moreover, while this chapter demonstrates how social signifiers, such as nationality, were deeply sexualized, it also shows how unstable and mercurial social signifiers truly were. By examining the way nationality appeared in the context of queer sex, we see how the constructions of the nation were often nebulous. While the British and Irish persistently invoked nationalized tropes, they also implemented them in amazingly varied ways, both within broader nationalistic discourses and within individual lives.

The Dublin Castle Scandal

The Dublin Castle Scandal of 1884 brought queer sex to the forefront of the Irish Question. In terms of sex, the scandal exposed a rather routine affair: older men soliciting younger ones. But as the scandal unfolded, it transcended the physical encounters between individuals. From the perspective of Irish nationalists, the Dublin Castle Scandal, and the sex it uncovered, was a microcosm of the Anglo-Irish

relationship. Nationalist leaders, such as William O'Brien and T.M. Healy, invoked Dublin Castle as the latest affair in a long line of British perversions, with the English as a corrupting force infecting the youth of Ireland. But instead of denying Irish involvement, nationalists emphasized it in order to dismantle English arguments that the Union was a good, "civilizing" force.

The Dublin Castle Scandal began unintentionally—at least that was the claim made by its instigator, William O'Brien. O'Brien was an Irish MP and the editor of *United Ireland*, a newspaper founded and funded by the aggressive nationalist group the Irish Land League.[1] On August 25, 1883, an article appeared in *United Ireland*, written by the Irish MP T.M. Healy. Healy was responding to a criticism made concerning the deportment of the Irish members of the House of Commons. Healy retorted that if the English were so worried about deportment then they should first correct "the life and adventures, and what is called the 'private character' of various Crown Employees in Ireland," specifically naming James Ellis French, a county inspector and the Director of Detectives for Dublin Castle.[2] O'Brien recounted that in the rush to publication, Healy's accusation "escaped my supervision."[3]

Healy's jab, however, did not escape the notice of James Ellis French and the English bureaucracy of Dublin Castle. Within two weeks, William O'Brien, as editor of *United Ireland*, had received a writ of £5,000 for libel. O'Brien, who by this time had

[1] Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 328.

[2] *United Ireland*, 25 August 1883.

[3] William O'Brien, *Evening Memories: Being a Continuation of Recollections by the Same Author* (Dublin and London: Maunsel and Co. LTD., 1920) 17.

familiarized himself with the rumors against French, pleaded justification. To assure his acquittal, O'Brien hired a former detective of Scotland Yard named John Micklejohn to uncover evidence and to collect witnesses against French.[4] As O'Brien described, Micklejohn "explored the lowest depths of vice and crime," discovering a "criminal confederacy which, for its extent and atrocity, almost staggered belief."[5] Micklejohn was familiar with confederacies of crime and vice, having himself served two years for taking bribes while in the service of Scotland Yard.[6] Despite his dubious morals, Micklejohn's investigation was extraordinarily successful. Micklejohn not only gathered condemning evidence against French, but also implicated other English bureaucrats—Gustavus Cornwall in particular, an English aristocrat serving as the Irish Secretary to the General Post Office. Reassured by Micklejohn's evidence, O'Brien pressed ahead with his plea of justification against French while also exposing the others. In a speech given to Parliament, O'Brien publicly accused Gustavus Cornwall of being French's accomplice. T.M. Healy accused George Bolton, the Treasury Crown Solicitor and French's superior, of using his position to protect the sexual criminals, calling Bolton "the most blackguard and ruffian profligate in the service of the Crown."[7] Speaking in Parliament, O'Brien and Healy were protected from libel, but a sub-editor reproduced the speech in *United Ireland* under the heading "A Precious Trio"—a slight not protected by parliamentary privilege.

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[4] An interesting side note: O'Brien hired Micklejohn on the advice of solicitor Sir George Lewis. Lewis would give the same advice to the Marquess of Queensberry during the Wilde trials.

[5] O'Brien, 22.

[6] HC Debates, Vol. 290 Col. 510 8 July 1884.

[7] HC Debates, Vol. 283 Col. 348 13 August 1883.

Cornwall responded with a £10,000 writ of libel against O'Brien. Solicitor Bolton claimed damages of £30,000.[8]

The libel trials proceeded slowly, particularly French's. French feigned illness, then insanity, and eventually dropped his case entirely due to financial costs. However, Cornwall and Bolton remained determined. The case of "Cornwall v. O'Brien" was called before Justice O'Brien on July 2, 1884.[9] As the trial began, the outlook was bleak for William O'Brien, as his four witnesses, rounded up by Micklejohn, were refusing to testify. One witness, a soldier, escaped to France, and O'Brien feared that the other three would follow suit. Although it is unclear why, at the last moment the three witnesses rallied, taking the stand.[10] By the end of the very first testimony, given by a young man of "independent means" named Malcolm Johnston, the trial was virtually decided. O'Brien was acquitted and awarded costs, causing the Bolton case to all but crumble as well.[11]

As O'Brien and *United Ireland* celebrated, Cornwall, French, and six others were arrested on charges of sodomy and conspiracy to commit sodomy. One of the newly-charged, Martin Kirwan, was a captain in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and was tried together with Cornwall in August of 1884. Their first criminal trial resulted in a hung jury, but the second acquitted the two men of the crimes.[12] James French, who was tried

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[8] O'Brien, 23-25.

[9] "Cornwall v. O'Brien," *The Dublin Daily Mail*, 2 July 1884.

[10] O'Brien, 30-31.

[11] *The Irish Times*, 8 July 1884.

[12] "Report of Trial of Gustavus Cornwall and Martin O. Kirwan, Second Day" POST 120 63 File 1, British Postal Museum and Archive.

separately, did not fare as well. While his first two trials ended in hung juries, his third resulted in a conviction, for which he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.[13]

The Dublin Castle Scandal occurred during a particularly volatile time in Irish politics. Irish MP and nationalist leader, Charles Parnell, was at the height of his power, and by the end of 1884 the Irish electorate would be tripled by the Representation of the People Act.[14] Minor successes in Parliament only increased the support of nationalist agitation in Dublin. Indeed, agitation had been at a fevered pitch since the passing of the Protection of Person and Property Act in 1881, which effectively allowed the imprisonment without trial of any Irishman "reasonably suspected" of crime or conspiracy.[15] William O'Brien himself would be a victim; he was arrested in October of 1881 at a Land League convention and taken, along with Parnell, to Kilmainham Jail.[16] Tensions would only increase the next year after the British enacted harsh retaliation for the infamous Phoenix Park murders of the newly-appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and his Permanent Undersecretary, Thomas Henry Burke.

As calls for a sovereign Ireland increased, so did the English determination to prevent it, for losing Ireland, to Conservatives and to many Liberals, was analogous to losing the Empire itself. In 1883, Lord Salisbury would propose that "if the forces of nationalism and revolution were allowed to triumph in [Ireland], then the Empire would

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[13] "The Queen v. French" POST 120 62, British Postal Museum and Archive; "Trial of James Ellis French." *Lloyds' Weekly Newspaper*, 28 December 1884.

[14] Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd, 1999) 445.

[15] Ibid., 120.

[16] Bew, 329.

disintegrate 'step by step' as if set off by a chain reaction."[17] Ireland symbolized Britain's control of its global empire, and as the nineteenth century progressed, Englishmen were "schooled in the faith" that the "very existence of the British Empire depended on the maintenance of a single Parliament for Great Britain and Ireland."[18] As historian Deirdre McMahon argues, "Home Rule for Ireland was the slippery slope to imperial disintegration."[19] Irish nationalists too were aware of the imperial connotations of independence. In 1881, Irish-American Patrick Ford composed an open letter to William Gladstone which suggested that a failure to grant Home Rule would eventually ensure "a vulnerable empire."[20] Indeed, a growing anti-imperialism became prominent in Irish nationalist propaganda.[21]

The dreaded consequences of a self-governed Ireland transformed how the Irish were conceived in English minds. R. F. Foster argues that English resentment toward the Irish grew as the nationalist movement strengthened. What the Irish saw as a struggle for independence, the English perceived as an attack on property and the Union itself.[22] The Irish were no longer uncivilized, child-like, but relatively-harmless peasants. They were, according to historian L. Perry Curtis, Jr., increasingly believed to be ape-like monsters,

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[17] H.V. Brasted, "Irish Nationalism and the British Empire in the Late Nineteenth Century" in *Irish Culture and Nationalism*, eds. Oliver MacDonagh, et.al. (London: Macmillan Press, 1985) 84.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Deirdre McMahon, "Ireland, the Empire, and the Commonwealth" in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 182.

[20] Brasted, 89.

[21] Ibid., 95.

[22] R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: The Penguin Press, 1993) 193.

capable of destroying the British way of life.[23] Home rule would become so contentious among the English that it would famously split the Liberal Party and dissolve Parliament when Gladstone introduced the First Home Rule Bill in 1886.

The Dublin Castle Scandal unfolded during this moment of high political tension in 1884. Irish nationalists seized upon the scandal, utilizing it in both abstract and more literal ways to embody what they saw as the perversity of English rule. Indeed, the scandal and its context lent itself to such an interpretation. As an incident of same-sex prostitution, the Dublin Castle Scandal came with an easily invoked narrative of exploitation, while the English and Irish participants effortlessly reflected the larger political struggle. It was this dynamic that Irish nationalists used to make an ideological attack on the Union, arguing that the civilizing efforts espoused by the English were naive at best and blatantly hypocritical at worst. As discussed later in this chapter, using the scandal for such attacks was partially successful: it forced a regime change within Dublin Castle and, in William O'Brien's recollection, helped dismantle portions of the Coercive Acts, a series of punitive laws enacted specifically against Irish nationalists. Perhaps even more significant, though, the English could no longer argue, without contradiction, that their presence in Ireland was a total moral good.

Irish nationalism thus became a defense not only of independence and democracy, but of loosely defined yet conceptually powerful "non-negotiable moral imperatives" that were often embodied by sexuality.[24] In the nationalistic fever of the late nineteenth and

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[23] L. Perry Curtis, Jr., *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport: University of Bridgeport Press, 1968) 51.

[24] Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876*-1906 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

early twentieth century, "sexual respectability," the term used by historian George Mosse, became "crucial" in defining the nation-state.[25] According to Mosse, sexual respectability, derived from middle-class values, created a national sexuality that was, like the nation-state itself, perceived as masculine, virile, and self-controlled—attributes denied colonized peoples like the Irish. This respectable sexuality was represented by the heterosexual married couple, engaged in sex for the reproduction of children, and therefore the reproduction of the nation itself. Mosse argues that sexuality expressed outside of these limits was therefore perceived as extraordinarily dangerous to the nation. Sexual deviants partaking in masturbation or homosexuality were believed to have weak bodies and weak spirits, the "antithesis of the nationalized man."[26] Sex that produced nothing of worth to the state, like the kind enjoyed by the English bureaucrats, was anti-social, emasculating, and a major threat to the welfare of the Irish nation itself.[27]

The sexual relationships exposed by the Dublin Castle Scandal appear to have been relatively routine ventures for queer men in the late nineteenth century. The bureaucrats French and Cornwall had vast networks of sexual partners, both English and Irish, that crossed multiple social classes. With these inter-classed relationships, economics played an integral role in many of the encounters, and several men testified to monetary exchanges, but monetary exchange was not ubiquitous. Some witnesses, such as Malcolm Johnston, a relatively wealthy young man, mentioned no such transfers.

[25] George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985) 1.

[26] Ibid., 10.

[27] Ibid., 25. Also see Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830* (New York: Rutledge, 1987) See sect. II, part 5.

Despite such complexities, Irish nationalists couched the entire sexual experience of Dublin Castle in simplistic terms of Anglo-Irish prostitution, with the English bureaucrats occupying the familiar role of wealthy seducer.

Certainly, many of the men involved in the Dublin Castle Scandal were young Irishmen performing sexual favors for cash. One such man was a teenager named William Clarke. Clarke testified that Cornwall approached him while he was standing outside the home of a friend in Golden-Lane. The meeting was memorable for Clarke, as it occurred during a street fight between a group of soldiers and prostitutes, after which Cornwall and Clarke struck up a conversation. Cornwall then led Clarke inside a nearby urinal, where the two engaged in mutual masturbation. For this, Cornwall gave him two half-crowns and an invitation to meet again. Clarke accepted the offer and multiple meetings followed, all of which included sexual activity followed by payment.[28] Clarke interacted similarly with James Ellis French and Captain Kirwan. For some participants, like Clarke, economic transfers were apparently necessary to their consent. Malcolm Johnston testified that soldiers were particularly keen for payment, stating that while "different amounts of money were given to the soldiers, money was always passed."[29] One soldier was an Irish private named O'Dell, who, in his deposition, recounted his sexual exploits with the co-defendants, noting the half-crown and shilling he would always receive.[30]

[28] "Deposition of William Clarke" 20 July 1884, POST 120 62, pg. 10-11, British Postal Museum and Archive.

[29] "Deposition of Malcolm Johnston" 28 July 1884, POST 120 62, pg. 40, British Postal Museum and Archive.

[30] "Deposition of Private O'Dell" 1 August 1884, POST 120 62, pg. 55, British Postal Museum and Archive.

Yet not every young man involved in the scandal expected payment for his sexual participation. Malcolm Johnston, whose explicit testimony virtually decided the O'Brien libel trial, recounted sexual relationships with both Cornwall and Kirwan, but never mentioned payment of any type. Johnston, though, was a wealthy young man—the son of a deceased business owner, educated in England, and a university student at Trinity.[31] Johnston's fellow witness, George Taylor, while not wealthy, denied outright any instance of prostitution on his part. He appeared offended at the suggestion, stating "I don't understand what you mean when you ask me when I first commenced to prostitute myself. […] I never got any presents for my acts, nothing but dinner or drinks. I did not consider *that* remuneration at all."[32] While Taylor was willing to admit sexual relationships with men, he was emphatic that he did so for his own enjoyment, not for compensation.

The nationalists' portrayal of the Dublin Castle Scandal simplified the multiple ways sexual partners were acquired—as was true of most queer sex scandals—to a story of prostitution. It was a relatively easy, unconscious transformation. Most queer sex scandals were portrayed as instances of prostitution, the two vices being closely aligned in the British imagination. Yet, focusing on the prostitution involved in the Dublin Castle Scandal had greater motivations. Doing so transformed the Dublin Castle Scandal into what the nationalists portrayed as a metaphor for English rule: a disadvantaged Ireland forced to suffer under English depravity. William O'Brien certainly saw it as such.

[31] Testimony of Malcolm Johnston, "The Queen v. Cornwall and Others," POST 120 62, pg. 12, British Postal Museum and Archive.

[32] "Deposition of George T. Taylor" 23 July 1884, POST 120 62, pg. 19, British Postal Museum and Archive.

Forty years after the scandal had occurred, O'Brien's autobiography—a triumph in hyperbole—saved its most far-reaching phrases for the Dublin Castle Scandal. O'Brien introduced the scandal by writing that

> The facts now to be related disclose a case of murderous foul play as between a powerful State and a subject than which—I believed intensely then, and am still more deliberately persuaded now—nothing worse is to be found in the human annals since the times when the instruments of Government were the dagger and the bowl.[33]

O'Brien vividly remembered the scandal not as a case of sex among men, but as an intentional English conspiracy to deceive the Irish people, destroy his newspaper, and eventually ruin O'Brien himself.

To O'Brien, the Dublin Castle Scandal revealed the true characteristics of English rule and the import of the nationalist movement, and any action the English made during the scandal was ill-intentioned. When French and Cornwall were dismissed from their posts, O'Brien assumed it was an attempt by the English to force French and Cornwall to continue their libel trials in hopes they would clear their names and thus destroy *United Ireland*.[34] The scandal revealed the administrators of Dublin Castle to be "enemies who knew no scruples and no limits to their power."[35] They were "leprous subordinates" working for "the powers of darkness," guilty of the "misgovernment of Ireland."[36] It was the nationalists' duty to "drag the truth to light,"[37] exposing the "heinous crimes."[38] In no

[33] O'Brien, 17.

[34] Ibid., 19.

[35] Ibid., 22.

[36] Ibid., 32, 27, 24.

[37] Ibid., 27.

[38] Ibid., 25.

uncertain terms, O'Brien portrayed the Dublin Castle Scandal, not as an episode of sex between men, but as the nationalists' chance "to save Ireland from its perfidious official guardians."[39]

O'Brien was not alone in the nationalist spin he gave to the Dublin Castle Scandal. Other Irish papers approached the scandal in similar ways. Before the start of the libel trials, *The Freeman's Journal*, a nationalist paper with close ties to *United Ireland*, explained that it was O'Brien's "sense of duty" to have the scandal, "so hideous and so revolting," "fully, promptly, and impartially investigated." If there was any justice in Ireland, then the men involved would be "tried and disposed of with the least possible delay."[40] After O'Brien's success, *The Evening Telegraph* trumpeted the overthrow of "the foreign hands" that were "contaminating the running stream of Irish moral purity."[41]

Not surprisingly, English papers approached the Dublin Castle Scandal more hesitantly, and many ignored it altogether. Only the *Times* covered the events of the scandal with any regularity, but those articles were buried without sub-headings in their Ireland column. Newspapers like *Reynolds's* and *Lloyd's,* which would spill copious amounts of ink over similar scandals like Cleveland Street in 1889 and Oscar Wilde's arrest in 1895, barely noticed Dublin Castle at all, publishing only short notices. At the end of the French criminal trial, *Lloyd's* editorialized that the case "appears to have

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[39] Ibid., 22.

[40] *The Freeman's Journal*, 12 June 1884.

[41] *The Evening Telegraph*, as quoted in "Cornwall v. O'Brien," *United Ireland*, 12 July 1884.

excited but little interest."[42] English newspapers kept the scandal, and its inherent criticism of the Union, at arm's length.

The greatest attention, along with the harshest rhetoric, came from *United Ireland* itself. O'Brien's libel case became "a life and death struggle" for the heart of Ireland against "the propagators of the horrible English leprosy."[43] Although the criminal trials against Cornwall and Kirwan failed, *United Ireland* retained its moral superiority, condemning the fate of the young Irishmen in comparison to that of their wealthy English partners. O'Brien damned "the prostitution of the machinery of justice" as the "ragged panders are virtuously dragged to justice while the high and mighty ones by whom they earned their vile crust obtain a fresh charter to corrupt humanity." Cornwall and Kirwan's acquittals were simply "the worst depth of degradation of which civilized government is capable."[44]

It was this dynamic of prostitution, with its inherent sense of exploitation and corruption so explicitly exploited in *United Ireland*, which was central to the prosecution of the criminal trials. French, Cornwall, and Kirwan's guilt was not concerning the sexual acts themselves, as the presiding judge, Mr. Baron Dowse, conceded. Mutual masturbation, the only charge which could be decisively proven, "while a sin," was not "a crime."[45] The true felony rested in the men's motives and connivance. It was their attempts to spread their practices to "third parties," such as the young Irishman William

[42] *Lloyds' Weekly Newspaper*, 28 December 1884.

[43] "Justice at Last!" *United Ireland*, 12 July 1884.

[44] "How it was Done," *United Ireland*, 30 August 1884.

[45] Summation of the Right Hon. Mr. Baron Dowse, 22 August 1884, "Commission of Oyer and Terminer," POST 120 62, pg. 41, British Postal Museum and Archive.

Clarke, which Dowse concluded was the legal charge.[46] It was this crime that the prosecution pursued, claiming that these:

> […] lewd and evil-disposed persons, wickedly enticed and debauched young men, did amongst themselves, with divers other persons, unlawfully conspire, confederate, and agree to procure young men and boys, to wit, one George Taylor and Malcolm Johnston and others, with the intention of committing certain filthy, lewd, and indecent acts, being outrages on decency and morality—masturbation and mutual pollution—to the corruption of the morals of the said young men and boys.[47]

It was the Englishmen's corrupting influence, going beyond the sex acts themselves, that warranted the criminal trials. The theme of young Ireland corrupted by its English occupiers continued throughout the multiple criminal trials, with men like Johnston, Taylor, and Clarke displayed as the victims of the abominable bureaucrats. One prosecuting attorney, Sergeant Hemphill, pleaded for a conviction with admonitions "to cleanse the city from a foul leprosy that has been going on within it involving so many in its poisonous influence."[48]

As the criminal trials played out, so did a Parliamentary battle spurred on by the Irish members of the House of Commons. Here too Irish nationalists would use the Dublin Castle Scandal to criticize the English presence in Ireland. T.M. Healy emphasized the exploitation of the Irish, lamenting that young men had been "feloniously attacked" by "wretches" like James Ellis French.[49] But the argument quickly transcended the sexual experiences of the young Irishmen, as heinous as Healy believed them to be.

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 40.

[48] "Report of Trial of Gustavus Cornwall and Martin O. Kirwan, Second Day" POST 120 63 File 1, pg. 69, British Postal Museum and Archive.

[49] HC Deb, Vol. 293 Col. 922 4 November 1884.

In fact, Healy's scruples were a bit self-serving. While he cried out against the sex acts of men like French and Cornwall, in 1895 he would quietly attempt to assist his fellow Irishman, Oscar Wilde, for the sake of Wilde's "nationalistic" mother.[50] For Healy, like most of the nationalists, the true source of the Dublin Castle Scandal was indeed the true heart of all Ireland's problems: English occupation. Suffering from jury-packing, coercive acts, and an unregulated bureaucracy, Ireland existed under "a system more akin to the autocracy of Russia" where "the most unworthy and filthiest instruments" of the Crown indulged without the slightest consequence. The Dublin Castle Scandal was not only about the literal prostitution of poor Irishmen, but, in the impassioned words of Healy, it exposed the "prostitution of the representation" of the Irish people as a whole.[51] English occupation, and the indignities it caused, was a travesty that "cried to Heaven for vengeance."[52]

Despite such ardent rhetoric, nationalist agitators were mostly disappointed in the outcome of the criminal trials. Many of the men indicted with French, Cornwall, and Kirwan were found guilty, and, eventually, French was convicted as well. But the convictions of the minor players only made the acquittals of Cornwall and Kirwan an even more infuriating blow. However, such an outcome was not unexpected. Cornwall and Kirwan's prosecuting attorneys admitted the weakness of relying upon witnesses guilty of the same crime. They encouraged the jury to understand the "enormous

[50] T.M. Healy, *Letters and Leaders of My Day*, vol. 2, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1929) 416.

[51] HC Deb, Vol. 293 Col. 917 4 November 1884.

[52] Ibid., Col. 920.

difficulty in getting the evidence of pure-minded, faith-worthy witnesses."[53] Even O'Brien and Healy recognized the problems with their evidence. Although the witnesses were Irishmen, their corruption at the hands of the English had been too complete. To O'Brien, his witnesses were "an inscrutable puzzle," characterized by their "mixture of timidity, frivolity, and incredible vanity"—traits imposed upon them by their "abnormal temperament."[54] T.M. Healy, before the House of Commons, had to admit that the Irishmen called to testify were now "wretches […] whom no one would pick out of the gutter except Crown Officials."[55] Yet, despite the questionable evidence, nationalists blamed the acquittals on the English court system under which Cornwall and Kirwan were tried. O'Brien openly expected an acquittal, arguing that justice was impossible with packed juries, weak, crown-appointed prosecutors, and hand-selected judges. The trials, O'Brien editorialized, were just to "show that the Crown were not bigots."[56] Had Cornwall and Kirwan been "two poor, humble men," or Irish, then no jury "would leave [its] box without convicting them."[57]

Although Cornwall and Kirwan walked away as free men, William O'Brien reflected upon the Dublin Castle Scandal as a significant victory for the Irish nationalists. The scandal effectively rid Ireland of some of its most "perfidious official guardians," like French, Cornwall (who was, despite his acquittal, permanently dismissed), and

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[53] "Report of Trial of Gustavus Cornwall and Martin O. Kirwan," pg. 67.

[54] O'Brien, 27.

[55] HC Deb, Vol. 293 Col. 921 4 November 1884.

[56] "How it was Done," *United Ireland*, 30 August 1884.

[57] "Report of Trial of Gustavus Cornwall and Martin O. Kirwan," pg. 68.

particularly George Bolton. Bolton, the Treasury Crown Solicitor, whom O'Brien accused of protecting the queer men of Dublin Castle, lost his libel case, lost his position, and was forced to file for bankruptcy. O'Brien was gleeful. He considered Bolton particularly odious for his base political ploys, even if Bolton was not involved in the actual sex. It was Bolton, O'Brien wrote, who paid "penniless peasants" to give false testimony and who would never again be "permitted to pack a jury."[58] Yet, the Dublin Castle Scandal did more than dismiss particular individuals. According to O'Brien, it "broke the neck" of the coercion acts of the early 1880s, acts which curtailed the rights of Irishmen and allowed for imprisonment without trial.[59] Dublin Castle, shamed by the sexual exploits of its employees and exposed in a government cover-up, lost the clout necessary to enact any punitive measures. Perhaps the English even lost the will to do so, as Lord Spencer, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, openly questioned the effectiveness of such legislation.[60] "Coercion and its ministers," gloated O'Brien, "quaked with a concussion from which they have never quite recovered since."[61] While O'Brien's self-aggrandizing claims about the coercion acts, made forty years later, are difficult to support, they nonetheless emphasize the importance that O'Brien placed on the Dublin Castle Scandal as an effective criticism of English rule.

Why then, in the eyes of nationalists like O'Brien, was the Dublin Castle Scandal such a successful criticism of the English? Certainly it was not just the sex. In reality,

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[58] O'Brien, 33.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 32.

[61] Ibid.

the sexual relationships exposed were not perceived by those participating in them as exploitative or harmful—a theme continuously invoked by nationalists throughout the affair. Only some of the witnesses had been seduced by the Englishmen's willingness to pay, and one, George Taylor, openly admitted to participating solely for enjoyment, not monetary gain.

What made the Dublin Castle Scandal a political success was its nationalistic portrayal. Under the masterful, practiced rhetoric of men like O'Brien and Healy, Dublin Castle became a bastion of corrupting, leprous perverts preying on the literal flesh of young Ireland—a powerful image for Irish nationalists. The effect of this metaphor was derived from the morality of the image. Great Britain excused its imperialism by trumpeting its own sense of moral superiority, which, it was argued, obliged them to "uplift" less evolved civilizations such as the Irish. Events like the Dublin Castle Scandal not only exposed the fallacy of this supposed English superiority, but exposed the hypocrisy of the Empire itself. Criticizing the English on moral grounds became standard practice for nationalist groups throughout the Empire, even as far as India. As Mini Sinha argues, Indian nationalists would contend that the English, in their slow response to child marriage laws, were damaging the moral condition of the Indian people.[62] The Irish would use the specter of prostitution beyond the Dublin Castle Scandal. As historian Maria Luddy reasons, prostitution became "a symbol of British oppression and the means by which the British soldier infected the Irish nation with physical disease and

[62] Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire (* Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

immorality."[63] These moralistic attacks "show the importance of a sense of moral superiority to advanced nationalist discourse, and created an image of a decadent, immoral Britain, a national embodiment of the pornographer."[64]

The Dublin Castle Scandal, with its sensationalized accounts of queer prostitution instigated by English colonizers, was an excellent opportunity to stress the moral necessity of Irish independence. But such arguments of sexual morality and nationalism could cut both ways, and would be used to the same degree against Irish nationalists with the exposure of Roger Casement.

The Lives of Roger Casement

The sexual and political life of Roger Casement demonstrates, unusually well, the complicated relationship between queer sex, imperialism, and nationality. As a British Consul, Casement held a certain degree of power in his various posts in South America and Africa. This power, derived from his position within Great Britain's Foreign Office, translated into his sexual relationships with local men. When he found local inhabitants sexually appealing, he assumed, through his political and economic superiority, that he could freely access the sexual consumer goods he desired.

Casement's "Britishness," on display and unassailable in the Empire, was uncertain in the metropole. Though knighted in 1911 for his imperial service, Casement was Irish, and his final association with the nationalist cause, coupled with his exposed

[63] Maria Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish Society, 1800-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 156.

[64] Ben Novick, *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda during the First World War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001) 103.

sex life, stripped Casement of any previous claims of being British. When the English discovered his "black diaries" in 1916, they used the records of his purchased encounters with other men as a way to defuse his identity as an Irish martyr. In many respects, the ploy was successful. In an ironic reversal of the Dublin Castle Scandal, the English used Casement's sexual practices to criticize the Irish movement for which he gave his life.

From childhood, Roger Casement "was a set of contradictions, an incoherency."[65] Born in Dublin to an Irish Anglican family, his mother secretly baptized him into the Catholic Church at the age of three. This duality between Casement's Irishness and Englishness was a lifetime motif. When orphaned at the age of five, Casement was given to the charge of an aunt and uncle who sent him to a Church of Ireland school where he acquired an English accent that he retained throughout his life.

Casement first arrived in Africa in 1884 at the age of twenty. He would spend most of his adult life there, appointed as HM Consul in Nigeria and then the Congo, transferring to the latter in 1898. In 1904, Casement published a wildly popular report on the atrocities suffered by the indigenous people of the Congo at the hands of the Belgians under Leopold II. The report was instrumental in forcing Leopold to relinquish his personal holdings in Africa. Casement was later transferred to South America, where he worked in both Brazil and Peru. Here he witnessed similar mistreatment of the indigenous people, only this time perpetrated by British interests. For his humanitarian work, Casement was awarded the Companion of St. Michael and St. George by Edward VII in 1905, and in 1911 he was knighted by George V, making him Sir Roger Casement.

[65] B.L. Reid, *The Lives of Roger Casement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) XIII.

While Casement racked up English honors, his distaste toward English rule only increased. Exposed to the most denigrating aspects of imperialism, Casement began to consider the plight of his fellow Irishmen. He quickly involved himself in the nationalist movement, and by 1913, unable to reconcile his political stance with his position in the English bureaucracy, resigned from the Foreign Office. After his retirement, Casement focused on his nationalistic work, especially with the outbreak of World War One. In October of 1914, Casement published his non-enlistment manifesto in the *Irish Independent*, encouraging Irishmen to refuse service in the English army. He also traveled in the United States, drumming up support for a free Ireland, even meeting with former president Theodore Roosevelt. Upon leaving the United States, Casement traveled to Germany to secure German support of Irish independence, requesting direct aid in the form of troops and supplies. Casement's requests, however, mostly went unheeded. Casement, empty-handed, returned to Ireland in an attempt to preempt what he knew would be an ill-fated uprising planned for Easter of 1916, but his growing rift with the Irish Volunteers resulted in his advice being summarily dismissed. When he landed at the Irish beach of Banna Strand on Good Friday, 1916, Casement was immediately arrested, charged with treason, and transported to the Tower of London.[66]

Following Casement's arrest, the English used the black diaries in their favor. How the English uncovered the diaries is still contested by some, but it appears that the diaries were in fact voluntarily handed over by a Mr. Germain, on April 25, 1916. Germain, the owner of a lodging house, had been paid by Casement to store some of his

[66]Angus Mitchell, *Roger Casement's Heart of Darkness: The 1911 Documents* (Dublin: Irish Manuscript Commission, 2003).

personal belongings and papers two years earlier, before Casement embarked for the United States. Four days after Casement's arrest, Germain delivered the personal papers, including the diaries, to Scotland Yard.[67] The papers included many ledgers, account books, and diaries, but it was three small ledgers that comprised what are now known as the "black diaries." The first was written in 1903 while Casement was assigned to the Congo. The second and third diaries, which span 1910 and 1911, were written while Casement was investigating the atrocities suspected of the Peruvian Amazon Company, a British-owned rubber operation.

Upon receiving the diaries, the English wasted little time in circulating typed copies of the most explicit entries. Sir Basil Thomson, chief of the Special Branch of Scotland Yard, and Captain William Hall, head of naval intelligence headed the dissemination. The diaries were shown to King George V, and the American ambassador, Dr. Walter Page, along with most of the British Cabinet and leading newspaper editors. As Hall's biographer stated, the two men were incredibly thorough in the distribution of the "propaganda."[68]

The diaries were controversial from the very beginning. First of all, they were obtained illegally. Germain had, without any authority, rummaged through the personal property of his paying guest. Prosecutors questioned whether Scotland Yard could rightfully produce the documents in court, if the need arose. Furthermore, the diaries simply seemed too good to be true. The appearance of devastating personal

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[67] Jeffrey Dudgeon, *Roger Casement: The Black Diaries* (Belfast: Belfast Press, 2002) 530.

[68] Sir William James, *The Eyes of the Navy*, 1955 as quoted in Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias, *The Black Diaries of Roger Casement* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959) 28.

correspondence at the doorstep of Casement's opponents was fortunate to say the least. When the diaries became known to the public, which happened after Casement's execution, their authenticity became a paramount concern. Many Casement supporters insisted they were forgeries, a theory substantiated by the British government's refusal to release or even acknowledge the existence of the diaries for the next forty years. However, in 1916, the privileged eyes that were shown the diaries never questioned they were Casement's. Even Casement's defense team, Thomas Artemus Jones and Gavan Duffy, considered using the diaries as evidence if they decided on an insanity plea.[69] Moreover, most scholars today are convinced of the diaries' authenticity.[70]

The black diaries reveal what may be one of the best recorded sexual lives of the early twentieth century, listing, sometimes in minute detail, the encounters of a robust sexual life that revolved mostly around the young indigenous men Casement met while in the service of the Foreign Office. The entries were usually short and barely legible; many utilized a system of symbols, such as an X to denote intercourse. The entries were also a mixture of languages. While mostly in English, Casement would also use French and very often incorporated local languages. A typical entry, such as the one written by Casement on February 28, 1910, reads:

> Deep screw and to the hilt X 'poquino.' [like or as a poker] Mario in Rio 8 ½ x 6" 40$. Hospedaria [guest house], Rua do Hospicio 3$ only fine room shut window lovely, young, 18 and glorious. Biggest since Lisbon July 1904 and as big. Perfectly huge. 'Nunca veio maior!' Nunca! [Never seen bigger! Never!][71]

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[69] Interesting side note: Duffy first approached T. M. Healy to join him in Casement's defense, but Healy refused. Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1973) 329.

[70] Dudgeon, 514.

[71] As quoted in Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality,* 37.

The entries, including the one above, always recorded expenditures. Casement, who lived most of his life on a limited budget, carefully recorded the amounts necessary to make his sexual encounters possible, including the price of rooms, and he took particular care to list the amounts he paid his partners.

Casement's diaries, in conjunction with his extensive public correspondence produced while in the service of the Foreign Office, demonstrate how his perceptions of his own Britishness, and therefore his partner's nationality as well, influenced his sexual practice. While Casement enjoyed sex with Irishmen and Englishmen, whom he also paid, it was non-white men whom Casement actively pursued. As did many queer men of his social and economic background, Casement eroticized the men he encountered as being inherently more masculine, and therefore better, than he, and he possessed a strong, mostly misguided, desire to help them.

Roger Casement was not alone in utilizing the Empire as a sexual arena. By using nationalized stereotypes, queer men were able to designate literal sexual safe spaces on the map, and also on the bodies of the men with whom they came into contact. Certain nationalities were eroticized as particularly receptive to the advances of queer men, especially when coupled with economic incentives. Although queer men celebrated these eroticized nationalities, such feelings reflected an assumed difference in how sexuality was performed by British men and their non-British counterparts. British queer subjects professed a strongly developed sense of their own individual sexuality. They represented their non-British counterparts, however, as sexually less-refined and more instinctual. Economics was central to this perception, as British queer men believed that their partners reciprocated because of the economic windfall they hoped to receive and not

from any inherent desire. This conceptualization of sexuality reflected larger cultural attitudes of British superiority and the tendency to see non-British peoples as having not yet arrived to the same civilizational plane, and therefore available to, or even in need of, British manipulation.

For some Britons, the Empire represented an arena where "sexual respectability" was easily contested and shirked. The Empire's dislocation from the metropole and its necessary contact with non-Britons allowed for, and even encouraged, a greater sense of sexual fluidity, but only to a point. The Empire too, as an extension of Great Britain itself, was the focus of certain sexual restrictions set by the state. Yet, while there certainly were attempts to regulate the sex lives of Britons in the Empire, the sexual allure was not totally stamped out.

As historian Phillipa Levine argues, the regulation of sexuality was central to British imperial policy. She writes that "Sex always threatened the bulwarks of Empire and civilization, needing to be restrained and reined in."[72] These attempts to control imperial sexuality were exemplified in the regulation of prostitution, perhaps best seen with the expansion and continuation of the Contagious Disease (CD) Acts.

CD Acts, wherein women suspected of prostitution were subjected to compulsory vaginal exams, were common throughout the Empire, appearing in Hong Kong, India, and Australia.[73] The very prevalence of CD legislation testifies to the fear that prostitution caused within the Empire's ruling elite, and despite the controversy and

[72] Phillipa Levine, "Sexuality, Gender, and Empire" in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Phillipa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 134-135.

[73] Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 15.

eventual repeal of the CD Acts within Britain, they continued in Britain's colonies for decades.[74]

CD Acts served a viable purpose within the Empire that they did not serve within the metropole. The imperial CD Acts codified existing British perceptions about racialized sexuality, particularly of non-white women, in conjunction to that of the British man. The occurrence of prostitution reinforced racial stereotypes, as Levine explains:

> Prostitution in such an environment could be represented as a throwback to primitivism. Colonial officials routinely argued that prostitution was normalized in nonwhite societies and held no stigma. This, they argued, was proof that subject peoples were less evolved.[75]

This was an extraordinarily different perception from that of prostitution within Great Britain itself. In the metropole, prostitutes were victims of circumstance, often making the best of the situation; native prostitutes were victims of their culture. Prostitution thus became a hallmark of native, primitive society.[76]

While imperial prostitution and native sexualities were perceived as dangerous by some, not everyone saw the sexual possibilities of empire as an evil to be contained. As Ronald Hyam puts it, "Running the Victorian empire would probably have been intolerable without resort to sexual relaxation."[77] In fact, many saw the Empire as a release valve for the sexual tensions built up at home. Hyam writes that many young men going overseas "expected to indulge in casual sex as a routine ingredient of life."

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[74] Ibid., 66.

[75] Ibid., 8.

[76] Ibid., 257.

[77] Ronald Hyam, 'Empire and Sexual Opportunity,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, XIV, 2 (1986) 89.

Empire "unquestionably gave them an enlarged field of opportunity. Greater space and privacy were often available; inhibitions relaxed."[78] The Empire became a place for Britons—once again mostly men—to express and prove themselves. This was often achieved by exploiting the sexual opportunities afforded by the Empire.

To the British, the Empire in itself possessed an erotic quality. As Edward Said's path-breaking work discusses, the "Orient" was always skewed as abnormal when compared to European standards of sexual propriety, and some Britons considered the perceived sexual relaxation as an attraction.[79] There are many examples of British men who used the Empire to fulfill sexual desire and curiosity. Sir John Eardley-Wilmont, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land, became so notorious for his sexual exploits it prompted a governmental inquiry.[80] One British resident of Calcutta even went so far as to perform self-circumcision in order to improve his chances with the Muslim women he encountered.[81] As Hyam argues, "nearly everyone was looking out for sexual gratification."[82]

This combination of "sex and identity with power and authority," made the Empire a reassuringly masculine enterprise.[83] The brothels of empire were particularly powerful sites of masculine display, and "routinely provid[ed] sexual initiation for young

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[78] Ibid., 88.

[79] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

[80] Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) 26.

[81] Ibid., 79.

[82] Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002) 285.

[83] Levine, *Prostitution, Politics and Race*, 267.

Britons traveling east of the Suez."[84] Phillipa Levine agrees: "Men's memoirs of a colonial past, military or otherwise, frequently depicted the move east as the threshold to men's initiation into adulthood via the brothel, in a kind of sexual *Bildungsroman*."[85] It was not the sexual act in itself that was of central importance, but the acknowledgment by other men that the sexual act had occurred. The homosociability and sense of domination, along with the sex acts that the brothels afforded, allowed men the opportunity to prove their masculinity easily, and cheaply, to other men. Men even recorded these exploits in letters to other men, emphasizing the sexual virility of the colonizer.

Indigenous colonial men were also perceived as highly sexualized, but in ways that were denigrating. "Manly self-control" was the domain of true British men.[86] Self-control—often sexualized—developed into something unobtainable by native peoples, thus helping to construct racial dichotomies based on sexuality.[87] "Colonial men," argues Levine, were "routinely regarded as unable to exercise self-discipline over the sexual body."[88] This sexual excess could take several forms. Masturbation was one such form, and was commonly listed as a prevalent sexual perversion openly practiced by non-whites.[89]

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[84] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 292.

[85] Levine, *Prostitution, Politics and Race*, 265.

[86] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002) 348.

[87] Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) 18.

[88] Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics*, 261.

[89] Levine, *Gender and Empire*, 137.

Homosexuality was also linked to native male sexual practice, and "Many a Briton regarded same-sex liaisons as another example of non-British perversity."[90] Such "liaisons" were seen by the British as common occurrences among Indians, Chinese, and Africans. Young Indian men who had sexual "[…] surrogate father relationships with older men" were vilified.[91] W. A. Pickering found the Chinese to be quite "conversant with an extraordinary state of immorality which cannot be well named in European Christian society."[92] And the African practice of taking boy-wives was met with horror by the British.[93] To the ruling elite, "…the assumption of widespread homosexuality in the colonial tropics 'proved' colonial inadequacy."[94]

The mixed approaches to sex in the Empire were reflected in the sexual practices and beliefs of British queer men in their sexual interactions with non-Britons. British queer men, like Roger Casement, often fetishized the non-British male, manipulating sexualized stereotypes of the "other." The non-British male was inherently more masculine, physically attractive, and sexually liberated. Yet these fantasies, like the paradoxical sexuality at work in the Empire, also reinforced nationalized hierarchies that often followed racial lines. While men from outside Britain may have been desirable partners, the true power within these relationships was always wielded by the British. Much of this power was determined by the relative wealth of the British men. It was this

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[90] Ibid., 151.

[91] Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, 98.

[92] As quoted in Levine, *Prostitution, Politics and Race*, 260.

[93] Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, 98.

[94] Phillipa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007) 150.

wealth that, they assumed, induced their partners into sexual activity. Therefore, in many cases, non-British sexual partners became commodities and were treated as such.

Casement's portrayal of his sexual partners, revealed mostly in measurements and expenditures, exemplified a mercantile sense of desire. While he appreciated and even fetishized his partners' attributes, he did so as one praises the qualities of a particularly good product or an especially well-performed craft. Roger Casement extolled the masculinity of the men in Africa and South America. He wrote about their strong bodies and their unfailing sexual prowess, referencing "throbbing" members and "stiff as steel" appendages.[95] Indeed most of the allure of the indigenous men centered on their bodies and little else. Casement became obsessed with measuring his partners, particularly their penises, and making notes on their almost unbelievable size. For one man, Casement denied that his penis was his genitals at all, but rather an actual "limb," underlining the word.[96]

Casement also fetishized skin tone, preferring darker men. He established his own sexualized racial hierarchy, in which African men were at the top, while mixed-blood Brazilians were at the bottom. This preference also infiltrated his official reports, wherein he complained about the "disgusting boors" of Brazil who have "far less manner or courtesy than an African savage."[97] Casement wrote that the "hideous cross-breeds" had skin like the "nastiest form of black-pudding," and he yearned to return to "the black purities of Africa."[98] He missed his "dark skins," and remembered, in self-pity, when it

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[95] March, 1911, Dudgeon, 268.

[96] Ibid., 269.

[97] Casement as quoted in Reid, 86.

[98] Ibid., 86-87.

was easier for him to find a "fine big Darkie."[99] Casement's sexualization of the native body, particularly that of the black man, reflected the social beliefs instilled within British imperialists. Western science held a deep fascination with the size of Africans, especially of their genitalia, which Westerners always described, as did Casement, as obscenely large. Black men were oversexed in the British imagination, and this was borne out in their bodies.[100] But unlike many Britons, Casement was thrilled by the reputation of non-white men as oversexed. Casement never questioned that the men he picked up in the ports of Rio de Janeiro or in the rubber camps of the Congo would reciprocate his sexual advances. It was taken for granted.

Yet while Casement celebrated the open sexuality of his partners, it was derived from nationalized and racialized stereotypes that inherently dehumanized the indigenous men. Their sexual openness, while appreciated by Casement, also represented their primitive state, the premise on which the Empire itself was based. The men of Africa and South America were unable to help themselves, and therefore needed the assistance Casement wanted to offer. They were unable to overcome the vile treatment of their European abusers, the plight which Casement was ostensibly there to improve. But they were also unable to control their own bodies. Once again, Casement understood these men to be sexually incontinent—available and willing to indulge in Casement's every whim. The willingness to engage in homosexual activity was proof of their primitive state, as homosexuality was perceived as a sexual appetite held by barbaric peoples.[101]

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[99] Sept. 1911, Dudgeon, 310.

[100] Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics*, 261.

[101] Mosse, 25.

The perception of incontinence was only exacerbated by the necessity of payment required by many of Casement's partners. Sexual identity, which was central to Western attitudes not only about the morality of the individual, but also about the nation, seemed irrelevant to Casement's partners, at least in Casement's mind. Their bodies, and their sexuality, were a purchasable commodity that they readily sold. As such, the relationships garnered by Casement became more like the economic transaction of goods than a relationship between human beings.

In the black diaries, Casement's partners are completely silent. He writes of them as though they are grains to be weighed, measured, bargained, and bought. Their value resided in their sexual appeal to Casement, and that alone. This appeal was, in many cases, metric. The larger the penis, the more willing Casement was to pay large sums. Age also affected the cost, with men in their late teens and early twenties receiving the largest amount. He wrote of the men in terms of acquiring them, or wanting them. In June of 1911, he recorded a "young dark boy huge wanted awfully" alongside another "lovely boy wanted too."[102] Even the black diaries themselves were intended as household account books. The economic value that Casement placed on his partners was eerily reminiscent of the way Westerners counted the rubber many of the same young men labored to produce.

Casement's sexuality, however, would not remain on the pages of his diaries. His experiences of purchased sex in the Empire would be displayed before much of the Western world in an attempt to discredit his later efforts as an Irish revolutionary. Reminiscent of the Dublin Castle Scandal, Casement's sexuality would be directly tied to

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[102] June 1911, Dudgeon, 288.

his national identity, only this time the Irish would not be the ones with a claim to the moral high ground.

When the British produced evidence that confirmed Casement's homosexuality, his attempts to become an Irish national hero were ruined, along with any efforts to make him a martyr after his death. Casement certainly considered himself an Irish revolutionary, conceding that his only crime was that "he put Ireland first."[103] By publishing the diaries and distributing them, the English were well aware of the consequences for Casement's reputation. Sir Ernley Blackwell, legal advisor to the Home Office, submitted two memoranda to the Cabinet concerning the diaries. In the second, Blackwell explicitly suggested using the diaries "to prevent Casement attaining martyrdom."[104] Blackwell's advice, "in cold-blooded language," was that "the Cabinet should consider using the Diaries to blacken Casement's character."[105]

The character assassination carried out by Hall and Thomson was successful, and support for Casement quickly withered. The two men ensured that pages of the diaries "were surreptitiously circulated among influential people in Britain and America, and in both countries they undoubtedly had the effect of discouraging the movement for Casement's reprieve."[106] By July, newspapers such as the *News of the World* confidently claimed that no one who knew of the diaries' contents "would ever mention Casement's

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[103] "Casement's Speech from the Dock, 1916," Inglis, 404.

[104] Singleton-Gates, 28.

[105] "Letter by H. Montgomery Hyde to Robert Kee" 25 April 1956, H. Montgomery Hyde Collection 1.1, Harry Ransom Center.

[106] "Why I think the Casement Diaries are genuine," H. Montgomery Hyde Collection 1.8, Harry Ransom Center.

name again without loathing and contempt."[107] Despite a motion for clemency in the United States Senate, President Wilson and Ambassador Page felt it prudent to ignore the pleas, for "the people did not know the gravity of his offences."[108] As Casement's biographer Peter Singleton-Gates wrote, "the exposure of the diary turned the scales against Casement."[109]

Why was the rejection of Casement so complete? As queer, he simply could not be reconciled with the idea of the Irish Nation. There was no room for queer heroes, and the English knew when they produced the diaries that this was the case. As Kathryn Conrad argues, the Casement trials occurred while the notion of "Irishness" was at the height of its vulnerability, and a character who questioned the moral superiority so central to Irish national identity could not be recognized.[110] A free Ireland "did not have room for sexual deviants."[111] The only way in which Casement could be redeemed at all was to deny the authenticity of the diaries, but faith alone in Casement's sexual purity proved nothing.[112] Even W. B. Yeats, the lauded Irish poet, who was privately reconciled to Casement's sexuality, realized that it rendered him a moot point in the mythology of the emerging Irish State.[113] Indeed it was not until the late 1960s that Casement entered the

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[107] *News of the World*, 16 July 1916.

[108] Diary of Walter Page, as quoted in Singleton-Gates, 29.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Kathryn Conrad, *Locked in the Family Cell: Gender, Sexuality and Political Agency in Irish National Discourse* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 26.

[111] Brian Lewis, "The Queer Life and Afterlife of Roger Casement," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 14, no. 4 (2006) 376.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Conrad, 29.

pantheon of Irish founding fathers, when his body was brought back to Dublin and given a state funeral.[114]

Yet the exposure of Casement's penchant for same-sex prostitution meant more than his lengthy erasure from Irish memory. The English used Casement's sexuality not only to pre-empt efforts to make him a martyr, but to criticize Irish attempts at self-governance, as well. Casement, by virtue of his close ties and success within the Empire, represented a willingness on the part of the English to incorporate the Irish into the power enjoyed by Great Britain. Casement made it into the "inner circle" of English society: he was even knighted. Yet, Casement's status as British was never secure. While he was certainly British in the Empire, within the metropole he was Irish. As Kevin Kenny argues, the Irish at this time represented a contested imperial identity. They were both subjects and agents of the Empire, a role which Casement exemplifies perfectly.[115] Casement's failure to wield his power soberly, as a good Englishman would do, was offered as proof that the Irish were not yet fit for independence. The Irish could not be trusted with power. Of course, this portrayal of Casement as sexually reckless was reliant upon its context. The British were often happy to overlook the sexual indiscretions of imperial officers, even when they were not English. The case of Sir Hector Macdonald serves as evidence of this fact. Macdonald, the son of a poor Scottish stonemason, had risen in rank to Commander-in-Chief of the British troops in Ceylon. However, when it was exposed that Macdonald had been caught having sex with two Ceylonese boys on a

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[114] Reid, 448.

[115] Kevin Kenny "The Irish in the Empire" in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 93.

train, he immediately committed suicide. Despite ample evidence that the accusations were correct, a government committee found Macdonald innocent and assured that "his deeds, his simple courage and his example [would] live on. Those, no one can take away."[116]

While "Macdonald's memory lingered," Casement's connections to the Irish nationalist movement meant that the English would refuse to overlook his sexual promiscuity.[117] As Blackwell told the Cabinet, Casement had "warped his judgment" and used the power entrusted to him to complete "the full cycle of sexual degeneracy," eventually deriving his satisfaction from "attracting men and inducing them to use him."[118] Even Casement's body was treated as a colonial subject. After Casement's death, a Dr. Percy R. Mander was allowed to examine Casement at the request of the Home Office. Mander confirmed that he "found unmistakable evidence of the practice" to which "the prisoner in question had been addicted." As was true of African men in the Congo, Casement's body too was seen as bearing the marks of his over-sexed nature.[119]

As the nationalists had done in the Dublin Castle Scandal, and as Casement had done in his relationship with indigenous men, the English now utilized the assumption that queer sex was a primitive practice. A sign of sexual incontinence, queer sex represented a civilizational failure that morally-superior nationalities had already

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[116] Trevor Royle, *Fighting Mac: The Downfall of Major-General Sir Hector Macdonald* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2005) 162.

[117] Ibid., 160.

[118] PRO HO 144 1637 311643 67 "Sir Ernley Blackwell to the Cabinet of Herbert Henry Asquith" 22 July 1916.

[119] PRO HO 144 1637 311643 141 "Post-mortem Examination of Casement's Body" 3 August 1916.

transcended. Once again, by returning to the sexual promiscuity of its subjects, the English were reassured of their imperial mission to civilize the world, including the Irish. Even more importantly, Casement's sexual promiscuity, made possible by his rank in an English empire, served as an analogy for the Irish state. Ireland's ability to govern itself, like Casement's sexuality, had not yet matured.

Conclusion

The execution of Roger Casement in the late summer of 1916 did not mark the end of same-sex prostitution and its close ties with the Empire and nationalism. Using queer sex as a means to conceptualize one's national moral superiority, and to question the inherent morality of others, was simply too reliable a tool.

Such scandals were so popular, and powerful, because they drew on the sexual morality central to many nationalistic beliefs. In the 1880s, Irish nationalists would decry the prostitution of their own young men, and their nation itself, at the hands of the English. The Dublin Castle Scandal proved the moral superiority of the Irish and the threat that English occupation posed to Irish purity. Only a free Ireland, the nationalists claimed, would preserve the moral integrity inherent in the Irish people. It was this same sentiment that so quickly destroyed the reputation of Roger Casement in 1916. In a startling reversal, the English successfully criticized the notion of a self-governed Ireland by exposing the sexual activities of one of its hopeful leaders. Because Casement used his position within the Foreign Office to acquire sexual partners, he represented the bestial nature of the Irish man, who was simply unable to rightfully use any power

entrusted to him. How could such men, unready to govern, expect to establish an independent and just state?

It was this same strong sense of nationhood, and the connotations of sexuality which it carried, that was transposed into the sex lives of queer men themselves, once again best represented by Roger Casement. Casement, by fetishizing non-Britons, imbued his sexual partners with many admirable attributes, such as masculinity, beauty, and a sexual freedom rarely experienced within Great Britain. His enthusiasm for men beyond the British Isles was shared by many queer men of Britain's upper and middle classes, such as John Addington Symonds, T.E. Lawrence, and Oscar Wilde. Yet while these indigenous men were eroticized, the relationships in which they entered still reflected, unquestionably, British superiority. British queer men were the true agents: initiating, maintaining, and determining the relationships by means of their economic standing. British queer men felt justified in treating their partners, although they appreciated their value, essentially as commodities—another luxury provided by the Empire for discerning British tastes. As subsequent chapters will discuss, this duality would permeate much of the queer fantasy of the rent boy, even when the young men were also British. The rent boy remained an object of beauty: masculine, sexualized, youthful—qualities that outstripped those of his queer admirer—while always, through economic disparity, under the domain of his wealthy, queer patron.

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Chapter Four

Queer Men and the Rent Boy, 1918-1939

In his later life, Christopher Isherwood, the famous and openly-homosexual author, recounted his sexual awakening as a British public-school boy. In his youth he had cautiously developed intimate friendships with his classmates, and by college "had at last managed to get into bed with one." But these experiences were unsatisfying. Isherwood explained that he suffered from an "inhibition, then not unusual among upper-class homosexuals." Isherwood's sexual desire was not roused by someone of his own class, and preferably not of his own nationality. In his own words, he "needed" a foreign, working-class man. By 1928, having "become clearly aware of this [need]," he left England for Berlin, where he would live for a decade and write one of the most celebrated depictions of interwar Germany.[1] But Isherwood's sojourn to Berlin was not, in its conception, about writing. For Isherwood, as he famously penned, "Berlin meant boys."[2]

Christopher Isherwood was not alone in his desires. The attraction of the working class had long been a staple of same-sex erotics for queer members of Britain's upper classes. Yet during the interwar period in Britain, the idea of inter-class queer sex appears to have reached its zenith, not only in its ubiquity, but also in its articulation. The rent boy—a working-class man who exchanged sex for financial favors—was the representative of this largely class-based version of queer sexuality. As exemplified with Isherwood, queer sexuality to many British men, while inherently tied to the male body,

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[1] Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind, 1929-1939* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1976) 3.

[2] Ibid., 2.

was just as concerned with the class attached to the male body, and the rent boy was both in equal parts. He was the working-class man—strong, virile, masculine, rapaciously sexual—who could be "had." Because of his social class, with its presumed innate traits of masculinity, the rent boy was capable of performing queerness while incapable of "being" queer himself. This paradox, central to the queer fantasy of the rent boy, was resolved by the act of economic exchange. Prostitution explained away the tension caused by the "normal" working-class man who practiced queer sex. Working-class desire for money, not men, created rent boys, at least in the minds of their middle-class partners. Yet the role of economic exchange as the catalyst of these relationships purchased more than just the bodies of working-class lovers. It simultaneously reaffirmed broader notions of inter-class interactions, wherein the upper classes employed, controlled, and sometimes believed themselves to be the saviors of their working-class subjects who suffered from underdeveloped minds and mercenary ethics. Queer men, while eroticizing their working-class partners, also expected, as did their straight middle-class counterparts, a sense of power and control in their dealings, sexual or not, with working-class men—an expectation purchased by their relative wealth.

This chapter unravels the queer man's complex fantasy of the rent boy by focusing on two central themes. First it demonstrates how the rent boy was eroticized by queer men's expectations of his body, his gender, and his sexuality—all of which were bound up in his social class. Queer men articulated their relationships in classed, commercial ways: determining how such ventures were best initiated and maintained, as well as calculating the benefits and costs of having working-class lovers. Their commercialized perception of queer sex transformed rent boys into fetishized goods and

transformed upper-class queer men into consumers who expected to manage, control, and find satisfaction in the transaction.

Yet often, as explored in part two, the rent boy failed, or refused, to play along with the expectations of queer men. Working-class men practiced sex work in ways rarely acknowledged by the upper-class rent boy trope. While difficult economic times increased the desirability of sex work, working-class men who sold sex did so for a multitude of reasons, forming varied relationships to the work and to the men they encountered. Working-class men often manipulated the financial outcome of their services, and in some cases even informally organized to increase their profitability. These men also deconstructed the rent boy fantasy in other ways. Working-class men possessed and controlled a sexuality of their own. Men selling sex could, and did, enjoy the experience, finding pleasure and even love. Some openly embraced their own queer desires, seeking pleasure beyond acts of sex work, while to their upper-class partners they remained "normal" men. The "rent boy," constructed in the sexual imagination of the upper-class man, was deconstructed by the flesh of the working-class man.

"Like Any Possessive Housewife": Queer Men and the Rent Boy Fantasy

Montague Glover descended from his flat, camera in hand, to the London streets. Between the wars, Glover would capture through photographs a secret street life whose messages were only clear to the initiates: men lounging around the fountains of Trafalgar Square or a London Guardsman lingering alone by the entrance to Hyde Park. A middle-class architect and queer man, he was fascinated by the allure of working-class men. Some he would take home, not only as lovers but as subjects. From behind his camera

lens, Glover would inspect their bodies, record their faces, and even change their personas. With the use of a borrowed uniform or a pair of riding boots, the young men picked up from the streets became soldiers, sailors, and boxers. Standing the men in front of a blank, stark wall, Glover created fictional personifications of a queer man's ideal rent boy.

The photographs were a graphic embodiment of a common phenomenon among self-identified queer men—the same-sex erotics of the working-class male. Queer men established a clear image of the rent boy in terms of how he looked, how he behaved, and who he was. This section explores who queer men believed the rent boy to be. Similar to Roger Casement's conceptualization of his non-white partners, the working-class rent boy was, inherently, his body—taut and hard, and physical. His sexuality was unrefined and insatiable in its appetites. He was essentially masculine. All of these individual characteristics were bound up in the social class of the rent boy himself. Being working class ensured that these traits would be found marked on the rent boy's body, and furthermore, made that body accessible. His relative poverty allowed queer men to purchase what they desired, and this economic exchange became a central, although sometimes uneasy, component in the fantasy of having working-class lovers.

Yet the rent boy fantasy was not only an eroticized admiration of the accessible working-class man and his presumed characteristics. The rent boy fantasy was also an exercise in power. Wealthy, prominent queer men, such as E.M. Forster and J.R. Ackerley, conceptualized their sexual lives as an economic endeavor. In literal terms, they expected to purchase or trade financial favors to obtain working-class lovers. But, as consumers of working-class labor, queer men also assumed the rights of consumers—

to manage, to control, and to be satisfied with the transaction. Even when queer men couched inter-class sex in terms of love and romance, one characteristic remained—men from the upper classes presumed the reins were securely in their grasp. The rent boy, while possessing a healthy dose of masculine willfulness and independence, in the end was dutiful and compliant. But fantasies are just that, and queer men were frustrated at their inability to find this rent boy who occupied their imagined sexual lives. Like Glover's photographs, lived experiences and the men they involved often required "dressing-up" to fit the predetermined roles.

By the interwar period, the role of working-class men paid for homosexual acts had long been central to beliefs concerning queer sex, both by the British public at large and by queer men specifically. As argued in Chapter Two, inter-classed, economically-motivated encounters were crucial to the popular understanding of sex between men. Derived from established prostitution narratives, queer sex was related to the British public as following the same course of exploitation and depravity used to describe heterosexual prostitution. Even when encounters deviated from simple tales of cross-class exploitation, as in the Cleveland Street Scandal, queer sex was still presented within the narrative of prostitution encounters—with its assumed story of working-class victims succumbing to wealthy decadence.

Same-sex prostitution had a long history in British queer cultures, as well. The public's tendency to associate queer sex with prostitution was not unwarranted. Many queer relationships were inter-classed and included economic incentives—a penchant several early homosexual apologists celebrated. Edward Carpenter, the infamous British socialist, celebrated explicitly. Carpenter eroticized cross-class relationships, advocating

that "eros" was the one "sentiment which easily passes the bounds of class and caste, and unites in the closest affection the most estranged ranks of society."[3] Queer relationships in particular, in which men of "good position and breeding" were "drawn to rougher types, as of manual workers," helped to bring about the dissolution of class differences.[4] Carpenter practiced what he preached, cohabitating with his working-class lover George Merrill for nearly forty years. Another apologist, John Addington Symonds, not only recognized value in inter-classed homosexuality, but acknowledged benefit in the economic exchange that often happened between middle-and working-class lovers. Symonds argued that homoeroticism could lead to greater concern for the lower class, build intimate cross-class relationships, and provide social "uplift" for the poor lovers of wealthier men. While he found male prostitutes distasteful—calling them "improper ground in which to plant the seeds of irresistible emotion"—Symonds nonetheless reveled in his ability to "lift" Angelo Fusato, his working-class lover, "into something like prosperity."[5] For those wealthy Britons with access to the works of men like Carpenter and Symonds, inter-classed, economically-based queer sex was a long-observed, well-founded practice.

With the assumed ties of queer sex and economic exchange articulated by men like Symonds and Carpenter a generation earlier, interwar queer men readily, and easily, carried forth the classed vision of the rent boy. As such, it is challenging to argue for

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[3] Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*: *A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1908) 114-115.

[4] Ibid.

[5] John Addington Symonds, *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds* Ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (London: Hutchinson, 1984) 255, 276.

distinct interwar changes to same-sex prostitution. An inherently hidden culture, the words of queer men before 1914 are scant outside of criminal investigations, which makes comparisons difficult. Interwar queer men, on the other hand, lived into the generation of Gay Lib, leaving collected stories of their sexual pasts, thereby allowing historians multifaceted insights into queer culture that are unavailable for earlier generations.

With these challenges in mind, there is some evidence of changes brought about after the Great War. First, queer culture flourished in the growing, liberalizing cities of London and Manchester, and queer men and women produced small, but significantly widespread, cultural outlets such as nightclubs and small presses that published homoerotic works.[6] These avenues hastened a greater dissemination and homogenization of queer identity, including the conceptualization of same-sex prostitution. Second, the economic hardships of the late-interwar period and an increasingly poorer lower working class made it a buyer's market. With male prostitutes more numerous, more queer men found prostitution an economically feasible way to satiate their sexual desires. The state of this interwar prostitution market is implied by the evidence of a shift during World War Two. Queer men complained of rising prices due to the absence of working-class men, who were now serving overseas, coupled with the influx of queer American GIs. One man from London, named John, complained "the Americans ruined the market," as the rates of rent boys rose from £1 "in those early days" to $10 during the war, in effect

[6] Alkarim Jivani, *It's Not Unusual: A History of Lesbian and Gay Britain in the Twentieth Century (*Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) Part One.

tripling in price.[7] During the interwar period, the fantasy of the rent boy benefited from growing queer cultural apparatuses and a favorable economic climate.

While it is difficult to classify individual men as rent boys, articulating who or, perhaps more accurately, what a rent boy should be was not a challenge. He was, inherently, working class, and it was from his social class that all other characteristics were derived. The impoverishment of working-classness created the rent boy, in the sense that by being working class there existed an economic need wealthier queer men could meet or exploit. It was this same working-classness, with its assumed characteristics of masculinity and sexual prowess, which made poorer men attractive, and therefore valuable, to middle-and-upper-class queer men. In short, the symbiotic relationship between queer men and the rent boy revolved around—was made possible by—the middle-class queer idea of the working-class man. His working-classness was made apparent in his body, hardened and strong by a life of physical labor. His sexual appetites were animalistic and unrefined. He was innately masculine—all characteristics interwoven with, and dependent upon, his class.

Montague Glover and the images he left behind offer a queer aesthetic of the working-class body, albeit the aesthetic of one queer man. Affording scholars a rare glimpse into a queer life, the archive of Glover's work is significant not only for its subject matter, but for its survival, as well. Glover, although relatively wealthy, was far from famous or significant in his own time. Only by chance was his extensive collection saved at all. After the death of Ralph Hall—Glover's long-time, working-class lover—

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[7] "A Remodelled Life," an interview with "John" in *Between the Acts: Lives of Homosexual Men, 1885-1967* Ed. Kevin Porter and Jeffrey Weeks (London: Routledge, 1991) 141-142. This would have been an increase of around £4.

their shared property was auctioned off. The auctioneer, a gay man, recognized the value of the photographs and letters and purchased the archive from Glover's distant and uninterested kin. Traded for a gold-tipped cane once belonging to Queen Victoria, the collection made its way into the hands of James Gardiner, who then published an account of Glover's life and his images.[8]

What Glover's photographs show is the fascination one upper-class queer man found in the bodies of men considered social inferiors. And Glover was keenly aware of differences in class rank. He was born in 1898 into a family of successful merchants and property developers and educated at a public school, albeit a minor one, and then attended University College London where he studied architecture. With his lucrative career as an architect, Glover maintained a London flat in a fashionable area near Marble Arch, as well as a country home, "Little Windovers," where he would later set up housekeeping with his partner, chauffeur, and manservant—Ralph Hall.[9]

Glover's life was one filled with the comforts and privileges wealth afforded men of the middle and upper classes of interwar Britain—things like a camera, privacy, and the assumption that the working class could, without consent, become one's subject, artistic and otherwise. As Joanne Bourke explains, "material realities," such as a camera and the expense of housekeeping, mattered in terms of class identity. However, it was not the material life alone, but "symbolic expressions" of power and difference that were

[8] James Gardiner, interview by author, personal interview, 25 July 2011, Brighton, United Kingdom.

[9] James Gardiner, *A Class Apart: The Private Pictures of Montague Glover* (London: Serpent's Tail Press, 1992) 9-10.

central to defining class.[10] Glover's photographs, staged with great care to produce an explicitly working-class image, are symbolic expressions of class power. By capturing images of overtly working-class bodies, Glover reaffirmed the believed difference between himself and the working men he photographed, a difference that Glover eroticized.

Photography was a particularly powerful medium through which to represent Glover's eroticized working class. As Seth Koven argues, such inter-class images, while staged and posed, recreated a truth the photographer believed was already present. The photograph, although a self-creation, by its seeming realism "narrowed the gap between representation and reality."[11] Like Arthur Munby of the generation before, Glover used photographs to create his classed ideal.[12] Working from the privilege of his middle-classness, Montague Glover photographed working-class men as he believed them to be, both on the street and in his own private spaces. As a result, his photographs depict a singular view of the working class—male, physically fit, mostly young, and all with a presumed willingness to pose for Glover's lens.

Glover's vision of the working-class male body did not come solely from his own mind. As evidenced by Glover's private scrapbooks, he collected images of working-class men from various print sources. Soldiers in a friendly embrace, the flexing footballer, two friends comically sharing a single bed—all images cut and pasted from

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[10] Joanne Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 1994) 4.

[11] Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 121-122.

[12] Carol Mavor, *Pleasures Taken: The Performance of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) Chapter 11.

sports journals, boy's magazines, and newspapers. While such images were not overtly homoerotic, Glover reappropriated them as such, creating his own, private publication of the young male body.[13]

Just as Glover reappropriated the images of men he collected from popular sources, the photographs he took also constructed a tale that suited Glover's own imagined male. For the most part, Glover's photographs can be categorized into the public and private—his public photographs taken in the streets of London, his private ones taken at home. The public photographs show men at labor and at rest. Bricklayers, their tools still by their side, appear to stop a moment to gaze and smile at Glover. Guards, sailors, and policemen, all standing distantly at duty, are also shown out of uniform, their arms draped lazily around one another and their stern faces replaced by wide smiles. Glover even altered their locations, from London's streetscapes to green fields to swimming pools.

However, out of Glover's numerous locations, one locale surpasses all the others—the fountains of Trafalgar Square. Known widely by queer men as "the meat rack," the fountains at Trafalgar Square were a relatively safe space for queer men to meet other men, ostensibly for sexual encounters. The types of queer sex available by the fountains were numerous, but Trafalgar Square was particularly notorious as a space to pick up working-class men for paid sexual encounters.[14] It was in this environment that Glover chose to locate many of his images. Some of these men he apparently directed into the space. Sailors appearing on nondescript London streets are also shown sitting on

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[13] Gardiner, 11.

[14] "An Exile's Life," an interview with "Barry" in *Between the Acts: Lives of Homosexual Men, 1885-1967* Ed. Kevin Porter and Jeffrey Weeks (London: Routledge, 1991) 134.

the retaining walls of the square, a cigarette in hand. Other photographs seem less directed, such as those showing groups of men, some in professional suits, waiting alone, in view of the National Gallery.

While Glover photographed men who were apparently known and unknown to him, most prevalent among the images are solitary, poorly-dressed young men, lounging

in Trafalgar Square, often looking away as though their eye is on a passerby, but just as often staring directly at Glover's camera. The ragged clothes, reminiscent of the idealized poverty exposés of East End social-workers, clearly identify the men's social class.[15] Unlike the sense of camaraderie expressed in other public photographs, these men rarely smile, but rather look intently, their hips cocked to the side. It is not uncommon for these men to display prominent erections, their hands often close, or indirectly pointing, to their genitals—an explicit eroticism absent in Glover's other public scenes. Glover, by his choice of location, clothing, and explicit sexuality, clearly meant to mark these men, not only as erotic subjects, but as the rent boy, inhabiting spaces available to the working-class, wearing working-class clothes, occupying working-class bodies.

Montague Glover's private photographs share the characteristics of his public ones, but in exaggerated ways. With the men now positioned in Glover's private flat, his

[15] Koven, 120.

expectations were displayed in ways unobtainable in London's streets. Here he does not just arrange and move men, he alters and exposes them. In a demonstration of middle-class power and working-class deference, the men become "passive objects" to Glover's "manipulations."[16] Standing the men against a bare wall, using his "well-filled prop box" of uniforms and costume pieces, Glover dressed and undressed men to his liking.[17] While the photographs may, on the surface, appear as only simple, sexy snapshots of lovers, these images speak to a broader aesthetic of the rent boy as Glover believed him to be, even when it meant altering the men before his camera.

Glover most consistently altered the attire of his subjects. Soldiers, sailors, street urchins, wrestlers—all appear in Glover's collection. Often reusing the same articles of clothing for different men, Glover fashioned his subjects into the occupational tropes of the rent boy. It was common knowledge that certain men, like soldiers and messenger boys, identified by their dress, could be "had." By making the occupations of men central in his private erotic work, Glover demonstrated how important the display of occupation was to the sexualization of his subjects. These occupations reflected more than labor; they identified men explicitly as working class. Such a trend had existed for at least several decades. As argued in the second chapter, telegraph boys, who were central in several queer scandals of the late nineteenth century, were identified as likely participants in queer sex by both queer men and bureaucrats in the Post Office. Glover was apparently aware of this tendency, snapping photographs of young men on bicycles and donning General Post Office uniforms.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Gardiner, 29.

Many occupational types appear in the photographs, such as day laborers or boxers, but the uniformed soldier and sailor are the most prevalent by far. Indeed, Glover eventually placed every man he photographed in a uniform of some type. It is unsurprising; the soldier and sailor as rent boy was a pervasive trope among queer men. As Matt Houlbrook writes, military men, Guardsmen in particular, were known for "distinguished traditions of exchanging sex for money and consumerist pleasures with older, wealthier men."[18] These stories of military men for rent travelled in wide circles. One elderly queer man later recalled that when in lavatories, sailors who noticed an "eager looker," would encourage the man—in expectation of a few free pints and perhaps a place to stay the night—by saying things like "He's a beauty isn't he? Like him up your bum, chum?" The man reminisced that sailors made the offers with ease, such statements bringing "gales of laughter" from the sailor's colleagues.[19] Accounts of same-sex prostitution mentioned Guardsmen especially frequently. As one queer man from the time named "Norman" remembered, "It was easy to get Guardsmen anywhere."[20] Guardsmen, unlike sailors, had no need "to go into a piss place to meet a queer," afraid that "some queer would manage to get a good look at his prick, free of charge. All they had to do was walk along the street or hang around Hyde Park, and it was certain some queer would speak to them or give them 'the look.'"[21] Asking for a light or striking up a

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[18] Matt Houlbrook, "Soldier Heroes and Rent Boys: Homosex, Masculinities, and Britishness in the Brigade of Guards, circa 1900-1960" *Journal of British Studies* 42.3 (July 2003) 353.

[19] H. Montgomery Hyde, interview with an anonymous homosexual in *The Love That Dared Not Speak Its Name: A Candid History of Homosexuality in Britain* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970) 207.

[20] "A Loner's Life," an interview with "Norman" in *Between the Acts*, 32.

[21] Hyde., 208.

comfortable conversation meant, in Norman's recollection, that "you [could] nearly always conquer." The only thing the Guardsmen expected was about ten shillings.[22]

The perception that men in uniform were susceptible to homosexual advances was known beyond queer circles. Taylor Croft, in his sensational 1932 book on London vice, wrote that "Homosexuals have a particular interest in men who wear uniforms, and sailors and soldiers come in for their attentions." The motives of military men were obvious to Croft, which he simply listed as "monetary." While "some of them, of course, are actually perverted," Croft deduced, "the majority gain only the material advantage."[23] Officers trained the working-class enlisted to identify and avoid the "sordid" habits "of perverts."[24] The problem even prompted a conference in 1931 on "Homosexual Behaviour in the Armed Forces," which was attended by the Director of Public Prosecutions and representatives from branches of the military and the Metropolitan Police.[25] Guardsmen, even those who had never participated in same-sex prostitution, were aware of the expectations of queer men. Alan Roland, writing after a lengthy career with the Guards, described the "Dracula-like persistence" of the "pale and languid, often gaunt and hollowed-eyed homosexual." Those Guardsmen not properly diligent were "drawn into the filth."[26]

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[22] "A Loner's Life," 32.

[23] Taylor Croft, *The Cloven Hoof: A Study of Contemporary London Vices* (London: Denis Archer, 1932) 68.

[24] Alan Roland, *Guardsman: An Autobiography* (London: Museum Press, 1955) 107.

[25] PRO, HO 45 24960: "Homosexual Behavior in the Armed Forces," 5 July 1931.

[26] Roland, 107.

Roland noticed that the scarlet uniform in particular drew despised attention. Homosexuals were drawn to it "like a moth to the candle-flame." The uniform was not only attractive aesthetically, but Roland sensed that it marked him as in play, as somehow more obtainable. He noted that Guardsmen were never approached while in civilian clothes, and he assumed queer men saw them as possible undercover policemen. Yet once in uniform, the Guardsmen were "a target—a vivid, scarlet target to be stared at." Roland summarized his disgust for these advances by writing simply "I hated my uniform."[27]

The queer man's focus on the uniform itself, evident in its ubiquitous presence in Glover's work, marked men in both gendered and classed ways. The uniform of the Guardsmen or sailor, with its emphasized shoulders and narrow waist, accentuated the virile masculinity presumed of those in the armed forces, while also designating enlisted men as its working-class members.[28] The uniform was of "crucial significance in defining the understandings of class and masculinity" for the military and for civilians like Glover. The uniforms "associated their wearers with specific clusters of stereotyped qualities."[29] Uniforms, chosen by middle-class officers, singled out the working-class enlisted, infusing enlisted-men's uniforms with many of the characteristics given to the working class itself. For queers like Glover, the uniforms of enlisted men clothed

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[29] Quintin Colville, "Jack Tar and the Gentleman Officer: The Role of the Uniform in Shaping the Class- and Gender-related Identities of British Naval Personnel, 1930-39," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 13 (2003), 106.

working-class bodies in a "strong vein" of qualities that made working-class men desirable—their masculine sense, general bawdiness, and an implicit deference to middle-class paternalism, either to one's middle-class officer or a middle-class photographer. [30]

Glover's photographs of men in uniform paid homage to this widely-held belief of military man as rent boy. It is impossible to identify if any of Glover's subjects were indeed Guardsmen or sailors, but Glover replicated this perception with virtually every man he took home to photograph. Real or not, the fantasy of the sailor and the soldier was a central part of the erotic mythos that Glover was creating for himself.

Despite the symbolic eroticism of dress, Glover's subjects rarely stayed clothed. Perhaps the most universal aspect of his private photographs is that each man eventually appeared at least partially nude—his body revealed for Glover's lens. Even when shed of its occupational costume, the body, bared before the camera, exposed Glover's class-based aesthetic. All the bodies show a developed musculature derived from the stereotypically manly pursuits of labor or exercise. These well-developed physiques carried class designations of their own. Working-class and middle-class bodies were perceived as becoming ever more dissimilar. As a response to changed and decreasing needs for manual labor, a "revival of discipline over the body" erupted among working-class men. Groups such as the League of Health and Strength preached a "sacredness of the body" manifested in physical strength, an attempt to recapture the body produced by manual labor that was increasingly difficult to find.[31] The exposed bodies displayed in

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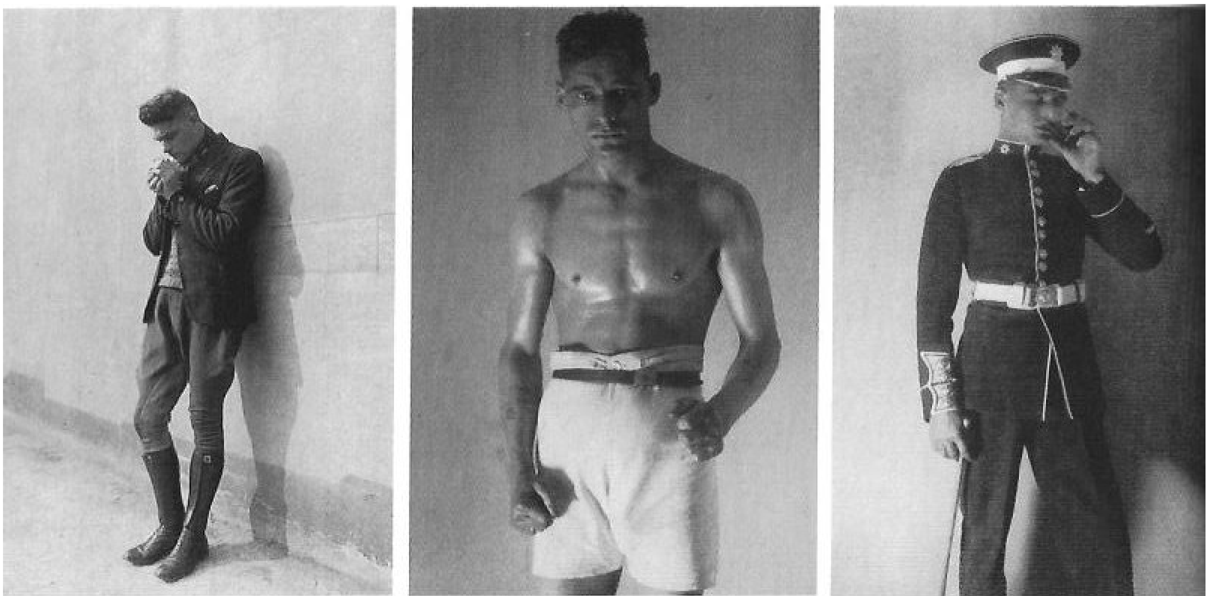
[30] Ibid., 127.

[31] Bourke, 42-43.

Glover's images, which replicated this singular view of fit working-class bodies, were in stark contrast to the middle-class body softened by "desk work," like that required by Glover's architectural firm, and covered in a respectable three-piece suit.

The nudity of Glover's photographs also highlights the role of labor itself between the subject and Glover. It was Glover's vision, his voyeurism, which was satisfied in the eventual achievement of the naked male. The photographs are of his "construction, production, and consumption."[32] Manipulating the subject with his own camera and in his own space, Glover was the middle-class overseer of working-class labor. It was the young man performing the action of posing, and, eventually, stripping, who is captured and eroticized for the middle-class consumer. The nudity—and the right to not only view but record the naked body—of his subjects was the pinnacle of Glover's sexualized vision of the rent boy—a working-class man laboring to satiate a middle-class man's desires. It was this labor, performed by the working-class body under middle-class



[32] Jennifer V. Evans, "Seeing Subjectivity: Erotic Photography and the Optics of Desire" in *American Historical Review*, 118:2 (April 2013) 440.

auspices, that proved critical in the way queer men understood their relationship to the rent boy.

Through the choice of costume, location, and the specific types of bodies photographed, Glover affords us a unique vision into the erotic aesthetics of a single queer man. Yet in reality, it is integrally reflective of a larger queer aesthetic of which Glover was a part. The men portrayed are designated as same-sex prostitutes by Glover's representation and replication of the assumed qualities of working-class men, qualities displayed in uniforms, at the fountains in Trafalgar Square, and in the bodies preserved on Glover's film.

Montague Glover, whose photographs were preoccupied with the identity of the rent boy, also indirectly portrayed how queer men and rent boys interacted, by moving, altering, and manipulating his working-class "laborers" to his own satisfaction. Typifying broader forms of inter-class interaction, the rent boy fantasy included this assumed upper-class control. The celebrated novelist E.M. Forster and his circle of friends in many ways embodied the same power dynamics that permeated the rent boy fantasy. Forster and his colleagues sought, as did Glover, to transform a sexual ideal into reality, inscribing their expectations on the bodies of working-class lovers. However, while Glover's momentary and static photographs seemed to present a realized "rent boy," Forster and his friends were continually frustrated by their inability to make such fantasies materialize.

Forster's attraction and sexual experience, although delayed until well into his adulthood, were singularly focused on men of the working class. After numerous affairs, Forster eventually settled with a London policeman, Bob Buckingham, along with Bob's

wife and child: a son named Morgan after E. M. Forster. Bob's "loyalty and calm" was to Forster, "a tonic."[33] Loyalty and calm, derived from acquiescence, was an expectation in Forster's relationships with working-class men. It was Bob's "loyalty and calm," coupled with "his very *ordinariness*," that allowed Forster, who in many ways came to dominate the lives of the entire Buckingham family, to find the affair satisfying.[34] Forster's remarks on previous relationships, such as his liaison with Reg Palmer, a mixed-race cab driver in West Hackhurst, were full of "disappointment." Sexually, Palmer satisfied. Forster recalled their visits as "sticky" and "physically superb."[35] Yet Palmer failed to meet the expectations articulated by another of Forster's working-class lovers—a willingness to abandon everything so Forster could call whenever he chose. Forster wrote of his "disappointment" when Palmer could not meet or was too busy to go off for the weekend. Especially disappointing was Palmer's tendency to listen to his wife, Bess, who once thwarted Forster's plans by complaining, "I see nothing of you all the day."[36] Forster even expressed frustration when Reg's lovemaking was interrupted by Bess going into labor with her second child.[37]

Harsh and uncompromising, Forster's control derived from his middle-class standing over the working-class Palmer. The relationship had a strong, though

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[33] Wendy Moffat, *A Great Unrecorded History: A New Life of E.M. Forster* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010) 221.

[34] Ibid., 222.

[35] "Letter by E.M. Forster to J.R. Ackerley" 19 January 1925, E.M. Forster Collection Series 1.1, Harry Ransom Center.

[36] "Letter by E.M. Forster to J.R. Ackerley" 17 October 1924, E.M. Forster Collection Series 1.1, Harry Ransom Center.

[37] "Letter by E.M. Forster to J.R. Ackerley" 20 July 1925, E.M. Forster Collection Series 1.1, Harry Ransom Center.

intermittent, financial side. Forster would give Palmer a pound here and there, even employing a friend to send Reg money while Forster was out of the country.[38] While an explicit economic exchange was irregular, Forster's classist assumptions were steadfast. Although he wrote complimentarily of Palmer, Forster referred to him as a "shy animal,"[39] and while it was a "privilege to be brought close" to Palmer, Forster still explicitly placed him "outside one's rung."[40] The differences between Forster and Palmer were an endless fascination to Forster. Palmer was impossible to approach "through the intellect."[41] He was "coarseness" and Forster "tenderness," and though the two had "kissed one another…imaginative passion, love, [didn't] exist in the lower classes."[42]

Indeed, the lower classes, and men like Reg Palmer, required a special understanding, one difficult to obtain for a middle-class man, as Forster stressed to his friend J.R. Ackerley. Ackerley, though a generation younger, was Forster's greatest sexual confidante. He was a handsome, charismatic man of considerable talent. Minor successes as a writer propelled him into the editorship of the BBC's magazine, *The Listener*, and later Ackerley would prove himself a fine memoirist, writing openly about his homosexuality. Sexually adventurous, Ackerley and Foster enjoyed sharing stories, sometimes even partners, and they certainly shared the same taste for rough-around-the-

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[38] Ibid.

[39] "E.M. Forster to J.R. Ackerley" 17 October 1924.

[40] "E.M. Forster to J.R. Ackerley" 19 January 1925.

[41] Ibid.

[42] E.M. Forster, *The Journals and Diaries of E.M. Forster, Volume II,* Ed. Philip Gardner (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011) 24 March 1925, 77.

edges working men. Ackerley summed up his romantic life, wherein "passed several hundred young men, mostly of the lower orders and often clad in uniforms of one sort or another."[43] It was "the normal, manly boy" who attracted Ackerley the most, and he despised any signs of effeminacy, which he saw as rampant in his own social class.[44] It was "street prowlers" and "male prostitutes" who were his "prey."[45] It was his "guilt for sex" that "obliged [him] to work it off on [his] social inferiors," although he fondly recalled how his affairs with working-class men "opened up interesting areas of life, hitherto unknown."[46] These men included Guardsmen, agreeable to "a bit of fun" for the "recognized tariff" of a pound. They were "young, they were normal, they were working-class," and they were "drilled to obedience."[47]

Navigating this world of working-class lovers was treacherous, and Forster often gave Ackerley advice. He admonished Ackerley to avoid spending much time with such "unintellectual people."[48] Forster was "happy" to hear that Ackerley was on holiday with a lover, but he warned: "don't be with him all the time." While Ackerley read or was "cultured," Forster suggested arranging that his lover, Jack, "gets through some of his

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[43] J.R. Ackerley, "My Father and Myself (New York: Poseidon Press, 1960) 110.

[44] Ibid., 118.

[45] Ibid., 123.

[46] Ibid., 126.

[47] Ibid., 135.

[48] "Letter by E.M. Forster to J.R. Ackerley" 17 February 1926, E.M. Forster Collection Series 1.1, Harry Ransom Center. (287).

extra sleeping." It was a "lecture" that Forster promised to continue at their next meeting.[49]

Forster's lecture on the working class reached its height in a letter to Ackerley, who was suffering from difficult times with his latest partner, a young sailor named Albert Burton. Ackerley obsessed over Burton, the closest he ever came to his "Ideal Friend."[50] The relationship was tumultuous, with the overprotective Ackerley acting "like any possessive housewife."[51] Forster offered his advice, telling Ackerley to "go very easily on Albert. The standards [of love] which are so obvious to you are very remote to him and his class." Albert was afraid of Ackerley's "method of feeling," and Forster understood that "it was difficult with our middle-class training to realize this. But it is so." While he encouraged Ackerley to give up his "ownership" of Albert, he asserts that relationships "based on ownership may be the best," although "they never last."[52] Forster was correct; in time Albert "disappeared out of [Ackerley's] life."[53] Ackerley's possessiveness, although damning one relationship after another, never waned. It is telling that Ackerley eventually found the love he wanted—not with a loyal, working-class "Ideal Friend"—but with a pet dog, his beloved Alsatian bitch named Tulip.

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[49] "Letter by E.M. Forster to J.R. Ackerley" 10 February 1926, E.M. Forster Collection Series 1.1, Harry Ransom Center. (288).

[50] Ackerley, 126.

[51] Ibid., 129.

[52] "Letter by E.M. Forster to J.R. Ackerley" 9 April 1928, E.M. Forster Collection Series 1.1, Harry Ransom Center. (306).

[53] Ackerley, 131.

These continual disappointments in love suffered by Ackerley and Forster were only remedied when they found their loyal, calm partners (or pet in the case of Ackerley). Obedience and submissiveness were the expectations that came with the financial support given by these wealthy men. Forster perhaps recognized it was exploitation, but he saw it as streaming both ways. Everyone involved received, ideally, what he wanted. When responding to a writer's letter about the exploitation of prostitution, Forster responded with an honest assessment of humanity's use of sex. People, "where the passions are concerned, naturally exploit other people the most." However, unlike the exploitation of war, "the present exploitation of pain and death," the "exploitation of 'love'" was, at least, attractive.[54]

The "exploitation of love," running a dual course, exposed, perhaps unintentionally, Forster's frustration with many of his working-class lovers. While reluctant to see his activities as exploitative, he was quick to realize his own exploitation by others. Forster ordered about his working-class lovers with ease, and expected, in his old age, to be "looked after by the robust and grateful lower classes," and eventually Forster found this arrangement with Bob Buckingham and his family.[55] Yet some middle-class queer men were unable, and perhaps even intentionally unwilling, to replicate Forster's comfortable, hierarchically controlled arrangement. Some queer men articulately challenged the hierarchy assumed in same-sex prostitution, and, indeed, some queer men appeared to wield no sense of control over their working-class partners.

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[54] "Letter by E.M. Forster to Douglass Reed" 29 April 1940, 5, E.M. Forster Collection Series 1.1, Harry Ransom Center. (258).

[55] Letter to J.R. Ackerley, 1929, Furbank, *Forster II*: 159.

George Ives, the paranoid and obsessive diarist, often ranted in his private journals over the use of working-class men for sex. The greater love, as he saw queer sex, should go beyond physical pleasure to personal betterment. His qualms were not with inter-classed sex, or even sex with a strong economic component, but with sex for sex's sake. He argued that wealthier queer men were falling short in their responsibilities to the younger, poorer men they met, failing to enact the social uplift he believed homosexuality could bring—a socialistic view of same-sex love propagated by men like Edward Carpenter.[56]

Ives' ideal display of queer sex was perhaps best represented in J.G. Nicholson's *The Romance of a Choir Boy*, which was privately published in 1916. Ives owned and greatly admired the book about an Anglican minister's relationship with a young, beautiful country boy named Teddy Faircloth. Motivated by his sexual desires, the minister, Philip Luard, eventually transplants Faircloth to his church and then to university, where Faircloth becomes solidly middle class. Luard's desire for Faircloth troubles him, although his lust is encouraged by Luard's friend and fellow minister, Gerrard. But Luard remains chaste, focusing his eroticism on Faircloth's studies and social uplift, albeit with lingering touches and wanting stares. By the novel's end, Luard and Faircloth—now with a world of opportunity before him—reminisce on their relationship. Luard has done right by Faircloth, and Luard quotes George Moore, saying "he never wrote anything 'truer than this: Physical intimacies are but surface emotions …; whereas spiritual intimacies live in the heart, they are part of the eternal life and reach

[56] Ives personally knew Carpenter and visited him at his home. Ives writes in his journal while at Milthorpe, Carpenter's home, in 1897. His journals are now part of the Ives Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

beyond the stars.'"[57] Nicholson and Ives romanticized inter-class queer love while downplaying its sexualized aspects. But the most sensual of the characters, Gerrard, was not portrayed negatively, and there was never a sense that a sexual relationship between Luard and Faircloth would be detrimental, so long as the focus remained on bettering Faircloth's position in the world. One's duty to working-class lovers should outweigh one's desire for them, but neither Nicholson nor Ives perceived that desire as perverted. Indeed the desire was not only seen as universal among queer men, but the catalyst to class equality.

Robert Lee Morris, a retired major in the Indian Army, seemed to share Ives' and Nicholson's view. For years, he provided significant and steady financial help to his partners with little sense of exerting any power or control over them. On May 24th, 1927, Morris pled guilty to fifteen counts of gross indecency and was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. The police had been observing Morris, who had "for a long period been carrying on his disgusting conduct of corrupting men and youths."[58] One of these youths, Philip Faber, was a seventeen-year-old telegraph boy who testified to sleeping with Morris for the past two years. Morris was persistent in his relationship with Faber, even writing Faber's mother when he had failed to show up at Morris' flat for a few days. Morris, as one inspector wrote, was "an educated and most plausible man," of a "particularly pleasant manner," keeping Faber in "a liberal supply of money."[59] Morris had numerous relationships with working-class youths, even visiting one, Leo Dickerson,

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[57] J.G. Nicholson, *The Romance of A Choir Boy* (Privately Printed, 1916) 280.

[58] PRO MEPO 3 404 "Minutes of the Metropolitan Police" 27 May 1927, 3.

[59] PRO MEPO 3 404 "Minutes of the Metropolitan Police, Inspector A. Cornelius" 20 April 1927, 2.

during the latter's short-term imprisonment in Wandsworth. Dickerson admitted to sex and to receiving payment from Morris, but, as he testified, "made light of it." Dickerson found Morris harmless and a great help, despite Dickerson's criminal past.[60] Morris called him "one of his boys," helped him to find employment, and even offered to let Dickerson live with him until he was back on his feet.[61] Morris held teas for the young men—attracting around a dozen every afternoon—gave out pocket money, and even purchased suitable clothing for some at Selfridges.[62] The depositions portrayed Morris as considerate and generous to a number of young men—attributes he willfully admitted. When approached by the police in his home, Morris calmly stated "Well, you know some men are inverts. I am one and I can't help it." Ironically, as Inspector Cornelius finished up the arrest, a lance-corporal in the Grenadier Guards came to call on Morris. Telling the soldier to go away, Morris looked mournfully out the window, saying "And I only met that man on Saturday." [63] Even after his arrest, an officer stationed to observe the property noted five more young men knocking on Morris's door. Inspector Cornelius surmised that Morris, quite successfully, "resorted to the ordinary way of soliciting soldiers, telegraph boys, railway porters, and shop assistants."[64] While expecting sex with the men he assisted, Morris nonetheless saw the help he gave as a central part of his

[60] Ibid., 3.

[61] Ibid., 4.

[62] PRO MEPO 3 404 "Statement of Robert Deacon" 11 January 1926, 4.

[63] "Minutes of the Metropolitan Police, Inspector A. Cornelius" 20 April 1927, 6.

[64] Ibid., 10.

relationships with working-class young men. He actively garnered a lasting interest in their lives, an interest that often spanned years.

Morris may have practiced the "democratic," inter-class eros expressed by writers like Ives; however, this middle-class assistance, even though generous and sometimes appearing selfless as in the case of Morris, always came with strings. The strings were often simply regular sexual access, but for some middle-class men, the attachment was more serious. They expected and exerted control over their partners, even when their partners tried to terminate the relationships. When Eric Ramm was arrested for gross indecency, the young man he was arrested with, nineteen-year-old William Morley, volunteered to make a written statement. Morley told that he had been sexually active with Ramm for the past three years, Ramm giving him money every time they met. Morley tried to break off the encounters, but Ramm made it impossible for Morley "to avoid him," though he attempted to several times. Ramm would wait outside the offices where Morley was a clerk and threaten Morley with "serious trouble" if he refused to accompany Ramm back to his flat.[65] When arrested, Morley flatly told the officer "I am glad this has happened as I have wanted for some time to sever my associations with this man." It was only the intervention of the police that ended Ramm's persistent interference in Morley's life.[66]

Charles Roberts, spurned by his former working-class, paid lover, took extreme measures. Roberts had been entertaining John Dines for the past six years, since Dines was a sixteen-year-old grocery delivery boy. Dines would visit every Sunday, sharing

[65] PRO CRIM 1 323 "Statement of William Alfred Clifford Morley" 17 July 1925, 2.

[66] PRO CRIM 1 323 "Statement of Charles Cooper, Detective Inspector" 18 July 1925.

Roberts' bed, after which Dines was given money "on each occasion."[67] Roberts gave Dines £20 for a motorcycle and eventually opened a joint bank account with him. The financial gifts even extended to Dines' family, with Roberts giving Dines' widowed mother an allowance and loaning funds to Dines' older brother.[68] However, Dines' financial situation began to improve as he moved from grocery boy to skilled construction laborer. Economically secure, Dines broke off the relationship, leaving Roberts devastated and angry. In revenge, Roberts started sending packages to Dines, shipped to the offices of his employer, Holland, Hammond, and Cubitt. The packages were full of Roberts' excrement. They arrived so regularly that Dines was forced to go to the police, incriminating himself, in hopes of stopping Roberts' harassment.[69] While Roberts certainly took his retaliation to extremes, the case still highlights the assumed control middle-class men expected over their working-class and paid partners. When Dines frustrated that expectation, Roberts' reaction was to harass and embarrass him.

True, spurned lovers in intra-classed relationships can retaliate in possessive ways, but the distinct class differences in a relationship like Dines' and Roberts' bolstered the sense of expected control and ownership. As Matt Houlbrook has argued, the desires to help, manipulate, and provide for were "intrinsically possessive." Possession of the working-class body was provided by "the queer's wealth," financial resources that were "to give him the upper hand."[70] But, by ending the relationships,

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[67] PRO CRIM 1 461 "Statement of John Edward Dines" 4 March 1929, 1.

[68] Ibid., 5.

[69] From the surviving record, it is unclear how the case ended. I have been unable to find any evidence of Roberts' conviction or acquittal. Neither have I found evidence that Dines was ever charged for his sexual relationship with Roberts.

[70] Houlbrook, 370.

working-class men interrupted that supposition, frustrating the belief systems of middle-class men in terms of both sexual and social relations with the working classes. The "problem of ownership," expressed by men like Forster, Ackerley, Morris, and Roberts, stemmed from their own desire for the "inequalities of wealth and social difference." Unsurprisingly, many working-class men met this "notion of proprietorship" with a "refusal to be subordinated to any man."[71] As "John," a self-identified rent boy explained, "[The older and better-off] find a boy they like and then they try to remodel him. Which is stupid. Nobody's remodeled me. I've remodeled myself, but nobody's remodeled me."[72]

"That's Why I Did It": Working-Class Men and Same-Sex Prostitution

Herbert Wragg liked to lean against the railings at Hyde Park Corner and wait for interested men. At first glance, he appeared as the essential queer fantasy of the rent boy. A Regimental Guard, Wragg was not in uniform, but his easily identifiable tie of red and blue quickly marked him as a soldier. By the entrance to Hyde Park, Herbert, or Harry as he preferred, asked passing gentlemen if they could share a light. If a passerby responded, he invited the man for a stroll, while staring "very hard."[73] It can be assumed that Harry was well informed on the culture of queer sex in November of 1929. He was at the right place, flaunted his military connections, and knew the etiquette of the pick-up.

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[71] Ibid.

[72] "A Remodelled Life."

[73] PRO CRIM 1 480 "Statement of Stephen Percy Dennis Lake" 21 November 1929, 14.

Yet, when arrested for solicitation, Wragg displayed that the queer fantasy of the rent boy—as straight, masculine, and only responsive to queer incitement—was often contested by lived experience. Wragg was not preyed upon by queer men. He was the instigator, at least on the evening when he met Stephen Lake. He invited Lake into the park, opting to take the Albert Gate, as Hyde Park Corner had "too many nosey parkers."[74] Wragg's sexual interest, at least for the moment, seemed to focus solely on men, as Wragg dismissed a pair of attractive women as "two whores."[75] Leading Lake to a lonely bench, Wragg offered "his bum for five bobs."[76] Proposing to be the receptive partner in anal sex dismantled the notion of the inherently masculine, working-class rent boy.

The Wragg case shows that the rent boy fantasy, so reliant upon the fixed gender connotations queer men tied to social class, was just that—fantasy. Indeed, when considering the records of same-sex prostitution that exist, it becomes clear that the working-class man having queer sex for cash rarely followed queer men's precepts of the rent boy. The working-class man who sold sex did so with an understanding, and a sexuality, of his own. The rent boy fantasy of men like Montague Glover, in fact, routinely failed to materialize in the streets, parks, and bedrooms of interwar London. While same-sex prostitution certainly did occur, it manifested itself in numerous ways. Working men exercised control over the financial implications of their encounters, using manipulation, sometimes violence, and—implicitly suggested in the surviving

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[74] Ibid., 15.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., 16.

evidence—informal labor organizing. These men explicitly displayed and controlled a self-determined sexuality, with some openly accepting their queer desires. The reality of same-sex prostitution exemplified the variety of sexualized and romantic encounters available, encompassing a large range of power structures, experiences, and motivations.

The economic and social conditions of the interwar years were especially well suited to the practice of same-sex prostitution. The financial collapse and depression of the 1930s provided many working-class men with the economic incentive, while a tepid and fitful state response to the plight of working-class households only intensified the likelihood that men, especially younger men, would exploit new sources of revenue.

It is true that the interwar years saw a significant decline in the level of poverty among the working class.[77] Real wages increased, and so did life expectancy. Meaningful markers of the quality of life, such as infant mortality, were improving, while family size, on the whole, decreased. Yet, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that change, while substantial, was sluggish and uneven. Unemployment, the constant spectre of working-class life, in some ways became a more pronounced problem. The very poor, those whose income relied on unskilled, menial employment, found an increasingly difficult labor market. Unemployment became more widespread and, worse, more prolonged.[78] Even as the number of unemployed fell, the percentage of those unemployed for over a year rose. For these men, "unemployment became a way of life."[79] A gulf formed between the employed, often the skilled and semi-skilled

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[77] Bourke, 6.

[78] Andrew August, *The British Working Class, 1832-1940* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007) 193.

[79] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 152.

"respectable working class," and the unemployed—increasingly made up of the residual poor. State intervention did little to repair the breach. Social-service expenditures increased during the interwar period, the majority spent on unemployment benefits introduced in 1911 and expanded in the Unemployment Act of 1920. However, the social relief was ill proportioned, and more likely to improve the lot of skilled and semi-skilled workers who faced irregular, shorter bouts of joblessness.[80] To exacerbate problems, these benefits narrowed after 1929, and in ways that, once again, disadvantaged the very poor, especially the young poor. Benefits were denied to workers living in their parents' home if the household income exceeded thirty-one shillings per week. This encouraged, or in some cases forced, young men out of the family home in order to receive benefits. As a result, homelessness among young, working-class men soared.[81]

The increase in unemployment also had profound social effects that, for some, would make prostitution a fairly desirable alternative to more legitimate forms of labor. First, the sense of poverty among the unemployed poor seemed more palpable. They were aware of the growing difference in the standard of living—the homes, possessions, and the lives of the employed were significantly better than theirs, and increasingly so. The uneven improvements allowed a swell in consumption for the employed segments of the working class. Labor activism ushered in the shortened, eight-hour work day, bearable work conditions, and the ubiquitous appearance of weekends.[82] Meanwhile, the

[80] Arthur J. McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain, 1880-1950* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 164.

[81] Bourke, 19.

[82] Ibid., 18.

lives of the poor were becoming relatively worse. They could not partake, to the same extent, in consumer culture or in commercialized leisure, such as the cinema.[83] Moreover, unemployment, while it left men with little money, did allow a great amount of freedom and time. The young, loitering man became "the public face of unemployment," gathering in libraries, by lamp posts, and on street corners.[84] Middle-class observers complained about the "unemployed men" who "passed hours on the streets, aimlessly."[85] Much of this free time could be passed, with little to no surveillance, in the streets and parks of Great Britain's large cities, London especially. Young men were also increasingly unable to obtain families of their own, finding it "wrong to love or marry on the dole" and admittedly missing "such consolation."[86] The better life that poor men could easily see but not obtain, coupled with copious amounts of unsupervised, idle time, created a social milieu in which the economic incentives of prostitution seemed especially attractive.

While economic conditions made prostitution a more viable option, social conditions made it a more palatable one, in terms of the class division that fantasies of the rent boy relied on. While the disparate social classes may have been becoming less so in terms of wealth, quality of life, and political power, the "salience of class," with its perception of inequalities and difference, continued.[87] In Britain, class remained, up to

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[83] August, 215.

[84] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 155.

[85] August, 215.

[86] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 157.

[87] August, 237.

and even beyond the Second World War, a "chief metaphor for defining oneself and other people."[88] McKibbin argues that class difference was felt even more keenly during the interwar years than previously, with a renewed hostility towards the working class. It was during the interwar years, with the post-1929 Conservative shift, that Britain developed "what she had never had before, a bourgeois politics, based specifically upon opposition to a political conception of the working class."[89] Universal male suffrage, the rise of the Labour Party, and years of liberal welfare reforms engendered a hostile, fearful middle class increasingly unwilling to continue their "subordinate role in the new order." The solidification of the middle-class consciousness explicitly made "relations with the working class [a] central political problem."[90] Middle-class observations in new fields like social psychology reflected worn working-class stereotypes of listlessness and aimlessness, while becoming increasingly hostile.[91]

This growing sense of disdain showed itself in the General Strike of 1926, during which workers from essential trades such as transportation and utilities walked out for nine days in support of striking coal miners. The strike was a failure for unionized labor in general, but it was also a failure in terms of perception. The most well-known aspect of the strike was the voluntary workers who heaved coal and drove busses during the walk-out. While the volunteers were made up of individuals from a broad range of social classes, it was the undergraduate men and society ladies who came to represent the

[88] Bourke, 25.

[89] Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880*-1950 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 299.

[90] Ibid., 259.

[91] Ibid., 271.

volunteers in the press's coverage. The upper-class volunteers, who approached the hard physical labor as a temporary "lark," amused the British readers, all while trivializing the labor itself.[92] The General Strike epitomized how "social exclusion was practised with determination," and how middle-class fears of waning prestige prompted exaggerated claims of cultural differences "between the middle-class and working-class way of life."[93]

These fears of waning "social esteem and relative status" had strong gendered connotations that drummed up images of a virile working class and the weakening, feminized middle class.[94] As the political and social world of Britain was restructured after World War One, the restructuring of gender was a "necessary corollary."[95] With the rise of the Labour party and the expansion of the vote and social services like unemployment benefits, the working-class male seemed "poised for domination." Specific gender identities had regularly been linked to class, yet, as T.G. Ashplant argues, the interwar moment produced ever more "class specific" versions of masculinity.[96] The working-class man was identified with brute strength and a rapacious sexual appetite. While these traits could, and were, disparaged as signs of working-class depravity and boorishness, they were also in some ways admired as inherently more masculine and

[92] Keith Laybourn, *The General Strike of 1926* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) and Rachelle Hope Saltzman, *A Lark for the Sake of their Country: The 1926 General Strike Volunteers in Folklore and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) Introduction.

[93] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 104.

[94] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 104.

[95] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 1.

[96] T. G. Ashplant, *Fractured Loyalties: Masculinity, Class and Politics in Britain, 1900-30* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007) 37.

natural—in stark contrast with the artificiality and disconnection from nature ascribed to the middle class.

Yet while social and economic conditions lent themselves to parts of the rent boy fantasies produced by middle-class queer men, in practice, same-sex prostitution rarely followed the tropes. Working-class men engaged in queer sex in numerous ways and for vastly different reasons—seducing and manipulating for cash, for social mobility, and for pleasure.

Queer men such as Ackerley and Forster may have controlled the purse strings, but the men selling sex just as often determined the nature of the encounters, which could vary widely. Ackerley's experiences proved this. While he was unable to keep his "Ideal Friend," Albert Burton, from abandoning their relationship, Ackerley was unable to rid himself of a Welshman whose feet smelled.[97] And while Forster wanted a working-class man who would care for him until death, same-sex prostitution took on a variety of forms, from relatively anonymous and quick sex in public spaces, such as in Herbert Wragg's case, to regular, structured encounters such as those enjoyed by Robert Lee Morris.

Despite the varying natures of these encounters, the inherent economic incentives were a central reason why same-sex prostitution flourished. A difficult economy simply made sex work more attractive to a greater number of struggling men. The poverty of the rent boy, which queer men could alleviate, was part and parcel of the rent boy fantasy. Yet working-class men and youths often approached the economic exchange quite differently. Men selling sex seemed to perceive the exchange, according to the rare

[97] Ackerley, 138.

instances when their stories were recorded and saved, not as charity, but as wages earned, evidencing a sense of value in their ability to secure remuneration via their bodies. Prostitution allowed for an income almost inconceivable for their peers, along with independence and access to consumer goods and entertainment. The "entertainment" and "glamour" provided to working-class men accustomed to "drab homes and drab lives," wrote the moralist author Taylor Croft, incited even those men he considered "normal."[98] Croft warned how working-class boys innocent to vice were swept up by "sex-obsessed" and "dangerous homosexualists," for they became too attached to the presents, motor-trips, and large houses.[99] These consumerist pleasures "attracted [working-class men] into the circle permanently."[100] While Croft related such warnings as evidence of "dangerous homosexualists" attempting to "initiate" young, working-class men, he nonetheless revealed that the same working-class men found these consumerist pleasures attractive and worthwhile, even if their nature was that of a "normal" man. Croft intimated that these young men learned to manipulate their wealthier partners into larger allowances, nicer gifts, and more exciting experiences to stimulate the "jaded satisfaction of the senses."[101]

Like Taylor Croft, Dorthea Maitland certainly did not intend to describe why sex work was attractive for young men when she wrote to the Ministry of Health in 1937. A representative of the Scottish Wayfarers Welfare Society, Maitland helped young

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[98] Croft, 69.

[99] Ibid., 70.

[100] Ibid. 69.

[101] Ibid., 70.

Scotsmen struggling in London. In her “horrid and sordid little story,” Maitland shared the experience of a sixteen-year-old “naughty” boy from Edinburgh. [102] Referring to him only as “The Boy,” Maitland had helped the young man a year earlier while he was still in Edinburgh. However, now in London, “The Boy” was found by Maitland’s male colleague who was trying to find a run-away pupil. Instead he uncovered “the sorry sight of youth gone wrong”: lads “furtively accosting and offering themselves to men” in Trafalgar Square. “The Boy,” a former pupil, was among the gang. Although refusing to return to Edinburgh, “The Boy” did stress to his former teacher how well things were going. He had, upon arriving in London, gone straight to Trafalgar Square, “where, he had heard, money was easily made,” and there he was “initiated” by his fellows in how to “earn easily.” “The Boy,” whom Maitland described as grubby in Edinburgh, was now well dressed—“better dressed,” in fact, “than his brother working back at home.”[103]

The only quotation attributed directly to the young man himself is telling. He said with pride, and what Maitland derided as “childish bravado”: “‘I won’t go with no man for less than ten shillings.’” Maitland recorded this quotation to emphasize how easily exploited youths could be—sinking to “this class of offense for the purpose of obtaining money.”[104] However, in the context of the other evidence, those ten shillings, “easily earned,” allowed for a lifestyle and provisions previously unknown to the boy, and still unknown to his brother in Edinburgh, apparently. “The Boy” was convinced that his life was better for working in Trafalgar Square, and he flatly refused the pleas to return to

[102] PRO MEPO 3 996 “Letter to J.W. Smith, Esq.” 13 November 1937 1.C.

[103] PRO MEPO 3 996 “A True Story” 1.D.

[104] PRO MEPO 3 996 “Minutes of the Metropolitan Police” 9 December 1937.

Edinburgh, despite the teacher's "powers of persuasion." That evening, Maitland's male colleague spoke to fourteen lads congregated in Trafalgar Square. All refused to leave with the man, who left with "a heavy heart" instead.[105]

Maitland had a clear purpose in writing her "horrid little story." She was attempting to fund hostels for Scottish boys in London. Offering young Scotsmen a safe place to sleep, eat, and relax would allow responsible adults to keep a "tight hold" on wayfaring youths. Her tale eventually found its way to the Metropolitan Police. While officers confirmed that many young men, "most probably moral perverts," used Trafalgar Square as a place to rendezvous, it was decided that no action needed to be taken, beyond vague instructions to pay closer attention.[106] Maitland feared that, in the future, boys "would too be spirited away by ten shillings to the streets of London," a spiriting away which, for the most part, would remain unhindered by London police.[107]

As Maitland described, the young men actively propositioned clients, while also teaching the trade to their friends—initiating them on how to "earn easily." Far from the fantasy of the passive rent boy succumbing to queer desire, working-class men developed techniques that would earn the most money but minimize risks, techniques they formalized by passing them on to other working men. When leaders of the armed forces joined with the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the problem of prostitution among military men, Major General Corkran, who commanded the London District of Guards, complained that the more experienced men became "agents for this class of

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[105] "A True Story.

[106] PRO MEPO 3 996 "Minutes of the Metropolitan Police" 4 December 1937.

[107] "A True Story."

offence," encouraging others to participate. "Good fellows" see that the Guardsman selling sex has more money and nicer things. The others begin to question how he obtained them. While some men would report their suspicions, the greater fear was that others would begin taking advantage of the same opportunity.[108] Corkran, while he dismissed the idea of a gang or section who "got together for the purpose of committing these offences," did admit that the behavior was often a learned one. Evans, a Guardsman caught soliciting, told Corkran that "other Guardsmen had taught him these practices." He was given a list of Guardsmen he could rely on for tips and advice, and was even handed a directory of usual fees, saying that "one man charged say 7 [shillings], and so on."[109] Men like Evans, Corkran argued, had to be handled cautiously, for even if they were dismissed, they would still act as a "go-between" for Guardsmen and their civilian partners. It was better to keep them in the Guards, where their behavior could be closely observed and modified, if needed.[110] The experience of men like Evans, supported by General Corkran's belief in its validity, demonstrates how men selling sex organized, informally, to improve their experience of sex work, creating helpful networks and even attempting to regulate prices. While middle-class men like Montague Glover may have seen the economic exchange as the purchasing, in some form, of a working-class body, men like Evans and his fellow Guards reappropriated that experience into an economic transaction that they controlled, manipulated, and employed to improve their

[108] PRO HO 45 24960: "Homosexual Offences: Notes on a Conference" 7 May 1931, 7.

[109] Ibid., 6.

[110] Ibid., 7.

lot in life. While portrayals of rent boys only showed reluctant participants responding to queer desire, these forms of working-class agency disrupted the middle-class fantasy.

The agency shown by participants like "The Boy" and Evans rewrote the nature of the relationship between same-sex prostitutes and the middle-class "ponces" or "twanks": derisive terms used to identify queer men paying for sex.[111] Far from passive, the active manipulation shown by working-men selling sex sometimes spilled over into blackmail and violence. One middle-class man, John Cecil Blackburn, in 1922 claimed to be the victim of this type of sex-worker violence. Meeting a soldier-on-leave in the street, Blackburn helped the man secure a room at the Alpine Hotel, and after only three minutes alone, the soldier demanded £2 or threatened to charge Blackburn with gross indecency. Blackburn paid the soldier, but was charged with indecent assault and gross indecency anyway. The soldier, being cross-examined, denied Blackburn's story, saying the arrangement was intentionally sexual, although he did not deny his attempt to extort Blackburn. The soldier was probably telling the truth. He did have £2 on his person, and Blackburn admittedly checked into the Alpine under a false name. The sympathetic judge told the jury that "such cases between adults should not be brought before the court," and the charges against the soldier were dismissed.[112]

Queer men consistently feared violent rent boys. In 1929, with the arrest of ex-Guardsmen Ronald Bateman and James Moore, this fear flourished. Bateman had met Philip Emery in Piccadilly, where, Bateman claimed, Emery "looked hard at him and a

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[111] Ackerley, 136.

[112] PRO HO 144 22298 "P.V. John Cecil Blackburn: Indecent Assault and Gross Indecency" 29 March 1922.

little ways on, he stopped and looked back."[113] The two struck up a conversation and returned to Emery's flat for drinks. Bateman claimed he went with no suspicions of Emery's indecent intent, and was surprised when Emery began taking off his clothes. In response, Bateman proceeded to severely beat Emery, robbing him of clothing, jewelry, and money. In Bateman's argument, the assault and robbery, which Bateman never denied, was "in defense of his honour."[114] However, Bateman's defense was disingenuous. The prosecution showed that Bateman was a known prostitute, often found in Piccadilly and Hyde Park. His accomplice, James Moore, who had taken the stolen goods, notoriously "associated with undesirable characters." Bateman and Moore, who were found guilty, were portrayed as members of "a gang of these men" who slept in Hyde Park and robbed unsuspecting pedestrians, with "most of them" being prostitutes working in Hyde Park until late at night. [115] The Bateman case, and its intimation of a gang of Guardsmen thieves and prostitutes, highlights how working-class men could, sometimes through threats and violence, turn transactions of same-sex prostitution into an experience that they controlled and manipulated.

While men like Maitland's "Boy" or Ronald Bateman found same-sex prostitution an obvious economic boon—one they worked to their own advantage, sometimes using fear or violence—other working-class men found enjoyment for reasons that were not financial. It appears that the working-class men were often queer themselves, finding sexual and romantic enjoyment from their encounters—a trait rarely, and always

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[113] PRO MEPO 3 362 "Minutes of the Metropolitan Police" 18 November 1929, 2.

[114] Ibid., 3.

[115] Ibid., 4.

derisively, acknowledged by their middle-class consumers. This was unexpected, as "Norman," a journalist who mostly slept with same-sex prostitutes reported: "One didn't expect people to have it for love."[116] Feelings of love or romance dismantled the rent boy fantasy. If the working-class man showed signs of love or romance, it in some way ruined him. He had to be "normal" or "ordinary," in Norman's words. Norman, a queer middle-class man, could "never live with another homosexual, so, of course."[117] John Alcock, another queer Londoner, recalled later in his life that one only wanted "sex with *men*." Cruising the streets of the West End seeking sexual partners, it never occurred to him, or any of his queer friends, to sleep with another queer man. Queer men, Alcock remembered, never went "for our own kind."[118]

Despite the expectations of queer men like Norman and Alcock, working-class men who sold sex often did receive romantic and sexual enjoyment in the encounters. Even members of the military, so central to the rent boy fantasy, found sexual excitement with "punters." One such man was an unnamed sailor observed by undercover police at a notorious queer hangout called "Billie's Club." Although the informants listed the sailor as normal, in contrast to all the "nancy-boy types," it was the sailor, wrapping his arms around a queer "nancy-boy," who said, "Wait till we get outside. You make me go funny."[119] One lance-sergeant, confiding in author Simon Raven, admitted that "some of us get quite fond of the blokes we see regularly. They're nice fellows and interesting to

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[116] "A Loner's Life," 23.

[117] Ibid., 32.

[118] John Alcock, taped interview, C456/003 British Library Sound Archive.

[119] PRO CRIM 1 903 "Depositions of Kenneth Murray and George Miller" 14 November 1936, 4.

listen to. As for the sex, some of the younger ones aren't bad looking. I've had some real thrills off them."[120]

Perhaps the best example of a working-class man who enjoyed queer sex is Harry Daley, a working-class policeman who infatuated many of the Bloomsbury set, including E.M. Forster and J.R. Ackerley. Although he never charged for sex, per se, he certainly benefited financially from gifts and loans provided by his wealthy lovers. They "were kind, even when there was no earthly reason why they should be." Some, he admitted, even fell in love with him. However, as Daley recorded in his memoir, these experiences soured. "Love," he wrote, "seems hardly the right word to describe the spite and back-biting it all involved—all that was asked was that I should give up all my former friends, acquaintances, hobbies and interests, and sit waiting at home until my lovers found time to call—and on no condition tell anyone I knew them."[121] Despite his grievances with his wealthier male lovers, Daley decidedly described himself as homosexual. While enjoying the benefits of his relationships with upper-class men, he chased boxers, swimmers, and fishermen. He had decided to "make friends openly with the people to whom [he] was attracted, irrespective of job, class or criminal record—and bugger the consequences."[122] It was Daley's working-class lovers, many of whom were not queer themselves, whom Forster and Ackerley wished Daley would drop. Having male lovers of his own ruined the image of Daley, as the "normal," masculine police man—an assault

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[120] Simon Raven, ''Boys Will Be Boys: The Male Prostitute in London,'' in *The Problem of Homosexuality in Modern Society* Ed. Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1963) 281.

[121] Harry Daley, *This Small Cloud: A Personal Memoir* (London: Weidenfeld, 1987) 134.

[122] Ibid.

on the rent boy fantasy. If the normalcy of the rent boy was central to his attraction, expressions of sexual enjoyment and love interrupted that notion, and queer men were just seducing "one of their own kind."

While lived experiences with same-sex prostitutes complicated the abstract notions of the passive, uninterested, "normal," rent boy, even the more concrete expectations were questionable. For example, the predominance of soldiers, Guardsmen in particular, seems shaky on closer inspection. Although gathered to discuss the problem of homosexual prostitution among soldiers, the authors of a committee report issued in May 1931 showed that the numbers were actually quite small. Out of the 127 solicitation cases of the past twelve months, only seven involved members of the Guards, two of the men being ex-Guardsmen.[123] "David," a wealthy queer man educated at Oxford, remembered few Guardsmen for rent. In his opinion, "the reputation for male prostitution in the Guards [was] blown up and exaggerated…it was just not true at all."[124] It was the perception of queer men, their stories of Guardsmen and their availability, that stuck out in David's mind, even though he never could find one for himself.

Even sexual practices failed to align with middle-class rent boy fantasies. Working-class men performed sexual acts, both active and passive, shattering the argument that these men retained their separateness from queer men by always taking the active, and therefore masculine, sex role, not the passive. As mentioned above, Guardsman Herbert Wragg offered his "bum for five bobs." Wragg was not the only man,

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[123] PRO HO 45 24960 "Homosexual Offences: Notes on a Conference" 7 May 1931, 4.

[124] "A Teacher's Life," an interview with "David" in *Between the Acts: Lives of Homosexual Men, 1885-1967* Ed. Kevin Porter and Jeffrey Weeks (London: Routledge, 1991) 45.

despite fulfilling all the other attributes given to rent boys, willing to perform passive sex acts. In May of 1928, William Hatton was discovered mid-coitus with John Sankey inside a lavatory at Archbishop's Park. Caught, literally with their pants down, by a park keeper, it was clear that Sankey was the penetrated party.[125] Sankey was a working-class man, apparently quite poor, as one sergeant noted the worn condition of his clothing. When arrested, Sankey admitted to the crime, telling the sergeant, "I'm sorry to say it's true."

Although he spoke only briefly, Sankey's statements reveal much. He explained that his behavior was rare, claiming he had "never done it before," a claim supported by Hatton's unsolicited response of "quite right." Sankey also admitted that he was motivated by an offer of money, saying "I was hungry and wanted money. That's why I did it."[126] Despite being working class, with seemingly no desire to perform such an act except for the money that came with it, the Sankey example shows that the fantasy of the rent boy as universally active, penetrating—an argument used to describe why working-class men could have queer sex without being queer—sometimes failed in lived experience. The act of being passive, the role assumed to be taken by the queer man, was significant in ways beyond physical sexual acts. Passivity was perceived as an offense to the gendered expectations of "normal" men—being penetrated was the essential queer act. A same-sex prostitute, like Wragg or Sankey, interrupted not only the sexual practice, but the gendered nature that middle-class queer men expected, assumed was inherent, in the working-class partners they were seeking. In reality, the sexual acts

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[125] PRO CRIM 1 433 "Deposition of William Edward Smith" 2 June 1928.

[126] PRO CRIM 1 433 "Deposition of Sergeant Robert Ellis" 1 June 1928.

practiced during same-sex prostitution were varied, and in the moment, spurred by sexual desire or financial need, such taboos and expectations were easily shucked.

Men like John Sankey, Herbert Wagg, Harry Daley, and scores of others all practiced queer sex in varied ways that commonly exposed the rent boy trope as false. Some working-class men indeed sold sex, but for a multitude of reasons and while forming varied relationships to the work and the men they encountered. They were not always the dutiful and compliant rent boy, but just as often directed the financial outcome of their services and worked to increase their profits. Their own manipulations could even spill over into violence—extreme examples of how the same-sex prostitute demonstrated that he controlled his own sexuality and could determine its financial worth. Working-class men possessed a sexuality of their own, including being queer themselves, and finding pleasure and love with other men.

Conclusion

Christopher Isherwood eventually found his boy in Berlin. He was a poor but beautiful street sweeper named Heinz. Isherwood helped with Heinz's widowed, tuberculosis-ridden mother, and eventually attempted to smuggle his lover out of Nazi Germany. However, the plans were ruined when, approaching British customs, Heinz was rejected and sent back. Isherwood had listed Heinz as a servant in his employment, but the high-ranking customs official saw through the ruse. Years later, Isherwood incredulously discovered that the man in customs was queer himself.[127]

[127] Isherwood, 162.

In the British customs house, Isherwood found a kindred, if unsympathetic, spirit who looked on the handsome Heinz, a self-declared servant of Isherwood's, and quickly understood the nature of their relationship. It was so discernible because it was so ubiquitous among the queer men of interwar London—Heinz with his youth, beauty, and poverty, and Isherwood with his wealth and relative power. Such couples were common, but problematic. Based almost squarely in the imagination of middle-class queer men, the young man engaging in queer sex for financial gain—the rent boy—occupied a distinct *habitus*, knowable, as was Heinz, by his looks, his gendered behavior, his assumed sexuality, all an expression of his social class. This fantasy was easily controlled, available for middle-class ownership.

Yet, like all fantasies, the rent boy, as the middle-class man wished to see him, rarely appeared. While working-class men engaged in queer sex for money, they did so with their own motives and on their own terms. The "proprietorship" or "upper hand" assumed by the wealthier partners was challenged by the working-man's own prerogatives. Working-class men and youths used the wealth of their partners for their own gain, and manipulated their partners for better shares of that wealth. This manipulation could even explode into threats and violence. But, for the most part, the rent boy fantasy was deconstructed in simpler, quieter ways. Working men, just like their middle-class counterparts, found queer pleasure, even queer romance, in the arms of other men, practicing a sexuality just as varied and vibrant as any well-educated, white-collared man.

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Chapter Five

Wolfenden's Queers: The Death of the Rent Boy

The Reverend Martin Kiddle had four pounds and a few shillings in his pockets one particularly cold night in January of 1943. That evening, Kiddle was arrested for male importuning after two officers observed his several failed attempts to converse with Guardsmen entering the lavatories of the Piccadilly tube station. Kiddle claimed that his suspicious behavior was brought on by a recurring bout of nausea that struck as he waited for an available phone booth. But if his objective was a simple call to his fiancée, then why, as the prosecution asked, did he need to carry four pounds in cash? Kiddle's barrister attributed his smiling at soldiers to common friendliness and his toilet loitering to an upset stomach. But the money in Kiddle's pockets dismantled his defense. The four pounds exposed the true cause of his suspicious behavior witnessed by the arresting officers, and made Kiddle's intentions certain enough for a jury to bring back a conviction. Yet Kiddle's case did not end there. Although his appeals failed, the glowing character witness offered by the Bishop of Rochester won Kiddle a King's Pardon in 1944.[1] Kiddle's pardon was closely tied to his own class standing and access to social elites. Indeed his pardon prompted an editorial condemning governmental over-bearance, to the point that "respectable" men, with respectable fiancées, could not even get sick in a public restroom for fear of arrest.[2] Kiddle's respectability stood for that of all well-heeled British men. What was taken for granted was Kiddle's innocence—

[1] "The Case of Rev. Martin Kiddle," PRO HO 144.22002.

[2] Stephen H. Brown, "A Social Problem" *The Law Journal*, 12 February 1943.

despite what the witnesses may have thought. In short, the editor was arguing that "respectable men" did not cruise in public toilets.

The Kiddle case captures, in several ways, the changing beliefs surrounding the nature of queer sex. First, there is the question of the state's intervention. Did the police overstep their bounds and arrest an innocent man? Such questions were translated into concerns over the criminalization of homosexual acts and how far the law could interfere. The line was eventually drawn between those acts considered private and those committed in public. But the example of Kiddle also shows the changing perceptions of who the British believed would commit such public acts. Although arrested in a lavatory, Kiddle—whose respectability was embodied in his class, fiancée, and social connections—failed to fit the developing conception of the pervert, and Kiddle's defense exploited this assumed difference. Yet Kiddle's precarious situation, which included both a conviction and a royal pardon, reflected how mercurial these beliefs were.

As evidenced by Kiddle's legal woes, post-war Britain experienced a shift in beliefs surrounding queer sex. Fundamental to this shift was a growing tension between same-sex prostitution and "respectable" homosexuality. The British public increasingly perceived the rent boy, and his patron to a lesser extent, as especially perverse and anomalous, and these figures were gradually detached from conceptions of homosexuality. The death of the rent boy fantasy is presented in this chapter in two parts. By the "death" of the rent boy, I am referring to the waning role of same-sex prostitution as a central form of queer sexuality, a form once perceived as widely practiced and revelatory of what it meant to be "queer." Just as the fantasy of the rent boy had been constructed within a specific historical moment, the fantasy was disassembled when

sexual attitudes and beliefs changed. While the practice of prostitution between men certainly continued, it continued under greater scrutiny and was relegated to the perverse periphery of gay life—a poor substitute for those unwilling to find monogamous, intra-classed, life-long love. Britons sympathetic to homosexuals and many homosexuals themselves excised the acts of both buying and selling sex from the standard homosexual ideal propagated in the mid-twentieth century, and the brunt of that ostracism fell on the same-sex prostitute.

This increasing ostracism derived from several factors. The designation between public acts and private intimacy became more significant, as a post-war Britain sought to redress pre-war grievances of privacy and social order. New bachelor apartments in rebuilt London afforded privacy to single men and were ideal for queer-men-of-means seeking independent lives away from the eyes of families and straight communities. Therefore, fewer upper-class queer men had to rely only on public spaces for sex. The period also coincided with an increasing acceptance, among liberal-minded elites, of a specific "homosexual nature," an idea dependent on scientific discourse. The homosexual, although still an aberration, was a character whose desires and actions were inherent to his being. This trend of thought prompted many elites to sympathize with decriminalization, challenging unjust laws that punished inborn desires. Efforts to decriminalize same-sex acts were amplified by post-war vice campaigns carried out by morality crusaders and the Metropolitan Police. Newspapers published maudlin stories of promising men destroyed by unsavory police entrapments in London's toilets and alleyways. The greater desire for decriminalization was intensified by the seemingly greater need for it.

These broader trends coincided with the changing self-perceptions of individual queer men. Foremost was the fluctuating attitudes to social class. The working classes were no longer characters to control as much as they were dangerous men to avoid. Also, the rent boy, in the minds of queer men, became increasingly queer himself or increasingly dangerous. Both factors were unattractive, although for different reasons.

The growing ostracism towards same-sex prostitution crystalized in 1957 with the issuing of the Wolfenden Report, examined in part two of this chapter. The Wolfenden Report, commissioned by Parliament, addressed the dual concerns of prostitution and gross indecency laws. During the construction of the report, the extent of gross indecency laws and the characteristics of those who broke them received considerable debate and some uneasy settlement. "Genuine homosexuals," acting respectably behind closed doors, were placed beyond the reach of British law, while public acts not only remained criminal but were increasingly penalized. The Report further castigated those figures affiliated with public sex, figures like the female prostitute and the working-class rent boy: the "professional homosexual" who encouraged such offenses.

The Wolfenden Report has long been seen by activists and scholars as a watershed moment for gay rights. Famously, the Report's findings encouraged the decriminalization of homosexual acts, provided that they were performed in private by two consenting adults twenty-one-years of age and older. With the issuing of the Wolfenden Report and the nascent chance for social tolerance, homosexuality as an identity underwent an immense shift, shedding the diverse forms of queer sex that it had once encompassed. The few publicly queer men, and their allies, conveyed a singular form of homosexuality that emphasized an intra-classed, love-based form of sex more

familiar to their heterosexual counterparts, by whom they were being judged. As a consequence, the practice of same-sex prostitution was systematically removed as an acceptable part of queer life, along with its more fluid forms of class, gender, and sexual identities. What emerged was an increasingly-dominant hierarchy that christened certain queers as respectable homosexuals while ostracizing the perverts—those whose sexuality was still characterized by public spaces and economic exchange.

Such conservative motives were not only present in the Report itself, but also in the construction of the Report. The writers of the Wolfenden Report called only three homosexuals and no prostitutes to provide testimony. As one of three homosexuals called, Peter Wildeblood, a former reporter, had an immense impact on the nature of the Report. Wildeblood presented a hierarchy of queer sex, arguing that the law, as it stood, forced queer men into perverse forms of anonymous sex in which economic exchange with derelict young men was a necessity. The upper-class homosexual purchasing sex, therefore, was presented with an excuse for participating in same-sex prostitution; fears of legal repercussions and social opprobrium left him, reluctantly, with only tawdry sexual outlets. The "true" homosexuals abhorred this lifestyle, Wildeblood argued, and law reform could be used to encourage a better type of queer sex. Although some members of the Wolfenden Commission questioned Wildeblood's assumption of homosexuality as an "inherent nature," his arguments resonated with most of the Committee. Wildeblood represented the homosexual whom the Wolfenden Report would reprieve, while the rent boy became even more criminal, and between these two queer figures emerged a distinct gulf. The rent boy was increasingly characterized more by his act of prostitution than his act of homosexual sex. With the stakes raised, the rent boy

had to be removed as a central vestige of queer desire, relegating its working-class practitioners to further repression and state harassment.

The Growing Rift

"MORE THAN 4,000 PROSTITUTES ARE OPERATING!" the *Sunday Graphic* exclaimed. With Elizabeth II's coronation looming, in October 1952 the *Sunday Graphic* ran a series of editorials calling out, in tantalizing detail, the "moral cesspool" that was Piccadilly Circus. The presence of prostitutes, homosexuals, and smut dealers defiled the city's heart—"an area once symbolic of the grandeur and real spirit of Britain." The *Sunday Graphic* assured its readers that the nation was united in mutual disgust.[3] Even if the nation as a whole was not, at least a few powerful citizens were. James Maxwell, president of Thomas Cook and Son, alerted the British Travel and Holiday Association of the troubles in Piccadilly. Maxwell's American colleagues "could not help commenting upon the depravity." Americans, he informed the association, interpreted the vice of Piccadilly as "one of the most glaring symptoms of degeneration in Britain."[4] Maxwell's letter and a clipping from the *Sunday Graphic* were forwarded to the Metropolitan Police and eventually the Home Office, but here, the "united disgust" was not so apparent. The Commander of the C Division agreed that vice was on the rise in the West End. Prostitutes and homosexuals were more numerous, more persistent, and most troubling, more blatant. The Commander wrote that "The pervert and the prostitute would run

[3] "The Nation Backs Our Campaign to Clean Up Piccadilly Circus," *The Sunday Graphic*, Oct. 12 1952.

[4] "Letter to Alexander Maxwell" Oct. 6, 1952, MEPO 2.9367

towards potential customers to see who could get in first." He recommended harsher penalties and removing requirements that the police prove undesirables were acting as a public nuisance.[5] However, the other commanders disagreed. They argued that the extent of vice was exaggerated; at most there were 800 active prostitutes. "Everything possible" was being done to keep rowdyism, "including the activities of homosexuals, to a minimum." Any increased persecution of homosexuals, it was feared, "would only lead to complaints."[6] The Metropolitan Police decided to maintain the status quo.

Fears of "degeneration" in an "area once symbolic of the grandeur and real spirit of Britain," exposed to critical American eyes, and on the eve of a monarch's coronation, unsurprisingly left some Britons anxious. What was surprising, however, was the Metropolitan Police's assessment that their actions were already substantial enough to keep vice in check. Indeed, the police seemed reluctant to interfere, especially with homosexuals, simply to prevent an outcry from social liberals who would accuse them of being medieval and draconian. They were aware of treading a fine line.

The debate within the Metropolitan Police over the state of vice in Piccadilly reveals the competing pressures surrounding sexuality in post-war Britain. This one conversation, prompted by a letter and an editorial, encompassed the numerous forces at play. Some Britons were calling for conservative sexual standards. Other Britons called for greater sexual freedom. The rent boy, and the queer sexuality of which he was a part, would be a central site where these tensions played out. While same-sex prostitution

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[5] "Prostitutes, Homosexuals, Pornography, and Rowdyism in the West End." Pg 3. Oct. 30 1952. MEPO 2.9367.

[6] "Minutes" Pg 1. Oct. 31 1952 MEPO 2.9367.

would continue as a practice, it was about to undergo a considerable transformation as a concept. Britain's attitudes and beliefs about sexuality, were changing, and ever more quickly with the catalyst of a post-war world. Queer sexuality, which had for so long been divorced from privacy and the home, was moved behind the closed doors of London flats and bachelor's apartments springing up in the rebuilt city. These private homosexual acts were increasingly performed by the private homosexual: a distinct psychological being expressing his inherent desires. If homosexuals were believed more and more to be like this, imbued with a greater sense of respectability, then they were also due a greater autonomy, with liberal elites critiquing what they saw as antiquated indecency laws. Yet not all queer acts, nor all queer men, were created equal. The rent boy, by virtue of his social class, was unable to achieve the privacy central to respectability and the security of being "distinctly" homosexual. He, and the men who purchased his services, were still perverts, and even more so. Prosecution of prostitution, which increased in the post-war years, was coupled with an increasing sympathy to allow homosexuals to "be themselves" without fear of governmental interference. The rent boy fantasy became more closely associated with prostitution and the perversion it represented and divorced from homosexuality.

This transition was not only evident in broader, public attitudes, but expressed by queer men, as well. While same-sex prostitution was always disparaged by some queer men, the practice was more and more conveyed as problematic for the homosexual on the rise. The rent boy became a more dangerous character, reflecting the changing attitudes about social class and interaction. Fears of blackmailing, while long present in homosexual circles, increased, and queer men saw working-class, paid partners as

especially likely to blackmail. True homosexual love was above blackmailing, public acts, and multiple partners, while these were considered endemic traits among paid encounters. Such attitudes and beliefs, held by members of the public and a powerful contingent of queer men, would be legitimized by the 1957 Wolfenden Report and its eventual codification.

Sexuality in post-war Britain is still relatively unmined by scholars, but within the last decade, theoretical histories of this pivotal period have started to appear. The linear concept of Britain's "Permissive Society," conveyed in memories and narrative histories of the post-war period, is being complicated. As Frank Mort describes, the sexual liberation after 1945, peaking in the 1960s, "was an extremely uneven acceleration of shifts that had a much longer period of incubation."[7] Attitudes toward sexual culture showed lingering effects of both nineteenth-century moralism and nineteenth-century progressivism. The mixture of these two forces "generated inconclusive outcomes that were the product of unresolved business between different social and sexual actors."[8] Indeed "Victorian values" of private intimacy and public propriety influenced liberal reforms such as the Wolfenden Report and responses to public scandals like the prostitution-centered Profumo Affair in 1963. Through evidence collected in oral interviews, historians Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher argue that a sexual culture focused on "privacy and innocence" for some was inhibiting and dissatisfactory, but for many these traits were "central to fulfilling and pleasurable intimate lives."[9]

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[7] Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 4.

[8] Ibid., 5.

[9] Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England 1918-1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) i.

Richard Hornsey articulates that these sexual mores marked the landscape of London itself. In a destroyed capital city, rebuilding embodied efforts to right pre-war wrongs. Better housing, modern thoroughfares, and liberal welfare reforms made public discretion and domestic propriety, traits the capital once made available only to the privileged classes, a universal mode of living. The ubiquity of the private and public divide played out among queer men. Those of means could pursue "a more selective and less obvious form of queer sociality, protected by the capital on which such access depended," turning to a network of "private homes, expensive restaurants, and private members' clubs." The shift, developing into "a more modern form of homosexuality," allowed queer-men-of-means to leave "the disordered performances and mercantile encounters" that the rent boy came to represent.[10] While the modern homosexual retreated to his club or bachelor apartment, the "procurable working-class lad [became] explosive evidence of public disorder" that had to be curtailed by greater, more consistent government intervention. In time, the streets became less hospitable for various forms of queer sexuality, further driving more queer men to the safety of private consumer spaces and residences. A public queer life centered on certain London streets and landmarks was no longer the viable option it was before the war.[11]

As historians are coming to understand, the post-war "Permissive Society" represented both change and continuity, and the process of decriminalizing certain homosexual acts reflected this truth. While homosexuality had been perceived as an inherently public act, Britons increasingly expected it to occur behind closed doors. In

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[10] Richard Hornsey, *The Spiv and the Architect: Unruly Life in Postwar London* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) 8.

[11] Ibid., 9.

doing so, barriers of sexual respectability and privacy were not necessarily torn down as much as they were enlarged, allowing in, begrudgingly, certain queer types of sexuality. The most tolerated was the most heteronormative—private, monogamous, and based on love. Being divided by privacy and some respectability, the queer man and the rent boy were sorted out from one another.

While same-sex prostitution, represented by the fantasy figure of the rent boy, occupied a significant role in queer sexuality, it was never ubiquitously celebrated by all queer men. As discussed in the previous chapter, George Ives disparaged queer men who engaged in inter-classed sex simply for the sake of pleasure. But even if instances of inter-class sex failed to meet Ives's high-minded, platonic objectives, he still considered such relationships a ubiquitous expression of queer sex. However, by the middle of the twentieth century, many elite queer men dismissed inter-class sex on principle, especially encounters with economic overtones.

There were two main reasons for the changing understanding of queer sex and the exile of the rent boy from its acceptable bounds. First, an increasingly powerful working class coupled with a growing, general disdain for them by the upper classes, disrupted the classed premise of the rent boy fantasy. Second, the emergence of a distinct homosexual type, put forward by well-educated elites, stressed privacy, monogamy, and intra-class relationships in an attempt to procure the legal and social privileges of respectability. Public debates and presentations of homosexual themes began to signify two figures: the respectable homosexuals, who should be pitied and helped but generally left to themselves, and the (mostly working-class) perverts infesting street life, creating nuisances, and perverting others.

The increasing difference between homosexuals and "perverts" cropped up in numerous conversations of queer sexuality. These conversations often implemented popularized sexological and psychological theories of human sexuality that argued homosexuality was a natural, though not desirable, human state. And while "true" or "genuine" homosexuals were seen to be rather blameless, those who preyed upon them, like the rent boy, were criticized. The language professionals used in medical reports and legal treatises reflected this bourgeoning dichotomy. In 1957, the *British Medical Journal* published "Homosexuality: An Analysis of 100 Male Cases Seen in Private Practice." The writers, psychologists Desmond Curran and Denis Parr, selected only homosexuals who were "consciously aware of their homosexual propensities" and who they determined were "natural" homosexuals. Citing Alfred Kinsey's famous 1948 study, they acknowledged a sexual continuum, writing that "Homosexuality is not an 'all or none' condition."[12] Yet men were still lumped into two groups: the cases included in the published report—those who really were homosexual—and the more troublesome, difficult-to-define cases Curran and Parr intentionally left absent from their article. Many of their clients had heterosexual encounters "out of academic interest or an attempt at self-diagnosis or treatment."[13] However, the writers asserted that these men always remained true homosexuals, even when, as was true for one patient, they fathered six children. The article also recognized that not all men who had homosexual sex were homosexuals. Indeed, they purposefully left out such men from their published findings, dismissing cases where homosexual performances seemed "incidental" or of secondary

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[12] Desmond Curran and Denis Parr, "Homosexuality: An Analysis of 100 Male Cases Seen in Private Practice" in *British Medical Journal* (April, 1957) 798.

[13] Ibid., 799.

significance, as when one man "sought consolation" in queer sex when faced with "economic failures."[14] These types, Curran and Parr demonstrated, did not reflect the "natural" homosexuals with whom their report was concerned.

The Howard League for Penal Reform, a liberal advocacy group, reflected these growing divisions in their own report on homosexuality and prostitution, which, incidentally, they would later give to the Wolfenden Committee. The writers of the report asserted that the League typically focused on law, not criminals, but in terms of homosexuality and prostitution, the two were inseparable, and to understand the nature of the law one had to understand the nature of the participants. The report supported a change in law that gave relative freedom to those acts committed in private, but any changes would have to explicitly reiterate the criminality of those acts committed in public—their public nature being the true offense. The writers clarified that these public acts were not only different but were performed by different types of individuals. If those homosexuals who engaged in private, consensual sex found their actions decriminalized, it would not change those who, out of degeneracy or perversion, enjoyed "the element of exposure."[15]

Elizabeth Abbott, on behalf of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, asserted similar distinctions between the private homosexual and the public pervert. Abbott argued that homosexuality was "coeval to man's existence on earth," a natural

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[14] Ibid.

[15] "Memorandum submitted by the Howard League for Penal Reform" The Women's Library, Metropolitan University Archives, 3AMS B.04.14 file 1, pg. 1.

phenomenon visible in numerous species.[16] However, Abbot acknowledged that there were two distinct types of men who practiced queer sex, and she explicitly "made a wide distinction between the 'pervert' and the true homosexual."[17] The "true homosexual," according to Abbott, had two innate characteristics. First, the true homosexual did not, despite popular belief, hate women. Indeed, he often made friends with many women, and even appreciated women as equals and individuals more than heterosexual men. It was the pervert who "probably dislike[d] the opposite sex." The second innate trait of the true homosexual was a "unique capacity for beauty, which in [homosexuals] reache[d] its highest expression."[18] To further drive home her distinctions, Abbot shared three personal cases of homosexuality. The first two were accounts of "true" homosexuals who lived respectable lives of "perfect serenity, trust, and mutual love and respect."[19] Even her third case, a schoolmaster discovered having an affair with his student, elicited Abbot's sympathy. The pervert, on the other hand, was more ambiguous in her report. Perverts were of "general bad character" and haters of women, but their most distinct characteristic was their greed. The pervert preyed on the true homosexual, using the law as a "blackmailers' charter," perusing his victims, "sometimes for years, because he knows of some homosexual practice: sometimes acts in which he, the blackmailer, may have taken part."[20] In her description, Abbot conflated the pervert and the blackmailer

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[16] "Document Number CHP/62—Report by Elizabeth Abbot for the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene" The Women's Library, Metropolitan University Archives, 3AMS B.04.14 file 2, pg. 8.

[17] Ibid., 10.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., 11.

[20] Ibid., 10.

into one shadowy, unscrupulous figure, placing him as both the contrast to and the enemy of the respectable, natural, "true homosexual." The innate homosexual was to be pitied. Unable to build the long-lasting, intimate relationships he truly desired—too easily subjected to legal and social opprobrium—the man paying for sex was forced to seek out the fleeting, tawdry encounters that left him vulnerable to preying "perverts" motivated by greed, namely rent boys.

The growing distinction was not only made by doctors and moralists, but was progressively more apparent in conversations about criminality and law enforcement. The rent boy's fate, as stressed throughout this work, was wholly dependent upon his being working class. He was, part and parcel, working class, his class identity forming the sexual fantasy built around him. Once again, as beliefs and attitudes on social class changed in Great Britain, these changes were reflected in the trope of the rent boy. The post-war world of Great Britain saw the apotheosis of changes that began between the wars. As McKibbin argues, the working class ascendency culminated in the social welfare state of the Atlee government elected in 1945. The political ascendency of the working class, represented by the Labour Party, mirrored a social ascendency, as well. For the middle and upper classes, the working classes were no longer deferential laborers, easily romanticized and simultaneously subjugated.[21] While the post-war welfare state may have been seen by many as an idea whose time had come, it also represented the growing instability in class relations.[22]

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[21] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[22] Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain, 1945-1951* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993) 2.

Working-class youths were increasingly portrayed as volatile and dangerous. "War babies," growing up in the moral excesses provided by the war, were turning into "post-war delinquents."[23] British society was assured it was witnessing a "quantum leap in the scale of delinquency." While the post-war rise in recorded juvenile crime was mostly due to formalizing police procedures, the "violent young criminal" still became a cultural stock figure.[24] Post-war representations of working-class sexual deviancy, in venues such as film and literature, presented young working-class sexual lives as examples of a world in turmoil, in which standards were falling precipitously and convention was flouted for no other reason than self-interest. As Richard Hornsey demonstrates in *The Spiv and the Architect*, these themes were embodied in the social archetype of the working-class spiv. "Young, working-class, and always on the make, the spiv was the obverse of the reconstruction citizen," writes Hornsey.[25] Characterized by "his libidinal desires," reeking of self-interest, violence, and a quick quid, the spiv's sexuality became the subversion of social order.[26] The spiv and the rent boy were often the same person. Although rarely associated explicitly with queer sex, the spiv—in his rejection of social order, especially that of his class—was essentially queer, as Hornsey argues. But in the context of his youth and social class, a desire to cash-in easily, and a general disregard for social norms, the spiv was, implicitly, a rent boy, capable and probably willing to engage in queer sex for fast money. The spiv/rent boy was recast, no

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[23] Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) 10.

[24] Ibid., 11.

[25] Hornsey, 20.

[26] Ibid., 16-25.

longer as essentially reaffirming social order as previous inter-class sexual encounters were conceived, but now as inherently upsetting this order.

The darker tone given to working-class sexuality, especially to working-class young men, was highlighted by the conception of upper-class sexuality. When writing on the "permissive society" of post-war Britain, Frank Mort asserts there was a "revival in social elites," who, drained of their political power, captured the imagination of many Britons. These elites became agents of sexual exploration and tradition-flouting. The public was fascinated with women like Princess Margaret and socialite Ann Fleming, who flirted with married men and haunted the best night clubs. By intermittently infringing on traditional sexual and gendered mores, the women retained their social standing, and even enhanced their popular reputation. The resurgence of social elites "brought together many of the contradictory features of traditionalism and innovation."[27] While the spiv was considered dangerous, upper-class types were "cast as social and sexual mediators who crossed and recrossed the boundaries" between sexual morality and immorality.[28] Relying on their social prestige, social elites were allowed to transgress sexually without repercussions, to an extent. As celebrity figures without political power, their transgressions were a relatively safe outlet though which Britons could discuss and express changes in social mores.

The meeting of spiv/rent boy and social elite was a theme replayed numerous times in post-war Britain, resulting in private conversations between government officials, but also in widespread scandal. In 1943 these two characters were arrested

[27] Mort, 73.

[28] Ibid., 89.

together in a public lavatory off of Leicester Square. Robert Wilson was a twenty-nine-year-old kitchen porter when he was arrested for persistent importuning and gross indecency with the Earl of Laurendale. Wilson was described as "waiting on gentlemen" and "smiling" at them as they passed him. To the arresting officers, Wilson was clearly the aggressor. When the couple was arrested, the Earl asked for a private word with the officers, where he informed them of his social and military rank—he was a captain in the British army—and told the men he was drunk, having just lost his son in the war. The Earl explained, "I am happily married, and hate this sort of thing, boys and buggery, you know." He implored, "Isn't there anything you can do?"[29] The officers resisted his entreaties, and both men were arraigned. Represented by Derek Curtis-Bennet, K.C., Laurendale pleaded not guilty, as did Wilson. It is unclear as to how, but the charges against Laurendale were dropped—most likely because of a legal technicality emphasized by Laurendale's accomplished legal team.[30] In the end, Wilson was tried alone on persistent importuning.[31]

The outcome of the Laurendale case reflected the "crossing and recrossings" of sexual morality, with the permeability of that line influenced by the participants' social status. Laurendale, by emphasizing his social prestige, coupled with his ability to hire exceptional representation, left the encounter relatively unharmed. Wilson was not so lucky. Represented as aggressive and predatory, Wilson was the true threat to morality,

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[29] "Statement of Harry Smith." 4 November, 1943. PRO MEPO 3.2331.

[30] It appears Laurendale was released on a legal technicality, as the case led the Metropolitan Police to order its officers to immediately request legal assistance from the Director of Public Prosecutions whenever cases involved people of "social status."

[31] "Minutes of the Metropolitan Police" 12 November, 1943. PRO MEPO 3.2331.

while Laurendale was the grieving, drunk socialite, innocently having "a binge on [his] own."[32] It is striking to compare this case with earlier scandals of inter-class queer sex, such as the Cleveland Street example. By 1943, the "London Minotaurs" of the upper classes and the "bleating lambs" of working-class prostitutes were no more. The roles had reversed.

The more aggressive prostitute, the new "Minotaur" infesting London's streets, was of considerable concern for law enforcers. While homosexual men still "seduced" working-class men, reports were more likely to include working-class men as eager to participate in, and then spread, their new trade. When considering contact between homosexuals and members of the military, the 1st Commander of the Metropolitan Police reported that the West End was frequented by Guardsmen "who loiter […], especially in the vicinity around Piccadilly Circus, and it is believed that some of them are there for the purpose of contacting homo-sexuals." There they "wait for homo-sexuals to approach them."[33] Instead of "corrupting young Guardsmen," the Commander wrote, "I am of the opinion that the majority of those who associate with homo-sexuals do so quite freely and for the purpose of making money."[34] No longer were these men initiated into queer sex by "vampire-like" homosexuals who lured them with money and entertainment. The Commander argued that seduction was performed by other prostitutes. The young Guardsmen left home "completely ignorant of the existence of homo-sexuals. A few weeks in the barracks room of a Guards Regiment soon changes that, and in a short space

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[32] "Statement of Harry Smith."

[33] "Report by Commander 1" 10 February 1950 PRO MEPO 2.8859, pg. 3.

[34] Ibid., 5.

of time they become fully aware to the methods and habits adopted by perverts." Eventually, when Guardsmen were approached, the Commander asserted, "they are in practically every case fully alive to what is taking place." The Guardsmen, far from seduced, "turn themselves quite willingly into male prostitutes."[35] To support his arguments, the Commander recounted a raid made on a known homosexual haunt, the Pakenham Arms Public House in Knightsbridge, on May 6, 1949, during which "thirty military personnel (most of them Guardsmen) were found thereon."[36]

The greed-derived prostitution assumed in working-class acts of queer sex was perhaps most explicitly shown in the 1945 case of George Bronson—a man whose fate was in stark contrast to that of the Rev. Martin Kiddle. Like Kiddle, Bronson, a pattern-cutter, was arrested in a lavatory, and he used a documented case of gastritis as his defense. In the Leicester Square lavatories, the arresting officers claimed that Bronson smiled and spoke to soldiers. He was especially attentive to older gentlemen, whom he would follow into the lavatories. Bronson was promptly arrested for persistent importuning. The magistrate remarked that the unemployed Bronson "probably needed the money" and sentenced him to six months.[37] Bronson, as he later claimed on appeal, had £300 to his credit, but nevertheless, both arresting officers "thought this young man (30) was a professional." When an appeal was made by Bronson's brother, the Home Office agreed that the available evidence showed "no overt indecency, no suggestion of professionalism, and no question of the corruption of youth"; however, they were still

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid, 2.

[37] "Letter to Mr. F. C. Watkins, MP" 25 September, 1945. PRO MEPO 3.2330.

assured that "Bronson was guilty of the offense of which he was charged, and his case [could not] be properly compared to the exceptional case of Kiddle."[38] Why the two cases were incomparable was not explained, but it was clear there would be no King's pardon for the young pattern-cutter. Like Kiddle, Bronson's case hinged on his social class. Although financially secure, Bronson, as an unemployed working-class man, was assumed to be "professional," his supposed need of money an incriminating motive. The encounters that Bronson and Kiddle were seeking in West End lavatories differed, not by the acts themselves, but by their implicit class-driven sexualities. Kiddle was perceived as befuddled and naïve or, at worst, stricken with homosexuality; Bronson was in the lavatories to seduce and entrap, preying on older gentlemen in particular—at least in the eyes of the Magistrate, police, and the Home Office.

By 1954, the Director of Public Prosecutions could report, with no evidence but his own observations, that these "commercial types are very much on the increase." Gentlemen were "running a risk" from these men, just by going into a West End lavatory.[39] The risk was not only the seduction of gentlemen but their being blackmailed as well. Blackmail, especially for sexual misconduct, had been a lingering fear of inter-class interaction, and the government took strident measures to prevent it. The Larceny Act of 1916 set the maximum penalty at penal servitude for life.[40] The unruly, unscrupulous working-class youth of post-war Britain seemed particularly likely to blackmail his partners. While debating the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report in

[38] "Copy of Minutes on File No. 882924" PRO MEPO 3.2330.

[39] "Minutes of the Director of Public Prosecution" 14 October, 1954. PRO DPP 6.66.

[40] "Larceny Act of 1916" Chap. 50, Sec. 29.

1958, one parliamentary committee "recognized the evil" of blackmailing, and "considered that blackmail was more serious an offence than homosexuality."[41] What made blackmailing such a serious offense, serious enough to overshadow queer sex, was not explained in the report; it was simply taken as the given truth. It was the inherent social disorder, an individual's attempt at "wealth redistribution," wherein the working-class youth benefited at the expense of the gentlemanly victim. Blackmailing toffs was another symptom of the greater class upheaval, led by the spiv and his sexualized alter-ego, the rent boy.

The Wolfenden Report

"'Peter,' said Philip 'do tell us—when is the law going to be changed?'"

"'It all depends,' [Peter] said, 'on this Departmental Committee.'"[42]

Peter Wildeblood, a former reporter for the *Daily Telegraph*, had recently published his first book, *Against The Law*, wherein he chronicled his secretive homosexual life, subsequent arrest, and his year in prison. Released in March 1955, Wildeblood quickly sent out his first book, and in the glow of its success immediately began working on his post-publication memoir, recording the numerous "prisoners of the flesh and spirit" who approached him for advice, or just a sympathetic ear.[43] Wildeblood billed himself as the honest voice of homosexuality. Already exposed by a public scandal, he no longer had anything to hide.

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[41] "Blackmail" a draft report, Debate in the House of Commons, 16 November, 1958. PRO HO 291.123.

[42] Peter Wildeblood, *A Way of Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1956) 83.

[43] Ibid., 11.

In his book, Wildeblood recounted a dinner party of prominent homosexual men where he was asked his opinion on the possibility of decriminalization. His friend Phillip expected little change, but Wildeblood admonished the group, "We musn't be defeatist about this," believing that respectable individuals were really quite tolerant. But to turn that tolerance into decriminalization, Wildeblood told his friends, homosexuals had "to put [their] house in order." He wrote, "If we're ever to be really tolerated, there have got to be concessions on *both* sides."[44] But the concessions were difficult, "the trouble" being that "the types who behave[d] worst" always "attract[ed] all the attention." Such men used "the fact that [they were] outside the Law as an excuse for behaving as badly as possible." When those queer men spoke of "liberty" what they really meant, to Wildeblood, was "license." License was "chasing Guardsmen every night," and those who behaved like "subscribers to a lending library." It was "loyalty, or love, or whatever you like to call it," that the "useful" homosexual practiced.[45] "I just don't think promiscuous sex is a very good thing," he said.[46] "If we are to have our freedom" Wildeblood wrote, "we must deserve it."[47]

Peter Wildeblood was clear about whom he believed "deserved freedom," and he would have an extraordinarily powerful platform on which to argue his beliefs. By the publication of his second book, *A Way of Life*, in which Wildeblood recounted the dinner-party conversation, Wildeblood was not simply an author, but the representative of

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[44] Ibid., 86.

[45] Ibid., 89.

[46] Ibid., 87.

[47] Ibid., 86.

homosexuals as far as the British government was concerned. Peter Wildeblood was one of only three openly homosexual people to testify before the Wolfenden Committee, where he argued that not all queer sex was equal. It was the private, monogamous, "old-fashioned virtues" of "old married couples" that deserved the freedom to exist—behind their own bedroom doors, of course.[48]

Peter Wildeblood and the Wolfenden Committee, officially known as the Committee on Homosexuality and Prostitution, represented the codified separation between the homosexual and the rent boy. Wildeblood, in reaching for respectability, reinforced the power of that concept: bourgeois manners and sexual mores were universal, even applicable to queers. But, at the same time, Wildeblood's insistence on the state's limited sanctioning of queer sex highlighted that the bulwark of respectability was unstable, changeable. To alleviate this tension the line between respectable and perverted would be moved but not erased, and both Wildeblood and the Wolfenden Committee determined that line's new location. It was drawn, boldly, between the monogamous, private sexual relationships of two men in love and the perverted, fleeting, cash-induced encounters of London's streets. By exploring Wildeblood's construction of the respectable homosexual and the way that figure was codified in the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report, the death knell of the rent boy fantasy rings clear and the modern form of homosexual, and homosexual sex, solidifies.

However, Wildeblood and the Wolfenden Committee were certainly not lone actors creating a sexual hierarchy out of nothing. What made their interaction particularly important was the way they were influenced by the understandings and

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[48] Ibid., 89.

conflicts surrounding sexuality during their time. Yes, they were powerful agents affecting change, but they were doing so within certain limitations. Both entities had to deal with the increasingly-held belief in the congenital homosexual while also being influenced by the post-war intolerance of public sex acts embodied by the prostitute, both male and female. Some members of the Wolfenden Committee struggled with the idea of the congenital homosexual; Peter Wildeblood accepted the concept enthusiastically. But both saw public sex, and the prostitute, in generally harsher post-war terms. No longer were prostitutes the fallen, seduced, hapless "soiled doves" of Victorian exposés. Now they were mercenary, greedy pariahs—willing agents in their trade rather than the victims of it. No other figure in Britain's sexual landscape would so thoroughly fall within the Wolfenden Committee's dual agenda of homosexuality and prostitution as the rent boy. For the rent boy, with his presumed heterosexuality, could not claim the saving grace given to the congenital disposition of "true" homosexuals and, due to his cash-driven motives, was especially fit for the castigation meted out to the prostitute.

The Wolfenden Committee and Peter Wildeblood appeared on the national stage at approximately the same time, their existence already intertwined. David Maxwell-Fyfe, Home Secretary under Churchill's 1951 Conservative government, appointed the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution in 1954. To form and lead the committee, Maxwell-Fyfe chose John Wolfenden, Vice-Chancellor at the University of Reading.

Maxwell-Fyfe was the last person one would expect to form a committee on homosexuality and prostitution laws. Under Maxwell-Fyfe's tenure as Home Secretary,

arrests for homosexual activity tripled and remained twice as high as interwar numbers.[49] David Kynaston, and Jeffery Weeks before him, asserts that Maxwell-Fyfe made "the active prosecution of homosexuals almost his highest priority."[50] Matt Houlbrook challenges the assumed intensity of Maxwell-Fyfe's "witch hunt," rightly arguing that reforms in the Metropolitan Police and better records help to partially explain the uptick.[51] Even if Maxwell-Fyfe was not responsible for the intensity of arrests, he still certainly supported it as part of his campaign to right wartime license. Prostitution was a central part of this campaign too, particularly the visibility of female prostitutes in London's West End. "'Hard, bad and degraded,'" attitudes toward female prostitutes worsened during the more prosperous 1950s, as the standard economic justifications became more difficult to make.[52] It was the Home Office that decided Wolfenden's committee would tackle both issues. Ultimately, Maxwell-Fyfe was unsatisfied with its recommendations on homosexual law reform. As he told a Tory backbencher, "I am not going down in history as the man who made sodomy legal."[53] Later, as a member of the House of Lords, Maxwell-Fyfe would oppose the decriminalization bill. However, in 1954, Maxwell-Fyfe was moved to act by events beyond his control.

In early 1954, Peter Wildeblood was arrested on charges of gross indecency, along with his friends Michael Pitt-Rivers and Edward Montagu, the Baron of Montagu.

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[49] Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 34.

[50] David Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951-1957* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2009) 97.

[51] Houlbrook, 34.

[52] Kynaston, *Family Britain*, 556.

[53] Ibid., 370.

Montagu had been accused of gross indecency with a boy scout in the previous year, but the trial was paused after the boy scout lied about several key pieces of evidence. While Montague awaited re-trial, the police discovered two men in the Royal Air Force who agreed to testify against the three, claiming they all had sex at Montagu's country estate during a weekend party. Wildeblood, in his memoir, denied that anything happened at the estate. However, Wildeblood had be seeing one of the men, twenty-three-year-old RAF Corporal Edward McNally, for the better part of a year. The trial of the three men was held in March. Montagu was the center of the public frenzy, but Wildeblood created his own spotlight, openly declaring his homosexuality during the trial while maintaining he was innocent of the charges. His defense strategy did not work. Montagu was sentenced to a year, while Wildeblood and Pitt-Rivers received eighteen months.[54]

"The Montagu Scandal," as the case became known, produced a loud outcry from the British public. Three respectable, wealthy men were ruined by the testimony of two working-class lads who had committed the same crime without consequence. Perhaps the increase of arrests, alongside the proliferation of congenital homosexuality arguments, allowed for a more sympathetic public reaction. There was also Wildeblood, who created pity by the open admission of his sexuality, which resulted in the ruin of this promising, well-educated professional. An editorial in the *Sunday Times* was sympathetic to Wildeblood's plight and argued that the law was "not in accord with a large mass of public opinion." The editorial went on to call for a change in the law, as "the case for a reform of the law as to acts committed in private between adults is very

[54] From the account given in Peter Wildeblood, *Against the Law* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1957).

strong."[55] An article in the *Sunday People* recounted the trial as evidence of "the complete failure of our so-called 'civilisation' to find any remedy for sexual perversion to replace cruel and barbaric punishment."[56] Wildeblood personally experienced this solidarity. While being transported to prison "the crowd began to press around us, shouting. It was some moments before I realized that they were not shouting insults, but words of encouragement."[57]

Parliament soon joined the conversation. Only a few weeks before the arrest of Wildeblood and his friends, Labour MP Desmond Donnelly had called on the Government to set up a commission to review the laws against homosexuality.[58] Donnelly was most likely reacting to two earlier homosexual scandals in 1953: one involving the writer Rupert Craft-Cooke, and the other involving Labour MP William Field, who was arrested for importuning in Piccadilly Circus. After the Wildeblood trial, Donnelly once again pressed for the commission, and Maxwell-Fyfe agreed to consider.[59] However, the House of Commons was overshadowed by the House of Lords, where Earl Winterton prompted the first debate on homosexuality in the history of either house. Winterton despised the idea of reform, but nonetheless questioned Maxwell-Fyfe's motives, arguing that he knew of "no better method of putting off legislation than by appointing a committee."[60] By June, Maxwell-Fyfe ordered the commission and had

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[55] "Law and Hypocrisy," *The Sunday Times*, 28 March 1954.

[56] *The Sunday People,* 28 March 1954.

[57] Wildeblood, *Against the Law*.

[58] HC Debates, Vol. 521 Col. 1294-9 3 December 1953.

[59] HC Debates, Vol. 526, Col. 1745-5 6 April 1954.

[60] HL Debates Vol. 187, Col 737-67 19 May 1954.

secured the unfailingly respectable John Wolfenden as its chair. From his prison cell, Peter Wildeblood wrote to the Committee on Homosexuality and Prostitution, and offered his testimony as a legitimate homosexual, "who had nothing to hide."[61]

The conversation between the Wolfenden Committee and Peter Wildeblood has been examined by historians. Matt Houlbrook argues that the Wolfenden Report represented the "rigid bifurcation between the respectable and disrespectable, the "homosexual"—beneficiary of law reform, and the queer—continued subject of social opprobrium and regulatory intervention."[62] The bifurcation was partially accomplished by strictly regulating who was chosen to give evidence to the Committee—who was, in fact, regarded as a true homosexual. Wildeblood was extended this privilege, and narrated "a singular 'homosexual' subject" out of which developed "a case for law reform that was both exclusionary and liberating."[63] Wildeblood, and other socially prominent queer men, by claiming authority over the homosexual narrative, defining what homosexuals were *really* like, simultaneously defined public, promiscuous practices as falling outside of true homosexuality. They were, as Frank Mort calls it, making their own history. But their history-making was curtailed by the discursive limits of their period. Men like Wildeblood had to draw "on social medicine and psychiatry as well as confessional declarations familiar from autobiographical writing to announce their identity and distinguish their respectable condition from the degraded perverts and effeminate queans who populated the West End."[64] By "countering dominant narratives

[61] Wildeblood, *Against the Law*, 7.

[62] Houlbrook, 254.

[63] Ibid., 256.

[64] Mort, 11.

of depravity and degeneracy," men like Wildeblood established "an image of the respectable 'homosexual' for whom tolerance and legal recognition should be granted."[65] To achieve the recognition they sought, they had to strain the dross.

In Wildeblood's testimony to the Wolfenden Committee, what constituted dross was clearly laid out. Before testifying, Wildeblood issued a statement, outlining his arguments in advance. First, he denoted three distinct types of homosexuals: those who regarded themselves and behaved as women, pederasts, and "homosexuals within the strict meaning of the word."[66] Wildeblood described the last group, the one of which he considered himself a member, as "by far the largest," "extremely cautious and discreet," and "deplor[ing] of the behaviour of 'Group A' almost as much as that of 'Group B,'" which he said may be "illogical, but understandable."[67] It was with "Group C", and only "Group C," that Wildeblood assumed the "far-reaching changes […] would be principally concerned." It was only for "Group C" that Wildeblood felt "qualified to speak."[68]

Wildeblood contradicted fears of promiscuous and proselytizing homosexuals who would "run riot if the punishments were abolished"—fears he believed prevented law reform. While he never denied that promiscuity occurred, he argued that it was not the true homosexual's natural tendency. What homosexuals really wanted to do, according to Wildeblood, was to "find another man of their kind, and if possible, form a permanent attachment." But the law proved a "paradox." Homosexual men, according to Wildeblood, were more likely to be arrested, and found guilty, when trying to observe the

[65] Houlbrook, 261.

[66] "Statement submitted by Mr. Wildeblood" PRO HO 345.8, pg. 1.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 2.

"universal moral rules" of "ordering one's life with discretion and fidelity." The promiscuous man finding sex on the streets was driven to do so, just as promiscuous married men, in order to avoid scandal, were driven to find prostitutes instead of housing mistresses. Therefore, to reform the law was to allow homosexual men "to live quietly and faithfully with another, with no question of scandal or public corruption."[69]

Law reform would also remove the threat of "blackmailers" and "agents provocateurs" who loitered in the streets frequented by homosexuals, and who, without the bonds of "genuine trust and affection," threatened to "make allegations to his victim's family or the Police." The law was "a Blackmailer's Charter," and he quoted Lord Jowitt as saying that "95 percent of all blackmail cases have homosexuality as their root." As the law stood, "characters of lowest moral character" often went unpunished, while those who complained when blackmailed "were convicted on their own evidence."[70]

On May 24th, 1955, Wildeblood had the opportunity to expound upon his written statement, testifying before a Wolfenden Committee meeting at the Home Office. During his testimony, Wildeblood more clearly laid out his taxonomy. When asked about prostitutes, he briefly acknowledged the feminine prostitute of "Group A," but elaborated on "the large group of male prostitutes, who are not really homosexuals at all"—"I supposed you define them as perverts, really."[71] Their "homosexual acts" were, to Wildeblood, only explained by their desire for "payment." To clarify, Wildeblood asserted he was testifying on behalf of those who "actually *want* to behave" and not for

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[69] Ibid., 3.

[70] Ibid., 5.

[71] "Notes of a Meeting" 24 May 1955, PRO HO 345.13, pg. 3.

those after “gain.”[72] As a pervert, the male prostitute was beyond Wildeblood’s purview. Homosexuals were not naturally attracted to heterosexual male prostitutes, as one committee member suggested, but only became involved with them because they made themselves “available.” The laws encouraged the sex trade for reasons of caution and discretion, not because of “any particular attraction.” Once again, Wildeblood emphasized the difference between homosexuals like himself and the rent boy, saying that the “great many of the male prostitutes that I mentioned, the perverted kind, they are not homosexuals but will do anything for money and they are often to be found in the Guards and in the Navy to some extent.”[73] Guardsmen, Navy men, and perverts were clearly not the sexual figures Wildeblood was there to defend. To him, the true homosexuals were “perfectly good citizens,” living under a law that made an honest life, as he saw it, “extremely difficult, if not impossible.”[74]

Wildeblood’s audience did not simply accept his distinctions. Mr. Adair, a committee member who eventually disagreed with decriminalization, pushed Wildeblood on this point, forcing Wildeblood to acknowledge the “very great difficulty” for the law to distinguish “between the invert and the pervert.” But Wildeblood countered that the “burden [of the law] does rather tend to fall on the invert.” The male prostitute would give Queen’s evidence and get off, even though they had “been prostituting themselves frequently.”[75] Wildeblood conceded that some homosexual men turned to male

[72] Ibid., 4.

[73] Ibid., 28.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 29.

prostitutes, but it was an unnatural perversion that stemmed from draconian regulations—under such circumstances, "morality" was "rather discouraged by the law." Same-sex prostitution would dissipate with reform, although, Wildeblood warned, there would always be a small group of perverts who, for the sexual thrill, would continue to hunt for sex in the streets.[76]

Wildeblood used his own circumstances as evidence. Had he pursued casual, purely physical encounters on the street, he assured the Committee, "I would not have gone to prison." It was the trust he placed in Corporal McNally that was "used as corroborative evidence" when McNally testified against him.[77] It was this "paradox" that law reform was to remedy. With reform, Wildeblood later wrote, homosexuals like him could find what they truly wanted: "freedom to choose a partner and […] to live with him discreetly and faithfully."[78] If "true" homosexuals did seek sex on the streets, it was forced upon them as the only viable option. The "pervert," on the other hand, innately sought the thrill of public sex, and did not reflect the true, congenital homosexuals Wildeblood was there to represent.

It was unsurprising that Mr. Adair challenged Wildeblood on the sexual dichotomy of invert/pervert presented in his testimony. Many members of the Wolfenden Committee were not convinced by the argument of congenital homosexuality advocated by Wildeblood and other supporters of law reform. Homosexuality as an acquired trait and a sign of general degeneracy was still a common belief. John

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[76] Ibid., 10.

[77] Ibid., 11.

[78] Wildeblood, *Against the Law*, 175.

Wolfenden himself, in penciled marginalia, laughed when Wildeblood's written statement claimed homosexuality was an in-born disposition not unlike color-blindness.[79] Many who gave testimony to the Committee also balked at the notion of congenital homosexuality. Constables particularly, but even some medical experts, refuted innate same-sex desires, attributing a perceived rise in homosexuality to "a general decline in the standards of public morality." Some witnesses even blamed the "change in the climate of psychological opinion," arguing that such "'enlightened' outlooks" led to homosexual "indulgence." When criticizing the congenital argument, one officer even called for a return to "wholesome repressions."[80] When the basic premise of Wildeblood's argument was so fiercely questioned, it was even more imperative that he emphasize the distinction between congenital homosexuals and those involved with same-sex prostitution.

Despite Wildeblood's assertion of clear distinctions between inverts like himself and perverts like the Guardsmen prostitutes, the lines were much less distinct than Wildeblood let on. As Houlbrook argues, Wildeblood himself conveniently failed to mention that Edward McNally, the RAF officer in whom he placed his "trust," was a rent boy he picked up on the streets of Piccadilly Circus. In trying to erect the narrative of the respectable homosexual, Wildeblood had to re-write the specifics of his own history.[81]

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[79] "Statement submitted by Mr. Wildeblood," 8.

[80] Association of Municipal Corporations, "Homosexuality, Prostitution and Solicitation: Memorandum of Evidence submitted to the Departmental Committee on Homosexuality, Prostitution, and Solicitation" 6 September, 1955. The Women's Library, Metropolitan University Archives, 3AMS.B.04.14 File 1, pg. 3.

[81] Houlbrook, 260.

Wildeblood was not alone, however, in making distinctions. Distinguishing the homosexual from the pervert, and the male prostitute in particular, was accomplished both outside and within the auspices of the Wolfenden Committee. In a series of exposés in the *Sunday Pictorial*, journalist Douglas Warth clearly delineated between inverts and "Evil Men." His "evil men" were not homosexuals "who simply settle down and live a 'married' life with someone of their own sex."[82] These men deserved "more humane consideration," and Warth explicitly saw imprisonment as ineffectual and dangerous, as it could corrupt "normal" men.[83] Warth saved his opprobrium for the "degenerates" who were not "for the most part, true perverts," but the "simply immoral money-makers." It was this "readier market" for sex "conducted commercially" that had "a grip on Britain." Warth described the practices of his "evil men," writing of troops who solicited on the streets, Guardsmen in particular—"men whose instincts are normal but who are prepared to descend to unnatural practices." Some, he noted, were violent to their customers, "an even more reprehensible activity which is known as being 'on the creep.'" The true pervert, a victim of violence and robbery of "creepers," had no legal recourse, Warth sympathetically wrote. [84]

Other testimony given before the Wolfenden Committee echoed Wildeblood's distinctions between inverts and perverts. One written statement, submitted by a university-educated "professional man who [was] himself homosexual" also drew a line

[82] David Warth, "Evil Men" *Sunday Pictorial* 1 June 1952.

[83] David Warth, "Evil Men" *Sunday Pictorial* 8 June 1952.

[84] Warth, 1 June 1952.

between the homosexual and the prostitute.[85] Homosexuality, he wrote, was "equally as natural a process" as heterosexuality, and true homosexuals were "fundamentally different."[86] He was testifying on behalf of the "'natural' (who is by far the commoner) homosexual"[87] and the "ordinary homosexuals."[88] Using the work of sexologists, especially Alfred Kinsey, the author asserted that homosexuals were in their natural state, and therefore deserved the freedom to express their inherent nature.[89] The "ORDINARY and COMMON male homosexual," living in a "modern and enlightened day required the following simple CHANGE IN THE LAW, only and simply: That sexual relations between ADULT males in PRIVATE should not be against the law."[90]

Despite the author's fondness for capital letters and underlining, he asserted that he was a reasonable man, and agreed "wholeheartedly" that not all queer acts deserved decriminalization—"Still bearing in mind that we are discussing the more 'natural' homosexual."[91] No one, he assured, was advocating for non-consensual acts or sex with a minor, and those who solicited "in public" were just as reprehensible as rapists and pedophiles.[92] "Natural" and "ordinary" homosexuality excluded male prostitutes. He

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[85] "A Memorandum prepared for submission to the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences" May 1955, PRO 345.8, title page.

[86] Ibid., 2.

[87] Ibid., 3.

[88] Ibid., 5.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., 1.

[91] Ibid., 2.

[92] Ibid., 1.

wrote, “It should therefore be made quite clear from the outset that the views I am putting forward concern only the sexual relations between men in which payment of money forms no part.”[93] Going further than even Wildeblood, the anonymous author questioned why the Wolfenden Committee was charged with investigating both homosexuality and prostitution. To the author, the two sexual identities resided on different planes—homosexuality was a natural inclination while prostitution was clearly a degenerate vice—and it was “wrong to couple these two together in this way.” To include the “more limited sphere of male prostitution” in a discussion of homosexuality was, therefore, illogical when such men were in reality “the equivalent of the other terms of reference”—i.e., prostitutes. [94]

Unhinging true homosexuals from prostitutes, as the anonymous writer attempted, highlights how the rent boy straddled both portions of the Wolfenden Report. He had a foot planted in two camps. The bifurcated nature of same-sex prostitution, where its practioners were never quite queer and never quite prostitutes, once again impacted the lives of men selling sex. Unable to obtain the status of homosexual bequeathed by science and medicine, the rent boy’s position was even more tenuous than before. He was relegated to the periphery of queer culture and enfolded more within the camp of the prostitute. As Houlbrook argues, the Wolfenden Report only “spoke” the name of a middle-class version of queer sex, but in the lesser-studied prostitution portion of the Report the rent boy and the sexual forms he represented were all too present, and he suffered for it.

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

The study of prostitution that completed the Wolfenden Report was in stark contrast to the relatively "permissive" recommendations on homosexuality. Although the Wolfenden Committee ultimately rejected the pervert/invert dichotomy as "not very useful," they nevertheless pressed for the reforms desired by men like Wildeblood.[95] The Committee recommended that "homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private be no longer a criminal offense."[96] They also included the same limitations stressed by Wildeblood, emphasizing the criminality of public acts while placing "in private" queer acts squarely beyond government purview.

Unlike homosexuals, prostitutes were not the beneficiary of "permissive" attitudes and recommendations. No prostitutes were ever called to testify, and even the discussion of whether or not to interview prostitutes was minimal and the idea quickly dismissed as too difficult and relatively pointless. The Report recommended that the "requirement to establish annoyance" be eliminated; that maximum penalties be increased and a system of higher penalties established for repeat offenders; and that magistrates could "remand, in custody if need be, for up to three weeks," any prostitute convicted of more than one offense in order to obtain a social or medical report.[97] These recommendations, so different from those for private homosexual acts, derived from the "public" nature assumed of prostitution. Just as street-sex remained explicitly criminalized in the homosexual recommendations, the morality of "private" sex was reified in the prostitution recommendations as well. Sex for money—unlike sex for love, even

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[95] *The Wolfenden Report: Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution, Authorized American Edition* (New York: Stein and Day, 1963) 35.

[96] Ibid. 187.

[97] Ibid., 189.

homosexual sex for love—was regarded as inherently public. Like all sustained economic exchanges, it had to operate outside of the home. As discussed above, these public forms of sexual exchange were increasingly unacceptable in the reimagining of post-war Britain. The harsh recommendations of the Wolfenden Report reflected while they simultaneously codified this trend.

The concern over prostitution and its perceived increase was consistently presented in discussions with or about the Wolfenden Committee. A report by the Central Conference of Chief Constables highlighted the growing danger and nuisance of prostitution. They supported a steep rise in penalties, arguing that harsher laws were "long overdue." The Constables further demanded that courts be made to use their "new powers," for if "they fail[ed] to use them, conditions [were] likely to remain" as pervasive and troublesome as before any reforms.[98] Even the Howard League for Penal Reform, an extraordinarily progressive reform society, acknowledged the seemingly aggressive nature of contemporary prostitutes, "with the women concerned stepping into the path of passers-by and making something of a nuisance of themselves."[99]

In the debate over the Wolfenden recommendations in Parliament, the call for stricter prostitution laws received little notice beyond their general acceptance. The Under-Secretary of State, David Renton, referencing the experiences of moral welfare workers, stated that intervention no longer worked, as evidenced by "the state of affairs today." The contemporary prostitute was not the fallen woman seduced into sex work.

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[98] "Central Conference of Chief Constables Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution" PRO MEPO 2.10236, pg. 2.

[99] "Memorandum submitted by the Howard Leagues for Penal Reform" March 1955, The Women's Library, Metropolitan University Archives, 3AMS.B.04.14 File 1, pg. 5.

Renton characterized the prostitutes of his day by saying they "now deliberately choose prostitution as a way of life and are unlikely to respond to moral persuasion."[100] Prostitutes, according to Renton, were the willful agents of their own downfall, choosing prostitution in defiance of standard morality.

It was during this moment, when the prostitute was subjected to heightened castigation, that the rent boy more fully joined her ranks. The Marquess of Lothian, during a House of Lords debate on the Wolfenden Report, separated out homosexuals from male prostitutes, relating rent boys with prostitutes in general. Lothian argued that "prostitution, and particularly soliciting, as practised in public, by both males and females […] present[ed] a more urgent problem than that presented by homosexuality as practiced in private."[101] It was the female and male prostitute, not the private homosexual, who turned certain areas of London into "a disgrace and a scandal," where it was impossible for "decent people to walk unmolested and unoffended," and where "foreign visitors" were "appalled by what they see."[102]

To combat male prostitution as strongly as its female counterpart, the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report placed same-sex prostitution within its calls for harsher penalties. Laws were now to include language that explicitly referenced male prostitutes. Charges of living off the earnings of a prostitute were to be "applied to the earnings of male, as well as female, prostitution."[103] The law was to be amended "so as

[100] "Redemption of Young Prostitutes": notes for the winding-up speech of Mr. David Renton, 26 November 1958, PRO HO 291.123, pg. 1.

[101] HL Debates, Vol. 206, Col. 784, 4 December 1957.

[102] Ibid., Col. 785.

[103] *Wolfenden*, 187.

to make it explicate that the word “brothel” include[d] premises used for homosexual practices as well as those used for heterosexual lewdness.”[104] In case there were any doubts, the Committee wished “to make it perfectly clear” that their recommendation that homosexuality be decriminalized was “not intended to countenance any forms of [homosexual] behaviour approximating to the objectionable activities associated with female prostitution.”[105]

The emphasis on the rent boy as a prostitute and not a homosexual was present in the Wolfenden Report itself, and also in the arguments around how the recommendations would be enacted. MP David Renton argued before the House of Commons that there existed a “small minority of men whose affections [were] exclusively homosexual”: the “genuine invert.” However, “the trouble” was “that beside those genuine homosexuals with their unalterable impulses, there [were] a wide range of others varying from [the psychopathic pervert to the opportunistic male prostitute] which surely should not [be] allow[ed] to spread.”[106]

Government bodies reporting to the Wolfenden Committee took extraordinary measures to ensure that male prostitution remained illegal. The fears of inadvertently allowing homosexual prostitution to become legal were especially rife when it came to soldiers, a group widely associated with male prostitution. The Wolfenden Report would, therefore, have no influence on military discipline at all. It was “manifestly the

[104] Ibid., 55.

[105] Ibid., 54.

[106] “Homosexuality”: notes for the winding-up speech of Mr. David Renton 26 November 1958, PRO HO 291.123, pg. 3. Renton used the phrase “psychopathic pervert to the opportunistic male prostitute” in his speech to the House of Commons, although that line was left blank in his notes.

intention of Parliament to exclude the Services, like the Merchant Navy, from the effects" of the Wolfenden recommendations, as "the conditions of service life [made] young servicemen particularly vulnerable."[107] The soldier, "separated from his family" and in "an environment containing all shades of entertainment but all at a very high cost" was "perpetually short of money." Homosexuals, on the other hand, were "strongly attracted towards soldiers and particularly towards men of the physical requirements and standards of deportment required by the Guards Brigade." In such circumstances "soldiers have obviously succumbed to a temptation for easy money."[108] However there were still concerns over soldier-prostitutes committing acts outside of regular military oversight and discipline. To further combat the "vulnerability" of soldiers, leaders of the armed forces lobbied for a clearer definition of consent that excluded sex for money. The proposed amendment read: "Consent to a homosexual act induced by the payment of money or gift shall not be deemed to constitute consent for the purpose of this Act." A more explicit definition would assist military discipline by "discouraging male prostitution" and preserving "the illegality of all homosexual acts with male prostitutes."[109]

Concern over the clarity of language highlights the difficult conceptual work performed by men like Peter Wildeblood and tentatively enshrined in the Wolfenden Report. Homosexuals were to be relieved of criminality, but who would experience this relief was limited and had to be clearly defined. Enlarging the borders of respectability

[107] "Sexual Offences Act, Service Policy" pg. 4.; "Service Policy in the Cases of Sexual Offences" 4 July 1968, PRO DFE 70.96.

[108] "Homosexuality in London" PRO DFE 70.96.

[109] "New Clause 3: Sexual Offences (No. 2) Bill, PRO DFE 70.96.

proved a tenuous moment that prompted those borders to be simultaneously reinforced and even better regulated. By shedding the rent boy and planting him firmly in the realm of prostitution and perversion, homosexuals of the upper classes found their inclusion into respectability more probable.

Conclusion

The radically different treatment of the "respectable" homosexual and the castigated prostitute—the rent boy now included—was perhaps best illustrated in how the Wolfenden Report's recommendations became law. As discussed in the next chapter, the progressive reforms that ensured men like Peter Wildeblood were placed beyond criminality took a decade to pass—finally codified, word for word from the Wolfenden Report, in the Sexual Offences Act of 1967.[110] The harsher penalties dealt out to prostitutes, however, were passed the same year the Wolfenden Report was given to Parliament. While it took a decade to convince Britain that homosexuality should be decriminalized, even when using Wildeblood's narrow definition, Britain and its leaders were prepared to immediately enact draconian efforts to restrain the prostitute, including the rent boy. These laws, Sections 33-36 of the Sexual Offences Act, still stand today and were broadened by the Sexual Offences Act of 2003.[111]

Although the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report eventually became law, neither the Report nor Peter Wildeblood represented the entirety of queer sexual

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[110] Despite being introduced several times, the bill languished for a decade, until a strong Labour majority, motivated by the social changes of the 1960s, decided that reform was past due.

[111] "Sexual Offences Act of 1956" Chap. 69, 4 and 5 Eliz. 2. and "Sexual Offences Act of 2003" Chap. 42.

expression or belief in 1950s Britain. Homosexual scandals involving prostitution still occurred throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Even the old rent boy fetish of the straight, working-class lad survived the Wolfenden Report. Simon Raven, in his 1963 study of male prostitution in London, where there was still "a substantial demand," painted the male prostitute as a rather harmless, although pitiful, figure.[112] He dismissed the histrionics of the Wolfenden Committee as the "abstract and irrelevant indignation of catchpenny public moralists."[113]

Yet the Wolfenden Report and the version of homosexuality it condoned had a significant impact on the construction of the modern homosexual, especially in terms of how homosexual relationships are perceived to exist. While couched in terms of "permissiveness," the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report reflected the increased concern over a public sex culture in post-war Britain. The homosexual, through medical and psychological arguments of the congenital queer, had to therefore be thoroughly separated from the perverts who populated London's shadier streets—such as the rent boy. By appealing to a middle-class sense of love, discretion, and privacy, the homosexual was eventually brought, albeit hesitantly, into the fold. Even those homosexual men buying sex were, on the whole, at least pitied, with Wildeblood arguing that their actions were performed reluctantly for fear that long-term relationships would not escape the notice of the law or society. The working-class man selling sex was left to fend for himself, relegated to the periphery of perverts and subjected to harsher laws

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[112] Simon Raven, "Boys Will Be Boys: The Male Prostitute in London" in *The Problem of Homosexuality in Modern Society*, ed. Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1963) 279.

[113] Ibid., 290.

made by the same committee that gave middle-class men like Wildeblood their legal autonomy. It was the death-knell of the rent boy who had played a central role in the imagining of queer desire for almost a century. No longer would queer sex be defined by the expectation that one had sex with "normal" men who expected payment. Homosexuality would become, just as it is now, a much more exclusionary practice, involving only homosexuals. The sexual fluidity inherent in the rent boy fantasy solidified into the mostly intra-classed, almost intra-species "gay culture" that is today often naturalized and universalized.   Not that male prostitution no longer exists—it certainly does. But the contemporary male prostitute and those men who purchase their services are construed very differently. The rent boy, as the Guardsman or J.R. Ackerley knew and understood him, died with Wolfenden.

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Chapter Six

"The Present State of Whorecraft": An Exploratory Conclusion

As the 2012 Olympics approached, London prepared for the onslaught. Tourists and athletes, of course, were anticipated, but London's streets, it was feared, would contain another group that also required the city's special attention. Prostitution and human trafficking were expected to bloom in London before, during, and even after the games. *The Telegraph* declared London would be a "magnet for prostitutes," as "vice girls hope to strike gold." The number of prostitutes had reportedly doubled in the East End, as construction workers raced to finish the event venues, and some pundits warned that the prostitute population would quadruple by the start of the games.[1] The prostitutes, it was assumed, would be the victims of international criminal gangs, forced to sell themselves to the throngs amassed in the city. An increase in "trafficked women," according to the BBC, was already noticed in the Olympic boroughs as early as 2009.[2] Tessa Jowell, the Labour Minister of the Olympic Games, traveled to Vancouver to investigate the extent of prostitution during the Winter Olympics. In 2010, the Metropolitan Police established the Human Exploitation and Organized Crime Command (SCD9) to combat the expected trafficking, and brothel raids in the East End increased

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[1] Jacquelin Magnay, "London 2012 Olympics: vice girls hope to strike gold," *The Telegraph* 27 March 2010, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/news/7529528/London-2012-Olympics-vice-girls-hope-to-strike-gold.html, accessed 7 September 2013.

[2] "Games may spark prostitution rise" *BBC News* 14 July 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/8150364.stm, accessed 7 September 2013.

seven-fold.[3] Immigration officials were specially trained to spot signs of trafficking, warned to keep an eye out for "South East Asian, Albanian, and African gangs."[4]

The worry and preparation were, unmistakably, in vain. Even while such stories were being pumped out by the press, some were already questioning the melodramatic reports. Dr. Brooke Magnanti, author of *The Sex Myth*, discredited the hype as "the same old guff."[5] Think-tanks such as the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine found no links between human trafficking and large sporting events like the Olympics or the World Cup. The Global Alliance Against the Traffic in Women reported, "There is no empirical evidence that trafficking for prostitution increases around large sporting events. This link has been de-bunked by other anti-trafficking organisations and researchers."[6] Even Tessa Jowell, once she was out of power, admitted that the likelihood of large-scale trafficking was remote.[7]

They were right. There was no rise, at all, in incidents of sex work or trafficking. The practice actually diminished over the course of the games. Laura Godman, a spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police, spun the decrease as a job well done. But

[3] Hannah Furness, "Prostitutes 'cleaned off the streets' ahead of the Olympics" *The Telegraph* 2 April 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/9180739/Prostitutes-cleaned-off-the-streets-ahead-of-the-Olympics.html, accessed 7 September 2013.

[4] Mario Cacciottolo, "London 2012: Will the Olympics bring more prostitutes?" *BBC News Magazine* 6 June 2012 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-18174387, accessed 7 September 2013.

[5] Brooke Magnanti, "London 2012: Will the Olympics bring more prostitutes?" 8 June 2012 http://sexonomics-uk.blogspot.com/2012/06/london-2012-will-olympics-bring-more.html, accessed 7 September 2013.

[6] Global Alliance Against the Traffic in Women, "What's The Cost of a Rumor: A guide to sorting out the myths and facts about sporting events and trafficking" 15 November 2011 http://www.gaatw.org/publications/WhatstheCostofaRumour.11.15.2011.pdf, accessed 7 September 2013.

[7] Cacciottolo, "London 2012."

Georgina Perry, a sex-worker advocate, argued that the crackdown on prostitution, under the guise of trafficking prevention, forced sex workers into more remote areas of the city and further away from social support networks and safe spaces. Godman maintained that their "duty and intent" was protecting "victims." While fear may have "cleaned up" London's streets, it did little to protect those selling sex.[8] By the time the Olympic flame went out, only one incident of prostitution directly tied to the games had been investigated by the police.[9]

That lone incident was not about forced sex labor from Asia, Africa, or Albania, but about two American men from Texas. One thirty-five-year-old man, a licensed massage therapist, operated a nude massage parlor in Houston, which he closed temporarily while he went to London. His travel companion was fifteen. The disparate ages of the unrelated men caught the attention of immigration authorities, and the pair never made it past Heathrow Airport. They were sent back to the United States on separate planes. The two were most likely lovers, not predator and prey. They had been together for months, and the boy often spent the night at the man's home. The boy's mother even knew they were travelling to London, and there was no evidence that the boy ever took part in the massages. Despite the specifics, the case was deemed trafficking and prostitution by the press, and the *Daily Mail* reminded readers of the

[8] Julie Mollins, "The sex-trafficking event that wasn't," Thomas Reuters Foundation 28 Nov 2012 http://www.trust.org/item/?map=qa-london-olympics-the-sex-trafficking-event-that-wasnt, accessed 7 September 2013.

[9] Ibid.

earlier warnings, using the incident to show how sex trafficking was "a very real threat."[10]

The histrionics surrounding the London Olympics, with its one example of assumed same-sex prostitution, reflect the continuing obsession with sex work. Prostitution scandals and stories of "trafficking" always make for good media fodder and successful television docu-dramas. Sex work, both straight and gay, is still held as the darker side of humanity—the inherent danger lurking in sex—that has to be continuously exposed to the light of legislation, police efforts, and social investigators. The perverseness of its participants, so clearly stressed by men like newspaper editor and moralist W. T. Stead or early homosexual activist Peter Wildeblood, continues to draw shock and condemnation.

The perpetuation of these connotations is extraordinary when compared to the relaxation of sexual mores that marks the last half-century in Britain. Co-habitation and pre-marital sex are relatively commonplace, and homosexuality is now fully decriminalized. Gays are out in large numbers and can celebrate state-sanctioned marriages. Yet, the prostitute, male or female, still occupies the perverse periphery.

Why is this the case? Why do prostitutes and their clients still face an inimical legal system, an often hostile police force, and almost complete social opprobrium? Sketching the sexual history of Britain since 1957 with a focus on queer history provides a rudimentary explanation, giving promise for more in-depth research in the future. From 1957 to the present, a turbulent half-century saw both the rise of general permissiveness

[10] Anthony Bond, "Nude male masseuse 'flew boy, 15, to London to work as a prostitute for 2012 Olympics,'" *Daily Mail* 26 July 2012 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2179258/Man-travelling-teenage-boy-Heathrow-sent-U-S-fears-planned-sexually-exploit-youngster-Olympics.html, accessed 7 September 2013.

and liberation and a conservative turn and the advent of AIDS. With such an altered context, is the rent boy of interwar fantasy or post-war condemnation related at all to the contemporary male sex worker? The answer is—one so often favored by historians—yes and no. The rent boy has remained a litmus test, reflective of broader sexual attitudes and beliefs. He still finds himself the scapegoat of many ostensibly progressive movements, from gay lib to gay marriage to human trafficking. Yet men-selling-sex have benefited from the same movements, using organizational techniques and structures derived from sex-based activism to speak up and act out on behalf of sex workers. Their trade itself has also changed. With the Internet, digital spaces have replaced "meat racks" and park corners while different categories of sex work have proliferated. Sex workers can now always be "on the make" without ever leaving home. They can provide service to thousands of clients simultaneously while never meeting any of them in person. They have become the faces of billion-dollar corporations, with exclusivity contracts and marketing schemes to match. However, many young men remain as economically vulnerable and socially restricted as any same-sex prostitute of the past, such as Jack Saul or Harry Daley.

The decade between the Wolfenden Report and the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, which decriminalized private homosexual acts between men at least twenty-one years old, reflected the tenuous nature of permissiveness—what Frank Mort describes as an "uneven acceleration of shifts."[11] The Profumo scandal, with its triangulation of government officials, prostitutes, and the tension of Cold-War security, epitomized the explosive power of illegitimate sex. The entire episode hinged on the sexual activities of

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[11] Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 4.

the woman at its heart, the English call-girl Christine Keeler. Keeler had a short affair with John Profumo, Macmillan's War Secretary, and was suspected of passing government secrets to Yevgeny Ivanov, a senior attaché at the Soviet Embassy in London. She admitted to a sexual relationship with both men, but denied any conspiracy behind the sex. When exposed in 1963, the story of a Conservative Secretary of War mingling with a prostitute became an avatar of wider social anxieties, from the hypocrisy of Britain's ruling elite to the failures of the post-war economy. The case—with its subsequent trials, suicides, and the collapse of Macmillan's Conservative government—showed, in spectacular fashion, the limitations and perceived dangers of sexual permissiveness.

Christine Keeler's body was the contested space around which the scandal circled. Even the scandal's exposure resulted from Keeler's sex practices, when she came to the authorities' attention after her former live-in lover attacked her newest companion, a Jamaican piano player. However, inscribing Keeler as a prostitute was troublesome. While economic exchange was central to her relationship with Profumo and Ivanov, her motivations were distinctly different. Keeler was a woman equally seeking both sexual excitement and financial independence. As the affair enlarged, encompassing wider swaths of participants, the crucial questions remained answerable only by the secret machinations of Keeler's sexualized body. Did her eyes that "shone with passion, sensuality and cunning" beckon Profumo with malicious intent? Did her "sensual mouth" pass intelligence to the Soviets?[12] Keeler's body performed more than just titillating sexual acts, it "crystallized a prevailing national mood of anxiety." It blurred

[12] Ibid., 306.

racial lines, national identities, and sexual mores, all in an enormous scandal that was, ostensibly, about Britain's security. But the incident went far beyond Cold-War spying. As Frank Mort argues, it allowed "fresh debate and sexual conversation."[13] While the events of the Profumo Scandal reaffirmed the lingering consequences of traditional sexual transgression, it simultaneously demonstrated the extent of "cultural modernization." Keeler did not occupy the traditional trope of the prostitute, and her sexual practices and desires, both personal and professional, reflected a sexual ambiguity.

Ambiguity defined the public's reaction, too. While many condemned the individuals involved, a large portion of Britons also found the moralizing hypocritical and overwrought. The fetishized fascination with Keeler in particular seemed backwards and primitive to those who saw her sexuality as a private affair that should garner little surprise and even less attention. Such a varied response to the Profumo Scandal only highlighted the "lack of moral consensus" in the 1960s.[14]

The Sexual Offences Act of 1967 was, in many ways, marked by the same moral tension. Writing the legislation itself was simple enough, as it was taken, almost verbatim, from the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report. Its passage, however, proved difficult. Between 1958 and 1967, Parliament debated decriminalization at least seven times. Most Conservative MPs were flatly opposed and kept any reforms at bay while they held power. Opponents argued that decriminalization of sex between men was contrary to the British Christian tradition and violated universal moral law. Decriminalization would only allow Britain to glide more quickly down the slippery

[13] Ibid., 343.

[14] Ibid., 344.

slope of degeneracy and decline. The shift to a Labour government in 1965, on the heels of the Profumo Scandal, greatly increased the likelihood of passage. With a majority of only five seats, however, Prime Minister Harold Wilson was reluctant to back the bill, and it was first presented in the House of Lords. It passed the upper house with a majority of two to one in October of 1965, and an identical bill was presented to the House of Commons, by a Conservative MP, in early 1966. The bill was stalled by the general election, but when Labour returned with a majority of a hundred seats, decriminalization was seen as simply a matter of paperwork.

Decriminalization came with a whimper. Many gay men were barely aware of its passage, and those who had been central campaigners for reform felt mostly a sense of "tedium." No one was "'cracking any bottles of champagne or going to any carnival marches.'"[15] Many homosexual reformers were more devastated than relieved, as the new law passed with extraordinary limitations. The legislation applied only to England and Wales, as Scottish PMs refused to extend decriminalization to Scotland. Furthermore, the age of consent was set at twenty-one—five years higher than heterosexual consent statutes. Conservative politicians disseminated fears of "buggers clubs" and queer "exhibitionism," and what constituted as sexual acts "in private," and therefore legal, was ambiguous and circumscribed. Under the 1967 legislation, sex in a locked hotel room could have technically been considered a public sex act.[16] Even Lord Arran, a central architect and proponent of decriminalization, refused to countenance the

[15] Alkarim Jivani, *It's Not Unusual: A History of Lesbian and Gay Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 149.

[16] Stephen Jeffery-Poulter, *Peers, Queers and Commons: The Struggle for Gay Law Reform from 1950 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1991) 84.

more liberal agenda pushed by gay groups, such as the Homosexual Law Reform Society, responding that he was "'afraid, lest we go too far.'"[17] Arran's speech upon the success of his bill demonstrated this inherent conservatism, as he reminded queer men that, "while there may be nothing bad in being a homosexual, there is certainly nothing good."[18] "Dislike and derision or at best pity," he remarked, was the burden of the homosexual "for all time, and they must shoulder it like men."[19] Similar to the dissonant voices of the Profumo Scandal, the professed "progressivism" of the Sexual Offences Act relied as much on reifying conservative paradigms as it did on any discourse on "cultural modernization"—another example of Frank Mort's "uneven acceleration of shifts."

By 1967, Parliament was essentially playing catch up. Older queer men, such as Cecil Beaton, may have seen the Sexual Offences Act as "one of the most important milestones in English law," but few of his younger counterparts felt the same.[20] Peter Burton, who managed a gay club in 1967, remembered that the law mattered little to him and his friends, saying, "My generation was not going to be tied down by their laws and their constraints."[21] As Matt Cook argues, it was clear to many queer men, especially those who were younger, that the Sexual Offences Act accomplished nothing. Reformers, from the writing of the Wolfenden Report to its passage in 1967, relied on a

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[17] Ibid., 88.

[18] Jivani, 153.

[19] Jeffery-Poulter, 89.

[20] As quoted in Matt Cook, "Queer Conflicts: Love, Sex and War, 1914-1967" in *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men Since the Middle Ages*, ed. by Matt Cook (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2007) 176.

[21] Jivani, 153.

"conservative route in their lobbying and campaign work and touted an image of the homosexual which revolved around middle-class respectability, discretion and conformity."[22] As the Sixties turned into the Seventies, young queers, and the Gay Liberation movement they founded, increasingly rejected normalized expectations of coupledom and domesticity. Lord Arran's admonition that queers should comport themselves "quietly and with dignity" was falling on deaf ears.[23]

The Gay Liberation movement of the late Sixties and Seventies was multi-layered and multi-national. "Gay Lib" was indebted to the work of conservative queer movements of the previous two decades. However, Gay Lib intentionally separated itself from those earlier movements. Gay Lib generally rejected appeals to the status quo and established governmental intervention that hallmarked earlier campaigns. Its central tenet encouraged gays and lesbians to work beyond traditional mores and forms of power, and to create their own. How successfully they accomplished this is still a matter of great debate, but the centrality of this notion is undeniable. Homosexuals were not to be satisfied any longer with reluctant tolerance; by the 1970s, "gay was good."

New York City's Stonewall Riots in June of 1969 reverberated almost immediately with the more radical element of Britain's gay scene. Queers attacking police sent to raid a queer bar embodied the growing rejection of compliant activism. It is difficult to decipher at a glance the impact of American Gay Lib on its British counterpart. Early chroniclers considered the United States, and New York in particular,

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[22] Cook, 177.

[23] Ibid., 176.

as a type of gay Elysium, where the "very ideal was already being realised."[24] The American movement saw a shift from persuasion to confrontation, epitomized by Stonewall, and influenced by the larger, contemporary counter-culture of the United States. Gay organizers were directly influenced, and were often a part of, second-wave feminism, the anti-war movement, and the more aggressive brand of civil rights espoused by leaders like Malcom X. Stylistically, American Gay Lib borrowed the tactics and philosophy of these more combative social movements, which were then "transported" to Britain.[25]

By the end of 1970, London was the base of Britain's own short-lived and fragmenting Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and the Committee for Homosexual Equality (CHE). Both groups were comprised of people under thirty, the vast majority male and associated with a university. Like the Americans, openness, both in identity and sexuality, were central tenets, and supporters were expected to "come out." By publicly and personally identifying as gay, queers would "root out from their own minds the idea that their sexuality was bad, sick or immoral and develop in its place 'gay pride.'"[26] Associating pride with one's sexuality transformed any expression of that sexuality into a political, confrontational act.

It was in this social milieu that the rent boy reappeared, although greatly transformed. He reflected, as always, the changing sexual attitudes of his time. No longer straight, the rent boy was a self-identified gay man who used his sexuality, as did

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[24] Jeffery-Poulter, 98.

[25] Jivani, 162.

[26] Jeffery-Poulter 101.

Christine Keeler, for both pleasure and profit. He was fantasized no longer for his straightness, but because he was so good at being gay. He was sexually liberated, defined mostly by his sexuality, and wrapped in a handsome package.

And he was, as before, a fantasy. The proliferation of an international gay press in the 1960s and 1970s, when gay-specific pulp novels, magazines, newspapers, and journals exploded, allowed for a wide dissemination of the new rent boy fantasy. He was a stock character in the memoirs and fiction that filled gay publications. Phil Andros, the protagonist in a series of fictional, pornographic memoirs by American English professor Samuel Steward, epitomized the new rent boy. Andros, as written by Steward, was tall, muscular, and devastatingly handsome, dressed in a leather jacket and black cap, and in possession of a "quite-a-whopper" penis. He was an archetype of masculine beauty and sexual prowess. That prowess was focused, unashamedly, on men. Avowedly homosexual, Andros enjoyed the sex as much as the money he received from it. Prostitution was a literary device that drove the narratives behind the Andros series while simultaneously providing the sexually explicit scenes for which readers purchased the erotic novels.[27]

In gay pulp, characters like Andros were the central, sexually successful protagonists, and their role as hustlers demonstrated such. Forays into sex work were no longer about sexual ambiguity or even money, as assumed in earlier rent boy fantasies. Sex work was the ultimate confirmation of sexual identity. Rent boys were portrayed as physically and mentally robust and well adjusted, enjoying encounters with a good-

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[27] Justin Spring, *Secret Historian: The Life and Times of Samuel Steward, professor, tattoo artist, and sexual renegade* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010) 347.

natured, almost innocent enthusiasm. Hustlers had successfully "rooted out" any sense of gay shame. Hustling was a celebration of gay sex, and the economic motives were dismissed, sometimes even eradicated. Barry Sterling, the protagonist in *The Gay Lords*, became a hustler—despite being the son of a wealthy, blueblood Kentucky horse farm family—as a means to explore his newly-accepted sexuality.[28] The inherent sense of poverty or economic vulnerability central to previous prostitution narratives was wiped away entirely.

The clients in these novels, however, could not have been more different. The men who paid for sex were closeted, ostensibly "straight" men who failed to reach the hustler's sexual honesty. Portrayed as weak, cloying, or desperate, the client's double life, while titillating, was also dishonest and corrupting. Derided as cowardly at best and perverse at worst, he was often the antagonist to the hustler character. Clients became obsessive and even violent, either out of desperation for the hustler or out of desperation to retain discreetness. The hustler, however, always triumphed, usually easily and usually by a punch to the client's jaw. Prostitution, therefore, highlighted the difference between the sexually liberated gay man and the sexually repressed. It was repression, not sexual expression and acceptance, that proved to be the true immorality leading to decline and perversion.

Gay periodicals utilized the new rent boy and client types. *International Focus*, a short-lived gay periodical published in 1970s London, included stories and pseudo-sociological studies of hustlers, escorts, or gigolos in virtually every issue. A product of Gay Lib, *International Focus* reveled in queer sexuality, with article titles such as "Black

[28] Robert Saunders, *The Gay Lords* (New York: Unique Books, 1966).

Penis Power!" "Rent Boys!" and "The Happy Hustler!" The writers assured readers their articles were dispelling the myths of sex for sale as thoroughly as they were attempting to record the truth. Rent boys were handsome and youthful. Devious perhaps, but not seriously so. Most strikingly, they enjoyed the sex. While some professed to be straight, one "researcher" wrote, the declarations were made with vagueness and no physical proof. One rent boy was recorded saying, "Well, you get money and you get sex. It's killing two birds with one stone, isn't it?"[29] While renters were young, robust, and openly gay, clients were "lonely middle-aged men, frightened of their homosexuality, and perhaps hating themselves for it."[30] Renting became the epitome of the sexually liberated gay man—always young, enthusiastic, and up for it, while the clients were transformed into the regressive, backwards way of being that the larger gay movement was trying to dismantle.

The gay press not only presented the rent boy in his new form, it also provided a new economic space for men-selling-sex. Gay newspapers particularly profited from the "personal" ads that occupied their back pages. Print ads of the new queer press marked a shift in the selling of sex. Earlier, physical spaces, such as Piccadilly Circus and Marble Arch, had been the only market places. While free, they certainly carried greater dangers of exposure, arrest, and violence. Now, for a fee, young men could advertise their services with greater discretion, less interruption to their daily lives, and all while capturing a larger market.

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[29] P.H. "Rent Boys! An 'on the ground' study" in *International Focus* 1:2, 1976, 9. Accessed at the Carpenter-Hall Archives, Special Collections, London School of Economics.

[30] Ibid., 8.

But the shift to print ads arrived with new hurdles. Soliciting sex was illegal, so ads had to be discreet while still conveying one's objective. The texts of the ads, therefore, became a system of codes. "Models" and "masseurs" offered their services to readers for a fee, but the exact nature of the services was left ambiguous. There was also a visual problem. If men sold sex on their looks, it was a selling point lost in text, so personal descriptions were central, space-consuming components of any advertisement. The man-selling-sex was transformed into a list of characteristics and measurements, all self-reported. But, as one gay commentator noted, "Many times the advertiser will have a higher regard for himself than the buyer will." Moving the first encounter to an impersonal space created new arenas of trust and distrust. Clients, as precarious consumers, had to be wary lest they be fooled by a dishonest description. Buyers had to "shift through the flotsam and jetsam to find" the "prizes liable to be there."[31] Men selling also lost the chance to vet clients before accepting their proposals. Selling in a public space provided some forms of security: colleagues who could be called upon if needed and a limited geographical space in which a man and his client could travel. Print ads relied on impersonal telephone conversations and men traveling greater stretches of the city.

The advent of print ads also engendered a hierarchy among men-selling-sex that was non-existent beforehand and would only intensify in the ensuing forty years. Advertisements, in exchange for their anonymity and larger market, required capital—at least enough for the fees and a telephone. Men who could afford these business expenses

[31] "Happy Hustler" in *International Focus* 1:9, 1976, 16. Accessed at the Carpenter-Hall Archives, Special Collections, London School of Economics.

became generally perceived as the more successful and more desirable prostitutes, while those who remained in the streets became increasingly denigrated, linked to drugs and violence in particular. Prices reflected these perceptions; as "professional escort" rates rose, street hustlers, already the more economically vulnerable, saw their market and profits diminished.

By the early 1980s, print ads and the progressive gay newspapers they funded were increasingly subject to attack. The Earl of Halsbury, before the House of Lords, argued that the *Gay News*, which had been pressing for equal age-of-consent laws for homosexuals, could fund its activism because "when it comes to procuring, pimping, soliciting and prostitution, *Gay News* is in it up to the neck through its advertisement revenues."[32] Some gay-rights advocates were inclined to agree. Leo Abse, a Labour MP and gay-rights campaigner, editorialized that gay "exhibitionism arouses resentment and indeed it arouses fear." His aim, in 1967, had been integration, not an open invitation to "freak out."[33] Lord Arran, an early advocate of decriminalization, surmised that the confrontational sexuality of the "exhibitionists" had hardened the sympathies of a growing majority "who take the view that enough is enough and that there must be an end to permissiveness."[34] An end to this "permissiveness" was secured with the election of Thatcher's government in 1979.

The difficulties of the 1980s solidified the gay movement in ways the more factionary groups of the 1970s could never have achieved. The strong-armed opposition

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[32] Earl of Halsbury as quoted in Jeffery-Poulter, 122.

[33] Leo Abse in *Spectator*, 9 July 1977.

[34] Lord Arran in *London Evening News*, 9 March 1977.

of Thatcher's Conservative government, compounded by the devastation wrought by AIDS, resulted in a flurry of gay activism. Terrance Higgins, manager of a London gay bar, died in 1982—the first known AIDS-related death in Britain—but, similar to the United States government, the Conservative government would go years before acknowledging the crisis. Gay men and women in Britain, in turn, organized for visibility and to raise funds to disseminate information. Thatcher's government would not recognize the disease until late in 1985, by which time it was believed the number of infected had risen to 20,000 people.[35]

The public reaction to AIDS, and its association with the gay community, prompted a barrage of homophobia. Reporters and Conservative pundits were quick to capitalize on the fear surrounding "the gay plague." Homosexuals, flaunting their sexuality, had received their punishment, many argued. Gay bashings rose precipitously, and hopes of obtaining an equal age of consent were quashed (and would remain so until 2001). In the advent of AIDS, Thatcher reasoned, Great Britain should "question those who claim an inalienable right to be gay."[36] Her arguments corresponded with her legislation, and in 1987 Thatcher introduced her infamous Clause 28, which criminalized the promotion of homosexuality by any local authority or school.[37]

No prosecutions ever resulted from Clause 28, but for queer folks in Britain, it represented the hardening attitudes toward homosexuality and fears of censured civil liberties under Thatcher's third term.[38] Many gay men and lesbians considered the

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[35] Jivani, 185-186.

[36] Margaret Thatcher as quoted in Cook, 204.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Jeffrey-Poulter, 216.

validity of these criticisms. Some argued that perhaps gay men had indeed gone too far in the previous decade. Larry Kramer, who founded the confrontational AIDS-advocacy group, ACT UP, called for "new ways of defining" the homosexual. In his play, *The Normal Heart*, Kramer's main character implores gay men to create a new social identity founded upon the "minds and hearts and all of our creative contributions to this earth." Gay men's promiscuity had brought doom; "being defined by our cocks [was] literally killing us."[39]

The external and internal rejection of the previous decade's hedonism, in the light of AIDS, all but eradicated the rent boy. He was a conduit of disease. If sex was now deadly, the same-sex prostitute was its harbinger. Gay-organized AIDS activism and support did little to consider the particular plight of men-selling-sex, focusing, instead, on stories of more respectable gay men destroyed by the disease. AIDS would draw out sex workers to their own camps, and men-selling-sex began organizing with female prostitutes.

The organization of sex work appeared out of necessity. The advent of AIDS not only brought new dangers to the health of sex workers but also to their social survival. A wave of anti-sex legislation swept through the United States and Great Britain, and sexual safe-spaces, from saunas to adult bookstores, were shuttered. Solicitation laws were also more strictly enforced, all as preventative measures against the disease.

Sex-work advocacy groups, such as the English Collective of Prostitutes and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWA), formed in the 1980s and early 1990s to inform sex workers of available resources. More generally, NSWA sought to change

[39] Larry Kramer, *The Normal Heart*, as quoted in Jeffrey-Poulter, 191.

public prejudices against sex workers. Replacing the term prostitute with sex worker emphasized prostitution as a form of labor that suffered, because of social stigmatization, from unequal and unsafe work conditions.

The English Collective of Prostitutes published the first edition of *Network* in 1983. A publication about prostitutes and by prostitutes, *Network*, demonstrated a newly organized collective identity of the prostitute and her need to organize. As the newsletter described, their publication was not the first sympathetic look at prostitution. The Save Shepherd Market Campaign, for example, published a report in 1978 that called for decriminalization and an end to police harassment in the Shepherd's Market red-light district.[40] But *Network* went beyond small, localized campaigns and beyond politics in general. *Network* was billed as a forum for all sex workers, whatever their national, sexual, social, or racial status, and the publication encouraged sex workers to embrace this common identity. The publication collected stories of sex workers, "in their own words," promising readers that "for the first time, you can read the whole truth."[41] The Collective eventually opened a safe-house for sex workers, but with doors barred to all men. While early sex-work advocacy groups focused on female sex workers, the shift to a collective identity organized and politicized, and one that soon included male sex workers, influenced men-selling-sex to also identify with their form of labor and to mitigate its occupational hazards.

[40] *1978 Prostitution*, Hall-Carpenter Archives at Special Collections, London School of Economics. HCA/Grey/4/10.

[41] Letter of the English Collective of Prostitutes, 25 July 1983. Hall-Carpenter Archives, Special Collections, London School of Economics. HCA/Ephemera/981.

As the twentieth century neared its end, both sex work and homosexuality were changing. AIDS lost some of its social potency as information and new drugs improved. More progressive governments renewed hopes for political equality. Social life itself was changing tremendously, especially with new forms of communication—the Internet in particular. Just as print ads in the gay press began transforming queer sex work, the Internet would solidify that change. As gay men went online to organize, socialize, and find sex, men-selling-sex soon followed. General gay websites such as gaydar.co.uk, included "commercial" profiles, where male sex workers, mostly referring to themselves as escorts, could post ads that included multiple photographs, detailed descriptions, and discreet means of communication. Websites dedicated solely to male escorts soon appeared and thrived. The American-based rentboy.com alone hosts advertisements for 300 escorts in London.

Digital means have not only changed how prostitution operates, but also in what ways. Sex workers can now easily organize and socialize, disseminate information, and build their client base, all with relative privacy. Events like "Hustlaball," hosted in multiple cities around the world by rentboy.com, are places where sex workers, many of whom are gay celebrities in their own right, can mingle with fans. An online rent-boy university, Hook U, offers interested men information on how to "pimp" one's self, while staying healthy, safe, and maximizing profits. The types of sex work have proliferated, from live web-cam shows to a vast and varied Internet pornography business, opening new opportunities for men-selling-sex.

Such a rapidly changing industry, which still operates mostly on the periphery, brings new problems. As Michel Dorais has argued, the inequalities among men-selling-

sex are escalating. The increasing costs of prostitution—from advertising fees, cellular phones, to private apartments to host clients—distinguish escorts from lower-paid, vulnerable street workers. Men selling on the streets are more likely to be younger, poorer, and without adequate food and shelter. For many of these men, sex work is about basic survival, and as such their ability to negotiate prices or acts is severely limited, and simultaneously curtailed by fears of law enforcement. On the other end of the spectrum, escorts—who ostensibly offer time and companionship not sex—are increasing their rates to amounts unimaginable to street workers. Social mobility in the sex trade is also severely hindered by and directly reflective of social class. Escorts who demand the highest prices are often from more economically advantageous backgrounds and are more educated. Their motives vary, as well. Private escorts are generally seeking a higher level of lifestyle or to maintain their current consumption of luxury goods, including recreational drugs.[42]

The production efforts behind some types of sex work, pornography especially, have altered the economic viability of sex work, and male prostitutes have to navigate increasingly complex transactions. Contracts and exclusivity clauses with pornographers can elevate an escort's social cache, resulting in higher fees. But this level of success rarely happens, and most men in pornographic films will not become the proverbial "porn star." Such aspirations, nonetheless, have a direct effect on industry standards. Pornographers, who control access to their large consumer base, are given immense bargaining power, leading to reduced compensation and riskier sex acts, namely "barebacking"—anal sex without condoms.

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[42] Michel Dorais, *Rent Boys: The World of Male Sex Workers* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

The new labor concerns associated with sex work have led both female and male sex workers to organize and associate themselves with labor unions. In 2000, the International Union of Sex Workers was founded in Great Britain, and by 2003 was recognized by the Trades Union Congress and became a branch of the GMB: Britain's General Union. The union advocates for "human, civil, and labour rights" for all types of sex work.[43] Male sex workers have a specific branch of the union and are represented on the union's board by Thierry Schaffauser, a French escort and pornographic actor working mostly in London. Schaffauser, as a regular contributor to the *Guardian*, decries the punitive trends in the sex industry, advocating that all sex workers unionize. These trends "are normalizing unsafe sexual practice," all while "ripping-off" those sex workers involved. He claims that images are used without royalties, compensation rates are declining, and condom-free pornography is becoming the standard despite the risks. To combat these injustices, "the means of production must shift to the workers," who would produce better work while ensuring a better working environment.[44]

However, of late, sex-work advocates have come under fire, as the discourse around sex work has changed. The rise of "human trafficking" as a contemporary social epidemic is engendered by perceptions of mass inequality and fears of mass migration. Advocates of sex work, then, such as Dr. Laura Agustin, are routinely criticized for questioning the extent of and motivations behind the concept of human trafficking. When participating in the BBC World debate on human trafficking in 2010, Agustin was

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[43] International Union of Sex Workers, "who we are," http://www.iusw.org/iusw-who-we-are, accessed 15 October 2013.

[44] Thierry Schaffauser, "Time for porn stars to self-organise," *The Guardian* 3 March 2010 http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/mar/03/gay-porn-self-organise, accessed 15 October 2013.

compared to a "holocaust denier" by Mira Sorvino, the United Nations Goodwill Ambassador on Human Trafficking.[45] Despite the dismissiveness of Sorvino's remark, sex-work advocates rail against the simplistic, entirely negative account of sex work on which the concept of "human trafficking" relies. It denies all sex workers any agency and provides governmental forces with justification to restrict all sex work, regardless of the context. The inherent victimization of sex workers, argues Schaffauser, reduces them to passive objects in need of a paternalistic state. "It participates in the denial of their capabilities," and reinforces the stereotype that "sex workers are too stupid, or lazy, without any skills, and without the consciousness of their own alienation." It is not his sex work that makes him an object, Schaffauser writes about himself, but "the political discourses that silence me, criminalise my sexual partners against my will, refuse me equal rights as a worker and citizen, and refuse to acknowledge my self-determination."[46]

In the contemporary milieu, sex work continues to be a sphere in which ideals, fears, and fantasies are projected upon the bodies of its participants. "They are fighting over our bodies," one anonymous prostitute told sociologist Bernadette Barton. "It's like prostitutes are just these bodies who are somehow connected to something bad and evil or something good and on the cutting edge of revolution. They just turn us into symbols."[47] As this work has shown, symbols, meanings, and ideals have long been written upon

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[45] David Henry Sterry, "A conversation with the Naked Anthropologist about Sex Trafficking" *The Huffington Post* 5 January 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-henry-sterry/trafficking-the-bbc-the-n_b_803593.html, accessed 15 October 2013.

[46] Thierry Schaffauser, "Not all sex workers are victims," *The Guardian* 14 April 2010 http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/14/sex-workers-victims-laws-prostitution, accessed 15 October 2013.

[47] Bernadette Barton, "Dancing on the Mobius Strip: Challenging the sex war paradigm," *Gender and Society*, 16: 5, 2002, 587.

those selling sex. Sex work was, and remains, a discursive sphere where beliefs, fears, and fantasies of sexuality are discussed and played out. The same-sex prostitute, as both a prostitute and queer, doubly demonstrates how sex acts are rarely just that, but are encoded with meanings that oftentimes extend far beyond the sex itself. That is why the study of same-sex prostitution, despite its complications, is so rich—and vital. By being indistinct and malleable, and dependent upon a host of other social contexts, same-sex prostitution aptly reveals the essential murkiness and interconnectedness of concepts such as sexuality, gender, and class. The rent boy—a sexualized fantasy embodied by the same-sex prostitute—reveals the complexity of queer sexuality better than simple hetero/homo, masculine/feminine, or even class-based dichotomies. Despite being a largely sexualized creation, the rent boy was extensively shaped by all these social categories of class, gender, nationality, and even the established narrative of heterosexual prostitution.

As a distinct homosexual identity began to crystalize in the nineteenth century, it did so within the context of a society familiar, and somewhat obsessed, with the vice of prostitution and, therefore, queer sex was publicly perceived and portrayed in similar ways. Like prostitution, queer sex was believed to operate by certain means, such as class disparity and economic motives. Even more central was the belief that queer sex, like prostitution, was, without exception, ruinous, resulting in victimization, corruption, and exploitation. The British transferred these tropes of prostitution to understand and verify incidents of queer sex. With queer sex continually being associated with prostitution, the relationship between the two became naturalized, so much so that it eventually became codified by law.

Scandals of same-sex prostitution even had consequences for Irish nationalism. The threat of same-sex prostitution was a powerful tool to both assert and criticize British control. Irish Nationalists used same-sex prostitution as a metaphorical critique of British rule. Particularly damaging was the Dublin Castle Scandal of 1884, in which English bureaucrats were caught soliciting young Irish men. Yet the British used homosexual scandals, as well. The treason case of Irish nationalist Roger Casement, during which his predilection for paid sex with young men came to the forefront, only supported Britain's argument that the Irish were inherently ill-prepared for self-government.

Yet the simplistic narratives used by the larger British public or political pundits rarely reflected the experiences of queer men or the men selling sex. Queer men, like writer E.M. Forster and photographer Montague Glover, created their own fantasized image of the rent boy—the straight, masculine, working-class man reluctantly responsive to queer incitement. This fantasy relied on their broader notions of class, gender performance, and sexual practice. Queer identity, to men like Forster and Glover, was about social class, in which middle-and-upper-class queer men thought of working-class bodies as fetishized consumer goods. The rent boy was an upper-class queer fantasy. However, working-class men having queer sex, even when motivated by cash, practiced a greater deal of agency and sexual fluidity than middle-and-upper-class queer men recognized in the shallow trope of the rent boy. Indeed, the fantasy of the rent boy routinely failed to materialize, challenging queer men's understanding of both queer sex and their working-class partners.

Just as the rent boy fantasy was created within a certain context, his importance to and role in queer identity diminished as that context changed. The rent boy fantasy was

eventually relegated to the periphery of queer life during the mid-century movement for decriminalization. The movement was controlled by queer elites who ostracized economic-based and public forms of sex to emphasize the bourgeois sexual mores of their heterosexual counterparts. This conservative turn was both affected by and influenced the eventual decriminalization of queer sex, as represented in the Wolfenden Report of 1957. As sex between adult men in private was decriminalized, working-class men selling sex suffered harsher laws and more strictly enforced penalties under this new, ostensibly "progressive" legislation, and men who sell sex still contend with the state's heavy imposition.

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