

The Inverted City: London and the Constitution of Homosexuality, 1885-1914

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The Inverted City
London and the Constitution of Homosexuality, 1885-1914

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which male homosexuality came to be closely associated with urban life between 1885 and 1914. It focuses on London and argues that particular aspects of the city's history and reputation were integral to the social, sexual and political aspects of emerging homosexual identities.

The thesis draws on literature, sexology, the largely overlooked diaries and scrapbooks of George Ives (an early campaigner for homosexual law reform), and previously unexamined newspaper reports. The first chapter outlines changes to London during the period, and examines the intensification of concerns about poverty, degeneracy, decadence and sexual profligacy. The chapters that follow show how these changes and concerns informed understanding and expressions of homosexuality. Chapter two looks at the history of homosexuality in London, and indicates the significance of urban change in shaping patterns of behaviour. Chapter three examines legislation, the ways in which men were policed and surveyed in London, and newspaper accounts of court cases. Chapter four shows how sexology strengthened and elaborated this connection between homosexuality and the city.

The last two chapters consider material written by, and explicitly or implicitly concerning, men involved in homosexual activity. Chapter five discusses how the city provided an ideal locale for a decadent understanding of desire, and the final chapter focuses on writing that attempted to counter this decadence with an appeal to Hellenism and pastoralism. It shows how the city was envisaged as a locus for the formation of political and sexual identities that might initiate a process of social change.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis was funded in part by the British Academy. I am grateful to them and to Gwladys Cook and Nick Bridgmont who provided additional financial assistance.

I owe special thanks to Daniel Pick and Cornelia Cook for their expert supervision and for their unstinting encouragement and support. Sarah Waters also supervised the early stages of the thesis, and read a final draft. Her help and advice were invaluable. Gareth Stedman Jones and Katharina Rowold read parts of the thesis, and Nick Bridgmont, Anna Davin and Sadie Wearing read the whole thing; I am extremely grateful for their insights and comments. Discussions with Laurel Brake, Christopher Breward, Lesley Hall, Lynda Nead, Miles Ogborn, and members of the QMW postgraduate critical theory reading group all proved very helpful.

The librarians and staff at the Bodleian Library, British Library, Colindale Newspaper Library, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (especially Pat Fox), London Library, London Metropolitan Archive, and Wellcome Institute all smoothed the research process. Ed Maggs at Maggs & Co. Booksellers allowed me extensive access to George Ives's scrapbooks before they were sold to the Beinecke Library.

Finally, I have been very fortunate to have the support of Gwladys Cook, John Daniel, Amber Jacobs, Madeline Joinson, Allegra Madgwick, Matthew Weait and Sadie Wearing. Nick Bridgmont has been there for me throughout.

Abbreviations

BLY	Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
HRHRC	Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.
JJC	The John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
LCC	London County Council Archive, London Metropolitan Archives, London.

Introduction

This thesis examines the ways in which male homosexuality came to be closely associated with urban life between 1885 and 1914.¹ It is in part a history of male homosexuality in London during this period, though its focus is more particularly on the way ideas of homosexual behaviour developed in dialogue with contemporary hopes and fears about the city. The figure of the male homosexual, the thesis argues, was positioned consistently within an urban framework in a range of different writings, from the newspaper press and sexology to fiction and poetry. As a result the city became integral to the social, sexual and political aspects of emerging homosexual identities.

Raymond Williams has famously described the years 1880-1914 as an *interregnum*, the time between all that is associated with the term Victorian and all that went with the war and modernism. He notes of the writers of this period: 'We shall not find in them [...] anything very new: a working out, rather, of unfinished lines; a tentative redirection. Such work requires notice, but suggests brevity'.² Since this partial dismissal, however, and particularly in the last ten years, the period has attracted much critical attention, largely because it has been identified as a time of transition. It was, argues José Harris:

a unique period in the development of British society, when opinion had been emancipated from an ancient Church-State establishment but in which the homogenising forces of the new mass media were still in their infancy. The result was a bewildering diversity of beliefs and styles of life.³

These years have featured especially in the analysis of shifts in conceptions of gender and sexuality. Judith Walkowitz, for example, sees a change at this time in the ways women used public space,⁴ whilst Michael Roper and John Tosh identify a 'marked

¹ This thesis centres on male homosexuality in order not to collapse the specificities of the relationship between men and the city with that between women and the city. For a discussion of women and the late-nineteenth century city see Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (London, 1992); Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representation of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1988); Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (London, 1995); Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx and the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (London, 1991).

² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell* (London, 1987), p.161.

³ José Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1870-1914* (Oxford, 1993), pp.38-39.

⁴ Walkowitz, *op.cit.*, ch.2. Lynda Nead has challenged Walkowitz's assertions by showing how women were using public space independently and confidently in the 1860s. Lynda Nead, "'The Rape of Glances": Men Women and Streets in Victorian London' (unpublished paper presented at the 'Viewing London' seminar series, BFI/Birkbeck College, 2 Mar.1998); Nead, 'Mapping the Self:

shift in the codes of manliness' from 'the evangelicals and Dr Arnold to the respect for muscle and might at the close of the Victorian era'.⁵ Catherine Hall describes a similar trajectory, and notes a concomitant late nineteenth-century repositioning within the middle class to a fuller embrace of ideas of order, hierarchy, and popular imperialism.⁶ Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks, Alan Sinfield, Ed Cohen, Regenia Gagnier and Linda Dowling (amongst others) have meanwhile indicated significant changes in ideas about male homosexual behaviour, associated with the rise of sexology, changes in the law, the Wilde trials, the aesthetic and decadent movements, and the renewed interest in Hellenic social and sexual systems.⁷

During the same period greater London grew by around fifty per cent in terms of population, from 4.7 million to just over seven million.⁸ During this time the city saw significant if piecemeal change. The suburbs grew dramatically and the West End was transformed with the development of leisure and shopping facilities, thoroughfares, and imposing public buildings. Urban poverty was meanwhile gaining extensive exposure in the work of the 'urban explorers'. As London became grander and more visibly imperial, it seemed that it was also becoming more cosmopolitan, more socially divided, more degraded and disordered. The changes in ideas about gender, sexuality, and class mentioned above can each be seen in the intensifying concerns about the state of the city and the condition of its residents. They are particularly apparent in the debates associated with degeneration, immigration and poverty, and in the responses to a series of sex scandals.

These developments cannot be traced to a precise date. The material changes to the city did not all happen in one year, and shifts in understandings of gender, sexuality and class happened over time, often almost imperceptibly. However, in terms of the writing and debate that this thesis considers, 1885 emerges as an appropriate departure point. Crucially this year saw the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act which criminalised all 'acts of gross indecency' between men. The act

Gender and Space in Victorian London', in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Roy Porter (London, 1997).

⁵ Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds, *Manful Assertion: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London, 1991), p.3.

⁶ Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992), p.285.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol.1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, (1976; London, 1990); Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (1979; London, 1990); Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (London, 1994); Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side: Towards a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities* (London, 1993); Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (New York, 1994); Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Market Place: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot, 1987).

⁸ Figures compiled from census results of 1881 and 1911. Christopher Hibbert and Ben Weinreb, eds, *The London Encyclopaedia* (London, 1995), p.632.

was passed partly in response to W.T.Stead's sensational reports on child prostitution in London in the Pall Mall Gazette. His work typified a new journalistic style, which had a marked effect on the way homosexuality was depicted in the newspaper press during the period. 1885 also saw the publication of 'A Case of Sexual Perversion in a Man' by George Savage in the Journal of Mental Science, one of the earliest sexological pieces on homosexuality to appear in English.⁹ A year earlier, in 1884, the classic decadent text À Rebours by J.K.Huysmans was published in Paris, and by 1885 it was circulating in London. Wilde, who had emerged as the figurehead of the aesthetic movement in England, moved into his home in Tite Street in 1885 and was becoming a more established London figure after his trips to America and the continent in the preceding years. His first sexual experience with a man (probably Robert Ross) has been dated to the following year.¹⁰

From 1885 the project examines a period of almost thirty years, extending well beyond Wilde's conviction and death. In so-doing it begins to counter the largely unchallenged orthodoxy that Wilde's arrest and prosecution were followed by a period of increased repression and a recession in the urban homosexual subculture.¹¹ The study ends with the outbreak of war on July 28th 1914. London became the nerve centre of the British war effort, and found itself vulnerable to attack for the first time. Cultural and national priorities changed, and the dynamics of sexuality and the city shifted again, in some ways marking an intensification of the fears, hopes, restrictions and possibilities discussed in the chapters that follow. These years require a further in-depth study; one that is however beyond the scope of this thesis.

England was not unique in experiencing fresh debate about sexuality during this period. Shared assumptions about male homosexuality were developing across Europe - the result of geographical proximity, similarities in economic and social structures, and the fact that much writing about sexuality had a readership extending across the continent. Most significant for the present work was the common association between male homosexuality and the city. However, there were also many differences in the ways in which this behaviour was imagined and articulated,

⁹ George Savage, 'Clinical Notes and Cases: Case of Sexual Perversion in a Man', Journal of Mental Science, vol.30 (1885), pp.390-391.

¹⁰ Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.5.

¹¹ Holbrook Jackson noted in 1913 that after 1895: 'Bohemians cut off their locks, shed their soft collars and fell back upon suburbia'. This suggestion recurs in recent work on homosexuality: the early 1890s are highlighted as a period of activity and transition, whilst the first fourteen years of the twentieth century are largely sidelined or bypassed. Sinfield, Weeks and Jonathan Dollimore each emphasise the pre-1900 and post-1914 periods in their respective examinations of homosexual sensibility, identity and politics. Holbrook Jackson, The 1890s: A Review of Art and Ideas (1913; London, 1927), p. 116; Sinfield, *op.cit.*; Weeks, *op.cit.*; Jonathan Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault (Oxford, 1991).

particularly as every city had its own set of associations. Other cities in Europe (notably Paris and Berlin) were symbolically important for many men in London, but it was the differences that were compelling; the ways in which life in these other places was seen to be distinct from life in the British capital. By focusing on London the thesis shows how the particular material and social conditions of a city, as well as the ways in which it was imaginatively recreated, affected the development of sexual identities and identifications.

The idea of imaginative recreation is particularly important. The way in which a city is described informs perceptions and behaviour as surely as its material reality. As Tony Tanner notes in his inspirational study of Venice: 'we inhabit the city as it has been written and rewritten as well as the city as it has been built and rebuilt'.¹² Novels, poetry, guide books, newspapers, works of social commentary and plans for urban redevelopment continually shaped London, adding to existing associations new and heightened dangers and possibilities. Particular concerns clung consistently to the city - ideas of sexual disarray, corruption, criminality, and social unrest, for example - but even these were in a state of flux, moving in and out of focus at different times. Newspaper coverage of the ripper murders of 1888 heightened a sense of London's dangers, for example, whilst coverage of Queen Victoria's Jubilees only a year earlier suggested a prouder and more triumphal city. The theory of degeneration made the crisis of urban poverty seem all the more desperate during this particular period, whilst the decadent movement re-framed ideas of sexual profligacy. In addition personal associations marked areas and streets in the city with a more private sense of promise and threat.¹³ Whilst there were common threads in the way London was perceived, the city clearly did not have a stable or consistent set of meanings and associations.

Writing and debate had a parallel importance in the development of ideas about sexuality. The way in which desire and different sexual acts were described encouraged individuals to conceptualise their bodies and relationships in particular ways, and began to suggest a thoroughgoing division between 'heterosexuals' and 'homosexuals'. Recent analysis has indicated the importance of particular fields of writing in this process. Most famously, Michel Foucault demonstrates the need to historicise ideas about sex and sexuality, and indicates how sexology in the late-nineteenth century pathologised homosexual acts and constructed 'homosexuals' as a group apart.¹⁴ Ed Cohen, in his analysis of newspaper coverage of the Wilde trials of

¹² Tony Tanner, *Venice Desired* (London, 1992), p. vii.

¹³ On this point see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendell (Berkeley, 1988), p.108.

¹⁴ Foucault, *op.cit.*, p.43.

1895, shows the importance of the press in shaping ideas about the appearance and behaviour of this new figure, and following Weeks, David Greenberg, and Richard Davenport-Hines, discusses the role of the law in structuring and consolidating new norms.¹⁵ Linda Dowling explores the significance of Hellenism in the 1880s and 1890s in establishing ideas of a distinct homosexual subjectivity, whilst Alan Sinfield and Regenia Gagnier show the parallel importance of decadence and aestheticism.¹⁶ Finally, Eve Sedgwick, Elaine Showalter and Joseph Bristow indicate the importance of literature more broadly, showing how a number of different literary texts articulated anxieties and shaped ideas about gender and dissident sexuality.¹⁷ The different fields of writing discussed by these historians and critics worked together to form particular ideas about male homosexuality. Of most significance to the present argument is the fact that each one implicated the city, and related prevailing urban anxieties (about sexual disarray, decadence, degeneration, immigration, disease, and excessive consumption) to homosexuality.

Importantly, however, there were also significant differences between these various writings, indicating the nuanced ways in which male homosexuality and the figure of the homosexual could be understood. Sexologists produced a variety of terms, for example, among them 'homosexual', 'invert' and 'uranian'. The courts continued to emphasise sexual acts rather than identities, whilst in accusing Oscar Wilde of 'posing as a sodomite [*sic*]' the Marquis of Queensberry drew on older quasi-religious conceptualisations. Decadent artists often attempted to side-step or subvert sexual categorisation altogether, whilst some writers with an interest in Hellenism talked of 'Greek love' and of relationships between men being part of a wider process of social transformation and renewal. These different understandings and labels are not collapsible; they carry different associations, and find an organising logic variously in biology, in ancient Greek culture and in Old Testament theology. Each signified slightly different figures and different understandings of desire and sexual behaviour, and also, this project will argue, somewhat different relationships with the city.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cohen, *op.cit.*; Weeks, *op.cit.*; David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1988); Richard Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to Sex and Sexuality in Britain Since the Renaissance* (London, 1990). See also Leslie Moran, *The Homosexual(ity) of Law* (London, 1996).

¹⁶ Dowling, *op.cit.*; Sinfield, *op.cit.*; Gagnier, *op.cit.*

¹⁷ Eve Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, (Hemel Hempstead, 1991) and *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985); Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London, 1990); Joseph Bristow, *Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing* (London, 1992).

¹⁸ The specificities of these different understandings makes the question of terminology difficult. Clearly the heterosexual/homosexual binary that structures our understandings of sexuality now can not simply be imposed retrospectively. A number of terms were in use during the period, and they

The thesis draws on debate in a number of disciplines, including cultural geography, urban history, literature, and lesbian and gay studies. Geographers and architectural theorists have shown space in general (and also particular places) to be active in the constitution of ideas about sexuality.¹⁹ They have in addition argued for the reintegration of space into social and cultural analysis, fields in which history has tended to be the determining discipline.²⁰ Groundbreaking work within the field of urban history has taken up the challenge and shown how space and time might interact in historical analysis. This discipline has been characterised by an openness in approach. H.J.Dyos (described by David Cannadine as 'the doyen of British urban history'),²¹ recognises the significance of material transformation, economic and social structure and the imaginative recreation of space, and suggests the importance of interdisciplinarity in the study of the city. In this vein he writes that there can be no 'reliable historical chart to the quality of urban life without a new discipline for

were not necessarily premised on this dialectical understanding. Sexual identities were outlined, but there were no clear overarching terms which encompassed them all. For the purposes of this thesis different labels are used as they seem appropriate to the material, but partly for pragmatic reasons I use the terms 'homosexuality' and 'homosexual' (as an adjective) in more general discussion. There are problems with this decision, not least in privileging a sexological conception of sexuality. However, these terms are used in the widest sense: 'homosexuality' denotes, in John Boswell's words, 'sexual phenomena between persons of the same gender, whether the result of conscious preference, subliminal desire, or circumstantial exigency'. 'Homosexual' is used as an adjective to describe acts or behaviour in a similar way: there is not the presumption of a self-consciously assumed or applied identity. Except where it is appropriate to the material in question the thesis avoids using 'homosexual' as a noun or as an adjective to describe a personality or individual (as in 'homosexual man').

Other historians and critics have opted for more (apparently) neutral terms, notably 'same-sex desire', and Alan Sinfield's adaptation 'same-sex passion'. These terms raise other significant problems, however, not least in foregrounding passion and desire, both of which are complex concepts. Using 'desire' carries with it an assumption of our ability to know, or have insight into, the motivation of the individual; whilst passion posits a not always applicable sexual intensity. In this context talking about 'male homosexual behaviour' seems much more possible. On the issue of terminology it is important to note finally that in general neither 'homosexual' nor 'homosexuality' should be seen automatically to refer to men. However, because the project centres exclusively on male homosexuality I have tended to omit the additional adjective 'male' as long as the discussion obviously refers to sexual and emotional relations between men. John Boswell, Christianity and Social Tolerance: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century (Chicago, 1980), p.44; Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.11

¹⁹ See, for example, Steve Pile, The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity (London, 1996); David Bell and Gill Valentine, eds, Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities (London: Routledge, 1995); and Beatriz Columina, ed., Sexuality and Space (New York, 1992).

²⁰ See, for example, Michel Foucault, 'Of other spaces', Diacritics, vol.16 (1986): pp.22-27; Doreen Massey, 'Politics of Space/Time', in Place and the Politics of Identity, eds Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London, 1993); Edward Soja, Post-modern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (London, 1989), p.31; and De Certeau, *op.cit.* Although Foucault highlights the importance of space in 'Of Other Spaces' and Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, it is not a key component of his analysis of sexuality.

²¹ David Cannadine, 'Introduction', in Exploring the Urban Past: Essay in Urban History by H.J.Dyos, eds David Cannadine and David Reeder (Cambridge, 1982), p.xiii.

connecting the historical and literary traditions of scholarship'.²² Tony Tanner, Christopher Prendergast and Catherine Edwards (working within literary studies) have shown the importance of this connection in their studies of Venice, Paris and Rome respectively.²³ These writers demonstrate the inherent instability of the metropolis and its meanings, and indicate how they are experienced differently by different groups and individuals. This understanding is central to my analysis of London and its role in the development of ideas about homosexuality.

In terms of histories of nineteenth-century London there has been a recent turn towards sexuality and gender, most impressively in work by Lynda Nead, Deborah Epstein Nord, Judith Walkowitz, and Elizabeth Wilson.²⁴ Their studies have focused on female prostitution and female sexuality, and have indicated a wider sense of sexual disarray in the city which has an important bearing on this project. Work on male homosexuality and masculinity during this period, however, has tended to sideline the city, seeing it as a largely peripheral or contextual factor. George Chauncey's Gay New York and the recent collection of pieces on different cities, Queer Sites, have begun to show more clearly the pivotal role of the city in male homosexual experience.²⁵ These studies construct detailed subcultural mappings, but tend to overlook the wider discursive links between the city and homosexuality which are the focus of analysis here. Moreover, an extensive consideration of London and male homosexuality during this particular (and highly significant) period has not yet been undertaken. H.Montgomery Hyde, Wolf von Eckardt (*et al*), and Rupert Croft-Cooke, have provided useful insights into what was happening in London at this time, the latter two concentrating particularly on the 1880s and early 1890s. Their accounts are largely descriptive, however, and suggest a pragmatic relationship between homosexuality and the city.²⁶

Neil Bartlett's Who Was that Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde perhaps comes closest to some of the questions and concerns that are addressed in this thesis.²⁷ Bartlett relates his own sense of belonging in contemporary London to that of Oscar Wilde and his contemporaries, and analyses the signs of dissident desire which were circulating in the city in the 1880s and early 1890s. He masterfully shows

²²*Ibid.*, p.62.

²³Tanner, *op.cit.*; Christopher Prendergast, Paris and the Nineteenth Century (Oxford, 1992); and Catherine Edwards, Writing Rome: Textual Approaches to the City (Cambridge, 1996).

²⁴Nead, Myths of Sexuality, *op.cit.*; Nord, *op.cit.*; Walkowitz, *op.cit.*; Wilson, *op.cit.*

²⁵George Chauncey, Gay New York: The Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (London, 1995); David Higgs, ed., Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600 (London, 1999).

²⁶H.Montgomery Hyde, The Other Love: An Historical and Contemporary Survey of Homosexuality in Britain (London, 1970); Wolf von Eckardt *et al*, Oscar Wilde's London (London, 1988); Rupert Croft-Cooke, Feasting With Panthers: A New Consideration of Some Late-Victorian Writers (London, 1967).

²⁷Neil Bartlett, Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde (London, 1988).

the autobiographical imperative behind much historical work, and his personal investment in discerning connections across time. This thesis differs significantly, however. It first looks at a broader period, moving beyond the Wilde trials and their immediate aftermath. It also focuses more specifically on the fields of writing that shaped ideas about homosexuality and examines more directly the ways in which they overlapped with ideas about the city. Finally this thesis is more cautious about drawing direct lines of association between the 1890s and the 1990s.

What links many of these historians, geographers and literary critics is their sensitivity to language and the way in which it mediates and shapes experience and behaviour. This approach has exerted a particular influence on the present work.²⁸ The thesis argues that ideas about the city, sexuality, masculinity, class and national identity are fundamentally determined and understood through language, and through their discussion within particular areas of writing. Scientific texts, journalism, advertising, jurisprudence, and literature are each important to the ways in which these ideas are constructed, contested, controlled and understood. So too are daily interactions between individuals; between friends, family and work colleagues, for example. This is what makes the attention to cross-overs and dissonances between different fields of writing so significant, since they begin to show how cultural norms form and how they are reinforced and circulated.²⁹

These norms form a set of hegemonic values which, as Antonio Gramsci famously indicated, insinuate their way into every part of our lives, and so help to preserve the social, cultural and political *status quo*.³⁰ These values come to seem natural and commonsensical, and are consequently difficult to oppose. Moreover, because they are apparently obvious they are perpetuated at all levels of society: by scientists, politicians and journalists, and also through day to day social relations.

²⁸ This 'linguistic turn' in history has been the subject of considerable debate, particularly following the publication of Gareth Stedman Jones's *Languages of Class* (Cambridge, 1983). The exchanges became particularly fierce in successive editions of *Social History* between 1991 and 1996 (vols 16-21), and centred on the legitimacy of the approach and its implications for social history.

²⁹ This understanding is also one of the distinguishing features of new historicist approaches to history and literature. Claire Colebrook writes that new historicism draws on 'texts from various domains (science, jurisprudence, travel writing, etc.) in order to seek the resonances and distinctions which operate among discourses'. This circulation and contestation of ideas, she argues, is fundamental to understanding history. Claire Colebrook, *New Literary Histories. New Historicism and Contemporary Criticism* (Manchester, 1997), p.24. See also H.Aram Veveser, ed., *The New Historicism* (London, 1994), p.2; and Gillian Beer, *Forging the Missing Link: Interdisciplinary Stories* (Cambridge, 1991).

³⁰ For a discussion of Gramsci's theory of hegemony see Perry Anderson, *Considerations of Western Marxism* (London, 1979), p.79; and Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London, 1994), p.13. See also Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London, 1979), ch.1.

These values are also unsteady, however. The individual is fundamentally limited by them, but may also see other ways of knowing and experiencing him or herself. Ideas relating to class, national identity, masculinity and sexuality (not to mention ideas about the city and the division between public and private realms) were shifting during the second half of the century creating repeated challenges to prevailing norms and exposing contradictions and inconsistencies within them (what Alan Sinfield calls 'faultlines').³¹ It is consequently perhaps most helpful to consider hegemony as a process of constant negotiation and dialogue, as challenges, changes and traces of older understandings³² are absorbed and countered with varying degrees of success. The process indicated different ways of understanding relationships, morality and identity, and exposed (to however limited a degree) the fiction of naturalness that lay behind many common assumptions.

Furthermore, the effects of language and writing are never singular. The outraged response to Wilde's behaviour, to take an obvious example, also exposed particular ways in which the city could be used, as well as a subcultural network which might provide solace to men who shared Wilde's desires. The newspaper coverage of the case noisily re-articulated what should not happen between two men, but as noisily proclaimed that it did and outlined where it took place and who was involved. Such writing had numerous and contradictory effects which existed beyond the control of the author. These effects suggest that whilst our understandings are shaped by a series of powerful discourses (the law and science, for example) and limited by the field of language, there is still scope for an individualised sense of subjectivity. We are, as Peter Burke suggests, both 'masters and servants of language'.³³ Consequently whilst this thesis shows the connections between different writings about homosexuality (indicating a common and defining language) it also identifies a plurality which suggested the potential for individual choice and a degree of autonomy. This plurality destabilised the *status quo*, the domineering value system, and prevailing stereotypes.

Michel de Certeau has looked at the use of space in similar terms. The built environment is in many ways the embodiment of hegemonic values and systems (reinforcing and constituting ideas about empire, capital, consumption, democracy, and privacy, for example). The way in which space has been structured and written

³¹ Alan Sinfield, Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading (Berkeley, 1992).

³² Despite an apparently radical shift in the conceptualisation and treatment of pauperism and poverty in the 1830s, for example, Mary Poovey shows how these changes retained 'traces' of previous conceptualisations. See Mary Poovey, Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864 (Chicago, 1995), p.13.

³³ Peter Burke, 'Introduction', in The Social History of Language, eds Peter Burke and Roy Porter (Cambridge, 1987), p.14.

about dictates the ways in which it is used by the individual. However, whilst that individual exists within that space, they also constantly make choices (however small) about where to go and which route to take (for example). Moreover each journey is punctuated by memories and associations which make that person's relationship with the city different from everyone else's. The associations and meanings of the city proliferate, allowing the individual to 'elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised'.³⁴ De Certeau consequently finds a more empowering and individualised engagement with space and the hegemonic structures it represents than Foucault, who sees the subject overpowered by these structures and spaces and the self-regulation they induce.³⁵

The thesis thus suggests that there was room for individualised expression within the city and differentiated conceptualisations of what it promised and threatened. This is partly because of the instability and plurality of urban discourses. It is also because of the individual's social and economic position, their particular and often complicated allegiances (to their family, friends, and profession, for example), and the specificities of their psychological make-up. These factors complicate any simplistic account of behaviour and choice. Psychoanalytic theory in particular has shown that the writing, speech and behaviour of an individual will always have elements which are beyond his or her conscious grasp (not to mention the analytical powers of the historian or critic).³⁶ It is hardly surprising, then, that the individual's desires and experiences rarely 'map directly' on to prevailing hegemonic norms and values.³⁷ This is not to discount the power of language and discourse in shaping subjectivity and marking limits to the conceptualisation of sexuality, identity and the city. Instead, it is to suggest that their effect on the individual will not be the same and that he or she will respond to them in different ways.³⁸

³⁴ De Certeau, *op.cit.*, p.96.

³⁵ 'Stones', Foucault writes, 'can make people docile and knowable'. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977), p.172.

³⁶ Lyndal Roper writes: 'A historically useful psychoanalysis must allow for individual agency and the possibility that individuals can think and feel against the social grain - a goal that is easier to specify than to achieve'. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994), p.9. For a further discussion of the relationship between psychoanalysis, subjectivity and history see Peter Gay, *Freud for Historians* (Oxford, 1985); Sally Alexander, 'Feminist History and Psychoanalysis', in *Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in Nineteenth and Twentieth Feminist History* (London, 1994); and Karl Figlio, 'Historical Imagination/Psychoanalytical Imagination', *History Workshop Journal*, no.45 (Spring 1998): pp.199-221.

³⁷ Roper and Tosh, *op.cit.*, p.15.

³⁸ Kaja Silverman in fact argues convincingly that ideology and hegemonic values 'invade' unconscious desire and 'define the psychic reality even of a subject who at a conscious level remains morally and ironically detached from it'. Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London, 1992), p.23.

The purpose of this brief discussion of the plurality and instability of different fields of writing, the possibilities as well as the limitations of language, and the particularity of subjectivity, is to suggest that the intersection between the city and homosexuality can not be seen as stable. It was experienced in different ways by different individuals depending on their circumstances, class, education, and so on. There was moreover no singular discourse or field of writing which dictated behaviour, but rather a range of discourses and writings which conflicted and overlapped.³⁹ This thesis will at various points show how individuals dealt with the choices that lay before them, and attempts to remain sensitive to the variables which informed their engagement with the social realm. This is not, however, the main focus of the project, which looks at the development of ideas about homosexuality during this period and the formation of a set of sometimes contradictory assumptions about associated identities and behaviour. The work concentrates largely on what was produced, the cultural product and how it circulated, rather than the impetus behind this production and the way specific individuals dealt with it.

The thesis is organised around the fields of writing which have been seen as important in shaping ideas about homosexual identity, and there are chapters devoted to the law and the newspaper press, to sexology, to aestheticism and decadence, and to Hellenism and pastoralism. This separation is important since the different bodies of writing and debate were not equivalent: they had different purposes, different power to influence ideas and behaviour, and different audiences. Whilst the law sought to regulate behaviour, for example, sexology ostensibly sought a more abstract 'truth' and a wider 'natural' justice. The former gained a wide readership through reports of court cases in the newspapers; the latter was largely restricted to a professional elite. Both were nevertheless hugely influential. Likewise, the pornography, diaries, and poetry which were read by only a handful of men clearly did not have a wide public influence, and yet they reflected and suggested conceptualisations of identity and ways of knowing the city that overlapped with, but were also distinct from, those suggested by the law, sexology and the newspaper press.

As well as showing what distinguished each field of writing, treating them in separate chapters allows internal dissonances to emerge. These were not unified areas: the law was not applied or reported consistently throughout the period, and different elements of the newspaper press took different ideological positions. The period also

³⁹ Gillian Beer argues that we live 'in a variety of conflicted epistemologies' which interact in different forms of writing and in our everyday lives. Gillian Beer, *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter* (Oxford, 1996), p. 178; Beer, *Forging the Missing Link*, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

saw disagreement between sexologists as to the symptoms and causes of homosexuality. Each chapter attempts to show the specificity and contradictions within each field, whilst also indicating how they overlapped with each other and were associated with a range of debates about the city. In this way the thesis explores a controlled plurality. It shows the close links between the different images of homosexuality and the city, but also indicates the ways in which they were distinct from each other and suggested a range of possibilities and restrictions.

The thesis begins with two contextual chapters. The first outlines some of the changes to London during the period, examines the concerns and fears associated with the city, and investigates different forms of writing (from the work of the so-called urban explorers to the travel guides of Karl Baedeker) to indicate the ways in which the urban terrain was contested. It also discusses the wider perception of sexual disarray in the city, which formed a crucial context for discussions of homosexuality. It was partly because of this general association that the connection between homosexuality and the city was so automatic.

Chapter two shows how homosexual activity was an embedded and long-standing part of city life. The first half discusses reports of male homosexual activity dating back to the eighteenth century, and moves on to discuss the case of Fanny and Stella (two cross-dressers arrested in 1870), and the pornographic novel Sins of the Cities of the Plain (1881). It suggests both the continuities and changes in the expression and policing of homosexual activity, and discusses events and texts which existed within the living memory of some of the writers discussed in the rest of the thesis. Such histories, the chapter suggests, were crucial in shaping perceptions and behaviour. The second part of the chapter looks at the period 1885-1914 itself, and outlines a homoerotic map of the city, drawing attention to particular places and social organisations which gained notoriety in the public mind, or were important reference points for men seeking sexual or emotional relationships with other men. This part of the chapter indicates the significance of urban change and innovation to emerging patterns of homosexual behaviour.

Chapter three deals with court cases, and newspaper coverage of them. It examines the legislation regulating male homosexual activity, illustrates the ways in which men were policed and surveyed in London (partly through previously unexamined arrest and prosecution figures), and explores newspaper depictions of this particular sexual criminal and the places he was thought to frequent. The Cleveland Street affair (1889-1890) and the Wilde trials (1895) are perhaps the most memorable scandals from the period, but the chapter also examines minor cases. These reinforced and contested images emerging from the more major sensations. The chapter indicates

the contingency of law enforcement and press coverage, and shows how images of both an urban pariah and a protected community emerged.

The scope of chapter four is broader than the others, looking at the role of sexology in shaping images of homosexuality and the city more generally. The chapter explores the major sexological texts published in English during the period (including centrally the Charles Chaddock translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* [1892], Henry Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* [1897], and Iwan Bloch's *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, translated by M. Eden Paul [1908]), and shows how they each conflated the homosexual or invert and the city.⁴⁰ The chapter looks at the different relationship each writer imagined, and shows the emergence of a spatialised figure separated from the putatively progressive dominant culture.

The fifth and sixth chapters examine material written by, and explicitly or implicitly concerning, men involved in homosexual activity. The works repeatedly drew in other places and other times to explore the potential sensuality of life in the city and to legitimise sexual difference there. Chapter five discusses the relatively fluid conceptualisation of desire in aesthetic and decadent writing, and describes the significance of Paris and 'the Orient' as reference points. It shows how the possibilities offered by the city were explored in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), the anonymous pornographic novel *Teleny, or the Reverse of the Medal* (1893), and J.-K. Huysmans' *À Rebours* (1884), which so influenced Wilde and his circle. It also looks at some of the parodies of Wilde and the aesthetic and decadent movements, and at the stereotypes and conventionalised uses of the city they envisaged.

The final chapter focuses on writing which attempted to counter the decadence and supposed degeneracy of the writers discussed in chapter five with an appeal to Hellenism and pastoralism. The chapter considers the limitations London was perceived to place on male homosexual relations, but also shows how specific areas of the capital were singled out for their ability to endorse a Hellenic conception of relations between men. It examines the homophile periodical *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture* (1888-1894), alongside the published and private writing of the classicist John Addington Symonds and the campaigner for homosexual law reform George Ives. A closing analysis of the lengthy prose poem *Towards Democracy* (1883-1902) shows how Edward Carpenter reintegrated London into a vision of

⁴⁰ The chapter stops short of Freud's radical intervention into the field, even though the first English translation of the 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905) appeared in 1910. Freud's theorisation of sexuality, and his conceptualisation of the unconscious, introduced a further dynamic to the relationship between sexuality and the city, as well as some suggestive illustration. However, although his writing has had a profound effect on our contemporary understandings of sexuality, it was beyond the main current of debate in England during this particular period.

sexual possibility and freedom, and envisaged the city as a locus for the formation of political and sexual identities that might initiate a process of social change.

Running through each of these chapters to varying degrees is a consideration of the work of George Ives (1867-1950), a figure who has been largely overlooked in discussions of homosexuality in this period.⁴¹ The illegitimate son of the Baroness de Molarti of Spain and Gordon Maynard Ives, Ives was bought up in France and England by his paternal grandmother, Emma Ives. He lived all his adult life in London, first at the Albany, Piccadilly, then in Park Road, Regents Park and finally at Adelaide Road, just north of Primrose Hill. Living on a private income, Ives dedicated himself to legal and penal reform, and the liberalisation of attitudes to homosexuality and what he called 'the sex passion' more generally. To this end he formed the Order of the Chaerona around 1891 (a highly secretive support and pressure group named after the last battle of the Theban Bands in 338 BC), was an active member of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (established in 1913), and sent streams of letters to various newspapers and periodicals. Amongst his published writings was a fairly explicit call for the acceptance of homosexual relationships in an article in *The Humanitarian* in October 1894, which drew sharp criticism from W.T.Stead's *Review of Reviews*.⁴² He also wrote three short volumes of poetry (*The Lifting of the Veil* [1892], *The Book of Chains* [1897] and *Eros's Throne* [1900]), *A History of Penal Methods* (1914), on which he had worked for at least 12 years, *The Graeco-Roman View of Youth* (1926) and *Obstacles to Human Progress* (1939). His most remarkable works, however, were a 122-volume diary covering the period from 20 December 1886 to 16 November 1949, and a 45-volume scrapbook (or 'casebook' as he called it), compiled between 1892 and 1949. The diary runs to 20,000 pages and approximately three million words. The scrapbook contains some of his own published letters and articles, reviews of his work, occasional photographs and illustrations, and newspaper reports of cricket matches (a favourite hobby), eccentric human and animal behaviour, miscarriages of justice, cross dressing, gross indecency, nudity, and all things Greek.⁴³

⁴¹ For a brief account of Ives's life and reform work see Weeks, *Coming Out*, *op.cit.*, pp.118-124 & pp.130-136. For a discussion of Ives's association with Wilde see John Stokes, 'Wilde at Bay: the Diaries of George Ives', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, vol.26, no.3 (1983): pp.175-184.

⁴² George Ives, 'The New Hedonism Controversy', *The Humanitarian*, vol.v, no.4 (October 1894): pp.292-297; 'In Praise of Two Crimes', *The Review of Reviews*, vol.x, no.4 (October 1894): p.356.

⁴³ Before being sold to the Beinecke Library, Yale University, the scrapbooks were owned by J.Landesman, who published a short selection from them in *Man Bites Dog: The Scrapbook of an Edwardian Eccentric*. The selection overemphasises the more bizarre newspaper reports and depicts Ives as a benign eccentric. Ives's serious commitment to reform, evident in the scrapbooks and diaries, is largely overlooked. Paul Sieveking, ed., *Man Bites Dog: The Scrapbook of an Edwardian Eccentric* (London, 1980).

The diary and scrapbooks are significant for a number of reasons. First, Ives's voracious diary writing (which indicates his even more voracious consumption of histories of ancient Greece, works on criminology, sexological writing, and the newspaper and periodical press - in short the key areas of writing discussed in this thesis) signals the importance of textual and rhetorical practice in the formation of his ideas of sexual identity and his notions of resistance and agitation. It also suggests the importance of establishing a sense of autonomous subjectivity which might sustain a more defined and less marginal position within society. Through his diary writing Ives attempted to make a particular sexual and political version of himself visible to himself (and the putative reader he addressed and anticipated).⁴⁴

This self-conceptualisation took place specifically in London. Although Ives visited and fantasised about other places, he never moved from the capital. He saw as crucial his proximity to the organs of law and government, the major publishers and newspapers, his associates in the Order of the Chaerona and Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, and his circle of friends. London was central to Ives's life and work. As such the diaries provide tantalising insights into metropolitan life and many of the figures discussed in the chapters which follow. He was friends, for example, with Carpenter, Wilde, Lord Alfred Douglas (with whom he had a one-night stand), Wilde's confidant and literary executor Robert Ross, the editor of The Artist and Journal of Home Culture Charles Kains Jackson, the painter Henry Scott Tuke, romantic socialist and architect C.R. Ashbee, and sexological writers Henry Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld and Edward Westermarck. Although circumspect and secretive (several sections of the diary are in code and names are often abbreviated to initials) his writing gives a cogent insight into the way homosexuality was understood and experienced during the period, and further demonstrates the deep-seated links between London and homosexual identity in England.

⁴⁴ The phrase is borrowed from Patrick Joyce, who writes 'technologies of the self in the nineteenth century involved "making the self visible to the self"'. Patrick Joyce, Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England (Cambridge, 1994), p.19.



Figure i. George Ives in old age (HRHRC).

Chapter 1

The Disorderly City: London, 1885-1914

During this period London was the world's largest metropolis, and its social and cultural complexity had a profound impact on ideas of urban and sexual identity. This chapter explores intensifying concerns about degeneration, decadence, immigration and sexual disarray in London, and examines tensions between competing images of the city; between visions of East End poverty, West End excess, and imperial and commercial grandeur.

The chapter is in four sections. The first describes the redevelopment of central London in the second half of the nineteenth century and the city's burgeoning imperial and commercial profile. The second looks at the spectre of urban poverty, and the third explores changes in leisure and consumerism in the West End. The final section examines anxieties about the perceived fragmentation of urban life, the desire to impose order, and the apparent proliferation of opportunities for personal re-invention. These concerns, dynamics, and material changes shaped the way men policed and negotiated their sexual and social relationships with other men in the city, as subsequent chapters will show.

1.

The population of greater London grew by an average of 800,000 every ten years between 1861 and 1911, more than doubling in that time from just over three million to just over seven million people.¹ 'The historic rural mould', José Harris argues, was 'irrevocably shattered'.² Changes to the city were piecemeal, and lacked the kind of unifying stamp Baron Haussmann had imposed on Paris earlier *in the 1850s and 60s*. They nevertheless signalled London's imperial significance and modernity more forcefully than before. Indeed, Jim Dyos, Donald Olsen and Michael Port have suggested that whilst there was a certain envy of the Parisian Boulevards in journals such as *The Builder*, *Building News*, and *The Architect*, there was also a pride in London's architectural eclecticism, which was seen to signify a more advanced democratic spirit.³

¹ The most rapid period of growth was between 1871 and 1901, when the population increased by an average of nearly 900,000 per decade. Figures compiled from the decennial census. See Christopher Hibbert and Ben Weinreb, eds, *The London Encyclopaedia* (London, 1995), p.632.

² José Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1970-1914* (Oxford, 1993), p.42.

³ Donald Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (London, 1976), pp.58-59; Michael Port, *Imperial London: Civil Government Building in London, 1850-1915* (New Haven, 1995), pp.13-14; H.J.Dyos, 'A Guide to the Streets of London', in *Exploring the Urban Past: Essay in Urban History*

New roads and the developing railway network constituted some of the most dramatic change in terms of London's accessibility and appearance. By 1875 the central area of London was circled by gigantic termini, with railway lines segmenting the areas beyond and feeding the growing suburbs.⁴ Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Board of Works, which was established in 1855 as the first city-wide authority, initiated a series of road building projects which connected these rail termini with the administrative, financial and entertainment areas of the city. The Chelsea, Albert and Victoria Embankments, Northumberland Avenue, and Queen Victoria Street in the City were complete by the mid-1870s, and Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road by the late-1880s (see figs ii and iii). New vistas were opened up which were perceived to be more fitting for an imperial city. The Embankment was a particular favourite amongst commentators, but Telegraph journalist George Augustus Sala also relished the clearance effected by the Charing Cross Road project. He noted the 'spacious and handsome area' at the north of Trafalgar Square, where before there had been 'a choked-up labyrinth of noisome courts and alleys'.⁵ Fellow journalist H. Barton-Baker expected the Kingsway development (completed in 1905) to result in a similar transformation. It would, he claimed, 'convert the eastern half of the Strand, now so miserably mean as to be a disgrace to our great city, into a site that will surpass in grandeur of design any of the places of the continental Capitals' (see figs iv and v).⁶

Developments underground, meanwhile, elaborated the image of London as an innovative and modern metropolis. The new sewerage system was completed in 1875, improving the sanitation of the city, providing a powerful symbol of its health, and, significantly (as the following two chapters will show) allowing for the development of more public toilets.⁷ The Metropolitan Railway, connecting Kings Cross and Paddington stations, was completed in 1863, and by 1910 the central London underground network (with the exception of the Jubilee and Victoria lines) was in place. Karl Baedeker's 1911 guide to London noted that the city was 'now the

by H.J. Dyos, eds David Cannadine and David Reeder (Cambridge, 1982), p.196.

⁴ Euston was completed in 1838, followed by Waterloo (1848), Kings Cross (1852), Paddington (1854), Victoria (1862), Charing Cross (1864), St Pancras (1867) and Liverpool Street (1875). *The London Encyclopaedia*, *op.cit.*

⁵ George Augustus Sala, *London Up to Date* (London, 1894), p.160. At least 5,500 people were displaced by the Charing Cross Road and Shaftesbury Avenue schemes alone, and it is estimated that between 1872 and 1885 75,000 people were cleared from the central area, exacerbating the housing crisis of the 1880s. See Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study of the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), p.169 & p.214.

⁶ H. Barton-Baker, *Stories of the Streets of London* (London, 1899), p.302 & p.426.

⁷ By 1894 public toilets and urinals had been built at Piccadilly Circus, Cambridge Circus and Broad Street, just off Berwick Street (see fig. iii). For an account of the symbolic significance of the development of London's sewers see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London, 1986), esp. ch. 3.



Figure ii. Ordinance survey map of the West End in 1870, before the construction of Shaftesbury Avenue, Charing Cross Road and Piccadilly Circus (Alan Godfrey Maps).



Figure iii. Ordnance survey map of the West End in 1894, after the construction of Shaftesbury Avenue, Charing Cross Road and Piccadilly Circus (Alan Godfrey Maps).



Figure iv. Ordnance survey map of Holborn in 1873, before the construction of Kingsway (Alan Godfrey Maps).

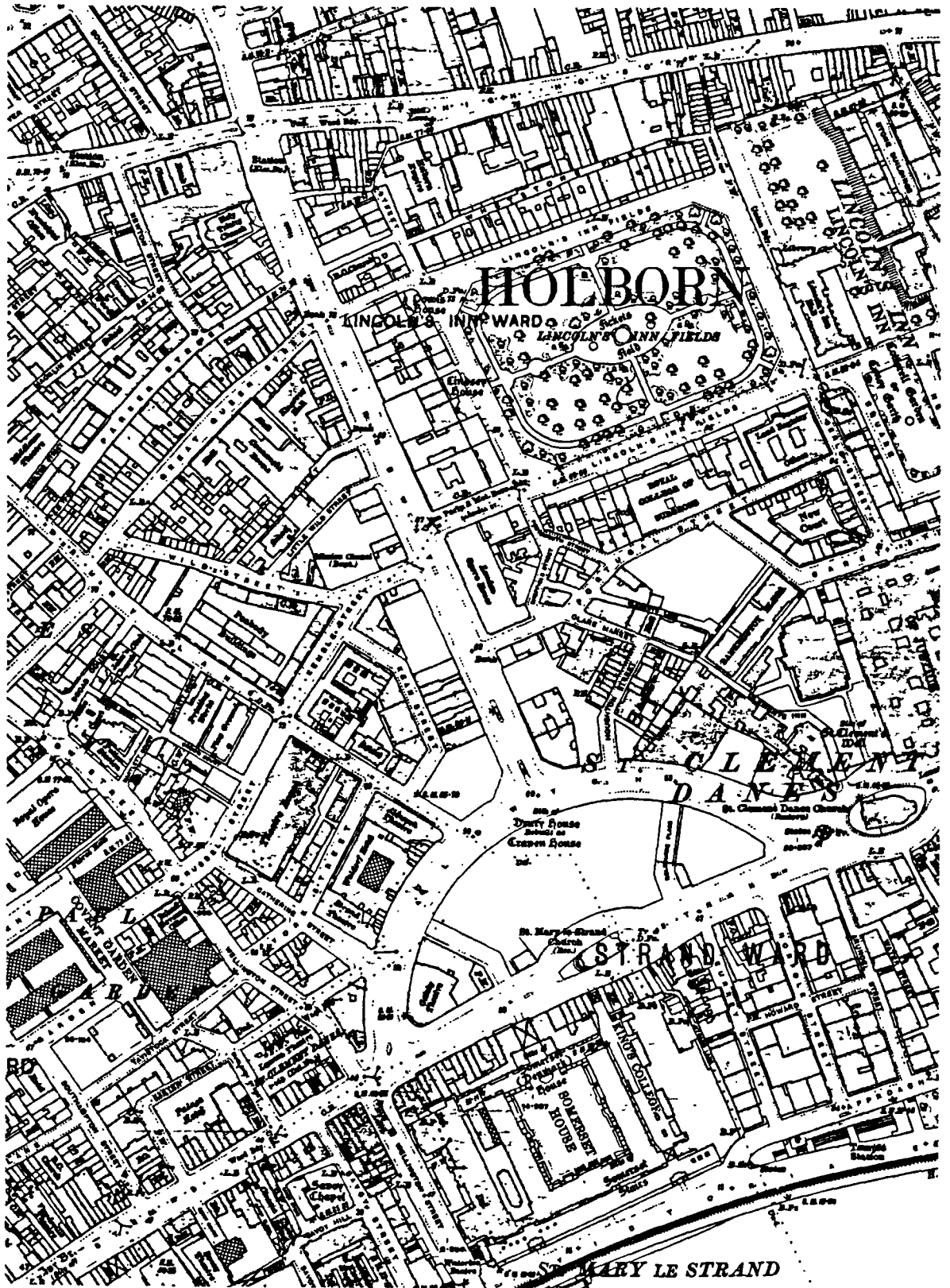


Figure v. Ordnance survey map of Holborn in 1914, after the construction of Kingsway (Alan Godfrey Maps).

best equipped city in the world in respect of convenient, rapid and cheap communication'.⁸

The new railway and underground network encouraged the development of the suburbs, which grew rapidly as speculative builders bought up enormous tracts of land around the city. There was no masterplan for this suburban growth, but it nevertheless came, Olsen argues, as 'a highly efficient means both of functional and social segregation'.⁹ Work and home life were increasingly divided, and different professional groups seemed to gravitate to different suburban areas, securing a degree of social homogeneity less evident in the centre: Olsen points out, for example, that Balham, Sydenham, Highgate, and Richmond developed as the wealthier of the middle-class suburbs, whilst stockbrokers and commercial agents settled in Brixton and Clapham, clerks moved to Dalston, Forest Hill, Walthamstow and Tottenham, and city tradesmen found homes in Stockwell, Camberwell and Kennington.¹⁰ The design of homes and gardens in these areas allowed family units to remain largely self-contained. This added to the sense that London was encircled by an outer ring representing ordered family life and stable social hierarchies. Access to the more chaotic centre was, meanwhile, regulated and limited by railway timetables.¹¹

Whilst the fabric and location of London's suburbs integrated imperial and middle-class ideologies into the lives of people who lived there, more dramatic architectural statements of Britain's national and international significance were undergoing construction in the centre of the city. Developments in Westminster, Kensington, and the City began to bring London back into line with its foreign competition,¹² demonstrating imperial power, economic clout, and technological and cultural advance. Proceeds from the Great Exhibition of 1851 helped in the development of a new cultural quarter in Kensington. The Royal Albert Hall was completed in 1871, the Albert Memorial a year later, the romanesque Natural History Museum in 1880, the Imperial Institute in 1893, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1909. Together, David Gilbert and Felix Driver note, the buildings signalled 'the supreme confidence and global reach of Victorian science and culture'.¹³ Whitehall

⁸ Karl Baedeker, *London and its Environs* (London, 1911), p.16.

⁹ Olsen, *op.cit.*, p.220.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.240. See also H.J.Dyos, 'Speculative Builders and Developers of Victorian London' and 'A Victorian Speculative Builder: Edward Yates', in *Exploring the Urban Past*, *op.cit.*

¹¹ Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilisation* (London, 1994), p.338.

¹² Berlin, Rome, Vienna and Washington had all seen large-scale building programmes in the 1860s and 1870s. See Felix Driver and David Gilbert, 'Imperial Metropolis: Landscape, Space and Performance in London, 1850-1950' (Unpublished; Royal Holloway Department of Geography Research Papers, no.5, 1997), p.5; Olsen, *op.cit.*, pp.58-59; Port, *op.cit.*, pp.13-14.

¹³ Driver and Gilbert, *op.cit.*, p.10.

also saw changes, with the Italianate Foreign Office (1873) and Baroque War Office (1906) mirroring 'an overconfident imperial mood'.¹⁴ The Admiralty was extended (1894) and a new Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture completed in 1909. Just across the river from Parliament, County Hall was opened in 1908 as a new home for the London County Council (founded in 1888). In 1911 the Queen Victoria Memorial was unveiled in front of Buckingham Palace and Admiralty Arch (at the eastern end of The Mall) opened to give direct processional access to Trafalgar Square.

Public and commercial developments in the City included the Post Office Headquarters in St Martin-Le-Grand (1873), the Wool Exchange in Coleman Street (1874), the City of London School (1882), the enlarged Stock Exchange (1885), the Guildhall School of Music and Art Gallery (1886), the new Old Bailey (1907), and (on the western border of the City) the Strand Law Courts (1882). In addition vast tracts of the area were redeveloped with grandiose neo-classical and Venetian office buildings.¹⁵ Further east a series of new docks were constructed, including Millwall (1868), South West India (1870), Royal Albert (1880), and Tilbury (1886). Karl Baedeker's guides to London, which were generally sparing in their coverage of the East End, promoted the docks as the place where London's wealth and England's power could be seen first hand. The 1885 edition marked them out as 'one of the most interesting sights of London [...] with its immense warehouses, the centre from which the commerce of England radiates all over the globe'.¹⁶ The 1911 edition went further: 'nothing will convey to the stranger a better idea of the vast activity and stupendous wealth of London than a visit to the warehouses at London's docks'.¹⁷ They were cast as psychologically and economically central to the city and the empire, lending added power and a dynamic edge to the solid symbols of commerce and government in the City and Westminster. The new department stores in the West End fulfilled a similar function, with imposing new buildings serving as exhibition halls for imperial produce.¹⁸

The geographer Steve Pile persuasively argues that this kind of monumentalism was a means of embodying and reproducing social and power relations. It made these relations visible, whilst also 'mask[ing] and/or legitimatis[ing] and/or naturalis[ing]' them.¹⁹ Monumentalised London thus came as an expression of national pride and a celebration of imperial and commercial achievement, but was also a means of

¹⁴ Andrew Saint and Gillian Darley, *The Chronicles of London* (London, 1994), p.223.

¹⁵ Driver and Gilbert, *op.cit.*, p.11.

¹⁶ Baedeker, *London and its Environs* (London, 1885), p.123.

¹⁷ Baedeker, *London and its Environs* (London, 1911), p.144.

¹⁸ Alison Adburgham, *Shopping in Style: London from the Restoration to Edwardian Elegance* (London, 1979), p.156.

¹⁹ Steve Pile, *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity* (London, 1996), p.213.

reflecting back and enforcing the observer's social position, and the class, gender and racial power relations necessary for the maintenance of imperial social and economic structures. Even though these symbols were literally constructs (something years of disruption and building work made obvious) and the architectural styles eclectic, the massy proportions suggested the solidity and permanence of political, social and economic values.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there was thus a piecemeal dramatisation of London's imperial world role. The city was undergoing a reinvention to become more 'itself': more regal, more imperial, more obviously commercially and economically successful, more innovative, progressive and cultured. The Illustrated London News and the Graphic bolstered the message in their extensive coverage of urban innovation, whilst lengthy accounts of developments and changes also appeared in work by Sala and Barton-Baker, and in Charles Pascoe's London of Today (1885) and George Sims's Living London (1901). London, wrote the journalist Robert Machray in 1902, 'is the most imposing and wonderful spectacle in the world. As a "sight" there is nothing to approach it - Paris, New York or any other city, not excepted'.²⁰ The increase in pomp and ceremony surrounding the royal family further activated the imperial resonances of the new buildings and thoroughfares. As David Cannadine notes, once Victoria had been made Empress of India in 1877 every royal occasion also became an imperial occasion.²¹

This intensification of imperial rhetoric was taking place at a time of particular tension between Britain and other European powers. In the 1890s there was concern about the French, particularly after they allied themselves with Russia in 1894. In the early 1900s, however, attention shifted to Germany, which was in the process of building up its naval fleet. By 1912 tensions were running especially high as Italy, newly victorious from their Turkish campaign, renewed their alliance with Germany and Austria. Reynolds clearly foresaw conflagration, with a front page article in November 1912 headed 'If War Broke Out: What a European Struggle Would Mean: Armageddon'.²² The concerns were reflected, and (I.F. Clarke suggests) exacerbated, by the proliferation of invasion narratives.²³ Cecil Eby counts over 70 such novels and pamphlets published between 1871 and 1914, detailing 48 onslaughts from Germany, 18 from France, eight from Russia, and others from China, Japan, America and

²⁰ Robert Machray, The Night Side of London (London, 1902), p.22.

²¹ David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance, and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and 'The Invention of Tradition, c.1820-1977', in The Invention of Tradition, eds Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), p.104. Major royal events during the period included the jubilees of 1887 and 1897, Victoria's funeral of 1901 and the coronations of 1902 and 1911.

²² 'If War Broke Out', Reynolds, 17 Nov.1912: p.1.

²³ I.F. Clarke, Voices Prophesying War (Oxford, 1992), p.125.

Mars.²⁴ London was the focus of many of these attacks. The perceived threat to the nation and empire made the strong architectural statements of stability and strength particularly significant, and clearly addressed a foreign as well as a domestic audience. These fears also led to a rise in jingoism and a nervousness about all things foreign, as subsequent sections and chapters show.²⁵

The symbolism of the changing cityscape was thus not as steady as it appeared, and apart from national pride it indicated an unease about international relations. Moreover, the elements that aided in the elaboration of the imperial message also often undermined it. The docks, the department stores, the railway termini, even the upsurge of imperial fervour in the streets during the jubilees and on Mafeking Night, shook the imagery of stability and unity.²⁶ The most significant factor in destabilising this imperial facade, however, were the revelations of urban poverty in the 1880s and 1890s, which was seen to threaten political, social, moral and racial decay.

2.

Charles Booth's massive and methodical seventeen-volume survey Life and Labour of the People of London (published between 1889 and 1905) found that thirty percent of Londoners lived below his poverty line, and that a further 8.5 percent were unable to cover the costs of basic clothing and food from their intermittent earnings. Booth was the first to put carefully researched figures to the levels of poverty in the capital, but concern had been expressed before. Henry Mayhew published London Labour and London Poor in 1851, and Dickens's novels famously detailed the lives of London's dispossessed between 1836 and 1868. In the 1880s and 1890s, however, the trickle of material on the subject turned into a flood, with fictional and journalistic accounts scandalising London's middle and upper classes.²⁷ This material, which has been discussed extensively by historians, is crucial to understanding particular homoerotic dynamics discussed later in the thesis, and consequently requires some brief consideration here.²⁸

²⁴ Cecil Eby, The Road to Armageddon (Durham, 1987), p.11.

²⁵ For a contemporary account see J.A.Hobson, The Psychology of Jingoism (London, 1901).

²⁶ The celebrations followed the relief of General Baden Powell and seven hundred men at Mafeking, South Africa, during the Boer War. See Hobson, *op cit*.

²⁷ Novels included Walter Besant's All Sorts and Conditions of Men (1882), George Gissing's The Nether World (1889), Israel Zangwill's Children of the Ghetto (1892), and Arthur Morrison's A Child of Jago (1896). The work of the urban explorers appeared in newspapers, periodicals, and books, and included James Greenwood's In Strange Company (1873 1883), Andrew Mearns's pamphlet 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London' (1883), George Sims's How the Poor Live (1883), Charles Masterman's The Heart of Empire (1901), and Jack London's The People of the Abyss (1903).

²⁸ See, for example, Gill Davies, 'Foreign Bodies: Images of the London Working Class at the End of the Nineteenth Century', Literature and History, vol.14, no.1 (Spring 1988): pp.64-80; Gareth Stedman Jones, Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982

Whilst the West End became physically more receptive and literally open to observation, the areas of poverty in London were exposed rather differently: accounts of the poor and the East End were channelled through commentators who tailored their reports to a middle and upper-class audience. They were highly significant in shaping perceptions of urban poverty and in making it discernible and readable - not least by employing the familiar language of colonial exploration which evoked and confirmed a particular (and perhaps comforting) power dynamic. The East End was variously 'a dark continent',²⁹ 'the great dark region of poverty, misery, squalor and immorality',³⁰ and a 'human wilderness of which nobody seemed to know anything'.³¹ Although Charles Booth's detailed mappings of London showed a complex pattern of poverty right across the city, these more sensational accounts suggested a singular and separate territory, ominously threatening in its difference and proximity.

This region seemed to have arisen chaotically, and posed a sexual, social and racial threat to the other (supposedly more orderly) half of the city. There seemed little comfort in the supposed geographical division of wealth from poverty, and in the 1880s in particular the East End cast a deep shadow over the West. Andrew Mearns proclaimed that 'the terrible flood of Sin and Misery is gaining on us',³² whilst J. Milner Fothergill envisaged the East End as a 'huge dragon, preying on mankind'.³³ Masterman, writing in 1901, after what he saw as a decade of inaction regarding the slums, described areas of poverty engulfing the city: 'it has spread three quarters round London; soon the two arms it has thrust towards the West will snap together like a vice; a ring [...] will completely encircle the imperial city'.³⁴ The stable suburban ring described earlier here assumes monstrous organic shape, threatening to lay siege in the city centre. London was rendered vulnerable by this mass of deprivation which could rise up against the centre or drag it down into a degenerative mire. In 1885 Sims warned that 'this mighty mob of famished, diseased, and filthy helots is getting dangerous; physically, morally, politically dangerous'.³⁵

(Cambridge, 1983), ch.4; Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, *op. cit.* J. Keating, 'Introduction', *The Working Class in English Fiction* (London, 1971); Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford, 1993), pt 1. Bernard Waitey, 'The Language and Imagery of "Class" in Early Twentieth-Century England (c.1900-1925)', *Literature and History*, no.4 (Autumn 1976), pp.30-55; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), ch.4; and *Outcast London*, *op. cit.*

²⁹ George Sims, *How the Poor Live* (London, 1883), p.5.

³⁰ Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor* (London, 1883), p.2.

³¹ Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (London, 1903), p.4.

³² Mearns, *op. cit.*, p.2.

³³ J. Milner Fothergill, 'The Town Dweller, His Needs and Wants' (1883), reprinted in Lynn Lees and Andrew Lees, eds, *The Rise of Urban Britain*, (London, 1985), p.109.

³⁴ Masterman, *The Heart of Empire* (London, 1901), p.14

³⁵ Sims, *How the Poor Live*, *op. cit.*, p.28.

Sexually and morally East Enders were apparently incorrigible. 'Ordinary decency', Sims remarked, 'is a thing which they would have as much conception of as they would have of the aestheticism of Mr Oscar Wilde'.³⁶ Mearns, meanwhile, was shocked not only by the proliferation of vice, but also by the lack of any adequate response to it. He noted: 'incest is common; and no form of vice and sensuality causes surprise or attracts attention'.³⁷ He went on to suggest that the area attracted those who were (intrinsically) 'filthy and abominable',³⁸ but also that this immorality was prompted by the appalling living conditions. The East End was seen both to corrupt and to attract corruption.

Around the docks, the symbol of British commercial and imperial power, this moral and social decay was particularly troubling. In an article for Booth's survey Beatrice Webb commented: 'extremes meet there, and contrasts are intense. There is magnificence in the variety and costliness of the multitudinous wares handled by the most decrepit and poverty-stricken worker'.³⁹ In the nearby bars of Tiger Bay (also known as Bluegate Fields, the area of opium dens visited by Dorian Gray in Wilde's novel) James Greenwood found sexual and gender norms in chaos. It was, he commented, 'an unbroken scene of vice and depravity of the most hideous sort'.⁴⁰ Sailors looking for prostitutes discovered 'petticoated bipeds' who had 'the air of a Whitechapel fighting man in female disguise'. He went on: 'they have their lairs in Tiger Bay, and Back Church Street and Palmer's Folly, and other awful places contiguous to the docks. They appear different from the ugliest creatures of any part of London, and they act differently'.⁴¹ The prostitutes are here predatory, masculine, and sub-human (in women's clothes to lure unsuspecting sailors to their venereal doom) and the docks, like the prostitutes' clients, seem to be in danger of infection from the adjoining areas. Whilst these women and the other East End figures were denied a voice in these accounts, they clearly represented an active threat to the city and society (as Greenwood's contagion imagery suggests). This threat was more than merely venereal, however, and extended to fears for the imperial race.

Daniel Pick argues that an initial scepticism about theories of degeneration in England eased towards the end of the century. Although they were still not universally or wholeheartedly embraced, Pick finds the ideas and language of degeneration

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.30. The comparison is telling: aestheticism is associated with an exclusive West End elite, but is, like East End morality, also at one remove from 'ordinary decency'.

³⁷ Mearns, *op.cit.*, p.7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.7.

³⁹ Beatrice Webb, 'The Docks', *Life and Labour of the People of London*, 1st series, vol.4, *Poverty*, ed. Charles Booth (1889; London, 1902), p.17.

⁴⁰ James Greenwood, *In Strange Company: Being the Experiences of a Roving Correspondent*, (London, 1883), p.217.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.186.

expressed in a range of contexts, from the sober reportage of the Lancet to the sensational fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson and Bram Stoker.⁴² The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Dracula associated the threat to London and in this they echoed a range of commentators. Arnold White, proposing radical measures for the sterilisation of 'the unfit', observed in 1886 that 'in certain quarters of London dynasties of criminals and paupers hand down from generation to generation hereditary unfitness for the arts of progress and all that brings greatness to the nation'.⁴³ White linked the state of the nation directly to the moral and physical health of London's poor, as did journalist Sidney Low in an article in the Contemporary Review. In an argument for the expansion of the suburbs, Low wrote: 'we may ask with dismay where the strength and stamina of our race will go when all its sons are confined and pestered in the pinfold of the towns'. He went on: 'the true-born Londoner, it is said, dies out in the third generation, and lives a weakly and stunted Helot'.⁴⁴ These fears appeared to be well-founded when recruitment for the Boer War in 1900 revealed that over half of London recruits were below the standard army height of 5'6", compared to only ten percent in 1845. A tenth of the recruits weighed less than seven stone two pounds, and 3,000 men were sent home from South Africa because they had bad teeth.⁴⁵ The urban population in general, but the poorest of the poor ('the residuum') in particular, were seen to be transmogrifying into a degenerate race apart as a result of a lack of contact with nature and a deleterious heritage. Worse still, it was feared that in overcrowded housing conditions this residuum might spread the blight of poor reproductive health and dissipated morality to 'healthier' and more 'progressive' East Enders. These concerns continued into the new century. In an article in the Fortnightly Review in December 1906 Montague Crackanorpe, Q.C., bemoaned the rapid reproduction of 'the physically feebler stocks' whilst birth rates among 'the abler and more capable' decreased.⁴⁶ His piece was covered prominently in the Evening News under the headline 'Great Problems of Married Life: "Weed Out

⁴² Daniel Pick, Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848-1918 (Cambridge, 1989), esp. ch.6 &7. See also Sander Gilman and J.E.Chamberlain, eds, Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress (New York, 1985); and William Greenslade, Degeneration, Culture and the Novel, 1880-1914 (Cambridge, 1994).

⁴³ Arnold White, The Problems of a Great City (London, 1886), p.49.

⁴⁴ Sydney Low, 'The Rise of Suburbia', Contemporary Review, vol.60 (Oct.1891): pp.545-557, p.533

⁴⁵ Ronald Hyam, Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience (Manchester, 1990), p.72. The total number of recruits rejected did not in fact rise in the 1880s and 1890s, as army medical department reports showed. See James Stuart, MP and Henry Wilson, MP, Facts versus Panic: Being a Reply to Certain Alarmist Statements Recently Made (London, 1899), appendix 1, JJC.

⁴⁶ Montague Crackanorpe, 'Population and Progress', Fortnightly Review, vol.80 (Dec.1906): p.1001.

the Unfit". A year later the Eugenics Education Society was founded to press for action in the face of a degenerating race and troubled international climate.⁴⁷

The problems of degeneration and sexual disarray in the East End were seen to be exacerbated by immigrant communities, and in particular by Eastern European Jews and the Chinese. There had been an influx of Chinese immigrants after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the creation of a number of treaty ports in Japan and China in the 1850s and 1860s. Many Jewish immigrants, meanwhile, arrived in London in flight from persecution. It was the areas adjacent to the docks which became home to many of these people, and by the 1880s there was a Chinese community in Limehouse, and a Jewish community in Whitechapel. Xenophobic rhetoric espoused in the press, in parliament and in scare-mongering texts (such as W.H.Wilkins's The Alien Invasion and Arnold White's The Destitute Alien in Britain [both 1892]) described dissolute immigrants compounding the poverty and moral depravity of these areas. An anonymous article in Blackwood's Magazine talked of the 'un-English squalor and congestion' caused by Polish and Russian Jews,⁴⁸ whilst a contributor to The Destitute Alien in Britain, Rev. G.S.Reaney, complained of the familiarity of 'aliens' in the East End with the vices 'common to the deeper depths of Continental cities'.⁴⁹ Greenwood's In Strange Company described the 'sensual', 'bestial' and 'revolting' countenance of the 'barbarian' Chinese in the dockland opium den he visited.⁵⁰ He suggested that the area was even more alien and un-English than the other parts of the East End, and there was an implicit anxiety about reverse colonisation, in which the region risked being taken over and transformed by sensuous foreigners. The anonymous author of the Blackwood's Magazine piece raised similar concerns: 'think', he wrote, 'if the slums were to bring to birth a slit-eyed mongrel'.⁵¹ The writer imagined the area somehow complicit in miscegenation, facilitating a promiscuous inbreeding that was seen to displace the English and Englishness. The continuing consternation led to legislative action with the Aliens Act of 1905 which prevented those unable to support themselves from entering the country (unless they could prove refugee status).⁵²

⁴⁷ See Richard Soloway, 'Counting the Degenerates: the Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England', Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 17, no. 1 (Jan.1982): pp.137-165; Jonathan Rose, The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919 (Ohio, 1986), pp.135-141.

⁴⁸ 'Foreign Undesirables', Blackwood's Magazine, vol.149 (Feb. 1901): pp.279-289, p.286.

⁴⁹ Rev.G.S.Reaney, 'The Moral Aspect', in The Destitute Alien in Britain: A Series of Papers Dealing with the Subject of Foreign Pauper Immigration, ed. Arnold White (London,1892), p.75.

⁵⁰ Greenwood, *op.cit.*, p.222.

⁵¹ 'Foreign Undesirables', *op.cit.*, p.289.

⁵² For a full account of the passage of this legislation see Bernard Gainer, The Alien Invasion: The Origin of the Alien's Act of 1905 (London, 1972).

A final potent area of concern for middle-class observers and commentators was the potential radicalism of the East End working class. Fears ran particularly high in the 1880s (a period of high unemployment) when a series of protests hit the West End streets. In 1884 120,000 mainly working-class people gathered in Hyde Park in support of the Reform Bill, which was being stalled in the House of Lords. In 1886 and again in 1887 the unemployed marched on Trafalgar Square;⁵³ and in 1889 striking dockers and matchgirls marched to Westminster. These protests meant that Whitehall, Hyde Park, and Trafalgar Square would be remembered not only for the ritual and display of empire and government, but for active dissent and mass invasion from 'the other side' of the city, emphasising both acute social division and a troubling proximity. Concern about East End radicalism receded in the 1890s, partly, Gareth Stedman Jones argues, because of an increasing conservatism amongst London's working class.⁵⁴ Radical groups continued to meet, however, and there were periodic strikes and protests which came as reminders of the disaffection of many Londoners. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of this was the six-week strike by the city's tailors, dockers and transport workers in 1912, which paralysed the city and again drew attention to East End poverty.⁵⁵

There was no concerted drive to solve London's housing and poverty crisis, and the efforts of government were piecemeal and often made matters worse. There was increased awareness of these problems during the period, however, at least partly because of the literature of urban exploration discussed earlier. Even Masterman, who was highly critical of the response to the crisis, conceded that the works had 'stirred at least a transitory emotion in the dwellers of the squares and terraces of West London'.⁵⁶ In the absence of a thoroughgoing response from government, charitable work and bequests became highly significant. Some projects were underpinned by socialism, others by a philanthropic desire to ease the problems but to maintain the *status quo*. In either case there were parallels with the civilising missions in the colonies, with attempts to inculcate a set of middle-class and Christian values in a supposedly savage and ignorant population. The Rev. Samuel Barnett of St Jude's in Whitechapel encouraged Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates to visit the East End and experience life there. In 1883 he inaugurated Toynbee Hall, the first of the settlements established to help in the education of the poor and to promote contact

⁵³ For an account of the disturbances accompanying the 1886 and 1887 protests see Victor Bailey, 'The Metropolitan Police, the Home Office, and the Threat of Outcast London', in *Policing and Punishment in Nineteenth Century Britain*, ed. Victor Bailey (London, 1981).

⁵⁴ See Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, *op.cit.*, ch.4; and *Outcast London*, *op.cit.*, p. 330.

⁵⁵ The police commissioner, Sir E.R. Henry, commented that the strikes had occasioned 'much poverty and distress in the East End', *Parliamentary Papers: Reports from the Commissioners*, vol.44 (London, 1914), p.4.

⁵⁶ Masterman, *op.cit.*, p.2.

between classes. Oxford House in Bethnal Green, Robert Browning Hall in Walworth, Mansfield House in Jamaica Road, and Mayfield House in Shoreditch soon followed. Youth clubs were run by the Salvation and Church armies, the Girls' Friendly Society, the university settlements and the local churches. They variously aimed to promote Christian ethics, teach basic skills, and encourage social and sporting activities.

Gifts of money to the poor were, after 1869, co-ordinated largely by the Charity Organisation Society, which supervised hand-outs to ensure they were not squandered. Similarly monitored charitable work operated in philanthropic housing management schemes. Volunteer rent collectors (frequently middle-class women) supervised tenants' behaviour and home life, in some cases paying deliberately unannounced visits to ensure standards were maintained. This kind of philanthropic activity sent out contradictory messages, as Stedman Jones has indicated. On the one hand it aimed to encourage thrift, self-help and independence, and on the other such virtues were seen to be the result of personal ties of obligation and dependence with members of the middle and upper classes.⁵⁷ Moreover, whilst the East End had far more visitors than before - settlement workers, rent collectors, 'slummers', even coach trips down Mile End Road - the attention did not address the root problems of inadequate housing and irregular income which afflicted the very poor in particular.

On the one hand these processes of documentation and philanthropy ameliorated the threat of the East End. The area was integrated into the civilising project of the West, and made readable and understandable by being absorbed into the rhetoric of the urban explorers and other middle-class commentators. On the other hand, the putative sexual and social disarray, the political disquiet, and the supposed threat posed by immigration and degeneracy undermined London's new imperial profile, not least by calling into question the power of the individual to shape his own destiny. Elizabeth Wilson notes that for the middle classes to enter parts of the East End 'was, figuratively, to die, to undergo a rite of passage that would destroy something integral to the Victorian identity: the optimism, the belief in the efficacy of providence and in the ability of the individual to triumph over circumstances.'⁵⁸

Neither was it necessary to travel east to be confronted with such ideological challenges: letters to the *Telegraph* in 1909 indicated concern about rough sleepers on the Embankment, the grandest of the new thoroughfares,⁵⁹ and Ford Madox Ford movingly described the scene on Piccadilly:

⁵⁷ Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, *op.cit.*, p.268; and *Languages of Class*, *op.cit.*, p.193.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx and the City* (London, 1991), p.27.

⁵⁹ W.Bramwell Booth, 'Human Wrecks on the Embankment', *Telegraph*, 12 Nov.1909: p.2.

On the right you have all those clubs with all those lounging and luxuriating men. On the left there is a stretch of green park, hidden and rendered hideous by recumbent forms. They lie like corpses, or like soldiers in a stealthy attack, a great multitude of broken men and women. [..] There, indeed, is your London at leisure; the two ends of the scale offered violently for inspection, confronting and ignoring steadily the one the other.⁶⁰

The park that connects the clubs to Buckingham Palace is hidden by the rough sleepers, who embody passive defeat in their seeming death, but also a persistent threat and challenge in their posture of 'stealthy attack'. Ford gathers into a single simile fears about the military prowess of the English (the soldiers here are near death) and the challenge such figures posed to the imagery of advanced and civilised nationhood propounded during the period. Whilst the figures in the clubs and park studiously ignore one another, the (middle-class) observer is 'violently' assaulted by the disjunction.

3.

Alongside the developing images of imperial and commercial prowess and degrading poverty, London was also accruing a burgeoning reputation for cosmopolitanism, excessive consumption and *risqué* entertainment. During the period the area around Piccadilly, Leicester Square and Soho opened out considerably, and became much more accessible. Piccadilly Circus trebled in size when the eastern quadrant was demolished to make way for Shaftesbury Avenue in 1889; Coventry Street was widened giving a more auspicious entry to Leicester Square, and Charing Cross Road made the area easier to get to from Tottenham Court Road, Oxford Street and the Strand, another key entertainment thoroughfare to the south east (see figs ii and iii). The Piccadilly Line, serving Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square opened in 1906, the Charing Cross Branch of the Northern Line opened a year later, and the Central Line, which brought shoppers to Oxford Street and Regent Street, was inaugurated by the Prince of Wales in 1900.

The area's association with entertainment was long-standing, but during this period theatres, restaurants and bars were built which attracted new crowds, and diluted both the exclusiveness of Piccadilly and the seediness of Leicester Square.⁶¹ New theatres were built on virtually every main road. The Empire Theatre opened on Leicester Square in 1881, and was joined two years later by the Alhambra, which had

⁶⁰ Ford Madox Ford, *The Soul of London* (1905; London, 1995), p.92.

⁶¹ An anonymous correspondent in *Chambers Journal*, for example, noted in 1893 that the Piccadilly crowd was now 'leavened' with 'the common multitude'. 'Piccadilly', *Chambers Journal of Popular Literature Science and Art*, vol.9 (2 Jul.1892): p.417-420, p.417.

been converted from a circus and dancing venue. Six theatres were built along the new Shaftesbury Avenue and two on Charing Cross Road. The Coliseum in St Martin's Lane was completed in 1899, and on the Strand the Savoy and the Aldwych joined the Vaudeville and Gaiety, which had opened around 1870. At the Haymarket and Prince of Wales theatres, the Bancrofts initiated a process of theatrical gentrification, banning drinking and smoking, charging higher prices, and attempting to attract a more exclusive audience. Several of the new Shaftesbury Avenue theatres followed suit. Others maintained the immensely popular music-hall format, however, with a variety of acts, more explicitly sexual content and less passive audiences.⁶² The Alhambra and Empire, the biggest music halls in the West End, both had promenades at the back of the stalls used by prostitutes. Others, like the Palace Theatre in Cambridge Circus, advertised *tableaux vivants*, featuring men and women in revealing body stockings. Complaints in the *Daily Chronicle* in 1907 suggest these displays went on well beyond the 'naughty nineties'.⁶³ Gavin Weightman argues that this suggestiveness was a more prominent feature of the West End music halls than those of the East End.⁶⁴ Thus, whilst attending lavish premieres in some West End theatres was a sign of social status, presence at others nearby might signal a penchant for erotic spectacle or sexual adventuring. Either way the West End was developing its reputation for performance, for fantasy,⁶⁵ and for escapism. This reputation was enhanced when the first moving pictures were screened at the Empire and Alhambra in the 1890s,⁶⁶ and when exterior electric lights were installed, making the two theatres 'glitter[] like fairy palaces through the foggy night air'.⁶⁷ The lighting that in the East End stood for safety and security⁶⁸ here denoted entrancing fantasies and

⁶² Gavin Weightman, *Bright Lights, Big City: London Entertained, 1830-1950* (London, 1992), p.92 & p.112. Susan Pennybacker notes that between 1894 and 1904 music hall audiences in London grew by 45 per cent to an estimated total of 59,000 people a night. Susan Pennybacker, *A Vision for London, 1889-1914: Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (London, 1995), p.211.

⁶³ 'What the Public Think', *Daily Chronicle*, 30Apr.1907, in George Ives, *Casebook*, vol.6, p.71, BLY.

⁶⁴ Weightman, *op.cit.*, p.100.

⁶⁵ 'Fantasy' is a term that recurs in this thesis, and is used to refer to a set of conscious daydreams and fictions. Whilst recognising that these cannot properly be divorced from unconscious 'phantasy', and that a complex relationship exists between them, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the connection. See Susan Isaacs, 'The Nature and Function of Phantasy', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol.29 (1948): pp.73-97. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality', in Victor Burgin *et al*, *Formations of Fantasy* (London, 1986), p.28.

⁶⁶ Two purpose built West End cinemas followed: the New Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly (1907) and the Electric Palace in Oxford Street (1908). By 1912 there were 500 cinemas across London.

⁶⁷ Barton Baker, *op.cit.*, p.233.

⁶⁸ See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialisation of Light in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Angela Davies (Oxford, 1988), ch.2.

dream-like transformations. They become, to use Christopher Prendergast, 'the beckoning signs of what [the city] deceptively promised'.⁶⁹

As the theatres and new thoroughfares were built, so were new hotels, restaurants, and coffee shops, filling a conspicuous gap in the market. George Ives noted in 1904 that until the mid-1890s 'there were no respectable coffee shops, no ABC's, no Locklands, no Lyons, no Flemmings - where I now dine for 1/4d about - and no vestige of the excellent Trocadero. London was gloomy [...] except for the very rich - cold and uncomfortable'.⁷⁰ The city had relied largely on inns until the late 1880s, whilst for those wanting to eat out there were few options apart from the exclusive clubs and the pubs and chop houses. In the last twenty years of the century, however, the possibilities broadened and the size of the listings section for hotels, cafes and restaurants in Baedeker's guides increased by a third between 1885 and 1911.⁷¹ By 1885 most main railway termini had a 'handsome' adjacent hotel,⁷² and the years that followed saw what Nevill and Jerningham described as a revolution in hotel catering in terms of customer service, decor and facilities.⁷³ On the Strand the Cecil was opened in 1886, the largest hotel in Europe with over 600 rooms, and the luxurious Savoy (overlooking the Embankment and boasting plentiful bathrooms) opened in 1889. Three new hotels lined Northumberland Avenue soon after its completion (the Grand, the Metropole, and the Victoria), and the Ritz and the Piccadilly opened on Piccadilly early in the new century. These hotels drew a wealthy but cosmopolitan and international crowd, and Sala noted that 'in 999 cases out of 1000 the Hotel Brobdingnab is Liberty Hall'.⁷⁴ Indeed Olsen suggests that many were suspicious of these new establishments - despite (or maybe because of) their luxury and comfort they were considered anti-domestic and inappropriate for families.⁷⁵ They provided private and luxurious, but not homely, accommodation.

Restaurants and cafes were opening around the same time, supplementing the dining facilities offered by the new hotels. Lyons opened their first teashop in Piccadilly in 1894, a massive restaurant in the Trocadero in 1896, and their famous Corner House on Rupert Street in 1909. Other large restaurants included Spiers and Ponds Criterion in Piccadilly, the Tivoli and the Romano in the Strand, the Café Monaco in Shaftesbury Avenue, and the Café de l'Europe on the north side of Leicester Square. The Café Royale, which was the first large continental-style

⁶⁹ Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1992), p.34.

⁷⁰ George Ives, *Diary*, vol.44, 12 Jan.1904, p.4, HRHRC.

⁷¹ Baedeker (1885), *op.cit.*, pp.5-15; Baedeker (1911), *op.cit.*, pp.1-17.

⁷² Baedeker (1885), *op.cit.*, p.6.

⁷³ Ralph Nevill and Charles Jerningham, *Piccadilly to Pall Mall: Manners, Moral, and Man* (London, 1908), p.94.

⁷⁴ Sala, *op.cit.*, p.143.

⁷⁵ Olsen, *op.cit.*, p.114.

restaurant in the West End, had opened at the south end of Regent Street in 1865. These establishments introduced an air of cosmopolitan living, with a new range of food types and a more mixed clientele. Many of them were divided into sections with differently priced menus, maintaining a degree of social segregation,⁷⁶ but they nevertheless broadened the appeal and convenience of the West End for many more people, and for middle-class women in particular. Although women undoubtedly had an independent presence in the West End well before this period (as Lynda Nead has convincingly argued),⁷⁷ by the turn of the century there were more places they could potentially visit, and the monopoly on respectable dining held by the exclusive gentlemen's clubs was shattered. The West End was becoming more user friendly, and provided a variety of spaces for rest and recuperation which lay somewhere between the public space of the streets and the privacy of home.

There was a sense of diversity in many of these establishments. At the Café de l'Europe in Leicester Square the illustrator Arthur Ransome described 'isolated parties' of bohemians amidst 'clerks, *demi-mondaines*, and men about town'. Apparently taking the tenor of the whole area to heart, he found everyone performing: 'office boys trying to be men, and worn-out men trying to be boys, and women ridiculously dressed and painted'.⁷⁸ Ransome suggested, however, that there was a tolerance rather than a celebration of this range of people, admitting that he and his fellow bohemians were 'only there on sufferance'.⁷⁹ In a similar vein Ford noted that in London 'you must be yourself as much as you please, but it must be yourself in a state of quiescence'.⁸⁰ Perhaps as a result bohemia in London was less strident and more diffuse than in Paris. The small, cheap continental restaurants in Soho and bookshops in Charing Cross Road constituted its more public spaces, but much of Ransome's *Bohemia in London* describes gatherings of artists and writers in private studios and lodging in Chelsea, Kensington, Gray's Inn Road and Museum Street.

Back in the West End the possibilities for consumption extended beyond food, drink, and *avant-garde* conversation. The already well-established and popular shopping streets and arcades (the Strand, Regent Street and the Royal Opera and Burlington Arcades [built in 1817 and 1819 respectively]) - were supplemented by vast new department stores. Existing drapers Swan and Edgar in Piccadilly and Dickens and Jones in Regent Street added new departments in the 1870s, and Lillywhite's of Piccadilly and the aesthetic showcase Liberty's opened around the same time. Later Bourne and Hollingsworth (1901) and Selfridges (1909) opened on

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.107.

⁷⁷ See p.7, fn.4 of this thesis.

⁷⁸ Arthur Ransome, *Bohemia in London* (London, 1907), pp.129-130.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Ford, *op.cit.*, p.75.

Oxford Street. Parallel developments further West included Whiteley's (1863), the Army and Navy store in Victoria Street (1871), and the monumental new home for Harrods in Knightsbridge (1901). These stores, argues Michael Miller, became the symbolic centres of consumer society, selling not just goods but the idea of consumption itself.⁸¹ They advertised widely, stocked a baffling array of lavishly displayed products, and provided cafes and entertainment.

Whilst the department stores were the symbolic focus of West End consumerism, the whole area was geared towards drawing in customers, and Pascoe noted that there was 'hardly a street in the West End of London that does not daily tempt to an opening of the purse'.⁸² Central to the proprietors' strategies of temptation were the increasingly sophisticated window displays, which Wolfgang Schivelbusch has characterised as a kind of magical illuminated stage.⁸³ The stores, and the streets onto which their windows faced became further fantastical spaces, 'separated', Masterman suggested, 'from the realities of life'.⁸⁴ They were also frequently tinged with eroticism. Sala, for example, eulogised a dummy on display in Regent Street: 'half-nude, but not ashamed, the little gentleman in silk underclothing was a sweet boon to me'. He was 'faultlessly attired' and had 'an eternal simper on his somewhat too self-conscious lips'.⁸⁵

Indeed the shopping streets, like the theatres, had developed strong sexual associations. In the Burlington Arcade the crossover of shopping and sex was long established, and it was 'the chief temple of frippery and frivolity' from which Lady Audley bought her racy French novels in Mary Braddon's 1862 novel.⁸⁶ Historian Alison Adburgham notes that a room above the bonnet shop in the arcade was used by prostitutes working at Hamilton's night house just off the Haymarket.⁸⁷ Elsewhere the associations were almost as strong, particularly after night-fall. Sala noted complaints by tradesmen that the installation of lighting on Regent Street had drawn 'hordes of bad characters of both sexes',⁸⁸ and Robert Machray made a similar observation in *The Night Side of London*: 'you will encounter the peripatetic foreign colony of ladies who make this their rendezvous, and turn it into what Mr Hichens calls, justly enough, a "sordid boulevard"'.⁸⁹ At night fashionable Regent Street thus

⁸¹ Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (London, 1981), p.167.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁸³ Shivelbusch, *op.cit.*, p.148.

⁸⁴ 'In the West End', he continued, individuals were 'driven to indulge in sumptuous living and vulgar display'. Masterman, *op.cit.*, p.vi.

⁸⁵ Sala, *op.cit.*, p.248.

⁸⁶ 'Piccadilly', *op.cit.*, p.418; Mary Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862; Oxford, 1987), p.104.

⁸⁷ Adburgham, *op.cit.*, p.101.

⁸⁸ Sala, *op.cit.*, p.252.

⁸⁹ Machray, *op.cit.*, p.15. Robert Hichens was the author of *The Green Carnation* (1895), which is

became a continuation of the notorious Haymarket, and together the streets represented sexual and consumerist excess: places of frivolous purchase by day and unsanctioned sexual transaction (with foreigners) by night. A sensational pamphlet of the late 1880s imagined a demonic inversion of values and behaviour in the Haymarket area after midnight:

They come out in strange and fantastic garments, and in glaringly gas-lit rooms screech and gabble in wild revelry. The street corners are beset by night prowlers. Phantoms arrayed in satin and lace flit upon the sight. The devil puts a diamond ring on his taloned finger, sticks a pin in his shirt and takes his walks abroad.⁹⁰

The area here displays the sort of double identity embodied by Dr Jekyll and later Dorian Gray. Any sense of order dissolves with nightfall as sensual phantoms and predatory demons take to the streets.

4.

Subsequent chapters will show the significance of these concerns, images, and material developments in shaping patterns of homosexual behaviour and broader ideas about homosexuality. The new transport intersections, public toilets, and semi-private spaces of leisure and entertainment were important, so too were the debates about degeneration, class division, urban sexual profligacy and the so-called 'alien invasion'. Simmering international tensions made these various concerns and the competing images of the city particularly troubling during this period. How could the imperial capital be made to symbolise order, efficiency, health and vigour when dissolute foreigners, sexual deviants, prostitutes and degenerates were present and visible in the city? Focusing on the West End, this final section looks more closely at the ways in which London's burgeoning modernity and sexual reputation were seen to threaten ideas of national, imperial, and indeed personal identity.

The last section described how^{JJC} the 1880s and 1890s saw the development of an existing reputation and set of associations in the West End. It became more ostentatiously a centre of consumption. There was a sense of order in this consumption: the shops, theatres and restaurants, were largely purpose-built, often in a monumental style, with many maintaining elements of social segregation. They promoted but also contained the escapist connotations of the area. Moreover Pall Mall, Piccadilly and St James continued to be associated with exclusive gentlemen's clubs and bachelor chambers. Despite this the diversity of attractions and the new

discussed in chapter 5.

⁹⁰ London by Night, or Gay Life in London (London, c.1888), p.7, JJC.

transport links to the West End meant that even if varying degrees of exclusivity were maintained inside the buildings, the streets outside were characterised by a mingling of classes, sexes and nationalities.⁹¹ The West End, Walkowitz argues, was increasingly seen as 'the site of exchange and erotic activity, a place symbolically opposed to orderly domestic life'.⁹² The diverse crowds undermined stable concepts of place and identity. In Soho Sims noted 'a babel of strange sounds, a clash of unfamiliar accents, a busy crowd of men and women of alien types and un-English bearing'.⁹³ In a walk 'through the glitter and the dusk of the Soho streets' Ransome found himself transformed into a Parisian 'in a moment',⁹⁴ whilst to visit the Moorish Cafe on Soho Street, was 'to hear strange Moorish melodies, to dream of white buildings with green-painted porticoes'.⁹⁵ Piccadilly Circus was similarly slippery. In Oscar Wilde's *The Decay of Lying* (1889) it becomes Japanese in Vivian's aesthetic imagination,⁹⁶ and in Fergus Hume's murder mystery *A Piccadilly Puzzle* (1889) fog transforms the street 'as if by magic [...] into a vague immensity resembling the Steppes of Russia', out of which 'ragged figures with sinister faces would loom suddenly'.⁹⁷ The area was repeatedly described eluding its geographical position, and whilst the East End had become 'darkest' Africa, the West End shifted between Paris, the Far East, north Africa, and even the Russian steppes. In these accounts the secure identifiers of class, nationality, or language were absent, disorientating the English observer and presumed reader.

Even when the area was not explicitly foreign in these depictions, it was rarely rendered with the kind of solidity that might be expected of the newly developed Circus and the roads leading off it. The junction was metaphorically flooded in E. Beresford Chancellor's account: 'it is a perpetual eddy of waters. If not hasting, certainly unresting are the passengers on those streams which flow in from so many points and seek so many exits'.⁹⁸ Any individuality is lost, and instead the observer sees only a mass of moving bodies. Just after 11pm, Machray claimed, there was suddenly 'movement, colour and a babel of sounds' at Piccadilly Circus:

Diamonds sparkle in My Lady's hair; her light laughter ripples over to you,
and you smile responsive; a faint fragrance perfumes the wondering air, and

⁹¹ Walkowitz, *op.cit.*, p.41.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁹³ Sims, *Living London*, *op.cit.*, p.4.

⁹⁴ Ransome, *op.cit.*, p.114.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.122.

⁹⁶ Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying' (1889), in *De Profundis and Other Writing* (London, 1985), p.82.

⁹⁷ Fergus Hume, *The Piccadilly Puzzle: a Mysterious Story* (London, 1889), p.6.

⁹⁸ E.Beresford Chancellor, *Wanderings in Piccadilly, Mayfair and Pall Mall* (London, 1907), p.76.

the vision sweeps past you [...] There are many such visions, each with its own story, its own revelation.⁹⁹

The bystander becomes momentarily entranced here, with muffled voices, laughter, perfume, and an indistinct vision seeming to promise, but just as quickly to deny, both sensual pleasure and some mysterious disclosure. Such images had more in common with descriptions of Paris than London, particularly with the emphasis on frivolous, public amusement and sensual excess.¹⁰⁰

The potential effects of these urban crowds were a repeated theme of literature and commentary in the period. Most famously, in the 1890s, Gustav Le Bon described the individual in the crowd becoming homogenised and losing any sense of self-determination, as the boundaries of identity, propriety and class broke down.¹⁰¹ In George Gissing's The Year of Jubilee the suburban, middle-class Nancy loses herself in the golden jubilee crowds:

She forgot her identity, lost sight of herself as an individual. Her blood was heated by close air, and physical contact. She did not think, and her emotions differed little from those of any shop-girl let loose. [...] Could she have seen her face, its look of vulgar abandonment would have horrified her.¹⁰²

Class identification and sexuality are subsumed into a primitive mass identity here, a carnivalesque abandonment which would appear 'vulgar' and 'horrify[ing]' to Nancy if she had any capacity for self-analysis. Descriptions of Mafeking Night in the Illustrated London News of May 1900, whilst more celebratory, depicted a similar social breakdown as the crowd 'seemed to effect a complete change in the character of Englishmen and Englishwomen'.¹⁰³ A companion piece asked the question 'Has the British reserve [...] given place to a more Parisian exuberance?'¹⁰⁴ The patriotic celebrations paradoxically result in a shift in national identity (as in Soho), with social hierarchies radically undercut.

The increased potential mobility around the city symbolised a similar disjunction. Whilst indicating the city's technological advance, mass transport also

⁹⁹ Machray, *op.cit.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁰ The anonymous author of Paris by Day and Night, for example, wrote: 'There is no home life such as we know and love here, in Paris. The sweet little Saxon word "Home", has no place in their vocabulary, so the thousands betake themselves to the glitter and the gaud, the boisterous revelry and riot of the café, the dancing room or garden, and the wine shops'. Paris by Day and Night (London, c.1890), p.15, JJC

¹⁰¹ Gustav Le Bon, The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind (London, 1896), pp.6-8. See also J.A.Hobson, *op.cit.*, pp.171-178.

¹⁰² George Gissing, In the Year of Jubilee (1894; London, 1994), p.58.

¹⁰³ 'The War Reviewed', Illustrated London News, 26 May 1900: p.698.

¹⁰⁴ I.F.Austin, 'Our Note Book', Illustrated London News, 26 May 1900, p.698.

came as a symbolic leveller. It was now easier and cheaper to reach the diverse areas of the city, and whilst class segregation and special workers' trains in fact kept divisions alive, all classes (even royalty) used the trains and entered the stations. Sims and Sala both testified to the sense of cosmopolitanism in the termini.¹⁰⁵ Travel itself challenged existing understandings of space and time. Trains, for example, both fragmented and unified the city for the passenger. Didier Gille suggests that the train 'became the purest and most essential expression of urban unity',¹⁰⁶ as disjunctive places were swept into a single journey. The passenger, however, gained only momentary glimpses of 'bits of uncompleted lives',¹⁰⁷ rather as Machray did standing on the pavement at Piccadilly. J.A.Hobson saw individuality foundering on the proliferating stimuli of urban life, and in particular the 'rapid and multifarious intercommunication of ideas rendered possible by modern methods of transport'. Cities and towns, he argued, 'generated' 'a neurotic temperament', which 'sought natural relief in stormy sensational appeals, and the crowded life of the street'.¹⁰⁸

Hobson signalled contemporary concerns about the urban population which extended beyond the East End poor. Nervous illness (also known as neurasthenia),¹⁰⁹ decadence, and sexual profligacy in the West End were seen by some to be just as dangerous to the order and moral rectitude of the nation as in the East. These dangers were most famously elaborated by Max Nordau in *Degeneration* (1895) in which he focused on the monied elite and the literary intelligentsia. The book was dedicated to Cesare Lombroso and proved immensely popular.¹¹⁰ Over ten years later George Bernard Shaw felt the need to defend the artistic community against Nordau's attacks.¹¹¹

Nordau's pathologisation of the aesthete, decadent, mystic, and even the realist, involved a catalogue of symptoms which coincided with virtually any transgression of what he terms 'traditional discipline' in the areas of art, morality, fashion and home decoration.¹¹² These transgressions seemed to proliferate in the city, and Nordau saw them as an exciting cause of degenerative illness, which led to abandonment of moral values. Not surprisingly then the degenerate could be seen 'in the vanishing day at the Paris Champs de Mars Salon or the opening of the Exhibition of the Royal

¹⁰⁵ Sims, *Living London*, *op.cit.*, p.94; Sala, *op.cit.*, pp.347-351.

¹⁰⁶ Didier Gille, 'Maceration and Purification', *Zone*, vol.1, no.2 (1986): pp.226-284, p.231.

¹⁰⁷ Ford, *op.cit.*, p.42.

¹⁰⁸ Hobson, *op.cit.*, pp.6-8. See also Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880 - 1918* (London, 1983), p.209; and Prendergast, *op.cit.*, p.160.

¹⁰⁹ Neurasthenia was a term coined by the American George Beard and is discussed in chapter 4.

¹¹⁰ Michael Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society* (New Haven, 1997), p.74.

¹¹¹ George Bernard Shaw, *The Sanity of Art: An Exposure of the Current Nonsense About Artists Being Degenerate* (London, 1908).

¹¹² Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895; Lincoln, Nebraska, 1993), p.7.

Academy in London'.¹¹³ He could also be found trespassing on inappropriate urban spaces in the search for new experience: 'a suburban circus; the loft of a back tenement; [...] or a fantastic artist's restaurant, where the performances [...] bring together the greasy *habitué* and the dainty aristocratic fledgling'.¹¹⁴ In his home, meanwhile, the degenerate sought to replicate the overstimulation of the city streets: 'everything in [their] houses', Nordau wrote, 'aims at exciting the nerves and dazzling the senses'.¹¹⁵ The offspring of these men and women lost any sense of moral structure and suffered from physical malformation:

The growth of long bones is extremely slow, or ceases entirely, the legs remain short, the pelvis retains a feminine form, certain other organs cease to develop, and the entire being presents a strange and repulsive mixture of incompleteness and decay.¹¹⁶

Nordau's prognosis if the race did not seek to 'adapt itself' was bleak. Looking to the future he saw the majority of men 'cloth[ing] themselves in a costume which recalls, by colour and cut, feminine apparel', whilst 'women who wish to please men of this kind wear men's dress'. In this dystopia 'modesty and restraint are dead superstitions of the past' and same-sex marriage has been legalised as 'a majority of deputies have the same tendency'.¹¹⁷ Homosexuality was rendered symbolic of the wider degenerate malaise here. It was, for Nordau, the form of sexual dissidence which could most readily be imagined shaping an alternative (degenerate) society.

If Nordau's diatribe against a plethora of late-nineteenth century artists and writers appeared paranoid and extreme, many of his ideas about the potential effects of city life were echoed elsewhere. The idea of mental debilitation resulting from city living, for example, had already been discussed by J. Milner Fothergill, James Cantlie, and Charles Kingsley, and later concerned Le Bon, Hobson, and the early sociologist Georg Simmel.¹¹⁸ Even Ford Madox Ford talked about the 'dazed and quiescent mind' of the commuter.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.36.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.538-9. Significantly Nordau still envisaged 'women's fashion being dependent on the whims and desires of men.

¹¹⁸ Charles Kingsley, 'Nausicaa in London' (1873), in *Sanitary and Social Essays* (London, 1880), p.116. James Cantlie, 'Degeneration Amongst Londoners' (1885) in Lees, *op.cit.*, p.47; J. Milner Fothergill, 'The Town Dweller: His Needs and Wants' (1889), *op.cit.*, p.112; Hobson, *op.cit.*; Le Bon, *op.cit.*; Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*, ed. Richard Sennett (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969).

¹¹⁹ Ford, *op.cit.*, p.86.

The connections Nordau made between the city and sexual profligacy, homosexuality, and the disruption of conventional gender categories, were also familiar. Fears about sexual disarray and compromised masculinity and femininity in London proliferated in the fiction, journalism, and social commentary of the period, and extended well beyond the pages of *Degeneration*. Greenwood's concerns about the standards of femininity in the East End have already been examined, as have the concerns about urban masculinity, particularly during and after the Boer War. In the West End, meanwhile, the decadent and aesthete became associated with effeminacy, and the 'new woman' adopted putatively masculine habits of behaviour and dress (in an apparent realisation of Nordau's worst fears).¹²⁰ The eugenic campaigns for national efficiency in the early years of the twentieth century testified to these concerns, and Ives reported a conversation with radical MP Arthur Priestley in 1912 in which Priestley suggested that the increase in effeminate men and masculine women in London constituted 'the great danger of the times'.¹²¹

A series of sex scandals brought the existing association of the city with sexual danger into particular focus. The Maiden Tribute case of 1885 and the ripper murders of 1888 raised the sexual heat of the capital and influenced the concerns surrounding homosexuality, itself the subject of a number of scandals which will be discussed in the next two chapters. The Maiden Tribute case stemmed from a series of articles by W.T. Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in which he exposed child prostitution in the capital. The case was greeted with widespread outrage and debate, and resulted in Stead's arrest and imprisonment for his part in the procurement of a young girl in Notting Hill as part of his research. A campaign to raise the age of consent ensued, involving mass demonstrations and culminating in a huge rally in Hyde Park. As a result the Criminal Law Amendment Act made a speedy progress through Parliament in the summer of 1885, raising the age of consent for girls from 13 to 16 and criminalising 'acts of gross indecency' between men. Stead's articles exposed a sexual mapping of the city, revealing, Walkowitz suggests:

the moral and social landscape of the Labyrinth - the Leicester Square restaurants, the Aquarium, the roller-skating rink, the Hyde Park benches frequented by procuresses on the lookout for unsuspecting nursemaids, the

¹²⁰ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester, 1997), ch.6. For further comparison between the new woman and the decadent see Sally Ledger, 'The New Woman and the Crisis of Victorianism', in *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, eds Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge, 1995), ch.2; and Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman', *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, no. 33 (1979): pp.434-453.

¹²¹ Ives, *Diary*, vol.57, 19 Jul.1912, p.104.



private houses with underground rooms, the isolated villas with thick walls and double carpets on the floor.¹²²

This map incorporated the public and semi-public spaces of central London, and the secluded homes of the suburbs, and suggested a territory in which the predatory rich preyed on the vulnerable poor.

Three years later the city was gripped by an even greater terror, with the five ripper murders between August 31 and November 9 1888. The newspapers were again filled with sensational descriptions and conjecture, further heightening the sense of sexual danger already associated with London's streets. Xenophobia and the abusive sexual dynamic between rich and poor (and east and west) were rearticulated, as Jews, aristocrats and wealthy doctors were posited as potential suspects. Anti-Semitic attacks increased, and professional and amateur sleuths, as well as teams of vigilantes, patrolled the area. The ripper was never caught and as a result suspicion and fear lingered; Ives referred to what he assumed to be the eighth and ninth Ripper murders in July and September of the following year.¹²³

The prostitute, whose long-standing presence on the urban scene was brought into focus by these murders, was herself a potent symbol of the city's sexual disarray. Noted particularly in the Haymarket, Piccadilly, the Strand and lower Regent Street, these women undermined the symbolism of the impressive streets on which they traded, and indicated a whole other city of fleeting, contingent and illicit relations.¹²⁴ They were seen as both victim and victimiser; on the one hand the abused sexual toys of their wealthy clients and a potent symbol of male sexual incontinence, on the other the scourge of the city and the source of the venereal infection that had insinuated itself into so many 'respectable' homes. Both images had a long history, but were particularly potent at this time because of the lengthy battle for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869, which permitted the detention and invasive examination of prostitutes in some port and garrison towns. The acts were finally repealed in 1886, but not before a heated and very public debate about

¹²² Walkowitz, *op.cit.*, p.99. For an additional account of the Maiden Tribute case see Deborah Gorham 'The "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" Re-examined: Child Prostitution and the Idea of Childhood in Late-Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, vol.21, no.3 (Spring 1978): pp.353-381; and Trevor Fisher, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of Late Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1995).

¹²³ Ives, *Diary*, vol.3, 22 Jul.1889, p.65; *Diary*, vol.3, 16 Sep.1889, p.93. For discussion of the murders, and in particular the anti-Semitism associated with them, see Christopher Frayling, 'The House that Jack Built: Some Stereotypes of the Rapist in Modern Culture', in *Rape: An Historical and Cultural Enquiry*, eds Roy Porter and S. Tomaselli (Oxford,1986); and Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London, 1991), ch. 4.

¹²⁴ See Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (London, 1995), p.5; and Walkowitz, *op.cit.*, p.22.

prostitution and the issue of uncontrolled male lust.¹²⁵ Nor did these concerns abate. The police commissioner's report to parliament for 1888 complained that the new theatres brought crowds in excess of 20,000 on to the streets around 11pm, and that hundreds of prostitutes were attracted to the area in the hope of finding clients.¹²⁶ The surgeon general William Moore called for the reinstatement of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1894 in The Humanitarian,¹²⁷ and there were intermittent articles in the newspapers about the nuisance caused by prostitution in the city. In 1906, for example, Reynolds included a letter on its front page from 'MD' complaining 'that the two most important thoroughfares of the West End [Regent Street and Piccadilly] must after nightfall be abandoned to disreputable alien women, who have become what they are before leaving their own country'.¹²⁸ MD reiterated the sexualised reputation of the area, whilst typically also laying the blame on voracious foreigners. A writer in the male 'lifestyle' magazine Modern Man similarly complained of West End prostitutes being 'our tribute from France'.¹²⁹ The concern in newspapers and periodicals about sexual profligacy was echoed by purity groups such as the White Cross League and the Alliance of Honour (which encouraged men to take a vow of chastity),¹³⁰ the National Vigilance Association (which succeeded in getting the Empire Theatre closed temporarily in 1894), and the Association for the Improvement of Public Morals (which used its own newspaper The Sentinel [1879-1900] to spread its ideas).¹³¹ These organisations frequently couched their demand for sexual continency in the rhetoric of national and imperial salvation. The White Cross League's Blanco Book, for example, made a clear connection between national security and manly Christian virtue.¹³²

The profile of sexual abuse and non-conformity in London was raised by these scandals and campaigns, and by the newspaper attention they received. It is thus not surprising that Grant Allen resorted to the spaces they outlined for his argument about

¹²⁵ For more information on the Contagious Diseases Acts see Sheila Jeffries, ed., The Sexuality Debates (London, 1987); Lynda Nead, Myths of Sexuality: The representation of Women in Victorian Britain (London, 1988), ch.3; and Judith Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and State (Cambridge, 1980).

¹²⁶ Parliamentary Papers: Reports from the Commissioners, vol.57 (London, 1888), p.49.

¹²⁷ William Moore, 'The Necessity of Re-establishing the Contagious Diseases Act', The Humanitarian, vol.5, no.4 (Oct.1894): pp.285-291.

¹²⁸ 'Piccadilly by Night. London's Terrible Scandal', Reynolds, 6 May 1906: p.1.

¹²⁹ Stuart Freeman, 'London Hell: Sisters of Sin', Modern Man, 14 Nov.1908: p.10.

¹³⁰ See The Blanco Book: A Collection of Papers for Men (London, 1903), p.251, JJC.

¹³¹ For details see Karl Beckson, London in the 1890s: A Cultural History (London, 1992), ch. 5; Fisher, *op.cit.*, ch.6; Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950 (London, 1995), p.227; Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Sexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present (1979; London, 1990), ch.1.

¹³² One passage, for example, read: 'Sailors and Soldiers of all ranks [...] have joined the White Cross League, and those who would maintain the strength of our country cannot do better than follow their example', The Blanco Book, *op.cit.*, p.252.

the flawed relations between the sexes in his notorious 1894 article, 'The New Hedonism':

An evening walk from Charing Cross by Leicester Square to Piccadilly Circus will serve to show the most abandoned optimist that [the relations between the sexes] are not quite perfect. A system which culminates in the divorce courts, the action for breach of promise, seduction, prostitution, infanticide, abortion, desertion, cruelty, husband poisoning, wife kicking, contagious disease, suicide, illegitimacy, unnatural vice, the Strand by night, the London Music Halls, might surely be bettered by the wit of man.¹³³

Allen did not specify which vices might have been encountered in the walk detailed at the start of the passage, nor did he detail what went on in the Strand and in the music halls mentioned at the end. Instead he suggested that the associations of these places were obvious, and listed a range of sexual and violent crimes which extended their dissolute associations. The places stood in for sexual irregularity, as they had begun to in the reporting of the Maiden Tribute and ripper cases. Moreover, the particular ills he identified and associated with London were either destructive or associated with sterility. The city was seen as productive only in the sense of fostering and reproducing such behaviour. In this he echoed a favourite theme of the degeneration theorists and urban explorers, and imagined the city denatured; a topography of unnatural vice, abuse and immorality.

New sewers, thoroughfares, public transport and imposing new buildings had given a sense of order to a chaotic city, securing the regulation and circulation that were seen as essential to the health of the urban 'body'.¹³⁴ However, urban poverty, sex scandals, and concerns for the mental and physical health of Londoners disrupted this image, and the re-ordered metropolis, and in particular the West End, found itself associated with sexual possibility and abuse, the promiscuous mingling of classes, and excessive consumption. The city centre streets and solid new edifices had accrued a set of less stable associations which spoke of the mutability, flux and sensual opportunity of urban life.

In the face of such associations it is perhaps not surprising that writers and commentators were keen to emphasise an underlying order and structure. Much popular journalism and fiction included agents of surveillance, categorisation and control. The urban explorers conveyed dismay but also putative knowledge and understanding of the city's mean streets; journalists orchestrated revelatory

¹³³ Grant Allen, 'The New Hedonism', *Fortnightly Review*, vol.55, (1 Mar.1894): pp.377-392, p.391.

¹³⁴ See Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).

campaigns about sexual disarray; and detectives continued to be popular fictional figures.¹³⁵ Attention to the detail of the city and the people who lived there allowed Sherlock Holmes to capture all his criminals (with the exception of Irene Adler in 'The Scandal in Bohemia') and the team of amateur sleuths in *Dracula* to find their vampire.

The police meanwhile served a crucial practical and symbolic role as agents of control. As chapter three shows, there was a sense that the legal system as a whole had let London down, failing to be either disinterested or consistent.¹³⁶ The police were nevertheless thought to have a privileged knowledge of the city, second only perhaps to hansom-cab drivers. Baedeker noted that 'all information desired by the traveller may be obtained from one of the policemen, of whom about 10,000, 300 mounted, perambulate the streets of the metropolis'.¹³⁷ Greenwood claimed that the police had a comprehensive mental map of the 'thief preserves' of the capital.¹³⁸

London County Council inspectors served as less visible agents of regulation. Inspectors checked boarding houses for structural problems and evidence of immorality (especially in the mixed establishments),¹³⁹ whilst others toured the music halls for similar transgressions. Between 1890 and 1892 1,200 inspections of music halls were made, reflecting the increasing concern of the LCC's Theatres and Music Halls Committee. The LCC refused to grant new music halls alcohol licences after 1894, and although they did not actually close halls down for immorality on stage during the period, their power to do so probably induced self-censorship and made hall managers responsive to protests from the council (as in 1897 when a 'Moorish bath' scene was dropped from the show at the Palace Theatre following an approach from the council).¹⁴⁰

Books about London indicated further (though more abstract) ways of reining in urban chaos. The city's history was repeatedly evoked, for example, whilst suggested itineraries allowed the bewildered tourist to master the capital. The proliferation of historical and architectural detail in accounts of London fostered

¹³⁵ For an analysis of the symbolism of policing and surveillance, and its relationship to fiction in earlier Victorian literature see D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley, 1988), ch. 1.

¹³⁶ There was widespread dismay about the failure of the police to capture the ripper, and in 1906 the state of Piccadilly brought the cry from Reynolds 'where are the police?'. 'Piccadilly By Night: London's Terrible Scandal', *Reynolds*, 6 May 1906: p. 1.

¹³⁷ Baedeker (1885), *op.cit.*, p. 63. The figure increased to 16,000 in the 1911 edition. Baedeker (1911), *op.cit.*, p. 68.

¹³⁸ Greenwood, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

¹³⁹ Pennybacker, *op.cit.*, p. 191.

¹⁴⁰ Pennybacker, *op.cit.*, pp. 212-213 & p. 225. The LCC trod a fine line, however. When the Empire Theatre was closed (because of its prostitutes rather than its performances) there were vociferous protests from the public. In many ways the music halls provided a contained environment for 'lewd' behaviour, and, Pennybacker suggests, audiences often resented LCC interference. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-231.

relations with a supposedly more certain past and controlled the cosmopolitan crowds the texts also depicted.¹⁴¹ Soho was protected, Walter Thornbury observed, 'as with a halo' by 'the glories of other days', and in an anonymous article in Chambers Journal the Piccadilly crowd was said to be acutely aware of the lives of past and present aristocratic residents.¹⁴² These depictions also generally maintained an analytical distance from their subject. Arthur Ransome's active participation in bohemian life in his account of the city was relatively uncommon and the reader and commentator were usually differentiated from the spectacle.¹⁴³ An ordered appraisal of the urban scene resulted and the wandering *flâneur* was largely absent. Whilst the structuring device of a walk (generally starting near Piccadilly) was used repeatedly, the route taken was carefully planned and was far from random. Each tour attempted to impart a sense of the 'authentic' London: the reader's gaze was directed at particular monuments whilst others were ignored; and times were suggested when areas were most typical (Covent Garden at dawn, the docks in the morning, Regent Street and Hyde Park in the late afternoon). For the tourist, guides like Baedeker and Murray could instil a sense of mastery, replacing (to use Prendergast) the troubling repercussions of a 'glance' at the city's multiple stimuli with a more stable and secure 'gaze' at particular 'sights'.¹⁴⁴ Baedeker recommended such a tour through 'the principal quarters' on arrival to 'dispel the first oppressive feelings of solitude and insignificance'.¹⁴⁵

For those familiar with the city there were other ways of maintaining one's bearings, not least of which was the continued interest in urban 'types'.¹⁴⁶ Fashion, appearance, and place were used in various accounts to fix the random subject and to assign a biography. The disturbing urban crowds became easier to categorise with a clear idea of who was who, and a concomitant sense of who was in and (more importantly) who was out of place. Thus Henry Mayhew carefully outlined different figures amongst the London poor in 1861, Nordau described the physiognomy and

¹⁴¹ See, for example, H.Barton-Baker, Stories of the Streets of London (1899); Richard Tames, Soho Past (1894); E.F.Rimbault, Soho and its Associations (1895); Walter Thornbury, Old and New London (1872 and 1897); and E.Beresford Chancellor, Wanderings in Piccadilly, Mayfair and Pall Mall (1907). Stephen Kern suggests that these years were also characterised by a more general interest in heritage and history, which can be related to mounting anxieties about what the city (and indeed society and culture at large) 'meant'. See Kern, *op.cit.*, pp.38-39.

¹⁴² Walter Thornbury, Old and New London: A Narrative of its History, its People and its Places, vol. 3 4 (London, 1897), p.174; 'Piccadilly', *op.cit.*, p.419.

¹⁴³ A similar distance and control is effected by the frequent use of theatrical imagery, which safely frames the action of the city for critical observation. See Sims, Living London, *op.cit.*, p.3; and Machray, *op.cit.*, p.3.

¹⁴⁴ Prendergast, *op.cit.*, p.40.

¹⁴⁵ Baedeker (1885), *op.cit.*, p.73.

¹⁴⁶ See Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight, *op.cit.*, ch.2; Mary Cowling, The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art (Cambridge, 1989).

dress of the degenerate artist, and Henry Havelock Ellis discerned the 'criminal type'.¹⁴⁷ Ransome showed how easy it was to recognise a bohemian in the West End,¹⁴⁸ whilst Ives knew precisely the attire of a bachelor when he went to equip himself accordingly.¹⁴⁹ Various commentators had a clear image of what a prostitute looked like and of where she was likely to be found (indeed a spate of false arrests of women in Piccadilly in 1906 indicated how police used place as a marker of identification).¹⁵⁰ In 1898 W.E.Henley, editor of the Scots Observer, and the illustrator William Nicholson produced London Types, an illustrated volume of twelve poems. Whilst the contents page listed the different 'types', the pages that followed were headed by the places they were likely to be found: the lady in Rotten Row, the flower girl on 'any corner', the paper boy in the City, the sandwich man in Trafalgar Square, and so on. The places were somewhat arbitrary - policemen were obviously not limited to Constitution Hill - but the book nevertheless indicated a series of recognisable types and suggested that most had a typical locale. Thus one poem suggested that the coster in Kensington was 'figured' 'out of bounds': 'if you'd see him in his proper place [...] Go East among the merchants and their men'.¹⁵¹

What was suggested yet again was a means of controlling and rationalising the city and its inhabitants, but what was implicit in these characterisations of urban types and locations was the possibility of trespassing on the 'wrong' parts of town or manipulating (whether consciously or unconsciously) the markers of identity and typicality. A stroll from Parliament, down Birdcage Walk, past the Palace, through Green Park to Piccadilly, across the Circus, through Soho and into Oxford Street may have involved a number of (perhaps unselfconscious) shifts in identification. From imperial subject in Westminster, to privileged figure among the destitute in the park,

¹⁴⁷ Henry Mayhew, London Labour and London Poor (London, 1861); Max Nordau, Degeneration, *op cit.*; Henry Havelock Ellis, The Criminal (London, 1890).

¹⁴⁸ The meaning of 'bohemian' here is (according to the Oxford English Dictionary) 'an artist, literary man or actor, who leads a free, vagabond, or irregular life, not being particular as to the society he frequents, and despising conventionalities generally'. This meaning had only become common in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the bohemian was a figure of considerable interest, partly because of his position on the borders of respectability. George Du Maurier and Giacomo Puccini's popular depictions of bohemian life (in Trilby [1894] and the opera La Bohémé [1896]) both date from the 1890s. Oxford English Dictionary, vol.2, prepared by J.A.Simpson and E.S.C.Weiner (Oxford, 1989), p.361.

¹⁴⁹ Ives, Diary, vol.8, 11Sept.1890, p.88.

¹⁵⁰ 'Piccadilly By Night', Reynolds, *op cit.* Stuart Freeman reported in Modern Man that 'no man or woman, be he or she as innocent as a new-born babe, can feel safe from arrest and possible conviction on an absolutely unfounded charge'. Stuart Freeman, 'London Hell: Police Methods', Modern Man, 19 Dec.1908: p.10. The Royal Commission Upon the Duties of the Metropolitan Police (1908) addressed accusations of false arrests for prostitution and soliciting, but concluded 'that there is no cause for any public disquietude upon this head'. Parliamentary Papers: Reports from Commissioners, vol.50 (London, 1908), p.99.

¹⁵¹ W.E.Henley and William Nicholson, London Types (London, 1898), p.3.

to cosmopolitan actor in Piccadilly, disorientated and maybe insecure intruder in Soho, and finally acquisitive, consuming subject in Oxford Street. Losing track of time might also have presaged a change in the way an individual was perceived; a woman shopping on Regents Street might be taken for a prostitute if she lingered too late.

Such shifts might also be undertaken more wilfully. Sherlock Holmes was the undisputed fictional master of disguise in the city, and when the urban explorer and novelist Jack London changed his clothes for his visit to the East End, he declared: 'Presto! In the twinkling of an eye, so to say, I had become one of them'.¹⁵² Ransome met a man in the Café l'Europe in Leicester Square who 'worked in a bank from ten to four every day, and played the wild bohemian every night', using a false beard as a disguise.¹⁵³ The decadent described by Nordau kept his identifying clothes but deliberately visited inappropriate areas of the city.¹⁵⁴ In a similar vein Ives noted the anomalous presence in Seven Dials of 'the refined type', complete with white gloves.¹⁵⁵

These shifts in identification suggested the multiplicity and possibilities of urban life, whilst the anomalies and uncomfortable juxtapositions constituted stubborn critiques of the social system and its attendant moral orthodoxies.¹⁵⁶ However seductive a particular version of city life, each side street potentially undermined it and offered an alternative vision. The understandings of particular character types, or of different areas of the city, were constantly undercut because of the number of people moving about who deliberately or accidentally challenged expectations. Moreover, whilst it is undoubtedly true that the physical composition of London and the writing that described it shaped the behaviour of city dwellers, it is also true that the eclecticism of this composition and the diversity of writing suggested many different ways of behaving.

The urban explorers indicated a different hierarchy of spaces to that outlined in Baedeker's guides. Greenwood gave detailed directions on how to find particular rookeries and streets of crime, whilst Baedeker largely bypassed the East End to focus on the major public buildings of the West. Machray's night-time version of the city pinpointed a series of alternative landmarks, including the coffee stands in Oxford Street and an illicit night club in Fitzrovia. The Maiden Tribute case of 1885 and the ripper murders of 1888 marked out further places, and drew lines between previously

¹⁵² Jack London, *op.cit.*, p.11.

¹⁵³ Ransome, *op.cit.* p.129.

¹⁵⁴ See p.48 of this chapter.

¹⁵⁵ Ives, *Diary*, vol.38, 1 Nov.1900, p.55.

¹⁵⁶ See Michel de Certeau's discussion of disruptive 'silent histories'. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S.Randall (Berkeley, 1984), p.108.

unconnected spaces. Conjecture about the identity of the ripper, for example, linked Whitechapel to the gentlemen's clubs in Pall Mall and St James. Machray further suggested the existence of a secret sexual map, a guide to which (he helpfully explained) could be found 'lurking' at any of the major railway stations.¹⁵⁷ The ceremonies of government and royalty inscribed processional routes, whilst adverts in magazines and periodicals built up a picture of shopping areas.¹⁵⁸ In addition there were the literal maps which offered yet more versions of the city. Those in Baedeker's guides, for example, counteracted the hierarchies of space implicit in the accompanying text. They presented an orderly but unvariegated view from above; the attractions and structured tours were not marked. This flattened rendition of London seemed to invite readers to superimpose their own mappings, to locate places of personal importance and trace their individualised routes through the city. These various written, cartographic, and personal perspectives on the metropolis advertised its diversity rather than ever effectively containing its meanings and producing a definitive 'London'.

5.

In Paris and the Nineteenth Century Christopher Prendergast describes the frustration of trying to characterise the modern city. 'It exceeds', he writes, 'both identification and identity'.¹⁵⁹ This sense is crucial to understanding London during this period. The city's physical shape and diversity, together with the literature and debate about its problems and possibilities, make it impossible to sum up. This is not to render London meaningless, but to suggest that a series of overlapping and contradictory images vied simultaneously with each other, disrupting any single, stable conceptualisation. This chapter has looked at three particular visions of London - as imperial capital, cosmopolitan metropolis and socially-divided city. The following chapters will suggest that the interrelation between these images, and the dynamics and debates they set in motion, were crucial to emerging understandings of homosexuality. The overarching tension between the desire for order and the spectre of urban disarray is especially important and informs a number of themes explored in the thesis. Three are particularly significant.

First, there was ambiguity about the division of space, and especially about the notions of public and private. There was an (orderly) conceptual division between these two realms, yet the apparent rigidity of this split was compromised by spaces

¹⁵⁷ Machray, *op.cit.*, p.ix.

¹⁵⁸ Christopher Breward, 'Fashion and the Man, from Suburb to City Street: The Cultural Geography of Masculine Consumption, 1870-1914' (unpublished paper delivered at the 'Researching the Metropolis' seminar series, Raphael Samuel Centre for Metropolitan History, 13 May 1998).

¹⁵⁹ Prendergast, *op.cit.*, p.2.

which seemed to fall between the two, and by behaviour which continually breached the divide. In the West End, for example, hotel rooms and bachelor chambers were in some ways more private than the family home. Cafes and restaurants (and especially private rooms therein) were neither wholly public, in the way a street might be, nor entirely private. The parks and some of the theatres seemed to garner activity conventionally associated with the most private parts of the home. The notions of public and private retained meaning and power, but the division between them was constantly compromised or complicated.

Secondly, there were the putative gender norms and ideals associated with Englishness. The presence of apparently dissipated, amoral, and undisciplined foreigners, and the emergence of stereotypes of the 'new woman' and decadent male, disturbed these spectral norms and ideals, and even seemed to challenge the national integrity of parts of the city. The ever-increasing pace of metropolitan life provoked similar anxieties. In particular it seemed to threaten the class structure that ordered urban (and national) life. These concerns about the moral and physical health of the city and society were not new, but they were more intense during this period and were seen to have a much more profound impact on the 'race' and the nation.¹⁶⁰

Finally, there were the issues associated with surveillance, evasion and anonymity. With such a vast population, the scope for monitoring and observing the behaviour of fellow city dwellers was immense, and this almost certainly acted as a check on certain behaviours. The city's scale and complexity, however, also offered the possibility of evasion, of personal transformation and of anonymity; of encountering others who might observe but who might also judge differently from the projected 'norm'.

These various tensions exposed opportunities for sexual and cultural difference in London, but they also resulted in a renewed desire to order urban space and behaviour more effectively. The two phenomena were clearly related and were important in shaping expressions of homosexuality in the city.

¹⁶⁰ See Harris, *op.cit.*, ch.8.

Chapter 2

London and the Cities of the Plain: Mapping Homosexuality in the Metropolis

This chapter examines the places in London that were associated with homosexual behaviour before and during the period 1885-1914. Through newspaper reports, broadsheets, diaries, pamphlets and pornography it constructs a homosexual mapping of the city, and outlines a subculture closely associated with many of the places discussed in the last chapter.¹ These representations did not necessarily correlate completely with actual patterns of behaviour. The writers had different motivations for describing homosexual activity in London and for editing or exaggerating their supposed knowledge. Moreover, men looking for sex with other men resisted and assimilated different aspects of these depictions, and also explored the sexual possibilities of the city in other ways which went unreported. The different texts nevertheless described a series of places and behaviours which had accrued a subcultural or more general notoriety. They showed homosexuality to be an entrenched and integrated feature of urban life, causing considerable alarm but also exposing a series of possibilities.

The chapter begins with a consideration of the long-standing association between London and homosexuality, examining subcultural activity (and reaction to it) in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A second section looks at the years immediately preceding the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, and focuses on the case of cross-dressers Fanny and Stella (1870-1871) and the pornographic novel *Sins of the Cities of the Plain* (1881). Together they suggest increasingly self-confident homosexual activity in the West End. The final section examines the period 1885-1914 itself and considers the ways in which homosexual behaviour was associated not only with parts of the redeveloped city centre and transport infrastructure, but with a series of urban figures.

1.

In the introduction to this thesis it was noted how recent work by a number of critics and historians has shown the importance of late-Victorian fiction, science, court

¹ The use of the term 'subculture' in this thesis needs explaining. For one man to have sex with another does not make him part of a homosexual subculture. However, when particular rituals, language, fashions and places are recognised as signifiers of that sexual activity, and are self-consciously adopted by the men involved, then it is possible to talk about a subculture and subcultural forms. It is these factors which mark out behaviour as different or against 'the norm', and they indicate both a protest against a set of hegemonic values and a bond between those who resist them. See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London, 1979), p.3.

cases, and newspapers to the genesis and consolidation of ideas of homosexual identity. This work elaborates and modifies Foucault's famous assertion that the period saw the emergence of the homosexual as 'a species' and set in chain a binary (heterosexual/homosexual) logic of desire which maintains its power today.² However, whilst these years were marked by a crisis in, and discursive elaboration of, sexuality and sexual identification, identities and subcultural forms associated with homosexual acts can be discerned well before, as can a strong connection with the city.³ The sexual act which most preoccupied commentators was, after all, named after Sodom, and a range of texts published in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century repeatedly drew comparisons between London and the biblical city.

Richard Davenport-Hines, Randolph Trumbach and Alan Sinfield have indicated a conceptual shift in understandings of homosexual behaviour in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Davenport-Hines associates this with developing ideas of selfhood and individuality in the seventeenth century which allowed for the concept of a distinctive and potentially exclusive sexual identity.⁴ Trumbach and Sinfield note a concomitant change in understandings of gender categories, with ideas of masculinity and femininity becoming more fixed and increasingly related to who an individual had sexual relations with. Masculinity was consequently bound up with desiring women, and femininity with desiring men. The corollary of this was that desire was understood to function across the gender divide. For a man to have sex with another man therefore implicated effeminacy: he became 'like a woman'. Previously, Trumbach suggests, 'masculinity could be maintained with a whore on one arm and a boy on the other'.⁵

This reconceptualisation of gender and desire is inherently problematic when applied to homosexuality since a 'masculine' man would be necessary to satisfy the

² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol.1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (1976; London, 1990), p.43.

³ For accounts of some of these earlier subcultures see Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London, 1982); Richard Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to Sex and Sexuality in Britain Since the Renaissance* (London, 1991); Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700 - 1830* (London, 1992); Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behaviour and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Social History*, vol.1, no.2 (Fall 1977): pp.1-31; Trumbach, 'Sodomitical Subcultures, Sodomitical Roles, and the Gender Revolution of the Eighteenth Century: The Recent Historiography', in *'Tis Nature's Fault: Unauthorised Sexuality During the Enlightenment*, ed. Robert MacCubbin (Cambridge, 1987); and Trumbach, 'Gender and the Homosexual Role in Modern Western Culture: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries Compared', in ed. D.Altman, *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?* (London, 1989).

⁴ Davenport-Hines, *op.cit.*, pp.66-68.

⁵ Trumbach, 'Sodomitical Subcultures', *op.cit.*, p.118. See also Trumbach, 'Gender and the Homosexual Role', *op.cit.*, pp.153-156;. Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (London, 1994), p.45; and Tim Hitchcock, 'Redefining Sex in the Eighteenth Century', *History Workshop Journal*, no.41 (Spring: 1996): pp.73-90, p.84.

desires of an effeminate man. This, as Sinfield points out, 'spoils the idea of effeminacy as the defining characteristic of same-sex passion'.⁶ Moreover, effeminacy continued to be associated with the aristocratic fop (whether he had sex with men or not). In Hell Upon Earth or The Town in Uproar (1729), a tract detailing vice in London, the fop shares a taste for fashion and affected manners with the sodomite described a few pages later.⁷ Effeminacy was thus a powerful but problematic and imprecise signifier for the sodomite at this time.

Despite this confusion, an oppositional understanding of sexual tastes began to emerge. It was not as absolute as the homosexual/heterosexual division of the twentieth century, but was still powerful enough to allow for stereotyping and for assumptions about exclusivity in sexual taste to take hold. Men who contravened new norms of masculine and sexual behaviour were thus increasingly seen as distinct, and partly as a result their presence in the city was more evident and challenging.⁸ In Satyrical Reflections on Clubs (1709) Ned Ward identified 'Mollies' clubs' attended by 'Sodomitical wretches' who were 'so far degenerated from all masculine deportment or manly exercises that they rather fancy themselves women'.⁹ Hell Upon Earth, meanwhile, referred to 'brutish creatures called Sodomites' in the city, whilst Satan's Harvest Home (1745) talked of 'vile catamites' who were only in 'the shape of men', and who 'kiss and slaver each other [...] in our most public places'.¹⁰ Later The Phoenix of Sodom, or The Vere Street Coterie (1813) (which gave an account of the raid on the White Swan just off Oxford Street in 1810) envisaged a similarly distinctive sub-group: 'a catamite brood, neaded into human *shape, from the sweepings of Sodom, with the spawn of Gomorrah*'. They were, the author noted, the victims of 'damnable propensities' and 'a dreadful, malignant malady', already suggesting the association between pathology and particular sexual tastes.¹¹ Revelations about marriage and birthing rituals at the White Swan echoed accounts of behaviour at Mother Clap's Molly House in Holborn almost a century earlier in 1726. These depictions indicated a lineage of subcultural activity in London and cast it in opposition to 'normal' masculine behaviour.¹² It was also described as a visible part

⁶ Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.43.

⁷ Hell Upon Earth, or the Town in Uproar (London, 1729), pp.33-35 & p.41.

⁸ See Trumbach, 'Sodomitical Subculture', *op.cit.*, pp.116-117; G.S.Rousseau, 'The Pursuit of Homosexuality in the Eighteenth Century: Utterly Confused Category and/or Rich Repository', in ed.MacCubbin, *op.cit.*, p.145; Ian McCormick, ed. Secret Sexualities: a Sourcebook of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Writing (London, 1997), p.63.

⁹ Ned Ward, Satyrical Reflections on Clubs in 29 Chapters (London, 1710), p.284.

¹⁰ Hell Upon Earth, *op.cit.*, p.41; Satan's Harvest Home, or the Present State of Whorecraft, Pimping, Adultery, Fornication, Sodomy, Procuring and the Game of Flats (London, 1749), pp.51-2.

¹¹ Robert Holloway, The Phoenix of Sodom or the Vere Street Coterie (London, 1811), p.17. Original emphasis. See chapter 4 of this thesis.

¹² Davenport-Hines argues that these accounts 'stimulated the labelling process', which again

of city life. If these men could not be recognised from their general demeanour, then they could apparently be discerned by their secret signals and presence in particular places. George Parker observed in 1781, for example, that they could be found 'around twilight' in Bird Cage Walk, St James's Park 'signalling' to each other:

If one of them sits on a bench, he pats the backs of his hands; if you follow them, they put a white handkerchief thro' the skirts of their coat, and wave it to and fro; but if they are met by you, their thumbs are stuck in the arm-pits of their waistcoats, and they play their fingers upon their breasts. By means of these signals they retire to satisfy a passion too horrible for description, too detestable for language.¹³

Earlier in 1726, Thomas Newton used his knowledge of Moorfields as a cruising ground and of 'the methods they used in picking one another up' to entrap William Brown who was subsequently pilloried.¹⁴

The insistence on the distinctiveness of these urban figures perhaps betrays a concern about precisely the reverse, however. *Hell Upon Earth* drew attention to the changing identifications of these men. The author noted their 'strength and vigour' on the scaffold, but recalled their 'ridiculous affectations' in their clubs 'assum[ing] the air and affect[ing] the name of Madam or Miss, Betty or Molly'.¹⁵ Mother Clap's customers were similarly able to cast off their effeminate costume and behaviour, and challenge the emergent stereotypes in court by citing their marital status and progeny by way of defence.¹⁶ They were worryingly 'normal' men. Later Holloway pointed out the dual identities of the White Swan's clientele in *The Phoenix of Sodom*. He noted the 'generally received opinion' of effeminacy amongst these 'beings', but also observed that Fanny Murray, Lucy Cooper, and Kitty Fisher, who were arrested in the pub, were 'personified by an athletic bargeman, an Herculean coalheaver, and deaf-tyre smith'. 'The latter of these monsters', he went on to note, 'has two sons, both very handsome young men, who he boasts are full as depraved as himself'.¹⁷ Holloway indicated the stereotypes of effeminacy and sterility, but also showed both to be

encouraged an oppositional conception of desire. Rudi Bleys, meanwhile, suggests that reports of homosexual acts from travellers to Asia and America during the period lent credence to the burgeoning association of effeminacy with the sodomite. Davenport-Hines, *op.cit.*, p.74; Rudi Bleys *The Geography of Perversion: Male to Male Sexual Behaviour Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination* (London, 1996), p.71.

¹³ George Parker, *A View of Society and Manners in High and Low Life*, vol.ii (London, 1781), pp.87-88.

¹⁴ *Select Trials*, vol.ii (London, 1735), p.211.

¹⁵ *Hell Upon Earth*, *op.cit.*, p.43.

¹⁶ For the trials of some of those arrested at Margaret Clap's house see *Select Trials*, vol.ii (1735), *op.cit.*, pp.193-7; for Clap's own trial see *Select Trials*, vol.iii (London, 1742), p.37. For further discussion of the case see Norton, *op.cit.*, ch.3.

¹⁷ *The Phoenix of Sodom*, *op.cit.*, p.13.

flawed. In the pillories that followed the trials of 1810 it was precisely this lack of conformity to stereotype that attracted the most vitriol from the crowd. One newspaper noted that it was 'the apparently manly appearance [of one of the defendants which] drew down peculiar execrations on him'.¹⁸

What the White Swan case seemed to indicate was the fallibility of the prevailing stereotypes,¹⁹ but also the ability of the men involved to present themselves differently in different parts of the city, to be Fanny Murray at the Molly House and an athletic bargeman elsewhere. They used London's diverse spaces to experiment with their identity and evade arrest, at least until the raid. The scale of the city by 1700 meant that a degree of anonymity could be maintained as men moved between places (and identities).²⁰ The growth of the city also meant that there were increasing numbers of men who might take part in these activities, allowing the network to become more organised. The subculture, Alan Bray suggests, was becoming integrated into city life. In the early-seventeenth century, he argues, it was based largely around theatre companies and the court. Most liaisons had been opportunistic and associated with isolated acts rather than a wider subcultural identification. These acts were treated with horror in the infrequent prosecutions, but the general lack of distinctive social characteristics meant that such behaviour was largely invisible.²¹ Given differing understandings of selfhood, gender and sexual identity, people were not looking for homosexual activity in the same way as they were later. 'In general', Bray notes, 'homosexual behaviour went unrecognised or ignored, both by those immediately involved and by the communities in which they lived'.²² In the eighteenth century, however, there were claims that London was being overrun by sodomites and Mollies. *Hell Upon Earth* announced in 1729 that 'the late proceeding in our courts of law have furnished us with ample proofs that the town abounds too plentifully with a sect of brutish creatures called Sodomites'.²³ Twenty five years later *Satan's Harvest Home* made similar dire observations: 'vile Catamites mak[e] their preposterous addresses even in the very streets [...] This abominable practise gains ground every day'.²⁴ The author moreover suggested that these catamites were using contemporary

¹⁸ *Ibid.* The citation comes from one of a number of unreferenced newspaper clippings pasted in the front of the British Library copy of the text (callmark: cup 3e4.p.12).

¹⁹ See Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.45.

²⁰ By 1700 the population of London was approximately 600,000. It had increased three times in the course of the seventeenth century. Figures based on tax returns. See Christopher Hibbert and Ben Weinreb, eds, *The London Encyclopaedia* (London, 1995), p.630.

²¹ Bray, *op.cit.*, p.78. Trumbach modifies Bray's claims, suggesting that urban sodomitical subcultures did exist before this time. He also argues, however, that they became more concerted and visible in the 1700s. See Trumbach, 'Sodomitical Subcultures', *op.cit.*, pp.116-118.

²² Bray, *op.cit.*, p.75.

²³ *Hell Upon Earth*, *op.cit.*, p.41.

²⁴ *Satan's Harvest Home*, *op.cit.*, p.52.

urban fashion as a means of articulating their desires publicly. The Italian trend for men kissing, he argued, provided 'a pretext' for these public 'slaver[ings]', and constituted 'the first inlet for the detestable sin of Sodomy' into London.²⁵

More detailed accounts of this colonisation of the city are given in *Hell Upon Earth* and *The Phoenix of Sodom*, as well as in trial reports and other tracts and satires. St James's Park and the area around it were mentioned particularly frequently. Six years after it was listed as a 'market' (a cruising ground) in *Hell Upon Earth*, it featured in *A View of the Town: In an Epistle to a Friend in the Country* (1735), and was subsequently the focus of George Parker's account of the sodomite's secret signals.²⁶ In 1791 the Grand Jury of Middlesex wrote to the Home Secretary urging that St James's Park should be locked at night to forestall 'that most detestable and abominable Crime', and in 1808 the Home Secretary complained that many persons 'known to have unnatural propensities [...] have been found [...] loitering around St James' Park every evening after dark', with the intention of 'making assignations with each other'.²⁷ Nearby pubs and brandy shops also served as meeting places. In 1709 'a notorious gang of Sodomites' were arrested in a brandy shop on Jermyn Street.²⁸ The Royal Oak on the corner of St James's Square and Pall Mall was a Molly house in the 1720s, complete with private chapel for mock marriages.²⁹ In 1776 the Little Theatre in the Haymarket was the centre of another scandal,³⁰ as was The Star and The Crown in Broadway, just south of St James's Park, in the 1780s.³¹

Moorfields (by the side of what is now Finsbury Square, just north of the City) had a similar reputation. It was well known to Thomas Newton in the 1720s, as was indicated earlier, and also featured in a case in 1810, suggesting a long-standing notoriety.³² In the early 1720s the nearby home of Thomas Wright and The Three Shoes pub were noted for serving ale to Mollies.³³ Still in the City area, London Bridge and the Royal Exchange in Threadneedle Street featured in cases in 1707, and

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Hell upon Earth*, *op.cit.*, p.42; *A View of the Town in an Epistle to a Friend in the Country: A Satire* (London, 1735), p.19. The use of the term 'markets' indicates a semantic connection between monetary and sexual exchange, which was well established by the later-Victorian period. The use of the Royal Exchange and Covent Garden as cruising grounds endorsed the association.

²⁷ Cited in Davenport-Hines, *op.cit.*, p.86.

²⁸ 'A Full and True Account of the Discovery and Apprehending of A Notorious Gang of Sodomites' (1709), in ed. McCormick, *op.cit.* p.66.

²⁹ *Select Trials*, vol.iii, (London, 1742), p.36.

³⁰ Humphrey Nettle, *Sodom and Onan: a Satire* (London, 1772). Nettle's satire focuses on the arrest, trial and subsequent acquittal of Samuel Foote, an actor (and possibly also the proprietor) of the Little Theatre. The British Library copy includes newspaper clippings about the case (callmark: 11642.g.15).

³¹ *The Phoenix of Sodom*, *op.cit.*, newspaper clippings.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Select Trials*, vol.iii, (London, 1742), p.197.

the latter is cited as a notorious meeting place by the author of Hell Upon Earth just over twenty years later.³⁴ More arrests were made on London Bridge in 1810.³⁵ St Clements's Churchyard in King William Street and St Paul's Churchyard were both apparently meeting places in the 1720s.³⁶ Further west the piazza at Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields were listed in Hell Upon Earth,³⁷ and again there were accommodating pubs and houses nearby: Mother Clap's house in Field Lane, Holborn, was raided in 1726 and the Three Tobacco Rolls in Covent Garden was implicated in a case in the same year.³⁸ Later The Phoenix of Sodom mentions more pubs in the West End, including the White Swan in Vere Street, off Oxford Street, and others in St George's Fields (near what is now Marble Arch) and the Strand. These were part, the author suggested, of 'the vast geography of this moral blasting evil' in the city.³⁹ What is clear from The Phoenix of Sodom and the earlier texts is that there was a range of indoor and outdoor spaces throughout the eighteenth century which provided opportunities for socialising, subcultural ritual, and sex.

These commentators were (predictably) indignant about these activities and an unwonted level of tolerance was suggested. The true extent of this is difficult to assess. The consistent use of cruising areas such as St James's Park and Moorfields suggests there was no concerted crackdown, and periodic arrests and prosecutions did not comprehensively deter men from visiting these places. Some of the Molly Houses seem to have been well known for long periods before they were raided and shut down. Witnesses in the trial of Gabriel Lawrence, who was hanged for his part in the Mother Clap case, testified that 'the house bore the public character of a place of rendezvous for sodomites' and that 'it was notorious for being a Molly House'.⁴⁰ Cook (the proprietor of the White Swan in Vere Street) had been in business for twelve years before being raided, and was well enough known to attract customers from up to thirty miles away.⁴¹ This said, the public vitriol directed at the six men prosecuted and pilloried after the raid is startling. The newspaper descriptions of the procession from Newgate to the pillory on the Haymarket suggested a city in a state of collective outrage. The shops from Ludgate Hill to the Haymarket were closed, and the streets lined with people. The cart carrying the prisoners was preceded by

³⁴The Trial and Conviction of Several Reputed Sodomites, Before the Right Honourable Lord Mayor and Recorder of London, at Guildhall, the 20th day of October, 1707', in ed. McCormick, *op.cit.*, p.64; and Hell Upon Earth, *op.cit.*, p.42.

³⁵ The Phoenix of Sodom, *op.cit.*, newspaper clippings.

³⁶ Hell Upon Earth, *op.cit.*; Select Trials, vol.i, (London, 1764), p.67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Select Trials vol.iii, (London,1735), p.36.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

⁴⁰ Select Trials, vol.ii, (London, 1742),p.193.

⁴¹ The Phoenix of Sodom, *op.cit.*,p.22.

others carrying offal, vegetables and excrement for the crowd. By the time the men arrived at the pillory they looked like 'bears dipped in a stagnant pool'.⁴² The pillory constituted a ritual purging of the city, but the newspapers suggested that more action was needed to effect 'the annihilation of so detestable a race'.⁴³ Davenport-Hines argues that the continuing Napoleonic wars might account in part for the crowd's reaction. It was, he suggests, 'both patriotic and cathartic and offered a twisted form of social unity'.⁴⁴ The sodomite and Molly embodied a threat to the nation, not least by challenging standards of masculinity and constituting a potentially traitorous, pseudo-foreign, presence.⁴⁵

Earlier pamphlets also suggested that the sodomite was a disruptive figure, however, wreaking havoc on putatively ordered notions of class, gender, propriety, and nationality. The levity and potential for cross-class liaisons in the parks and Molly houses was a repeated cause for concern. A View of the Town: In an Epistle to a Friend in the Country (1735) described an aristocrat looking for sex with a servant or lower-class man (an 'ingle'):

He to St James's Park with rapture flies,
And roams in search of some vile ingle prize;
Courts the foul pathick in the fair one's place
And with unnatural lust defiles his race [...]
The great metropolis of England's isle
Had like to've been the nation's funeral pile.⁴⁶

The unnaturalness and the danger to the race and nation stemmed not just from the homosexual nature of the liaison, but from the disregard of class boundaries. Humphrey Nettle in a later satire found a similar sodomitical anarchy at the Little Theatre, Haymarket: 'nobility', he observed, 'degrades to prowl for prey', thereby 'damn[ing] the nation'.⁴⁷ In the Phoenix of Sodom, finally, Holloway dwelt repeatedly on the disregard for social propriety at the White Swan, where 'men of rank and

⁴² *Ibid.*, newspaper clippings.

⁴³ Although sodomy was punishable with the death penalty, attempted sodomy was not a capital crime. Calls were made for the punishment to be extended by the Morning Advertiser, the Morning Post, the Observer, the Statesman and Bell's Weekly Messenger. See Louis Crompton, Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in Nineteenth-Century England (London, 1984), p.168.

⁴⁴ Davenport-Hines, *op.cit.*, p.101.

⁴⁵ In Satan's Harvest Home and Views of Society and Manners in High and Low Life Italians were blamed for introducing the vice to England; the author of the Phoenix of Sodom blamed foreign heretics arriving in 1315; and the Morning Chronicle at the time of the Vere Street case suggested that the vice, which was 'horrible to the nature of Englishmen', had insinuated itself into the country through the influence of foreign soldiers on our own troops. See Satan's Harvest Home, *op.cit.*, p.52; Parker, *op.cit.*, p.87; The Phoenix of Sodom, *op.cit.*, p.26; Crompton, *op.cit.*, p.167.

⁴⁶ A View of the Town, *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁴⁷ Nettle, *op.cit.*, pp.16-17.

respectable station might be seen wallowing either in or on the beds with wretches of the lowest description'.⁴⁸ These concerns about class disruption and foreignness endured, as subsequent chapters show.

Each of these texts bolstered ideas of normality in gender and class relations through the exposure of dissidence. They simultaneously uncovered (and advertised) a subculture and suggested, by contrast, the decency and propriety of the author and putative reader. In addition they pertained to promote a re-ordering of the city by exposing these men and calling for action against them. The activities of the Society for the Reformation of Manners (1691-1738) sent out similar messages. Founded by a group of puritanical Christians, it used *agents provocateurs* to entrap men in Moorfields and the Royal Exchange in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and an embittered informer to indict Mother Clap, her clients, and others in the 1720s.⁴⁹ These *agents provocateurs*, the rhetoric of revelation in the pamphlets, and the tips for spotting sodomites and Mollies (suggested by George Parker, for example), brought the possibility of exposure, either of an isolated act or a set of subcultural practices, forcefully into the consciousness of anyone who was involved in them. This panoptic dynamic was crucial in the genesis of ideas about homosexual identity in the city, not least in promoting the assumption that there was something (in addition to the genital acts themselves) to see and in making people aware of the supposed tell-tale signs. In the trial of Charles Hichen for sodomy in 1727, for example, the servant at the Talbot Inn in the Strand testified that 'he suspected [Hichen] for a sodomite' because of his frequent visits to the pub with soldiers. As a result, when Hichen took a private room at the pub, the servant 'peeped through the keyhole and saw him'.⁵⁰ Homosexual behaviour was incorporated into the visual economy of the city during the eighteenth century, and in the nineteenth century there were continued efforts to distinguish the perpetrators and bring them to view.

2.

Despite the intensity of hostility at the time of the Vere Street case (1813), homosexual activity continued as a visible part of city life. Rictor Norton's examination of William Beckford's diaries and scrapbooks signals a lively subculture in the 1810s and 1820s, which focused increasingly on the West End.⁵¹ The area

⁴⁸ *The Phoenix of Sodom*, *op.cit.*, p.11.

⁴⁹ *Select Trials*, vol.ii, (London, 1735), p.211; *Select Trials*, vol.iii, (London, 1742), p.39; Norton, *op.cit.* pp.44-57; Davenport-Hines, *op.cit.*, pp.69-72.

⁵⁰ *Select Trials*, vol. iii (London, 1742), p.75.

⁵¹ The son of the wealthiest man in England, William Beckford (1760-1844) became the subject of newspaper gossip over his friendship with William Courtney (later 9th Earl of Devon) in the 1780s, and subsequently lived largely outside society at his estate at Fonthill, near Exeter. Despite this Rictor Norton shows from his examination of Beckford's diaries, letters and scrapbooks that he

around Seven Dials was apparently a productive cruising ground for Beckford in the 1810s,⁵² and in 1825 John Muirhad (a member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice) was arrested after picking up an apprentice outside a print shop in Sackville Street, just off Piccadilly. Raids in 1822 and 1830, meanwhile, indicated the continued use of West End pubs by men seeking sex with other men. In 1822 Percy Jocelyn, the Bishop of Clogher, was caught with a guardsman in the White Lion Tavern in the Haymarket,⁵³ and an ensuing condemnatory pamphlet asserted that 'there were various houses in the metropolis used by such wretches for their nefarious purposes, especially in the neighbourhood of St Mary-le-bone'.⁵⁴ In 1830 a raid on the Bull in Bullen Court, just off the Strand, revealed the use of an upstairs room by men who had picked up soldiers in Horse Guards Parade.⁵⁵ Other cases involved soldiers at the Knightsbridge barracks and a Canon of St Paul's, who was found *in flagrante* in a wharf off Upper Thames Street, just south of the cathedral.⁵⁶ Many of these cases were greeted with considerable public anger. Clogher and his guardsman lover had to be protected from angry crowds, whilst the men arrested at the Bull reputedly faced a mob of 500, who pelted them with mud.

Explanatory notes in *Don Leon* (1866), a poem whose author purported to be Lord Byron, included details of further cases in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1830, for example, two men were caught in Hyde Park by disguised policemen, and in 1841 William Banks, MP, was arrested for an offence in Green Park.⁵⁷ The author attacked the underhand methods of exposure discussed earlier,⁵⁸ and detailed, by way of comparison, the ease of erotic life in Turkey where 'a black-eyed boy his trade unblushing plies'.⁵⁹ He nevertheless suggested that homosexuality was endemic in London:

Yes, London! All thy chastity is show;
Be witness Vere Street and the Barley Mow.
Lives there a man, what'er his rank may be,

continued to explore London's homosexual subculture. See Norton. *op.cit.*, pp.221-231.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.225.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.216-221; Crompton, *op.cit.*, p.300.

⁵⁴ *The Bishop! Particulars of the Charge against the Hon. Percy Jocelyn, Bishop of Clogher* (London, 1822), cited in Norton, *op.cit.*, p.220.

⁵⁵ Norton, *op.cit.*, p.228.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ In *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (an encyclopaedia of erotic writing) Pisanus Fraxi (the alias of Henry Spenser Ashbee) observed that the notes in *Don Leon* 'are copious, curious, frequently erudite, and give much information about the scandalous doings of the times'. Pisanus Fraxi, *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (London, 1877), p.189. See Crompton's discussion of the poem and its authorship. Crompton, *op.cit.*, pp.343- 386.

⁵⁸ 'Lord Byron', *Don Leon* (London, 1866), p.1 & p.32.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

Who now can say my caste from stain is free?⁶⁰

He went on to list the professions (soldiers, sailors, and MPs among them) implicated in these activities and to describe the places where they took place: opportunistically in barracks and schools; with more intent in Hyde Park and certain pubs. He noted past cases (like Vere Street) and suggested that homosexuality was a durable and intractable part of city life. Unlike previous commentators, the author attempted to defend this subculture and associated identities, arguing that homosexual desires were both intrinsic and legitimate.⁶¹

Yokel's Preceptor, or More Sprees in London (c.1860) was published around the same time as Don Leon. It was a cheap, sensational guide book to the capital's gin palaces and gaming houses, and also testified to the growing confidence of 'Margeries' and 'pooffs' in the West End streets.⁶² Like George Parker before him, the author offered advice on the 'way to know the beasts' (they could be recognised by their 'effeminate air and fashionable dress') and indicated their primary 'haunts': the quadrant at the south end of Regent Street (where Piccadilly Circus would later be constructed), Fleet Street, the Strand, and Charing Cross (where pubs had supposedly erected signs warning 'Beware of Sods'). These 'Sods' were, he noted, commonly found in the saloon bars of the theatres and in coffee houses, and also congregated around West End picture shops. 'Will the reader credit it', the author wrote in mock outrage, 'that these monsters actually walk the streets the same as whores, looking out for a chance!'⁶³

The confident expression and tacit toleration of homosexuality indicated in Yokel's Preceptor became more evident through the trial of Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park in 1870-71. The later pornographic novel Sins of the Cities of the Plain (1881) featured the flamboyant duo, and indicated to a more limited audience the sexual possibilities London offered. These various texts suggest that the period immediately before the passing of the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act was one of growing self-possession for London's 'Margeries' and 'pooffs'.

Boulton and Park (also known as Fanny and Stella) were charged with 'conspiring and inciting persons to commit an unnatural offence' after being arrested in women's clothes at the Strand Theatre in April 1870. What emerged during the case through the testimony of theatre managers, a Burlington Arcade beadle, a housekeeper, and a hansom cab driver, together with a selection of letters passed

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁶¹ The writer noted: 'God, like the potter, when his clay is damp,/ Gives every man, in birth, a different stamp', *ibid.*, p.28.

⁶² Yokel's Preceptor or More Sprees in London! (London, 1855), pp.5-7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.6.

between the defendants, was a circuit of West End spaces which Boulton and Park used with confidence to affirm and sustain their particular lifestyle. They had been known to the manager of the Alhambra for three years: he had once thrown them out when, dressed as women, they gathered a crowd of men around them. He testified that on another occasion, this time out of women's clothes, the men leant over the balcony 'making stupid noises, chirruping to each other with their lips [and] chucking each other the chin and playing frivolous games'.⁶⁴ Their behaviour at the Strand Theatre on another night was similar. A broadsheet, The Lives of Boulton and Park, published just before the trial (but after police court hearings) noted: 'these ladies leaned over their box, twirled their handkerchiefs, and lasciviously ogled the male occupants of the stalls'.⁶⁵ At the Surrey theatre they were noticed engaging male strangers in conversation.⁶⁶ The prosecution also detailed their appearance in women's clothes at the Casino in Holborn and at the Oxford and Cambridge boat race, and The Times noted that 'they promenaded Regents Street and the Haymarket until late hours in the morning, and made acquaintances'.⁶⁷ They shopped in the fashionable Burlington Arcade in make-up (but sometimes without dresses) and were asked to leave by the Beadle on one occasion after Stella was observed winking at a gentlemen and 'turning his head in a sly manner'.⁶⁸ On the day of their arrest one witness visited them at Bruton Street, Mayfair, where they, and two other visitors, 'talk[ed] constantly about performing and playing'.⁶⁹ They then took a cab to Chancery Lane Chambers on a visit, before going back to Oxford Street to buy gloves and jewellery. When these and other items were displayed in court the Telegraph noted that 'it seemed [...] as though outcasts of one of the Monmouth Street [clothes shops] had been cast over the court of the Queen's bench'.⁷⁰

This behaviour, together with over 40 letters seized by the police, was seen to implicate homosexual activity. The Attorney General, H. James QC, for the prosecution referred to the 'searching investigation' (including a year of police surveillance) undertaken to ascertain whether 'the popular apprehension was correct'.⁷¹ The committing magistrate refused the men bail, and the author of The Lives of Boulton and Park saw 'the profligacy of the guilty cities of the plain' behind

⁶⁴ 'The Trial of Boulton and Park', Reynolds, 14 May 1871: p.7.

⁶⁵ The Lives of Boulton and Park: Extraordinary Revelations (London, c.1870), p.3. The broadsheet was also published as Men in petticoats.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁶⁷ 'The Queen.v.Boulton and Others', The Times, 10 May 1871: p.11.

⁶⁸ Neil Bartlett, Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde (London, 1988), p.132.

⁶⁹ The Lives of Boulton and Park, *op.cit.*, p.6.

⁷⁰ 'The Boulton and Park Prosecution', Telegraph, 10 May 1871:p.5.

⁷¹ 'The Trial of Boulton and Park', Reynolds, 14 May 1887:p.6.

their behaviour.⁷² The prosecution's emphasis on effeminacy and costume suggests that they believed it to be compelling evidence of the men's sexual tastes. The Judge also made the connection. In his summing up he criticised the police surgeon, James Paul, for the unauthorised (and inconclusive) anal examination he conducted on Boulton and Park. He demurred from punishing Paul, however, because they were 'two effeminate' rather than 'two strong' men.⁷³ The judge clearly saw the examination, which might have revealed evidence of sodomy, as partially justifiable because of the defendants' effeminacy.

Given this 'popular apprehension' Boulton and Park's performance was a daring one. Previous courtroom testimony indicated that the use of the streets and parks to find sexual partners was nothing new, but this kind of theatricality seems to have been a departure. In previous cases, such as Vere Street, it had taken place firmly behind closed doors, but Boulton and Park found that the West End shopping streets, arcades and theatres were relatively accommodating. 'They used their frocks', Neil Bartlett argues, 'to create public space for themselves in London, in the separate but overlapping world of the actress, the prostitute and the *demimondaine*'.⁷⁴ They self-consciously took on these other urban roles, and at the Strand Theatre one witness was convinced, at least at first, that they were women. Other theatre-goers apparently took them 'for fresh stars about to shine in the firmament of the demimonde'.⁷⁵ Their disguise as 'fast women' made their 'ogling' the men in the stalls distasteful, perhaps, but not abhorrent. At other times, however, they wore make-up but did not attempt to disguise themselves convincingly as women, and they were allowed into the Burlington Arcade and were tolerated at the Alhambra. Boulton and Park, as Bartlett suggests, played the city carefully, aware of where they could get away with particular outfits, and where adjustment, or more comprehensive and convincing 'drag' was necessary.⁷⁶ In court they took on yet another role: they both wore suits, and Park 'had grown stout' and sported a moustache.⁷⁷

The public seem to have been entertained rather than appalled by the case. The Telegraph commented on the unstinting public interest, and Reynolds noted a largely friendly crowd outside the court: 'some of the assembled mass cheered them, some hissed and some clapped their hands [...] Fairly seated in the cab, Boulton as they were whirled off, put up his hands to his lips and kissed to his friends'.⁷⁸ Inside the

⁷² The Lives of Boulton and Park, *op.cit.*, p.3.

⁷³ 'The Boulton and Park Case: The Verdict', Reynolds, 21 May 1871:p.6.

⁷⁴ Bartlett, *op.cit.*,p.138.

⁷⁵ The Lives of Boulton and Park, *op.cit.*,p.3

⁷⁶ Bartlett, *op.cit.*, p.133.

⁷⁷ 'The Trial of Boulton and Park', Reynolds, 14 May 1871:p.6

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.7.

THE LIVES
OF
BOULTON AND PARK.
EXTRAORDINARY REVELATIONS. *R*



THE TOILET AT THE STATION.

PRICE ONE PENNY.
Office : 5, Houghton Street, Strand.

court laughter accompanied much of the evidence, and the outburst of applause which greeted the acquittal had to be suppressed by officials.

The Lives of Boulton and Park, meanwhile, employed the rhetoric of outrage, and claimed that London 'outvie[d] the Cities of the Plain and ancient Rome'. It suggested that their behaviour was indicative of a broad subculture that had insinuated its way into the heart of the city, 'poison[ing] society in our midst',⁷⁹ and threatening those 'dearest to our heart and hearths'.⁸⁰ Boulton and Park's activities were rendered as both anti-English (taking place to the indignation 'of every true Englishman')⁸¹ and anti-domestic. As in Yokel's Preceptor, however, this outrage was a convenient vehicle for detailed revelations about a subculture and two particular actors in it. This, rather than an exhortation to moral rectitude, seems to have been the broadsheet's main purpose.

Although the connection between sodomy and Boulton and Park's effeminate behaviour had been made more or less explicit in the coverage leading up to the trial, the men faced little of the collective public outrage and dismay that greeted those involved in the Vere Street case in 1810. There is a sense that these two men were less of a threat than they would have been sixty years before, and were instead an intriguing and highly entertaining spectacle. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. The lack of direct evidence of sexual relations with other men may have made the case appear relatively benign: there was no obvious 'victim'.⁸² Moreover, whilst the period was certainly not free of concern about international relations, degeneration, and urban decay, these anxieties were not as intense as in the 1880s and 1890s. There was not the same looming fear of national defeat or imperial collapse, and perhaps as a result the antics of Fanny and Stella in the West End seemed of relatively little consequence (though of much interest).

The judge deplored their behaviour. 'No one can doubt', he said in his summing up, 'that it is an outrage not only to public morality but also of public decency, and one that deserves in one way or another not only reprehension but actual and severe punishment'.⁸³ However, he all but directed the subsequent acquittal, by pointing out that however 'repulsive or offensive or objectionable' their behaviour, the jury had to be convinced that it constituted a conspiracy to commit a felony (sodomy). The judge

⁷⁹ The Lives of Boulton and Park, *op.cit.*, p.7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² The Royal Commission on the Contagious Diseases Act, which was sitting at the time of the trial, was hearing much more disturbing evidence of venereal disease, prostitution and male sexual incontinence. The Boulton and Park case seemed to have little to do with such exploitation and abuse, and indeed Reynolds, the Telegraph, and The Times did not make a link.

⁸³ 'The Boulton and Park Case', Reynolds, 21 May 1871: p.6.

clearly saw a connection between their behaviour and sodomy, but showed legal rigour in indicating its inadequacy as evidence. He also exposed the supposed inadequacies in the coverage of the law, which would be tightened in 1885 and 1898.⁸⁴

In *Sins of the Cities of the Plain*, a pornographic text published a decade after the trial, a similar confident urban pose was suggested, with London's West End accommodating role play and performance like that of Fanny and Stella, as well as more explicit sexual antics for which they could certainly have been prosecuted. The text foreshadows the later pornographic novel *Teleny* (1893) and similarly contains scenes of disturbing abuse and misogyny.⁸⁵ What it usefully illuminates is the way in which prevailing class, gender and racial power dynamics were replicated in conceptualisations of homosexual behaviour. It also outlined a fictionalised homoerotic geography of London which drew on real people and places and reproduced many of the images emerging from the courts, press and broadsheets. Importantly, though, it recapitulated these images and mappings outside a censorious juridical or journalistic context. The text thus exposed more directly the potential pleasures of London for the putative reader and the shifting identifications that were possible. It also disturbingly presented working class and foreign boys who lived in the city as pliant and disposable sexual objects.

Two hundred and fifty copies of the text were privately printed, and Wilde reputedly obtained his copy from the *Librairie Française* in Coventry Street.⁸⁶ The story takes the form of the memoirs of a young male prostitute, Jack Saul, who is paid to set down his experiences by a client, Mr Cambon of Cornwall Mansions, Baker Street. A male prostitute by the same name featured in the Cleveland Street scandal of 1889, and Fanny and Stella also appear in the text. Pisanus Fraxi noted that 'they

⁸⁴ Bartlett argues that the acquittal was the result of wilful disbelief on the part of the judge and jury who wished to preserve the national reputation. This is plausible, but the judge indicated that even without the slur of sodomy, Boulton and Park's behaviour was nothing to be proud of, and he moreover pointed out that 'it would be fatal to the character of the country if guilt, when detected, were allowed to go unpunished or unscathed'. Sinfield suggests that the stereotypes were not so ubiquitous as to be universally convincing, therefore allowing for the men to be dismissed. However, there was also a lack of proof that Boulton and Park had made unlawful suggestions to anyone. The acquittal was not dependent on a misapprehension of stereotype alone, and even if the stereotype was universally understood the men might still have been acquitted. When Wilde was prosecuted his 'pose' was important, but so was the testimony of the men he had had sex with. There was no such evidence in this case. Bartlett, *op.cit.*, p. 136; 'The Boulton and Park Case', *Reynolds*, 21 May 1871: p.6; Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.8.

⁸⁵ See chapter 5.

⁸⁶ H.Montgomery Hyde, *The Other Love: An Historical and Contemporary Survey of Homosexuality in Britain* (London, 1970), p.141.

would almost appear to have been sketched from personal acquaintance'.⁸⁷ Real addresses, pubs and hotels are mentioned (including The Star and Garter in Richmond, which is recommended in Charles Pascoe's guide to the city)⁸⁸ and it seems that the author not only knew London well, but had an intimate knowledge of its homosexual subculture; a knowledge he was keen to use to erotic effect. The text aims to arouse its reader through descriptions of sex in real places, and with figures who were either well-known generally (such as Fanny and Stella) or who might have had a subcultural reputation (like Saul). It deliberately presents its fantasises as documentary and consequently appears to elaborate the dynamics of an actual urban subculture.

The text details liaisons in a series of places, predominantly in the West End. Jack Saul recounts experiences on a farm in Sussex and at his public school, but it is at a London drapers (where he gets a job at the age of sixteen) that his adventures really begin. He ministers to an aristocratic brother and sister in Piccadilly, to members of a secret club in Portland Place (owned by the suggestively-named Mr Inslip), to another aristocrat living in Grosvenor Square, and to a lawyer in his offices at the Temple (Fanny and Stella visited a lawyer in the Temple in their perambulations on the day of their arrest). Saul also attends a cross-dressing ball with Fanny and Stella at a plush new hotel in the Strand, and has sex with them at a house in Eaton Square. Another escapade is detailed in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace during a royal garden party given by the Prince of Wales. An embedded narrative of ex-guardsmen George Brown, who is also a prostitute, describes a brothel near the Albany Barracks, Regents Park (also mentioned by John Addington Symonds in his memoirs)⁸⁹ and alludes to six others in the West End. In addition to these private and exclusive locales, Mr Cambon (Saul's 'employer') notes that 'the Mary Annes of London [...] were often to be seen sauntering in the neighbourhood of Regent Street or the Haymarket' (precisely Fanny and Stella's favourite haunts) and he himself picks Saul up in Leicester Square outside a picture shop.⁹⁰

With every encounter given a specific location, the text sets down a detailed homoerotic mapping of London which overlays the central area of the city. Key dominant spaces of justice, aristocracy, defence, and royalty all feature, as do the new hotels, shopping areas, expensive private houses, and streets notorious for prostitution. An outlawed set of practices, and associated modes of behaviour, thus

⁸⁷ Pisanus Fraxi, *Catena Librorum Tacendorum* (London, 1885), p.195.

⁸⁸ Charles Pascoe, *London of Today: An Illustrated Annual Publication*, (London, 1894), p.106.

⁸⁹ *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (London, 1984), p.186 & p.253

⁹⁰ *Sins of the Cities of the Plain, or Recollections of a Mary Ann, with Short Essays on Sodomy and Tribadism*, (London, 1881), p.9. Earlier *Yokel's Preceptor* noted that 'Margeries' could be found cruising outside such shops. See p.69 of this chapter.

gain substance through a dominant and widely understood geography. Such mappings can be seen again later in the diaries and memoirs of Roger Casement, George Ives and to a lesser extent John Addington Symonds. The individual who collected newspaper clipping and pasted them into the front of the Phoenix of Sodom may well have been attempting to give a similar geographical substance to his own desires, as Beckford and Ives certainly do in their scrapbook collections. However, in Sins of the Cities of the Plain the element of danger which haunts Ives, the moral rectitude which hinders Symonds,⁹¹ and the draconian laws apparent in the newspaper clippings, are side-stepped in a confident use of diverse urban spaces made possible by the fictional, pornographic nature of the text.

Part of the work's eroticism emanates from the conjunction of well-known places and an outlawed set of practices, but it also emerges from the use of established social structures and conventions. Apart from the institutions of justice and royalty, the ballroom and drawing room are also utilised to homoerotic effect in a parody of conventions of conversation and courtship. At Eaton Place, for example, Fanny sits primly at her piano in the drawing room, and announces to Saul (Eveline at this point): 'now I will play you a nice piece, only I have a fancy to have you in me, and you must fuck and frig me as I play to you'. Afterwards she comments: 'now wasn't that nice, dear Eveline?'⁹² At Grosvenor Square a similar conventional formality sees Saul conducted into 'his Lordship's' billiard room, where three youths emerge from 'what looked like a large bookcase'.⁹³ Aristocratic English conventionality here literally yields up sexual possibilities, and in this way homosexual activity is made to appear an intrinsic part not just of city life but also of the lives of the ruling classes and professions (as Don Leon also suggests).

As well as employing aristocratic and domestic form and ritual, the Grosvenor Square encounter trades on the supposed sexual accessibility and pliancy of foreigners: the youths in the bookcase are French, Italian, and African. The aristocrat's power over, and difference from, his sexual objects charges the encounter. The power dynamic is evoked again in another episode in which George Brown employs a 13-year-old shoe-shine boy from Whitechapel as his page, takes him to his apartment 'in a nice street in Camden Town' and forces him to have sex.⁹⁴ The pivot of Brown's abusive liaison is the social and corresponding geographical division of the city, which is reproduced and utilised in the text to sexual effect. Both of these

⁹¹ See chapter 6.

⁹² Sins of the Cities, *op.cit.*, p.18.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.38-39.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.75.

encounters rely on fixed positions of class, race, nationality or wealth, and the tendency of the city to throw extremes together.

Money is also an important component of these encounters and the purchase of male sexual partners in the West End strengthens the sense of consumerist excess discussed in the last chapter. Ten years previously Boulton and Park clearly saw the Burlington Arcade as an arena where acquisitive and sexual desires might be indulged, and in *Sins of the Cities of the Plain* the two are also clearly conflated. Saul, working in a draper's shop, is purchased by the incestuous siblings living in Piccadilly, and picked up by Mr Cambon whilst looking in a picture shop window. Saul and Brown are paid for most of their exploits, and Saul's story is itself bought (and framed and controlled) by the wealthy Mr Cambon. The language of sex also repeatedly overlays that of retail: Mr Cambon tells Saul during sex that he does not want to 'spend' too quickly, because he enjoys 'the sense of possession'.⁹⁵ Brown sells his shoe-shine boy for £100 in Paris, where, he blithely claims, 'they practise every kind of cruelty and even sometimes kill them'.⁹⁶ In another part of the narrative Brown explains how money could be extorted or stolen without the need for delivering the sexual goods. The novel's amorality and homoeroticism hinge on monetary exchange and an elaboration of capitalist ideology. As with the homoerotic use made of social convention, class division and racial otherness, it is again the dominant forces structuring city life that are in turn portrayed structuring homosexual relations. These relations are consequently imagined as intrinsic to the city's material and social fabric, and are not part of an alternative system such as that subsequently described by Edward Carpenter.⁹⁷

Whilst class and gender roles are underscored, the novel also suggests the possible dissolution of these fixed positions in the city and amongst specifically urban players. Saul and Brown are differentiated from the other characters by being principally identified with the city and homosexual activity, rather than with a particular class, race or nationality. As a result they are much more mobile than the men with whom they have sex and are able to occupy different power positions as they move around the city and assume different clothes and sexual roles. Brown, for example, can take on a feminine role, that of a lower-class male, and, in turn, a privileged abuser of a working-class boy. Earlier this power dynamic is evaded when Eveline, Fanny and Stella meet and have sex as equals. Likewise, Brown and Saul have sex together (as men) without the power games and passive/active roles which structure the other relationships. At other points in the novel both men have sex with

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.24.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.75.

⁹⁷ See chapter 6.

women. Their urban identification seems to allow them to embark on a wide-ranging exploration of sexual roles.

The changing identifications of these figures is reflected in the pliancy of the urban terrain itself. The novel constructs a series of fleeting, fantasy situations in London, which draw on the idea of a fragmentary and phantasmogoric urban scene. Each situation is carefully evoked but quickly abandoned in favour of another setting, with Saul, the mutating urban protagonist, the only continuous presence. It seems that every West End Street holds a different sexual possibility, in which diverse 'other' spaces might be conjured and drawn in. After the appearance of the youths from the cupboard in the billiard room, for example, the space of the aristocratic town house turns into a boudoir of Eastern exoticism, as the doors to an adjacent room are flung open to reveal the 'most seductive looking couches and ottomans [and] heavily curtained windows'.⁹⁸ The city not only represents sexual possibility in itself, but is also perceived to accommodate other eroticised arenas. Whereas the non-urban spaces that open the novel (the farm and the school) are fixed, London and the exclusive sites within it can reconfigure, allowing the city to be transformed into one (or both) of the Cities of the Plain of the title. These transformations and mutations are also a feature of the writing discussed in chapter five.

The behaviour of Boulton and Park and the fictionalised life of Saul suggest a distinctive urban homosexual style which variously embraced, parodied and undermined prevailing social and cultural dynamics as well as establishment spaces and institutions. It also demonstrates the ways in which the multifaceted and chaotic city might accommodate a variety of different roles and poses: Boulton and Park did not play one role consistently, and neither do Saul and Brown.

The real and fictional paths these men trod, together with those of the men discussed in section one, moreover suggest an entrenched relationship between the city and homosexuality well before 1885. These histories constituted an important precedent during the period that followed, marking out different places and a lineage of homosexual activity. Several of the cases and texts discussed above maintained their currency. *Sins of the Cities of the Plain*, detailing the subculture of the 1860s and 1870s, continued to be available, and went through at least one additional print run. Fanny and Stella were the subject of an obscene limerick in the erotic journal *The Pearl* in 1879, but were also mentioned later in newspaper coverage of the Wilde trials and again in 1910, after a spate of cross-dressing cases.⁹⁹ Those privy to Pisanus Fraxi's

⁹⁸ *Sins of the Cities*, *op.cit.*, p.54.

⁹⁹ 'Male Prostitution', *Reynolds*, 26 May 1895: p.1; 'In Male Attire: No Law Against Masquerade', *Globe*, 27 Jul.1910, in George Ives, *Casebook*, vol.7, p.89, BLY. Ives did not include page references for the articles pasted in his scrapbooks, and occasionally omitted dates and/or newspaper details.

three-volume encyclopaedia of erotic works (published in 1877, 1879 and 1885) could read summaries of many of the writings discussed earlier.¹⁰⁰ Case studies in Henry Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (1897) and Xavier Mayne's *The Intersexes* (1908) included some accounts of sexual exploits in London's parks, theatres and streets in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s.¹⁰¹ In addition to these printed reminders, gossip and personal testimony doubtless marked out other places in the city that had been used in previous years. These various accounts exposed the risks of homosexual activity, but they also advertised the sexual and social possibilities of the city. They indicated a series of places where the dictates of the dominant ideology might be adapted or resisted.

3.

During the period 1885 to 1914 the homoerotic mapping of London is perhaps easier to discern than before because of an intensification in the debate about homosexuality. The West End continued to be the focus of attention, and various cases discussed in the next chapter involve homosexual activity in the streets of central London. Piccadilly Circus was especially notorious, and it was here in 1889 that Jack Saul handed out cards referring men to the Cleveland Street brothel.¹⁰² Oxford Street had a similar reputation: in 1906 Henry Muller, a French 'alien', was jailed for three months with hard labour for trying to solicit men near Oxford Circus in the early hours of the morning whilst dressed in women's clothes (rather as Fanny and Stella had done in the Haymarket and Regent Street in the late 1860s).¹⁰³ The diaries of the Irish nationalist Roger Casement suggest that other West End Streets were also productive cruising grounds. He reported meeting men in the Strand, Marble Arch, Tottenham Court Road, Piccadilly, Piccadilly Circus, Oxford Circus, the Mall, Euston Square, Victoria, Sloane Square, and further west in Gloucester Road.¹⁰⁴ Casement

¹⁰⁰ The volumes include summaries of *Satan's Harvest Home*, *The Phoenix of Sodom*, *Yokel's Preceptor*, *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain*, and *Don Leon*. Pisanus Fraxi, *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, *op.cit.*; Fraxi, *Centuria Librorum Absconditorum* (London, 1879); Fraxi, *Catena Librorum Tacedorum* (London, 1885).

¹⁰¹ See chapter 4.

¹⁰² For details of the Cleveland Street scandal see chapter 3. Ives's scrapbook gives a good indication of Piccadilly's reputation. See, for example, 'Man in Woman's Attire: A Struggle in Piccadilly', *Echo*, 14 Apr. 1897, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol. 1, p.95; 'Perils of Piccadilly', *Star*, 19 Jul. 1902, in *Casebook*, vol. 3, p.52; 'Remarkable Blackmail Charge', *Daily Chronicle* 18 Jan. 1906, in *Casebook*, vol. 5, p.108; and 'Prison and a Whipping', 23 Oct. 1906, in *Casebook*, vol. vi, p.41 (newspaper not cited).

¹⁰³ 'Man in Woman's Dress', *Daily Mail*, 22 Aug. 1906, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol. 6, p.36. Public toilets at Great Castle Street and Woodstock Street, both near Oxford Circus, were also popular with men looking for sex. See 'The Curse of Marylebone Yet Again', *Marylebone Advertiser*, 21 Sep. 1901, in *Casebook*, vol. 3, p.21; 'Serious Charge of Blackmailing: Strange Case at the West End', *Daily Chronicle*, 8 May 1895: p.9.

¹⁰⁴ Roger Casement, *The Black Diaries*, eds Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias (London,

was meticulous in his record-keeping: alongside the meeting place, he noted the age, penis size, nationality (he had a particular penchant for French, Italian and Irish men) and sometimes the cost of the men he met. His record conflated the bodies and genitalia of his anonymous sexual partners with particular places in the capital, overlaying the principal streets and intersections with his own homoerotic associations. Ives was more guarded but also enjoyed the thrill of exchanged glances in the West End,¹⁰⁵ whilst his friend Edward Carpenter wrote in *Towards Democracy* of the city crowd and 'glances unforgotten and meant to be unforgotten'.¹⁰⁶

The green areas of central London were also popular for cruising, particularly in the evenings.¹⁰⁷ Hyde Park was notoriously used by soldier prostitutes to find clients, and in 1903, in recognition of the problem, the army issued an order forbidding uniformed soldiers from 'loiter[ing] without lawful purpose in the parks after dusk'.¹⁰⁸ Indeed soldiers, the supposed epitome of masculinity and defenders of nation, were implicated in a number a gross indecency cases during the period (as the next chapter shows). They were also evoked as figures of erotic fantasy by Carpenter, Ives, and the poet A.E.Housman.¹⁰⁹

Further opportunities for chance meetings and anonymous sex were provided by the buses, trains and grand new stations. George Augustus Sala marked the stations out for their mixed, cosmopolitan crowds in his guide to London of 1894, and Machray noted that men 'of the lowest type' congregated in Kings Cross.¹¹⁰ It was here that George Merril, Edward Carpenter's lover, met an attendant to the Prince of Wales, and arranged a meeting for later that evening.¹¹¹ In 1886, Arthur Brown, 'a

1959). There has been considerable debate about the authenticity of the diaries of 1903, 1910 and 1911. In the most recent Casement biography Brian Inglis argues that they are genuine. Whoever wrote them, however, must have had an intimate knowledge of the London street scene and the possibilities it offered. Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (Belfast, 1993), p.396

¹⁰⁵ George Ives, *Diary*, vol.31, 15 Feb.1898, p.64, HRHRC; *Diary*, vol.36, 3 Mar.1900, p.108.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* (1883-1902; London, 1985), p.34. See chapter 6 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁷ 'Suspects on the Embankment', *Evening News*, 7 May 1905, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.5, p.43; 'Serious Allegations Against Two Constables', *Evening Mail*, 21 Apr.1903, in *Casebook*, vol.3, p.97; 'Prosecutor Commits Suicide', *Daily Chronicle*, 13 May1904, in *Casebook*, vol.4, p.68; 'Hyde Park Incident', *Reynolds* 16 Jul.1906, in *Casebook*, vol.5, p.78; 'Met in Hyde Park', *News of the World*, 22 Nov.1908, in *Casebook*, vol.7, p.85; 'West End Blackmailers', *Star*, 12 Jan.1898: p.3. The parks also feature repeatedly in Casement's diaries.

¹⁰⁸ Two weeks later the *Express* printed complaints from guardsmen that they feared to look in a shop window for two minutes for fear of being arrested by the military police. 'Law for Loitering Soldiers', *Star*, 28 Sep.1903, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.4, p.17; 'Many Soldiers Arrested', *Express*, 12 Oct.1903, in *Casebook*, vol.4, p.20.

¹⁰⁹ Casement, *op.cit.*, 7 Feb.1911, p.547; 10 Feb.1911, p.548; 25 July 1911, p.598; & 3 Aug.1911, p.602; A.E.Housman, 'The Shropshire lad', poem xxxvii, in *Collected Poems and Selected Prose*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London, 1988); Carpenter, *op.cit.*, p.163; Ives, *Diary*, vol.43, 6 Dec.1903, p.61;

¹¹⁰ Robert Machray, *The Night Side of London* (London, 1902), p.37.

¹¹¹ Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (1979; London, 1990), p.38.

gentleman of means' was sentenced to two years with hard labour under the new Criminal Law Amendment Act for 'disgusting and filthy acts of indecency' with a guardsman at Victoria Station toilets.¹¹² Later, in 1912, the architect and socialist Charles Ashbee met his guardsman lover George Robson outside Charing Cross Station.¹¹³ The buses, trams and trains themselves also presented sexual opportunities. The aesthetic occultist Count Stenbock met a sixteen-year-old boy on top of a Piccadilly horse bus in the late 1880s,¹¹⁴ Casement encountered a 'lovely Italian' on a Clerkenwell tram in 1911,¹¹⁵ and Ives catalogued a number of arrests on buses and trains in his scrapbooks.¹¹⁶

These various accounts marked the West End streets and parks, and the stations, buses and trains, as sexualised places, where the possibility of a chance encounter was high. They provided opportunities (and dangers) which could be taken up casually by men not initiated into particular social milieu. Despite Casement's prolific sexual adventuring in the area, for example, he seems to have been entirely unaware of the associations of particular pubs, hotels, and theatres, which formed part of an indoor social and sexual network in the city.¹¹⁷ These included the Crown in Charing Cross Road, the Windsor Castle in the Strand, the Pakenham in Knightsbridge, and the bar at the St James's Theatre.¹¹⁸ Wilde was famously associated with the Café Royale and Kettners restaurant in Soho, and Ives noted that the Criterion Bar on Piccadilly Circus was 'a great centre for invert' until it closed in 1905.¹¹⁹ Ives himself favoured the Trocadero and later Lyons Corner House just across the road. The new hotels were also used for homosexual liaisons: the blackmailing duo Freddie Atkins and James Burton made use of the huge Victoria Hotel in Northumberland Avenue and the smaller Anderton's Hotel in Fleet Street for some of their operations in the early 1890s.¹²⁰ The Alhambra and Savoy Hotels

¹¹² 'Middlesex Sessions Appeals', *Reynolds*, 9 May 1896: p.8.

¹¹³ Alan Crawford, *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (London, 1985), p.161. C.R. Ashbee was the son of Henry Spenser Ashbee, alias Pisanus Fraxi.

¹¹⁴ Rupert Croft-Cooke, *Feasting With Panthers: a New Consideration of Some Late-Victorian Writers* (London, 1967), p.246.

¹¹⁵ Casement, *op.cit.*, 12 Feb.1911, p.549.

¹¹⁶ See, for example, 'To Defeat the Blackmailer', *Daily Chronicle*, 12 Apr.1901, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.3, p.43; 'Impropriety on a Bus', c.March, 1904, in *Casebook*, vol.4, p.64; and 'Charge Against Dr Stanton Coit', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 Mar.1908, in *Casebook*, vol.7, p.3.

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey Weeks notes that in Casement's diaries 'there is no sense [...] of his seeing the possibility of a full homosexual lifestyle'. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society* (London, 1981), p.110.

¹¹⁸ Theo Aronson, *Prince Eddy and the Homosexual Underworld* (London, 1994), p.24; Croft-Cooke, *op.cit.*, pp.260-270; Hyde, *op.cit.*, p.163.

¹¹⁹ Ives, *Diary*, vol.47, 15 Jun.1905, p.38

¹²⁰ Freddie, a 17-year-old, would seduce men in the Alhambra, in public toilets, and at the Knightsbridge skating rinks, and take them to hotels or his own rooms, where 'uncle' James would be waiting to burst in on them and extort money. Their antics came to light when their landlady called the police, but they were not prosecuted. They were later implicated in the Wilde trials. See Croft-

were both named in the Wilde trials, and Ives ate with Wilde at the latter on at least one occasion.¹²¹ Machray noted that guides to 'the worst and most devilish features of the night side of London' could be found 'lurking near the entrances of the great hotels of London - just as in Paris'.¹²²

In addition the theatres had a long-standing association with homosexuality. The Strand and Surrey theatres were visited by Boulton and Park, and the author of *Yokel's Preceptor* noted that actors were commonly 'pooffs'. During the period the Alhambra was notorious as a meeting place, but other theatres also presented opportunities, including parts of the Empire, and the Pavilion in Piccadilly.¹²³ Alfred Taylor met Sidney Mavor (with whom Wilde slept at the Albemarle Hotel) at the Gaiety in Shaftesbury Avenue,¹²⁴ and Arthur Mellors took several lovers to West End theatres, according to police surveillance reports cited in the 1906 case against him.¹²⁵ Mellors was an actor himself, and, as with Wilde, his conviction reinforced the connection between the theatre and homosexuality. Outside theatre-land Knightsbridge Skating Rink and Earls Court Exhibition Hall (opened in 1887 by J.R. Whiteley) were also popular meeting places.¹²⁶ On one of his frequent visits to Earls Court in 1901 a disappointed Ives noted that there had been 'many pretty things all around, but no adventures'.¹²⁷

For many upper and upper-middle class men the opportunities offered by the cosmopolitan West End were supplemented by a tradition of homosociality which often protected them in their sexual exploits. The clubs and bachelor chambers in Pall Mall and St. James (an area of earlier homosexual activity, as has been indicated) formed a continuation of the homosocial worlds of public school and university. H.Montgomery Hyde suggests that the men in this exclusive milieu were linked by a tacit knowledge of the extent of homosexual relations in the all-male establishments from which they had emerged.¹²⁸ The Earl of Euston and Lord Somerset (who were named in the Cleveland Street homosexual brothel scandal of 1889), Wilde, Lord Alfred Douglas, Robert Ross, and George Ives were all club members. After Robert Ross's inconclusive libel action against Lord Alfred Douglas in 1914, a suggestion that Ross be expelled from the Reform Club was turned down by the membership.

Cooke, *op.cit.*, pp.264-6.

¹²¹ Ives, *Diary*, vol.17, 15 Oct.1893, p.119.

¹²² Machray, *op.cit.*, p.vi.

¹²³ Croft-Cooke, *op.cit.*, p.268.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.270.

¹²⁵ 'West-End Flat Scandal', *Reynolds*, 15 Apr.1906, p.5; 'Recorder's Regret. One of A Dangerous Gang', *Reynolds*, 5 May1906, p.4. Mellors was sentenced to 18 months hard labour under the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

¹²⁶ Croft-Cooke, *op.cit.*, p.262, p.268, & p.270.

¹²⁷ Ives, *Diary*, vol.39, 30 May 1901, p.30.

¹²⁸ Montgomery Hyde, *op.cit.*, p.110.

Support was similarly forthcoming for Lord Somerset at the Turf and Marlborough Clubs after the Cleveland Street scandal of 1889.¹²⁹ Following the arrest of Prince Francis Joseph of Braganza in Lambeth for gross indecency during his visit to London for the coronation of 1902, Ives found Royal Society Club members (including journalist George Sims) broadly sympathetic. 'I was pleased', Ives noted, 'to see that [Sims] was not spiteful about the cult'.¹³⁰ Earlier a man Ives met on the street took him to the Army and Navy Club. Finding he was known there, Ives gave him his card. The club was clearly a comfortable place for the man to retreat to with his new-found friend, whilst his club membership served to ease Ives's usual suspicion of casual meetings.¹³¹

City centre bachelor chambers had similar associations. Ian Crawford notes that it was 'a normal part of Victorian respectability for [men to] have had rooms and habits of life that were separate from, and not to be questioned by, his household and family'.¹³² Such a convention made Wilde's chambers in St James uncontroversial (until the trial at least). In 1894 Ives took chambers at E4 the Albany, off Piccadilly,¹³³ and the address was used by Wilde for Jack Worthing in the original four-act version of The Importance of Being Earnest. It was removed from the performed play, along with a comment by Miss Prism that the 'wicked' Earnest must be 'as bad as any young man who had chambers in the Albany, or indeed in the vicinity of Piccadilly can possibly be'.¹³⁴ The effete protagonist of G.S.Street's novel Autobiography of a Boy (1894) has chambers in Jermyn Street, St James,¹³⁵ and in Vernon Lee's short story 'Lady Tal' (1896) the 'dainty but frugal bachelor' Jervase Marion (supposedly a parody of Henry James) has a flat in Westminster.¹³⁶ Throughout Jervase is referred to by his feminised surname, which Lady Tal's companion, Christina, pronounces 'Mary Anne, with unfailing relish of the joke'.¹³⁷

¹²⁹ H.Montgomery Hyde, The Cleveland Street Scandal (London, 1976), p.88.

¹³⁰ Ives, Diary, vol.41, 18 Sep.1902, p.112.

¹³¹ Diary, vol.38, 30 Sept.1900, p.30.

¹³² Crawford, *op.cit.*, p.4.

¹³³ Ives's grandmother was dismayed. See Ives, Diary, vol.17, 26 Oct.1893, p.129. The journal Leisure Hour noted in 1886 that the 'bachelor of the Albany was a recognised variety of the man about town'. 'London's Bachelors and Their Mode of Living', Leisure Hour, vol.35 (1886): pp.413-416, p.415.

¹³⁴ Karl Beckson, London in the 1890s: A Cultural History (New York, 1992), p.210.

¹³⁵ Tubby (the hero) holds aesthetic *soirées* on Thursday nights and takes trips in a sedan chair to the Turkish Baths (another space of homosocial relaxation) on the same street. Roy Porter notes that Jermyn Street was 'the inner sanctum of the masculinised city'. G.S.Street, The Autobiography of a Boy (London, 1894), p.xiii; Roy Porter, London: A Social History (London, 1994), p.282. See chapter 5 for further discussion of the novel.

¹³⁶ Vernon Lee, 'Lady Tal', in Daughters of Decadence, ed. Elaine Showalter (New Brunswick, 1993), p.195.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.231.

Bachelors living in city centre flats featured relatively frequently in court cases involving homosexual behaviour, and this familiar and largely respectable figure was loosely linked to dissident sexuality during the period. The narrator of 'Lady Tal' protests that Marion was 'a manly man' 'for all his bachelor ways'.¹³⁸ Later The Modern Man (a weekly male 'lifestyle' magazine, published between 1908-1911) gave tips on proper behaviour for the single male, suggesting certain unwanted associations of bachelorhood.¹³⁹ The single bohemian, meanwhile, was tainted by association with Wilde, though Arthur Ransome attempted to render him harmless in his 1907 book. During the trial Taylor's flat was described as bohemian, and one of the witnesses professed himself unsurprised when Wilde kissed the waiter at Kettners on account of the playwright's bohemianism.¹⁴⁰ In 1906 the murder of the artist Archibald Wylie in his Kensington studio (apparently by a soldier he had picked up in Hyde Park) again drew the connection between homosexual activity and the bachelor and bohemian.¹⁴¹ Although there were increasing suspicions about these figures and domestic arrangements during the period, they did provide a relatively secure screen (and safe space) for the sexual and social lives of middle and upper-class men in London. Ives slept with Lord Alfred Douglas at the Albany,¹⁴² and also enjoyed uninterrupted dinners and lunches with Wilde, Carpenter, Robert Ross (Wilde's literary executor) and others. The privileges of masculinity and the embedded traditions of homosociality sustained and protected his lifestyle.

For many of these men, however, sexual pleasure came not from fraternisation with men of the same class, but from contact with 'rough lads'.¹⁴³ At the Serpentine in Hyde Park working-class men could be observed bathing in an idyllic pastoral setting. Baedeker reported this 'scene of unsophisticated character' with evident relish: 'when a flag is hoisted, a crowd of men and boys, most of them in very homely attire, are to be seen undressing and plunging into the waters, where their lusty shouts and hearty laughter testify their enjoyment'.¹⁴⁴ Symonds was sometimes among the spectators,¹⁴⁵ and Ives swam there, meeting, in the summer of 1894, 'a jolly youth

¹³⁸ Lee, *op.cit.*, p.232.

¹³⁹ See section 4 of this chapter.

¹⁴⁰ H.Montgomery Hyde, The Trials of Oscar Wilde (New York, 1965), p.189.

¹⁴¹ See chapter 3.

¹⁴² Ives, Diary, vol.21, 28 Aug.1894, p.48 (verso note). Ives was characteristically cautious and keen to preserve appearances, however. He noted: '[Lord Alfred Douglas] pressed me to ask ___ in, but I declined as I thought it wouldn't do in the Albany'. *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ See Sinfield, *op.cit.*, ch.6; Croft-Cooke, *op.cit.*, pt.2; Seth Koven, 'From Rough Lads to Hooligans: Boy Life, National Culture and Social Reform', in Nationalisms and Sexualities, eds Andrew Parker *et al* (London, 1992).

¹⁴⁴ Karl Baedeker, London and its Environs (London, 1911), p.262.

¹⁴⁵ Symonds wrote: 'Early in the morning I used to rise from a sleepless bed, walk across the park, and feed my eyes on the naked men and boys bathing in the Serpentine. The homeliest of them would have satisfied me'. Memoirs, *op.cit.*, p.166.

[...] evidently a worker [...] and so frank and unsophisticated as to be quite a study'.¹⁴⁶ Ives was a regular at various swimming baths he knew to be popular with working-class men, including Whitechapel, Rugby House settlement, Hampstead outdoor ponds, and Westminster Polytechnic, where on one occasion he overheard two men having sex in a changing cubicle.¹⁴⁷

Brothels were another arena of cross-class liaison. Soldier prostitutes could be found not only in the parks but in an establishment near the barracks in Regents Park, and in 1889 telegraph boys were discovered working from a house in Cleveland Street, just off Oxford Street. These boys were familiar figures in the city by the 1880s, and were associated with more than just the efficient transmission of messages from the post office. They featured as witnesses in a 1906 case of gross indecency involving Edward Lovell ('a man of superior education'),¹⁴⁸ and John Gambriel Nicholson included a eulogy to 'the lad that's lettered G.P.O' in his 1911 collection of poems.¹⁴⁹ Earlier Aubrey Beardsley commented in a letter to a friend that 'for one week the number of telegraph boys who came to the door was simply scandalous'.¹⁵⁰

'Rough lads' and uniformed men were clearly popular, but there are relatively few reports of middle and upper-class men travelling to the East End to find them (except as part of sanctioned settlement work). Casement went cruising in the docks a number of times,¹⁵¹ and he was surely not unique, but in general it seems that men of his class preferred to pick up their working-class partners in the less threatening and more convenient West End streets, parks, and brothels. This was where soldiers were stationed, telegraph boys did much of their work, and where there was considerable class cross-over. The area was still associated with privilege and wealth, however, and it was certainly not a levelled or neutral terrain. Power in the relationships forged there often resided with the men who had the money to buy sex and rent hotel rooms, and (newspaper reports during the Cleveland Street scandal suggested) enough privilege to evade prosecution. Eve Sedgwick points out that most men did not have 'easy access to the alternative subculture, the stylised discourse or the sense of immunity of the aristocratic/bohemian minority'.¹⁵² It was the wealthy who created the norms of homosexual behaviour.¹⁵³ The Molly House subculture of the

¹⁴⁶ Ives, *Diary*, vol. 21, 27 Aug. 1894, p.57.

¹⁴⁷ *Diary*, vol.17, 29 Jul.1893, p.18.

¹⁴⁸ 'Aristocratic Rogues. Abominable Conduct, Ex-University Student Sentenced', Reynolds, c.July/August, 1906, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.6, p.28. Each mention of telegraph boys in the article was underlined by Ives.

¹⁴⁹ John Gambriel Nicholson, *A Garland of Ladslove* (London, 1911), p.27.

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Aronson, *op.cit.*, p.8.

¹⁵¹ Casement, *op.cit.*, 15 Dec.1903, p.185; 3 Feb.1911, p.545; & 18 Feb.1911, p.551.

¹⁵² Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985), p.172-3.

¹⁵³ Weeks, *Coming Out*, *op.cit.*, p.43.

eighteenth century mimicked the affected manners of the aristocracy (as Sinfield demonstrates), and in the 1890s it was the high life of the capital that came to be associated with Wilde's crimes. After the trials of 1895 the *Evening News* rebuked the working-class men who had crossed the social boundaries: 'the conviction of Wilde for these abominable vices, which were the natural outcome of his diseased intellectual condition, will be a salutary warning to the unhealthy boys who posed as sharers in his culture'.¹⁵⁴ The homosexual condition was cast as decadent and privileged; one in which the working class could only 'pose' as 'sharers'. Working-class men appeared to be sexually pliant adjuncts, unable to shape their own homosexual lives in the West End of London (except perhaps as blackmailers). Clearly these men did have erotic lives which were independent of the aristocratic and bohemian elite, and they also took advantage of the possibilities presented by the city streets, public toilets, and parks, as some of the cases discussed in the next chapter suggest. Such independence is not foregrounded in the various depictions of homosexual activity in the city, however, and the press tended to highlight those cases involving scandalous cross-class liaisons or well-known figures.

Those middle and upper-class men who hoped to evade these unequal power dynamics in bonds of comradeship with 'workers' often by-passed the West End and all it implicated, and focused their attention on East End clubs and settlement work. Ives, Ashbee, and numerous other Oxford and Cambridge graduates, spent time in the university settlements of east and south-east London. These places, Walkowitz notes, provided an escape from 'bourgeois culture' and offered the prospect 'of bonds of comradeship' with working class 'lads'.¹⁵⁵ To Symonds, Carpenter, Ashbee and Ives this work and contact was much more than mere eroticism; it was (in Ashbee's words) 'one of the motors for social reconstruction'.¹⁵⁶ In *The Intermediate Sex* Carpenter highlighted the social role of the 'uranian' and the importance of his work in these places. He noted that one man 'saved a boy from drunken parents, [took] him from the slums and by means of a club helped him out into the world. Many other boys he had rescued in the same way'.¹⁵⁷ In the wake of the Wilde trials a letter which appeared in *Reynolds* drew attention to the 'Mary Anns' 'who plied their beastly trade' in Piccadilly, but also referred to the supposedly suspect motives of men working in the university settlements. The correspondent alluded to the cover-up of a 'grave

¹⁵⁴ 'Retribution', *Evening News*, 27 May 1905: p.2.

¹⁵⁵ Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London, 1992), p.59. Seth Koven suggests that this comradeship constituted a 'chaste echo in a different key' of the relationship between Brown and the shoeshine boy in *Sins of the Cities of the Plain*. Koven, *op.cit.*, p.370.

¹⁵⁶ C.R.Ashbee, 'Memoirs' (unpublished), cited in Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919* (Ohio, 1986), p.65. See chapter 6 of this thesis.

¹⁵⁷ Edward Carpenter, 'The Intermediate Sex', *Selected Writings* (London, 1984), p.236.

scandal' at 'a certain philanthropic institution'; there was 'the gravest suspicion', the writer noted, 'that the club was a place of assignation for some few of the philanthropic undergraduates'. He went on to question any cross-class friendships: they could not 'be readily explained except by a theory of unnatural sexual relations'.¹⁵⁸

4.

Homosexuality was an integral part of city life, and could not be comprehensively separated off into a discrete subculture. It often hinged on class difference, on spaces of class cross-over, but was also associated with exclusive homosocial arenas and well-known places of entertainment and urban innovation. It was linked in particular with the revitalised West End, which, with its long-standing associations of theatricality, performance and entertainment, seemed almost to invite these dissident modes of behaviour. Buses, trains and the new underground, meanwhile, permitted encounters with a range of different people who were (for a short time) sitting or standing still and were thus perhaps easier to solicit.

Familiar urban figures were also implicated. The bachelor, bohemian, theatre-goer, actor, settlement worker, soldier and telegraph boy were all at various times associated with homosexual behaviour. Such overlaps allowed for an integration into urban life which belied ideas about the distinctiveness of the sodomite, invert, or Mary Ann. There was consequently concern about misrecognition and a perceived need to distinguish suspect types, fashions and activities more clearly. In 1897 the trade journal *The Tailor and Cutter* betrayed concerns about the associations of clothes shops and clothes shopping, for example. An article about a failed gentlemen's outfitters noted that the shop was too ornate and the proprietor ill-occupied. He 'did nothing but walk up and down the shop [...] and hold important conversations with the handsomest of the young men who was shrewdly suspected by the neighbours to be the "Co"'. The piece concluded: 'we saw all this with sorrow; we felt a fatal presentiment that the shop was doomed, and so it was'.¹⁵⁹ The fashion historian Christopher Breward suggests that the article signals a new emphasis on utility amongst men's clothing retailers, who were attempting to dispel unwanted associations of effeminacy and homosexuality.¹⁶⁰ In this case the ornate shop, the

¹⁵⁸ 'Immorality at Public Schools. Striking Correspondence', *Reynolds*, 2 Jun.1895: p.5.

¹⁵⁹ 'Shops and their Tenants', *Tailor and Cutter*, 30 Sep.1897, p.496. I am grateful to Christopher Breward for this reference. Also note the 'simpering' and 'effeminate' shop dummy in Regent Street described by George Augustus Sala and discussed in chapter 1, p.43.

¹⁶⁰ Christopher Breward, 'Fashion and the man, From Suburb to City Street: The Cultural Geography of Masculine Consumption, 1870-1914' (unpublished paper delivered as part of the 'Researching the Metropolis' seminar series, Raphael Samuel Centre for Metropolitan History, Bishopsgate, London, 13 May 1998). The connection between homosexuality and tailoring was

proprietor, and his 'handsome' assistant were 'doomed'. as shoppers presumably sought less suspect establishments.

Modern Man, the 'weekly journal of masculine interest', had similar preoccupations. An early issue used the by-line 'Full-Blooded, Vigorous, and Clean' (echoing the rhetoric of muscular Christianity espoused by Charles Kingsley, Baden-Powell and the White Cross League), and included a piece ridiculing the dandy and his penchant for fake tan, powder and rouge. 'These call themselves men?', the writer declared.¹⁶¹ Captain L.H.Saunders, who wrote a fashion column, had similar concerns. 'Should Men Wear Corsets?' he asked in one issue (yes: as many army men wear them); 'Should Men Wear Scent?' he asked in another (no: 'a man who smells of scent is a ridiculous person, and to call him effeminate is to put things in their mildest form').¹⁶² A subsequent piece by C.D.Witton bemoaned the damage done to the fashion for button holes by Wilde's penchant for green carnations.¹⁶³

The first eleven issues included a series entitled 'London Hell', which dealt with the perils of London life, and described further suspect male figures such as 'the blackmailer' and 'the vampire'. The vampire was a thief who gained money by striking up friendships with unsuspecting men. Their homosexuality was strongly suggested: they were 'the black sheep' of their families and 'specialists in sin', who, 'dressed in purple and fine linen', haunted 'the restaurants, cafes and bars of Piccadilly and its vicinity' on the look out for 'undergraduates, [...] green subalterns [and] young naval officers'.¹⁶⁴ With the blackmailer the reader was warned to be particularly wary in the music halls, where he 'commences his operations' by 'striking up acquaintance' with

suggested in *Sins of the Cities of the Plain* when Jack Saul is first 'rented' from a West End drapers; later, in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry intriguingly spends hours bargaining for a piece of brocade in Wardour Street (Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [1891; London, 1985], p.55; also see chapter 5 of this thesis). The association with consumption more generally was indicated in the Boulton and Park case and in subsequent trials of men caught cruising in Oxford Street (see chapter 3). For a wider discussion of consumerism and homosexuality see Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Market Place: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot; 1987); and Rachel Bowlby, *Shopping With Freud* (London, 1993), ch.2.

¹⁶¹ 'The Dandy's Toilet', *Modern Man*, 28 Nov.1908, p.22. Ellen Moers indicates the increasing association of the dandy with the aesthetic fringe rather than the ruling aristocracy in the 1890s, and notes that he became particularly suspect after Wilde's conviction. Each of Wilde's best known plays had a dandy, and Wilde himself was seen to have struck a dandified pose. Even before the Wilde case, however, extravagance in dress was seen as morally suspect. Prince Albert Victor, who was rumoured to have been involved in the Cleveland Street scandal, was warned by Queen Victoria against any 'extravagance in attire [...] because it would prove an offence against decency, leading [...] to an indifference to what was morally wrong'. Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummel to Beerbohm* (Lincoln, Neb., 1978), p.314 & p.289. See also Gagnier, *op.cit.*, p.133.

¹⁶² Captain L.H.Saunders, 'The Outer Man', *Modern Man*, 12 Dec.1908: p.24; and 13 Mar.1909: p.24.

¹⁶³ C.D.Witton, 'Judging a Man by His Button Hole', *Modern Man*, 15 Jan.1910: p.22.

¹⁶⁴ Stuart Freeman, 'London Hell: Vampires', *Modern Man*, 12 Dec.1908: p.10.

young men.¹⁶⁵ Readers needed to negotiate the West End streets, cafes and music halls with care and a 'masculine' acumen was necessary to forestall trouble. Despite the magazine's efforts to indicate suspect fashions and to outline the vampire and blackmailer, their concerns (like those of some of the writers considered in section one) were specifically associated with the indistinctness of homosexuality in the city and the cross-over of respectable and dissident identities. There was neither an entirely discernible figure nor a separate territory, and we begin to see the ideological threat 'homosexual' men posed by refusing to be separated comprehensively from the 'normal' city and the 'normal', middle-class, 'modern man'.

Whilst clearly worrying for these journalists, such indeterminacy provided opportunities for men looking for sexual and social relationships with other men in London. There was no singular urban circuit or mode of identification, and instead there was a range of possibilities. Wilde was husband, father, bohemian, aesthete, man-about-town, and decadent; identities which were not necessarily incompatible but which came into focus at different times and in different parts of the city. He relished the West End cafes and restaurants, the theatres and hotels, and found ample scope to cultivate relationships and a social circle there. These arenas provided an alternative to the domestic home base in which he had a stake nevertheless. Ives was friends with Wilde and took in elements of his West End circuit, but he also visited the parks, university settlements and swimming pools, went on midnight bicycle rides through the city, and spent time at his club and at intimate dinner parties. He self-consciously played the social radical and the confirmed (and in some ways conservative) bachelor. Casement, finally, cruised the parks, docks and the West End streets extensively, but seems to have remained unaware of the strong community bonds which Wilde and Ives both felt in different ways. Like many others discussed in the chapters to come, these men utilised the privileges associated with their masculinity and class to explore the homoerotic possibilities of the metropolis. They each had a personal mapping of London. These overlapped with each other, with places which had a long history of homosexual activity (like the parks), with well-known West End streets and new centres of entertainment and leisure, and with respected philanthropic institutions. They nevertheless represented distinct explorations of sex and subjectivity in the city.

¹⁶⁵ Freeman, 'London Hell: Blackmailers', *The Modern Man*, 21 Nov.1908: p.10.

Chapter 3

The 'Grossly Indecent' City: Courts, Newspapers, and the 'Homosexual' Criminal

The last chapter concentrated on the interface of homosexuality with particular spaces in London and some familiar urban figures. Discerning this relationship relied on various forms of writing, from private diaries (which marked out and sustained a personal geography of the city) to sensational pamphlets and newspaper reports. These reports, almost exclusively concerning court cases, were particularly important in shaping wider perceptions of homosexuality, and in affirming for interested individuals the existence of a subculture (as well as suggesting the dangers associated with it). Using previously undiscussed data and newspaper reports, this chapter explores the legal and journalistic treatment of homosexuality more closely and considers images of the sexual criminal and the city that emerge from it.

The first of the four sections which follow outlines the legislation relating to homosexual activity during the period, and explores the general conflation of the newly criminalised subject with London. It also shows how the city constituted a contingent criminal territory which shifted with changing patterns of policing and press reporting. Whilst in theory the law applied universally, its application produced the crime, the criminal, and the criminal territory in particular ways. In the newspapers editorial decisions about which cases to foreground or ignore further shaped ideas about homosexual activity. The three subsequent sections analyse certain aspects of these depictions in more detail. Section two looks at the way homosexual activity was envisaged taking place in separate, degraded arenas, whilst also trespassing scandalously on spaces of family, leisure, and entertainment. It also shows how particular figures emerged from this reportage. The third section looks at the dynamic of visibility and invisibility in the policing of homosexuality and the operations of blackmailers, showing how the newspapers imagined both a sensitised and vigilant city (in which residents were ever watchful) yet also a protected and even sanctioned urban homosexual community. Finally, the chapter explores the way courtrooms were depicted in the press, and looks at both the symbolic function they were seen to perform and the ways in which this function was subtly undermined.

1.

Legislation against sodomy was in place and enforced well before the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. The existing legislation was based on the 1533 statute against sodomy 'with mankind or beast', though it had been modified in the course of the nineteenth century. In 1828 the statute against sodomy was repealed and re-

enacted in the Offences Against the Person Act, a piece of legislation which covered murder, abortion, rape and sex with girls under 12. The act was redrafted in 1861 to incorporate a wider range of offences, which were newly subdivided. Sodomy now appeared under the subsection 'unnatural offences', and the death penalty was replaced with imprisonment for between ten years and life. Attempted sodomy or 'any indecent assault upon any male person' carried a sentence of between three and ten years imprisonment or up to two years with hard labour.¹ As legal theorist Leslie Moran points out, these pieces of legislation organised the crime of sodomy in thematic relation to other criminal acts, and so connected it to paedophilia and rape.² When the Criminal Law Amendment Act was added to the statute books in 1885 existing legislation against sodomy, attempted sodomy and indecent assault outlined in the 1861 act remained in place. Section 11 (the so-called Labouchere Amendment) of the new act thus came as an ill-defined addendum. It read:

Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is party to the commission of, or procures the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.³

Ed Cohen and Jeffrey Weeks both suggest that this provision marked a departure in that it was directed specifically at sexual relations between men (sodomy could occur with man, woman or beast). However, the attempted sodomy and indecent assault section of the 1861 act (which immediately followed the clause on sodomy) clearly envisaged these offences relating to men and consequently Labouchere's amendment was a less decisive shift in the law than they suggest.⁴ It did, though, come as a clearer and more direct reiteration of concern about sexual relations between men and about unbridled male lust in general. The provision against 'acts of gross indecency' also acknowledged a diversity in the possible expressions of homosexual desire, and since any indecent assault against a male person was already a criminal offence, Labouchere's Amendment tacitly moved the emphasis from unwanted advances to consensual sexual relations. Moreover, in the Amendment the spaces in which these diffuse sexual acts were illegal was carefully spelt out. Before 'acts of gross indecency'

¹ *Public General Acts, 44 and 45 Vict.* (London: 1861), p.833, sec.61 and 62.

² Leslie Moran, *The Homosexual(ity) of Law* (London, 1996), p.79.

³ *Public General Acts, 48-49 Vict.* (London: 1885), p.6, sec.11.

⁴ Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side: Towards a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities* (London, 1993), p.91-92; Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (1979, London, 1990), p.10-11.

were mentioned the territory in which they were illegal ('in public and private') was clearly outlined. The detail was strictly speaking irrelevant (if these acts were illegal then they were illegal everywhere, as sodomy was) and there was no mention of place in the 1861 act. However, the specification indicates the importance of the conceptual division of space at this time, and the way in which the Labouchere Amendment sought to override it. Legal theorist Lucia Zedner argues that by the late nineteenth century the private (or rather the domestic sphere) was conceived as a zone regulated by the conventions of the family rather than the strictures of the state.⁵ The specification in Labouchere's Amendment reclaimed the private for the law in respect of homosexual activity, and these dissident acts were determinedly cast as an offence to state and morality wherever they occurred. At the time of the Cleveland Street scandal of 1889 Labouchere wrote in *Truth*, the weekly crusading journal he edited, that the offences 'put those who commit them beyond the pale of privacy'.⁶

Activity on the streets continued to be of particular concern, however, and in 1898 the Vagrancy Law Amendment Act was passed with a clause against men who 'in any public place persistently solicit or importune for immoral purposes'.⁷ The crime carried a one month prison sentence, with hard labour, in line with the 1824 Vagrancy Act, but this was increased to six months with discretionary whipping for a second offence under the Criminal Law Amendment Act (White Slave Traffic Act) of 1912.⁸ Like the Labouchere Amendment, this provision directed attention to the place before the criminal act, which (as with 'acts of gross indecency') remained vague. The amendment further broadened the possibilities for arrest, with police able to use their assumptions about particular places and particular forms of (non-sexual) behaviour to arrest men. Ives complained in *The Continued Extension of the Criminal Law* (1922) that 'an alleged smile or wink or look may cause an arrest'.⁹ Thus in 1902 Lawrence Salt appeared before magistrates for 'persistently soliciting' after being observed in Piccadilly Circus talking to a man who was known to be 'an associate of bad characters'. The magistrate dismissed the case, but excused the policeman's seemingly

⁵ This apparent domestic self-determination was carefully controlled, however, as Zedner goes on to argue: 'although the family was endowed with regulatory powers, their exercise became the subject of ideological directives and constraints. Much of this took a literary form, from etiquette manuals and advice books to religious pamphlets. Highly prescriptive in tone, this literature peddled an image of the ideal middle-class family which permeated down into all but the poorest slums'. Lucia Zedner, 'Regulating Sexual Offences Within the Home', in *Frontiers of Criminality*, ed. Ian Loveland (London, 1995), p.176. See also Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, *The Facts of Life: the Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain 1650-1950*, (London, 1995), esp. part ii.

⁶ Henry Labouchere, *Truth*, 28 Nov.1889: p.983.

⁷ *Public General Acts, 61-62 Vict.* (London,1898), p.221, sec.1b.

⁸ *Public General Acts, 4 Geo.* (London, 1824), p.698, sec.3; *Public General Acts, 2-3 Geo.V* (London,1912), p.91-91, sec. 5 & 7.

⁹ George Ives, *The Continued Extension of the Criminal Law* (London,1922), p.8.

excessive rigour on account of Piccadilly's reputation.¹⁰ In 1906 Henri Muller (a French tailor) was successfully prosecuted under the 1898 statute for approaching men on Oxford Street around midnight whilst dressed in women's clothes, and later, in 1912, John Hill and Robert Freeman were jailed after attempting to engage men in conversation on Charing Cross Road.¹¹ In the same year an actor, Alan Horton, was sentenced to ten weeks with hard labour after he was observed by plain clothes police officers entering public toilets in Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square around midnight. He did not make contact with any one during this time, but according to police evidence 'while in said lavatories and also while in the street he smiled in the faces of gentlemen, pursed his lips and wiggled his body'.¹² The police also cited his use of make-up. No one complained or appeared to notice his behaviour (apart from the police) but the conjunction of time, place and his effeminacy were sufficient to effect arrest and imprisonment.

This section of the Vagrancy Law Amendment Act in many ways did more to criminalise a putative homosexual identity than the Labouchere Amendment. The Labouchere Amendment, whilst broadening the remit from sodomy, maintained the focus on sexual acts. The 1898 provision, however, heightened the significance of behaviour that was not explicitly sexual (Horton's make-up and 'wiggle', for example) and places that had a reputation (such as Piccadilly, Oxford Street and Charing Cross Road). The police did not arrest because sexual acts had actually been committed, but on the basis of a judgement they made about the propensity of an individual to commit them. The measure, to Ives, meant that London suffered 'more public tyranny than most cities on the continent'. 'Think', he went on, 'how boys are convicted for soliciting and importuning who are not even alleged to have touched or spoken to anyone'.¹³

The last years of the nineteenth century thus saw a tightening of the law regarding homosexual activity, and added to the provisions against sodomy and attempted sodomy the offences of gross indecency and soliciting. These legal developments gave a focus for protest, which the long-standing and less gender specific measures against sodomy had not. Havelock Ellis attacked the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 as 'exceptionally severe' in *Sexual Inversion* (1897) and saw it as a symptom of a wider cultural refusal to accept the biological realities of sexual

¹⁰ 'Perils of Piccadilly', *Star*, 19 Jul.1902, in George Ives, *Casebook*, vol.3, p.52, BLY.

¹¹ 'Man in Woman's Dress', *Daily Mail*, 22 Aug.1906, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.6, p.36; 'Marlborough Street Rogues and Vagabonds', *Illustrated Police News*, 15 Jun.1912, p.14.

¹² *The Law Reports: King's Bench Division* (London, 1913), p.155-158. See also Les Moran's discussion of the case. Moran, *op.cit.*, pp.135-136.

¹³ George Ives, *Diary*, vol.61, 15 Jul.1914, p.4, HRHRC.

life.¹⁴ Ives referred to the 1898 provision as 'poisonous', and to the Criminal Law Amendment Act as 'a piece of panic Puritanism', producing 'its yearly crop of victims.'¹⁵ The legislation indicates prevailing concerns about sexual profligacy and sent out powerful messages about expectations of private conduct and public behaviour. Francois Lafitte notes that 'every system of law is a system of education, [...] fix[ing] in the minds of men certain conceptions of right and wrong, and of the proportionate enormity of different crimes'.¹⁶

The bare bones of the Labouchere Amendment made certain behaviour illegal everywhere: in public and private, in country and city. However, this apparent ubiquity was in fact richly textured and contingent. The circumstances in which the legislation was discussed and passed, and the individuals involved in promoting it, framed and informed the words on the statute books. The particular circumstances in which Labouchere's Amendment was passed, for example, closely tied its provisions to London rather than the nation, even though this is not explicit in the wording of the amendment itself. It was part of a bill driven through parliament in response to the Maiden Tribute scandal, and was thus a response to wider concerns about urban sexual activity.¹⁷ The incorporation of Labouchere's Amendment into the act thus connected homosexuality not only with child prostitution but also once again to the city. Labouchere later confirmed the link when he claimed that he had drafted his amendment in response to what he perceived as the growth of homosexual activity in the capital.¹⁸ The genesis of the 1898 provision against soliciting is less clear and parliamentary debate was limited largely to discussion of appropriate punishment rather than of the offences themselves.¹⁹ However, once again it was part of an act dealing with prostitution, a subject of increasing concern to the metropolitan police as the West End drew more and more people to its theatres, cafes and restaurants.²⁰

¹⁴ Henry Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol.1, *Sexual Inversion* (London, 1897), p.155.

¹⁵ Ives, *Diary*, vol.37, 18 Jul.1900, p.81; *Diary*, vol.10, 10 Jan.1891, p.2.

¹⁶ Francois Lafitte, 'Homosexuality and the Law', *British Journal of Delinquency*, vol.9, no.1 (Jul.1958): pp.8-19, p.12.

¹⁷ Weeks and Sinfield both show how the 1885 act was passed in a atmosphere of general concern about incontinent male lust, and remark the legislative links made between homosexuality and prostitution in the 1885 and 1898 acts. Weeks, *Coming Out*, *op.cit.*, p.16-17; Weeks, *Against Nature: Essays in History, Sexuality and Identity* (London, 1991), pp.52-53; Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (London, 1994), p.14.

¹⁸ Henry Labouchere, *Truth*, 11 Apr.1895, p.1331. The historian F.B.Smith also emphasises the importance of Labouchere's character and public profile. F.B.Smith, 'Labouchere's Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill', *Historical Studies*, vol.17 (Oct.1976): pp.165-173.

¹⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.64 (London: 1898), col.747-758.

²⁰ In the 1888 report to parliament by the metropolitan police commissioner (the last to include comments from each divisional superintendent) Superintendent W.G Hume complained about the additional crowds drawn by the new theatres on Shaftesbury Avenue. Many of the estimated 20,000 people leaving the theatres went straight home, he noted, but increasing numbers of young men

Figures presented to parliament detailing the numbers of prostitutes convicted in the capital showed a marked increase around the time the act was passed. In 1895 498 women were convicted, and in 1896 the figure was 523. In 1897 and 1898, however, convictions reached 968 and 1326 respectively.²¹ Once again it seems probable that parliament had an urban problem in view when they passed this legislation against soliciting, and the new offence was directed at the further regulation of sexuality specifically within the city. Conviction figures in fact continued to grow further, reaching 3443 in 1912, the year in which punishment for soliciting was extended.²²

Though this tailor-made legislation indicates particular concerns about homosexual activity during this period, other statutes were also used to regulate it. Measures relating to nuisance, intent and disorderly conduct were regularly evoked, as they had been in the years before 1885. Arthur Marley and John Severs, who were dressed in women's clothes when they arrived at a party in Fitzroy Square in August 1894, for example, were prosecuted and fined for idle and disorderly conduct. Later William Ryan and Thomas Riley were arrested (but acquitted) for loitering with intent on the Embankment in 1905.²³ The following year 20-year-old Albert Smith received twelve months with hard labour and thirty lashes for the same offence after being seen 'loitering outside White's Club in Piccadilly and trying to engage men in conversation'.²⁴ A range of laws could be used to arrest men supposedly involved in homosexual activity, and this also gave flexibility in terms of punishment. A man arrested and prosecuted for intent could receive a more severe sentence than a man arrested for soliciting. Likewise, the crimes of 'attempted sodomy' and 'indecent assault on a male' carried a longer prison term than an 'act of gross indecency' with another man.

There are problems in discerning levels of arrest and conviction for homosexual behaviour in London, not least because many are hidden within these other crime categories. Figures for arrests and prosecutions for soliciting under the 1898 act, for example, were not separated from other Vagrancy Act crimes in the statistics presented annually to parliament by the metropolitan police commissioner. Likewise, before the inception of gross indecency legislation in 1885, arrests for homosexual behaviour other than sodomy or attempted sodomy were disguised in figures for broader crime categories, making comparisons with the post-1885 period difficult. An examination of figures for gross indecency, sodomy and attempted sodomy

lingered, attracting more prostitutes to the area. Parliamentary Papers: Reports from the Commissioners, vol.57 (London,1888), p.49.

²¹ Parliamentary Papers: Reports from the Commissioners, vol. 46 (London,1898), p.57.

²² Parliamentary Papers: Reports from the Commissioners vol.14, (London,1916), p.23.

²³ 'Suspects on the Embankment', Evening News, 2 May 1905, in Ives, Casebook, vol.5, p.43.

²⁴ 'Prison and a Whipping', 23 Oct.1906, in Casebook, vol.6, p.41.

nevertheless indicates a gradual increase in arrests and prosecutions over the period (see the appendix). For the period 1885 to 1889 arrests and prosecutions were low. Sodomy and attempted sodomy cases in fact fell slightly on the preceding five years. Arrests for gross indecency, meanwhile, stood at approximately 11 per year, much lower than in the 1890s and 1900s. This was possibly because police were still working out when and how to use the new provision. Between 1890 and 1894 arrests under the measure grew sharply, with an average of 29.6 per year. Arrests for sodomy and attempted sodomy more than doubled to an average of 12.4 per year in the same period. In the five years following the Wilde trials there was a further, though much less dramatic, increase. Combined total annual arrests for the three offences (sodomy, attempted sodomy, and gross indecency) went from an average of 42 per year between 1890 and 1894 to 51 per year in the five years that followed. The figures continued to increase slightly between 1900 and 1909, before jumping significantly in the final five years of the period. Whilst between 1910 and 1914 arrests and prosecutions for sodomy fell slightly and those for gross indecency continued their gradual increase, arrests for attempted sodomy more than doubled, from an average of 13.2 per year to 30.4 per year. The average total number of arrests for all three crimes in London thus grew from an average of 58.6 per year between 1905 and 1909 to 76 per year between 1910 and 1914.

With no accompanying commentary on these figures in the police commissioner's reports it is hard to discern police policy and practice with regard to homosexual behaviour, or to account conclusively for the fluctuation in the numbers of arrests and prosecutions.²⁵ There is little evidence of a concerted purge, but there are years when arrests and prosecutions were significantly higher, indicating perhaps a greater sensitivity and intolerance on the part of the police, or alternatively a greater visibility of homosexual behaviour in the city. 1890, 1898, 1899, 1906 and the period 1910-1914 are notable in this respect, and each of these years was marked by newspaper or parliamentary discussion of homosexual behaviour in the city which may have prompted, or been prompted by, police activity. In the Cleveland Street scandal of 1889-90 the police and courts faced criticism for their handling of suspects, as will be shown later, and there was a lengthy exchange in parliament about the case which drew attention to an apparent increase in homosexual activity in the city. 1890 also saw a change in police commissioner: James Munro resigned from the post after only two years, following criticism of his handling of the Cleveland Street case and his

²⁵For a discussion of the problems associated with the interpretation of this kind of crime data see V.A.C. Gatrell, 'The Decline of Theft and Violence in Victoria and Edwardian England', in *Crime and the Law the Social History of Crime in Western Europe Since 1500*, eds V.A.C. Gatrell *et al* (London, 1980).

failure to solve the Whitechapel ripper murders. It is possible that his replacement, Colonel E.R.C. Bradford, sought a more rigorous approach to the policing of sexual crime in the city.²⁶ In 1898 various members of a West End blackmailing gang were sensationally brought to trial and the Vagrancy Law Amendment Act was debated in parliament. In 1906 the prosecution of the actor Arthur Mellors and the murder of artist Archibald Wakley (apparently by a soldier he had picked up in Hyde Park) received widespread newspaper coverage. Homosexual activity in the city was again highlighted, possibly encouraging increased police vigilance. In May 1912 the metropolitan police were stung by criticism from liberal MP Handal Booth that they turned a blind eye to West End sexual profligacy in return for financial recompense. 'How is it that you see the women parading up and down the West End each night, and stepping into cabs with men under the noses of the police if they haven't paid a toll?' he asked in parliament. Reynolds reported that 'a wave of indignation has swept over the police force'.²⁷ The police response could well have included action against homosexual behaviour, particularly as prostitution had repeatedly been bracketed with it. Later in the same year parliament again discussed the apparent rise in homosexual activity in London, and as part of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (White Slave Traffic Act) punishment for male soliciting was increased. The two years that followed saw particularly high levels of arrests for attempted sodomy, which potentially carried longer sentences than for gross indecency. This suggested a greater desire for heavy punitive action against sexual dissidents at a time of increasing international tension.

Indicating the unpredictability of these figures, however, is the fact that in the aftermath of the Wilde trial there was no evidence of a newly sensitised constabulary patrolling the streets. Arrests remained steady and prosecutions in fact fell in the two years following the trial. Indeed whilst the ratio of prosecutions to arrests was particularly high in 1895 (32:44), suggesting a willingness to convict on the part of the courts, in 1896 there appears to be an increased reluctance to convict with only 17 out of 42 cases involving sodomy, attempted sodomy and gross indecency resulting in prosecution.

Whatever the specific reasons for increases in particular years, arrest and prosecutions certainly became more frequent in the course of the period. A growing familiarity with the crime and the legislative provisions on the part of the police is indicated, and they clearly became more aware of homosexual activity in the city. As a

²⁶ Four police commissioners served during the period: General Sir Charles Warren (1886-1888); James Munro (1888-1890); Col. E.R.C Bradford (1890-1903); and Sir E.R. Henry (1903-1918).

²⁷ 'West End at Night: Police Indignation at MP's Imputation of Blackmail', Reynolds, 26 May 1912: p.3.

result it became an increasingly commonplace crime detailed in the newspaper press, particularly as the vast majority of cases passed through both police and crown court, significantly increasing their exposure. In the Wilde case, for example, in addition to the three major trials, there were four police court appearances by either Lord Queensberry, or Wilde and Alfred Taylor (Wilde's co-defendant). The homosexual life of the city was rarely out of the public eye for long, and the newspaper-reading public had fairly consistent reminders of it, especially as many other cases came to court under statutes other than the three for which figures are available.

These statutes and statistics tell us only so much about homosexuality. Whilst the importance of the legislation of 1885 and 1898 and the circumstances in which it was passed should not be underestimated, the specific provision against homosexual activity contained in the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Vagrancy Act Amendment Act were seen as secondary in importance to the more pressing concerns about under-age sex and prostitution which constituted their central focus. Newspaper reports on the passage of the acts included barely any reference to the clauses relating to homosexual activity. Moreover, the statistics relating to gross indecency, sodomy, and attempted sodomy importantly indicate levels of arrest and prosecution for these particular crimes, but tell us nothing about the often compelling and memorable details of individual cases. Such details appeared in the newspaper press, which provided some of the most powerful images of sexualised spaces in the city and of the men that used them.

In 'The Critic as Artist' (1891) Wilde noted the dominion of journalism, and suggested that it 'monopolis[ed] the seat of judgement',²⁸ and, in 'The Soul of the Man Under Socialism' (1891), that it had replaced the rack as an instrument of punishment and torture.²⁹ Lord Alfred Douglas was dismayed by the press coverage of Wilde's trials, and complained that his lover had been tried by the papers rather than the jury.³⁰ The scale and nature of the newspaper press had changed dramatically in the years immediately preceding the case. Technological advances meant newspapers could be produced more quickly than before, whilst the earlier abolition of advertisement, stamp and paper duties (in 1853, 1855 and 1862 respectively) and improved national and local transport infrastructures meant that more newspapers were on the market. In 1846 there were six morning and four evening daily newspapers published in London; by 1885 this had risen to 14 and seven

²⁸ Oscar Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist' (1891), in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellman (London, 1970), p.348.

²⁹ Wilde, 'The Soul of the Man Under Socialism', *ibid.*, p.276.

³⁰ Oscar Wilde: Lord Alfred Douglas Appeals for Fair Play', *Star*, 20 Apr.1895: p.3.

respectively. In 1914 whilst the evening press remained stable, the number of morning papers published in the capital had risen to 25.³¹ Whilst most sold for one penny or more, the *Echo* (1868), the *Star* (1888) and the *Evening News* (1889) were all just half a penny, a pricing policy which increased the potential readership significantly. All three were particularly popular during major trials since they came out in the evening and so gave the latest details. The weekend papers, such as the radical *Reynolds* (1850), were also popular for providing a digest of the week's events.

Accompanying the quantitative change was a shift in style. In the 1880s W.T. Stead at the *Pall Mall Gazette* and T.P. O'Connor at the *Star* altered their approach to editing, precipitating a wider change in newspaper content and style. Whilst there were significant continuities with previous journalistic styles,³² the 'new' journalism did radically alter the way news could be consumed. Investigative reports (like Stead's into child prostitution in 1885), campaigns (like the *Star's* backing of the striking dockers in 1889) and 'stop-press' were incorporated, and editorial comment was foregrounded. The articles themselves were more direct, whilst headlines and sub-headings became more descriptive, often telling a mini-narrative at a glance. In an article on 'the new journalism' in the *New Review*, T.P. O'Connor compared it to the intimate personal histories of Thomas Macaulay, and suggested that 'to get your ideas through the hurried eyes of the whirling brains that are employed in the reading of a newspaper there must be no mistake about your meaning [...] you must strike your reader between the eyes'.³³ The papers were catering for the quickening pace of city life. The vivid, often sensational reports gave stories added impact, with papers competing for details during the Whitechapel ripper murders, the Cleveland Street scandal and the Wilde trials. Newspapers found new ways of attracting attention and galvanising opinion, and they broadcast scandal and cogent if simplistic moral messages to a massive readership. The liberal writer J.A. Hobson suggested in 1901 that the press had been the driving force behind the rise of jingoism during the Boer war.³⁴ More recently Judith Walkowitz has shown how the papers formulated 'chaotic experience' into 'meaningful moral drama' during the Whitechapel ripper

³¹ *The Newspaper Press Directory: A Complete Guide to the Newspaper Press in Each County* (London, 1946; 1865; 1891; 1894).

³² See Laurel Brake, 'The Old Journalism and the New: Forms of Cultural Production in London in the 1880s', in *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain 1850-1914*, ed. Joel Wiener (Connecticut, 1988), p.2.

³³ T.P. O'Connor, 'The New Journalism', *New Review*, vol.1, no.5 (Oct.1889): pp.423-434, p.434.

³⁴ J.A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism* (London, 1901), pp.9-10.

murders.³⁵ Newspaper reporting of court cases was similarly significant in shaping images of deviance and so also in controlling and regulating it.³⁶

The discussion of homosexual behaviour in the press was almost exclusively in a juridical context, and coverage ranged from the large-scale accounts of the Cleveland Street scandal and the Wilde trials, to the low and medium-scale reports of other cases during the whole period. The Cleveland Street scandal was a protracted affair, involving three trials and heated exchanges in parliament. It began in July 1889 when a 15-year-old GPO telegraph boy called Charles Swinscow admitted being paid for sex with men at 19 Cleveland Street, just north of Oxford Street. Charles Hammond, the proprietor of the Cleveland Street house, fled abroad once he had been implicated by Swinscow, but his accomplice Charles Veck, and the supposed ringleader at the GPO, Henry Newlove, were tried at the Old Bailey on September 18, 1889 under the Labouchere Amendment. They were sentenced to nine and four months with hard labour respectively, but the case went unreported. Rumours circulated about the men who had used the brothel, including army bachelor Lord Arthur Somerset, the divorcee Henry James Fitzroy, Earl of Euston, and Prince Albert Victor, the Prince of Wales's eldest son and heir. Ernest Parke, the editor of the new radical weekly newspaper the North London Press, decided to go public with the speculation, and in November published Somerset and Euston's names in connection with the Cleveland Street house.³⁷ Euston sued for libel. After widely reported committal proceedings in November and December, the case was heard on 15 and 16 January 1890. It included sensational testimony from Jack Saul, the putative author of Sins of the Cities of the Plain, who worked from the Cleveland Street house and handed out cards to likely clients (including the Earl of Euston) in Piccadilly. Despite this Parke was found guilty of libel and jailed for a year.

After the case Reynolds, the Pall Mall Gazette, the Star and Truth all recapitulated concerns that the authorities had orchestrated a cover-up, and Henry Labouchere took the matter up in parliament on February 28, 1890 in a debate lasting several hours. The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, rebutted Labouchere's accusations of dishonesty in a statement to the Lords the following week. Shortly after, on March 12th, 1890, the third case associated with the scandal finally came to court. This involved Lord Somerset's solicitor Arthur Newton, who was charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. Newton pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to

³⁵ Judith Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London (London, 1992), pp.83-84.

³⁶ Richard Ericson, *et al*, Visualising Deviance: A Study of News Organisation (Milton Keynes, 1987), p.3. See also Nicola Lacey, 'Contingency and Criminalisation', in ed.Loveland, *op.cit.*, p.5

³⁷ 'The West End Scandals: Names of Some of the Distinguished Criminals Who Have Escaped', North London Press, 16 Nov.1889: p.5.

prevent prosecution and was sentenced to six weeks in prison. The prosecution offered no evidence for the other five counts, citing the 'mischief' done by witness revelations in open court.³⁸

The three infamous Wilde trials five years later ran from April 3rd to May 25 1895. The first was a libel action taken by Wilde against the Marquis of Queensberry, who had left a card with the words 'posing as a sodomite [*sic*]' for Wilde at his club, the *Albemarle*. During the trial Queensberry and his team set out to substantiate their plea of justification, prompting Wilde to withdraw. As a result of the revelations in the libel case Wilde was arrested, along with one of his associates, Alfred Taylor, and charged under the Labouchere Amendment. The two men were tried together between April 29 and May 1, but the jury could not agree on a verdict, and the judge ordered a re-trial. This time Wilde and Taylor were tried separately, with Taylor's case heard first. The Solicitor General, Sir Frank Lockwood, took up the case for the prosecution and the two men were found guilty and sentenced to the maximum term of two years with hard labour on May 25, 1895.

Both the Cleveland Street and Wilde cases dominated the news for several months, whilst other cases during the period worked cumulatively to elaborate images emanating from these larger scandals. The choices editors made in terms of including cases, curtailing coverage or highlighting one case at the expense of others, drew attention to particular networks of places and modes of behaviour. This is perhaps most obvious during the Wilde trials when five other cases were covered by *Reynolds*, reiterating on a weekly basis the images emerging from the more major sensation. Two received front page coverage alongside details of the Wilde case under the headlines 'Other Serious Charges' (April 14) and 'Other Cases - Horrible Condition of London' (April 28). The case of John Goodchild, a chemist's assistant from the East End, was the focus of both reports, and a further item on May 5th. Goodchild was charged with inciting a 14-year-old Jewish matchboy, Jon Abrahams 'to commit an unnameable crime'. He had apparently approached Abrahams on Old Broad Street, near Liverpool Street Station, and tempted him with treats to a bedroom above Pearce's Dining Room on the same street where 'acts of gross indecency' were allegedly committed.³⁹ A search of Goodchild's room yielded a collection of photographs and a diary, which suggested involvement in the Cleveland Street scandal, and relationships with a number of teenagers, including some who had subsequently been imprisoned for blackmail. The Goodchild case was given precedence over the committal of Walter Woolverton (a respected YMCA member) for indecency in a boat race crowd, which was detailed in a paragraph at the end of

³⁸ H.Montgomery Hyde, *The Cleveland Street Scandal* (London, 1976), p.207.

³⁹ 'Other Cases: Horrible Condition of London', *Reynolds*, 28 Apr.1895: p.1.

the Goodchild story of April 14th. The case of James Munro, a 17 year-old charged with indecency with a number of other teenagers. was mentioned in a single sentence on May 5th.⁴⁰ In highlighting the Goodchild case a particular territory was again stressed, as was a particular form of predatory sexual behaviour. The case echoed aspects of the Wilde trial which dominated the front pages, most significantly in its depiction of relationships between older men and teenagers or young men. Similar high profile coverage during the Wilde trials accompanied a blackmailing case centring on a public toilet off Oxford Street (which is discussed later), and the story of Wilhelm Julius, who was bound over for three months after being arrested in women's clothes in Waterloo Place.⁴¹

Taken together these five cases underscored the debauchery of the capital indicated by the evidence heard in the Wilde trials. The suggestion was that the offences relating to homosexuality had increased significantly, that it was particularly prevalent in certain areas, and that London was being more vigorously policed. This did not necessarily reflect the reality of the situation, and in fact, as was indicated earlier, the total number of arrests for sodomy, attempted sodomy, and gross indecency for 1895 was only two above the average for the preceding five years (42), and was seven below the average for the period 1895-1899 (51). Editorial decisions shaped perceptions of sexual offences in the city and sketched out patterns of criminal sexual behaviour which were not necessarily borne out by the range of cases before the courts.⁴²

At less sensitive times more minor cases were relegated to two or three paragraphs on the inside pages, and many were not covered at all. In 1897 Hamilton de Tatha wrote to Reynolds to register his acquittal on charges of gross indecency when, having reported the initial hearing, the paper failed to report the result of the subsequent case. Earlier, in 1886, the paper was similarly inattentive in the case of Arnold Brown. They did not report his prosecution for an act of gross indecency in front of a guardsman in Victoria station toilets in February 1886 (one of the first prosecutions under the Labouchere amendment), and covered only part of the appeal process in May of the same year under the unprepossessing headline 'Middlesex

⁴⁰ 'Other Serious Charges', Reynolds, 14 Apr.1895: p.1; 'More Cases for the Old Bailey', Reynolds, 5 May1895: p.8.

⁴¹ 'In Women's Clothes', Reynolds, 21 Apr.1895: p.8; 'In Women's Clothes', Reynolds, 28 Apr.1895: p.6.

⁴² Jennifer Davis notes a similar phenomenon with the 'garrotting panic' of 1882. She notes: 'It was the actions and reactions of the press, public and various public agencies involved which created the "crime wave" rather than any significant increase in criminal activity in the streets'. Jennifer Davis, 'The London Garrotting Panic of 1862: A Moral Panic and the Creation of a Criminal Class in Mid-Victorian England', in Gatrell, *op.cit.*, p.191.

Sessions Appeals'.⁴³ The result of the appeal, like the earlier trial, went unreported. Brown's behaviour was considered worthy of prosecution and the maximum possible sentence (two years with hard labour) but the story (involving a classic tryst between 'a gentleman of means' and a guardsman) was not published in *Reynolds*. At other times - during the Cleveland Street or Wilde scandals, for example - the cases would probably have been given a much higher profile.

More generally, newspaper coverage of the central London courts, as opposed to those in suburban areas or the provinces, indicated a particular concentration of homosexual activity there. The London press, while increasingly catering for a national readership in this period (as historian Lucy Brown has argued),⁴⁴ lacked regional correspondents. Consequently even *The Times*, the newspaper perhaps most identified with the nation rather than the city where it was produced, principally covered London police and crown court cases. The liberal MP (and *Star* editor) T.P. O'Connor suggested in the parliamentary debate on the Cleveland Street scandal that there was a high level of cases involving homosexual activity in the rural Assize courts,⁴⁵ yet there was barely any mention of these in the putatively national press.

If an uneven territory of criminality was suggested by the cases and courts editors decided to cover, the press was itself keen to indicate the parallel inconsistencies in the application of the law. The Cleveland Street scandal was the most obvious example. Editorials proclaimed their duty to expose the inconsistencies in policing and sentencing, and force appropriate redress. The *Star* in particular took on the crusading mantle. Its front page editorial declared 'we must probe this hideous evil down to its lowest roots', and continued two pages later 'will not a large section of the public say that if the police authorities will not do their duty, the press must not be prosecuted for trying to compel them?'⁴⁶ Toward the end of the affair, and after his affray in parliament, Labouchere published two articles in *Truth* exposing the double standards in the application of justice, and the direct results this had for morality in London:

The offence has increased in London to a fearful extent owing to the practical immunity that is extended to it. Every person connected with the administration of the criminal law in the home office and the treasury, from the highest to the lowest, is steeped in the illusion that this immunity ought to

⁴³ 'Middlesex Sessions Appeals', *Reynolds*, 9 May 1886: p.8.

⁴⁴ Lucy Brown, 'The Growth of the National Press', in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. Laurel Brake *et al* (London, 1990), p.133.

⁴⁵ Colonel Kenyan Slaney, MP for Newport Shropshire, furiously rebutted O'Connor's claims. In Shropshire, he said, labourers did not 'bear this character'. *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.341 (London, 1890), col.1585.

⁴⁶ T.P. O'Connor, 'What We Think: A word on the Scandals', *Star*, 25 Nov. 1889: pp.1-3.

continue [...] every constable knows that he does not consult his own interests, but very much the reverse, by putting himself in conflict with this official doctrine.⁴⁷

The press drew attention to this supposed laxity of police action, and suggested a cosseted subculture which was protected at the highest levels. They foregrounded Saul's comment in the Euston libel trial that the police 'had been kind to him' and turned a blind eye 'to more than him'.⁴⁸ Wide coverage also attended T.P.O'Connor's observation in the Commons that whilst detectives 'dogged' Irish MPs, none could be found 'to dog the footsteps of a ruffian who, for upwards of a year, has kept a house in the city which has brought disgrace on the character of the city'.⁴⁹

At other times, however, the police appeared draconian. In June and July 1912, for example, Alan Horton, John Hill and Robert Freeman (whose cases were mentioned earlier) were arrested and convicted for intent and soliciting, despite there being no complaints about their behaviour. Ives commented in July 1912 that there had been 'many tragedies' and that 'persecutions' had been 'falling upon many people'.⁵⁰ The ratio of arrests to prosecutions for this year suggests that police were arresting more people with less compelling evidence than before (or else magistrates and jurors were becoming more lenient). Between 1890 and 1909 an average of 47 per cent of men arrested for sodomy, attempted sodomy or gross indecency were convicted, but in 1912 the figure was only 36 per cent. In 1913 and 1914 the figure fell further, to 34 per cent and 32 per cent respectively.

The law was clearly not applied consistently. Men knew they could often escape unhindered by the law but there was also always a potential risk; the blind eye turned to Jack Saul's behaviour by police, or the warnings given to the actor Arthur Mellors before his eventual arrest and prosecution in 1906,⁵¹ were not always forthcoming. Moreover, the reputation of particular places seems to have influenced the police in terms of the men they arrested: they knew a man apprehended in Piccadilly Circus might be convicted with less evidence than someone caught elsewhere. Prevailing stereotypes of homosexual behaviour, like that exhibited by Horton, also influenced arrest patterns, particularly with regard to solicitation. A man with similar intent to Horton, but without the make-up or effeminate wiggle was clearly more likely to evade arrest. The press, meanwhile, shaped some of these ideas about places and deviant types through selective and sometimes sensational reporting. Men wanting sex

⁴⁷ Henry Labouchere, *Truth*, 6 Mar.1890: p.473.

⁴⁸ 'Euston Libel Case: A Witness for the Defence Tells a Sensational Story', *Star* 16 Jan.1890: p.3.

⁴⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.341 (London,1890), p.1586.

⁵⁰ Ives, *Diary*, vol.57, 16 Jul.1912, p.101.

⁵¹ 'Recorder's Regret: One of a Dangerous Gang: An Actor's Penitence', *Reynolds*, 6 May 1906: p.4.

with other men would have to carefully negotiate these assumptions about bodies, behaviour and territories if they were to survive unprosecuted in London. They would also have to remain sensitive to the contingency of the messages being sent out, and the shifting frontiers of criminality in the city, which meant that some places were more permissive than others and some periods more liberal. In 1877 Fanny and Stella could get away with winking at the Burlington arcade beadle and wearing make-up in public. In 1912 similar behaviour led to prosecution and imprisonment for Alan Horton.

2.

Whilst the prosecutions and press coverage were clearly contingent, the images of homosexuality in the newspapers were more consistent. Most spectacularly in the Wilde trial, but also in other minor cases, police assumptions, court proceedings and press reporting produced a fairly cogent body and territory, albeit beset with certain contradictions. The unrelated cases pasted in Ives's casebooks for the period form a consolidating lineage of stories confirming these impressions of spaces and individuals. They suggest where men could be found (as indicated in the last chapter), and, as Cohen and Sinfield argue in relation to the Wilde trials, outline what they looked like. Perhaps most significantly, the courts and the newspapers bracketed this body and these spaces together. Within this juridical/journalistic frame men who had sex with other men were largely defined by space and described as creatures of their environment. The emphasis was on acts and where they were committed: the Labouchere Amendment specifically emphasised 'public and private' spaces, and the suspect's presence in certain parts of the West End, in public toilets, in the parks at certain times, enabled particular conclusions to be drawn. Arrests came after 'dens' had been searched, and movements through the city had been traced. Prosecution was usually followed by removal to the punitive space of the prison. Newspapers emphasised this connection between the criminal and the scene of the crime. Headlines from the period announced: 'The Cleveland Street Case'; 'The West End scandals' and 'Another London Scandal' (1890), 'Fitzroy Square Raid' (1894); 'the West End Blackmailing Case' (1895); 'West End Blackmailers' (1898); 'West End Flat Scandal' and 'The Studio Murder' (1906); and 'Met In Hyde Park' (1908).⁵²

⁵² 'The Cleveland Street Case', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 Jan.1890: p.5; 'Another London Scandal', and 'The West End Scandals', *Reynolds*, 12 Jan.1890: p.5; 'Fitzroy Square Raid', *Star* 20, Aug.1890: p.3; 'The West End Blackmailing Case', *Daily Chronicle*, 24 May1895: p.7; 'West End Blackmailers', *Star*, 12 Jan.1898: p.3; 'West End Flat Scandal', *Reynolds*, 15 Apr.1906: p.5; 'The Studio Murder', *The Times*, 25 May, 1906: p.9; and 'Met in Hyde Park', *News of the World*, 22 Nov.1908, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.7, p.85.

The places mentioned in the court cases and press reports were characterised in two ways. On the one hand these places were described as utterly separate from the middle-class domestic arena, and deemed somehow appropriate for such unspeakable sexual crimes; on the other there was perceived to be a monstrous trespass on the territory of the imperial city, constituting a disgrace to city and nation.⁵³ These conceptions figure homosexuality as both outside but also dangerously within urban culture. In the Cleveland Street scandal, for example, the Star described the house as 'a hideous cesspool of wickedness and foulness',⁵⁴ whilst in Reynolds there was a hyperbolic litany of description: the house was 'a horrible den of vice', 'a hideous place', 'a den of infamy', and an 'abominable institution'. It also referred to 'the infamous Cleveland street inferno' and 'the abominable orgies of Cleveland Street'.⁵⁵ This, however, was set against the location of the house. Labouchere was widely quoted in the press when he commented in parliament that 'the house is in no obscure thoroughfare, but nearly opposite the Middlesex Hospital'.⁵⁶ The Illustrated Police News presented a front page picture of 'the den of infamy' which looked like most other town houses in the area (see fig.vii).⁵⁷ The papers also commented on the involvement of telegraph boys from the GPO headquarters, who had sometimes visited Cleveland Street dressed partially in their uniforms. The 'den of infamy' was not in a (presumably more fitting) 'obscure' street, but opposite the Middlesex hospital, and involved not common street boys but post office employees.

Similarly, in the Wilde case, Alfred Taylor's darkened, perfumed rooms are repeatedly evoked in court, and relayed by the press. In his summing up for Lord Queensberry at the first trial, Edward Carson talks of the 'shameful' and later 'extraordinary' 'den';⁵⁸ and in the second trial Taylor's landlady at 13 Little College Street reported that:

The windows of his rooms were covered with strained art muslin and dark curtains and lace curtains. They were furnished sumptuously, and were lighted by different coloured lamps and candles [...] the windows were never opened and the daylight was never admitted.⁵⁹

⁵³ During the Cleveland Street scandal, for example, the Star talked of it being a 'national disgrace' and Reynolds of the 'horrible national scandal'. These sentiments were echoed in parliamentary comments by Labouchere. 'The Scandals', Star, 8 Jan.1890: p.3; 'The Horrible National Scandal', Reynolds, 26 Jan.1890:p.4; Parliamentary Debates (1890), *op.cit.*, col.1541.

⁵⁴ 'What We Think', Star, 1 Mar.1890: p.1.

⁵⁵ 'Lord Euston's Case', Reynolds, 9 Jan.1890: p.4.

⁵⁶ Parliamentary Debates (1890), *op.cit.*, col. 1541.

⁵⁷ 'West End Scandal Case: Severe Sentencing on Mr Parke', Illustrated Police News, Law Courts and Weekly Record, 25 Jan.1890: p.1.

⁵⁸ Hyde, Cleveland Street, *op.cit.*, p.142.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.178.

POLICE NEWS

LAW COURTS AND WEEKLY RECORD

No. 1,351.

(REGISTERED FOR CIRCULATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND ABROAD)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 1890.

Price One Penny.



Figure vii. 'The West End Scandal Case: Severe Sentence on Mr Parke', Illustrated Police News, 25 Jan. 1890: p.1 (Colindale Newspaper Library).

The descriptions recall the homes of Des Esseintes in J.-K. Huysmans's French decadent classic *À Rebours* (1884), in which 'natural order' is inverted to cast a shadowy darkness during daylight.⁶⁰ There is also a suggestion of the eastern exoticism noted in *Sins of the Cities of the Plain*. The press foregrounded these details as they were repeated in each of the three trials. Each time the heady perfumes, artificial light, and sumptuous furnishings were stressed. Fresh air and light, the conduits of Victorian health and vitality, were absent, and the public gaze was shut out, as in the Fitzroy Square case a year earlier, where all the curtains were reportedly drawn. It is the antithesis of rooms described in a piece on Piccadilly in *Chambers Journal* in 1892:

Through the French windows travellers outside the omnibus can catch a rapid sight of statuettes, a neat white bookcase well filled with bright volumes, a few pieces of choice French furniture - nothing approaching the palatial; but neat, tasteful and orderly, like the house of any English gentleman.⁶¹

Here was a general standard to which the respectable Englishman should conform. It was ordered and neat, with nothing too lavish, and was, perhaps most significantly, unashamed of the public gaze. The Little College Street chambers disrupted these ideas of English propriety, and were envisaged as the natural habitat for the sexual deviant, who shaped his domestic space on degenerate foreign ideas of home. The *Evening News* editorial wrote on the day of Wilde's conviction: 'such people find their fitting environment in the artificial light and the incense-laden air of secret chambers curtained from the light of day'.⁶² Taylor's rooms, as Ed Cohen argues, become a 'liminal space whose decorative perversions of bourgeois domesticity came to signify larger violations of the sexual/moral codes that such domesticity (re)produced and reflected'.⁶³

The location of Taylor's rooms was also stressed. Charles Gill, prosecuting in the second trial, suggested to Wilde that the area was 'rather a rough neighbourhood' and 'not the sort of place you would usually visit'.⁶⁴ In the final trial the solicitor general, Sir Frank Lockwood, characterised the area as a 'place where debased persons congregated'.⁶⁵ He later commented that it was 'not a very cheerful street'.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ See chapter 5.

⁶¹ 'Piccadilly', *Chambers Journal*, vol.9, 2 Jul.1892: pp.417-420, p.419.

⁶² 'Retribution', *Evening News*, 27 May 1895: p.2.

⁶³ Cohen, *op.cit.*, p.180.

⁶⁴ H.Montgomery Hyde, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* (London, 1973), p.203. This cross-examination was also widely reported.

⁶⁵ 'The Wilde Scandal', *Star*, 21 May 1895, p.3.

⁶⁶ Hyde, *Trials*, *op.cit.*, p.250.

The apartment and street were marked out as distinct and somehow suitable to the alleged sexual activity that occurred there. Wilde attempted to disarm this rhetoric, however, suggesting instead that it was part of (not separate from) the dominant urban terrain. In the first trial Wilde said he did not find the rooms strange, only 'bohemian'.⁶⁷ In the second he said that it 'was merely a bachelor's place', and that he did not know about it being a rough area, but only that it was near the Houses of Parliament.⁶⁸ When Lockwood asked Wilde if he liked the situation of the apartment, he replied that he thought it 'was a particularly nice one - close to Westminster Abbey'.⁶⁹ According to the *Star* Taylor's council, J.A. Grain, was 'anxious to show that the darkening of Taylor's windows at Little College Street was only the draperies usual in continental cities and the modern flat'.⁷⁰ The defence repeatedly returned to the 'normal' and the 'usual', and Wilde to the 'bachelor' and 'bohemian', to counter prosecution depictions of luxury, elaborate furnishing, and exotic perfumes, and the dissident eroticism they supposedly implicated. The contested nature of the flat and its location were perceived to be important in discerning the desires of the defendants. If they could be proven to be distinct then the behaviour of those who visited them would apparently be clearer. Employing the same logic, the defence sought to show the continuity of the street and room with the rest of the city.

Whatever the status of the Little College Street flat in terms of middle-class propriety, what was clear was that Wilde had trespassed in other ways. At the committal proceedings of Wilde and Taylor at Bow Street on April 6th, Gill said that 'it would be shown that the prisoner had the audacity to commit these offences at the Savoy Hotel, at a hotel in Piccadilly, and even at his own house in Tite Street when his family was away'.⁷¹ In his summing up Judge Alfred Wills was aghast that sex between men might have taken place at the Savoy Hotel and had in the first instance gone unreported by the chamber maid; 'it is a state of things one shudders to contemplate in a first class hotel', he said.⁷²

The prosecution thus painted a picture of gross trespass on public, domestic, and pseudo-domestic turf on the one hand, whilst on the other constructing a perverse 'other' space in Little College Street which appeared to nurture dissident desire. This sense in both the Cleveland Street and Wilde scandals recurs in the reporting of other cases. The West End actor Arthur Mellors, prosecuted in 1906, and the murdered

⁶⁷ 'Wilde: Judge's Summing Up', *Star*, 1 May 1895: p.3.

⁶⁸ Hyde, *Trials*, *op.cit.*, p.203.

⁶⁹ 'Wilde: Cross-Examined for the Third Time', *Star*, 24 May 1895: p.2.

⁷⁰ 'Oscar Wilde', *Star*, 29 Apr.1895: p.2. The writer's reference to Mr Grain's 'anxiety' subtly undermines Grain's comment about the rooms

⁷¹ 'Oscar Wilde: Charged this Morning at Bow Street', *Star*, 6 Apr.1895: p.3.

⁷² Hyde, *Trials*, *op.cit.*, p.268.

artist Archibald Wakley, whose inquest received wide coverage in the same year, both lived outside middle-class domestic arenas: in a small flat in Victoria and a studio in Bayswater respectively. Both also used public spaces to find or entertain partners: Mellors in the West End theatres, Wakley in Hyde Park. Earlier in 1895 John Goodchild (whose case was discussed earlier) made forays from the room he rented above a chemist's shop into the East End streets to find sexual gratification. In relation to middle-class expectations of domesticity each of these men were outsiders: their private space in the city enabled rather than inhibited their dissident desires, and the policing function of the family home was absent. The day after Wilde was found guilty the Chronicle berated the lack of wholesome domestic influence:

The herding of boys in great schools, their too early separation from their homes and association with their mothers [...] all these things, coupled with the tasteless luxury that rich parents hold out as a poisonous lure to idle young men and women, afford a terrible wide margin for the gradual perversion of heart and intellect.⁷³

The Telegraph editorial, meanwhile, saw Wilde's superfine art, and all it represented, as the 'enemy' of 'the natural affections, the domestic joys, the sanctity and sweetness of the home'.⁷⁴ The middle-class home was set in opposition to these spaces and desires, making Wilde's activities in Tite Street particularly abhorrent. When his effects were auctioned to pay his debts, the sale attracted almost universal coverage in the press, and the 'dispersal' of his possessions seemed a kind of poetic justice: the familial domestic space could not harbour these activities and survive.⁷⁵

This use of city space by men seeking sex with other men blurred the conceptual boundaries between public and private. Assignations were made at private parties (like those at Little College Street or Fitzroy Square), in the streets, in public toilets, in parks, and through friends in West End restaurants and bars. They were consummated in situ or in private rooms, in bachelor chambers in St James, in the pseudo-domesticity of West End hotels, or even in the family home. The city centre (as opposed to the suburbs) was shown to be permissive of homosexual activity in its public, private and more liminal aspects, and a fluid movement between them was suggested. The prohibition of such activity anywhere (under the Labouchere Amendment) was flouted everywhere in central London.

⁷³ 'Comment', Chronicle, 26 May 1895: p.4. Correspondence in Reynolds after the trial further centred on the morality of public schools, and suggested they were a cause of urban vice. See, for example, 'Immorality at Public Schools: Remarkable Letters', Reynolds, 25 May 1895: p.3; 'Immorality at Public Schools: Striking Correspondence', Reynolds, 2 Jun. 1895: p.5.

⁷⁴ 'Dangerous Infiltration', Telegraph, 6 Apr. 1895: p.4.

⁷⁵ 'Sale of Oscar Wilde's Effects', Reynolds, 28 Apr. 1895: p.1.

It was in conjunction with this set of spaces, that the body of the sexual dissident was delineated. Importantly men were not labelled as homosexuals or inverters by the newspapers or courts during the period, and the emphasis continued to be on what they had done. Whilst a series of stereotypes were elaborated, this emphasis on criminal sexual acts meant that men were assumed to have misbehaved as a result of an inability to exercise self-control and a profound moral debasement, rather than for any constitutional reason. The courts and press were largely uninterested in arguments about inherent sexual identity propounded by the sexologists, and instead pursued the question of what the man had *done* rather than who he *was*. Thus even though Justice Wills, who had tried Wilde, noted a 'strain of insanity' in James Smith in 1897, it did not stop him from passing the maximum sentence of two years with hard labour.⁷⁶ Wilde's appeal of the previous year on similar grounds, which cites both Max Nordau and Cesare Lombroso, was turned down.⁷⁷ The offence was too gross to admit excuse. Nevertheless, reports of the bigger cases in particular often included lengthy descriptions of the behaviour of defendants and witnesses, building up images of distinct (though no less culpable) types. Wilde was almost obsessively described and he became, as Sinfield and Cohen both argue, the clearest prototype of the urban homosexual. Cohen, for example, shows how, in the first trial, Wilde's languid and aesthetic stance was contrasted to Lord Queensberry, who became 'a virtual icon of outraged masculinity'.⁷⁸ Illustrations in the *Morning Leader*, Cohen observes, depicted Wilde as a grotesque figure, with bloated face and enlarged nose and lips. His physicality and mass were emphasised and contrasted to the more respectable 'intelligent philistines' of the jury.⁷⁹ On his conviction, the *Evening News* commented that Wilde 'was the perfect type of his class, a gross sensualist, veneered with the affectation of artistic feeling too delicate for the common clay'.⁸⁰

The image is fed and refined by precedent and subsequent figures appearing in the dock and witness box. Reynolds described Saul, who gave evidence in the Euston/Parke libel case, as 'a filthy loathsome and detestable beast', and the *Star*

⁷⁶ 'Corrupting the Youth of the Country', c.Feb.1897, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.1, p.44. Smith had been sentenced to life imprisonment for sodomy in 1877 but was released in 1895 on a ticket of leave. His prosecution in 1897 meant this ticket was revoked and his life sentence recommenced after he had served his two years with hard labour. He was released again in 1905 under the supervision of the Salvation Army in Bermondsey, but having committed another offence was sent back to prison.

⁷⁷ Oscar Wilde to the Home Secretary, Sir Matthew White Ridley, 2 Jul.1896, in *Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (Oxford, 1979), pp.142-145.

⁷⁸ Cohen, *op.cit.*, p.139.

⁷⁹ *Morning Leader*, 4 & 5 Apr.1895; reproduced and discussed in Cohen, *op.cit.*, pp.139-141.

⁸⁰ 'Retribution', *Evening News*, 27 May 1895: p.2.

remarked on his effeminacy and theatricality. His demeanour was markedly different from the editor Parke, who took the guilty verdict and the pronouncement of sentence 'like a man'.⁸¹ In the Fitzroy Square case of 1894, the press reported the spectacle of two men, Arthur Marley and John Severs, making their first police court appearance in women's clothes, and a year later Wilhelm Julius was said in *Reynolds* to be a 'very effeminate looking individual'.⁸² In 1906 there was an extended description of Frenchman Henri Muller, who had been arrested in Oxford Street. He stood 'with one black glove on and holding a handkerchief. His face had been carefully shaved and slightly rouged and was of a feminine cast [...] He wept while in the dock'.⁸³

In other cases descriptions were less detailed, but still gave an impression of a particular 'type'. William Jones, who had been seen 'frequenting' a urinal just off Oxford Street in 1901, was said to be 'a tall, unwholesome looking individual'.⁸⁴ Later in 1908, in an apparent allusion to Wilde, Herbert Blythe is said to be a 'clean-shaven, well-dressed man' and a 'higher critic'.⁸⁵ Back in the Wilde trial the witness Arthur Mavor was described as a 'slim dandified young man, in a painfully high and stiff collar', and *Reynolds* remarked on 'the saddening spectacle' of a 'large number of well, even fashionably dressed men' at Wilde's committal proceedings, who 'for more than an hour [...] waited, walking up and down, smoking cigarettes, laughing and joking, trying to learn what truth there was in the report that further arrests were intended'.⁸⁶ Taylor, Wilde's co-defendant, had, according to the *Star*, a particularly suspect mouth and smile. It was not fleshy and sensual like Wilde's, but instead narrow and effete. The paper described the 'cynical smile' which 'hovered round his thin lips'.⁸⁷ Later they reported his 'sickly smile',⁸⁸ and on the 19th April Wilde was described being followed into court by 'the simpering Taylor, who smiled all over his weak open mouth'.⁸⁹ The fascination with his mouth (in the absence of other distinguishing features) stressed both effeminacy and corporeality.⁹⁰ The bodies of Wilde, Saul,

⁸¹ 'Lord Euston's Case', *Reynolds*, 19 Jan.1890: p.4; 'Euston Libel Case', *Star*, 16 Jan.1890: p.3; 'What We Think', *Star* 17 Jan.1890: p.1.

⁸² 'Raid on Fitzroy Square', *Star*, 13 Aug.1894: p.3; 'In Woman's Clothes', *Reynolds*, 21 Apr.1895: p.8.

⁸³ 'Man in Woman's Dress', *Daily Mail*, 22 Aug.1906, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.7, p.36; 'Blackmailers Letter', *The People*, 3 Jul.1910, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.7, p.85.

⁸⁴ 'The Curse of Marylebone yet Again', *Maylebone Advertiser*, 21 Sep.1901, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.3, p.21.

⁸⁵ 'Met in Hyde Park', *News of the World*, 22 Nov.1908, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.7, p.85.

⁸⁶ 'The Wilde Trial', *Star*, 27 Apr.1895: p.3; 'Wilde and Taylor Committed for Trial', *Reynolds*, 21 Apr.1895: p.4.

⁸⁷ 'Oscar Wilde Charged this Morning at Bow Street', *Star*, 6 Apr.1895: p.3.

⁸⁸ 'Oscar Wilde: Brought Up at Bow Street this Morning', *Star*, 11 Apr.1895: p.3.

⁸⁹ 'Wilde Case', *Star*, 19 Apr.1895: p.3.

⁹⁰ Gill Davies notes a similar preoccupation amongst the urban explorers and novelists who wrote about the East End. The mouth, she suggests, represented 'the physicality of the body and its threat to rational, middle-class sensibility and ideology'. Gill Davies, 'Foreign Bodies: Images of the London

Muller and Horton were each interpreted by journalists, and in turn by the reading public. Stereotypes were evoked, clarified and endorsed, in order to render the pariah recognisable in a number of forms in the city streets: as fleshy and decadent; weak and effeminate; or more generally as 'unwholesome' and 'beastly'. The cross-dressing connection was also repeated, and other subsidiary markers included a penchant for fashionable dress and a lack of facial hair.⁹¹

In addition foreign origins were frequently noted.⁹² Saul was said by Reynolds to 'speak with a foreign accent',⁹³ Henri Muller's nationality was mentioned in the first sentence of the article in the *People*, as was that of Wilhelm Julius, who was Austrian. Emphasis was also placed on the Germanic origins of Julius Walters (arrested for approaching men in East India Dock Road whilst dressed as a woman in 1908) and Ernest Sneider (who surrendered himself to the police in 1910 in an attempt to elude a blackmailer), during a period of increasing tension between Britain and Germany.⁹⁴ In the Goodchild case of 1895 the fact that the matchboy, Jon Abrahams, was Jewish, was mentioned repeatedly, alongside suggestions that he complied willingly with Goodchild's advances.⁹⁵ These factors, from dress to national and religious identification, were not primary indicators of dissident desire, but they came as confirmation, further shaping images of the urban sexual deviant.

These spaces and bodies gain added importance in press coverage since, as Cohen suggests, they stood in for mention of the sexual acts themselves. The newspaper reader often had to gather clues from descriptions of place and appearance in order to discern details of the crime, which were not usually made clear. Whilst the courts often heard detailed descriptions of sexual acts, the newspapers referred to 'gross indecency' or 'unnatural', 'infamous' or 'unnameable' offences. Sometimes references were even more oblique and the reader was left guessing what was at issue. In the 1912 case against John Hill and Robert Freeman it was not clear from press reports what they were saying to the men they approached in Charing Cross Road. Earlier in 1898 Robert Clibborn was convicted of blackmail and sentenced to seven years imprisonment, but the threats he issued to Charles Deck were only suggested by

Working Class at the End of the Nineteenth Century', *Literature and History*, vol.14, no.1 (Spring 1988): pp.64-80, p.69.

⁹¹ The fact defendants were clean shaven was reported in each case, and in the *Morning Leader* illustrations mentioned earlier Wilde is contrasted with the bearded jurors (see fn. 79). Wilde had earlier encouraged Ives to shave off his moustache. Facial hair perhaps symbolised a respectability Wilde sought to evade. See Ives, *Diary*, vol.17, 14 Oct.1893, p.119.

⁹² It is also possible that police xenophobia made foreigners more vulnerable to arrest.

⁹³ 'The West End Scandals', Reynolds, 12 Jan.1890, p.5.

⁹⁴ 'Masquerading as a Woman', 13 Nov.1908, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.7, p.26; 'Blackmailers Letter', *People*, 3 Jul.1910, in *Casebook*, vol.7, p.85. Walters was ordered to be deported on completion of his five-month sentence.

⁹⁵ 'Other Cases: Horrible Condition of London', *op.cit.*

the fact that Deck was on the Embankment at night with an actor when he was approached, his fur coat stolen, and money demanded for its return. Acute readers might also have remembered Clibborn as one of the men who attempted to blackmail Wilde, and deduced from this, the implications of a night-time walk along the Embankment and the theatrical company, the possible nature of the threats Clibborn used to extort money.

The inquest into the murder of Archibald Wakley in 1906 is similarly non-explicit, Wakley's evening visits to Hyde Park to meet soldiers became crucial to the conclusions drawn by the jury, and in turn the newspaper readership. Having heard about these visits, the foreman of the inquest jury asked an acquaintance of Wakley, a soldier named Walker, what had happened when he had visited the artist's studio:

"I am sorry to have to put this question but I want a plain answer. You will understand what I mean. Now do I understand that the deceased suggested something to you to which you objected?" "Yes Sir", replied Trooper Walker, who afterwards stared down, and swung, with a military style, head erect out of the court.⁹⁶

The euphemistic question and answer, which are far from 'plain', shed no real light on what had happened, unless the reader had picked up the same clues as the jury and understood what 'something to which you objected' might mean. The jury had drawn conclusions as to the nature of Wakley's desires from the place where he and the trooper had met, from the sketches he kept in the studio, and from the silence around some aspect of his body (the basic nature of his injuries having been outlined to the jury). The foreman assumed it would be Wakley who made the objectionable suggestion, and did not question why Walker visited Wakley in the first place, having only met him casually in Hyde Park. These assumptions about Wakley's guilty behaviour were set in opposition to Walker's military aplomb in the courtroom (at a time of considerable sensitivity about the moral and physical condition of the military).⁹⁷ In each of these cases the unmentionable nature of homosexual relations made the circumstances of the crime, where it was supposedly committed, and who was present decisive to the reader's understanding. In the Wilde trials this led to apparently banal details of visits to the Savoy and chambers in St James having to stand in for more graphic descriptions offered in the courtroom.

⁹⁶Studio Crime', *Daily Chronicle*, 6 Jun.1906: p.5. A trooper was suspected because of spur marks found on Wakley's thighs. Walker was tracked down through an address on a scrap of paper found in the studio but he had an alibi for the evening in question and was not charged.

⁹⁷See Anne Summers, 'Militarism in Britain Before the Great War', *History Workshop Journal*, vol.1, no.2 (Aut.1976): pp.104-123.

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Accompanying these descriptions came a rhetoric of exposure. When Wilde was finally prosecuted the Illustrated Police News reported that a 'canker' had been brought 'to light'.⁹⁸ The imagery is typical. The cases were seen as the means through which urban depravity could be exposed and removed. The Star at the time of the Cleveland Street scandal admitted its reticence in 'dragging into the light of day and topics of conversation the foul loathsome slimy things that are hidden out of sight', but announced that the time had come to break the silence, to lift the 'veil' and 'expose' the men involved 'to the view of justice'.⁹⁹ This idea of concealed lives and the need to render them visible was crucial to the maintenance of sexual order since it brought with it a regime of watchfulness and vigilance.

Police surveillance was a common aspect of these cases. The Cleveland Street house was monitored and Lord Somerset followed as part of the investigations into the 1889 scandal. Four years later police watched the house in Fitzroy Square,¹⁰⁰ and in the Wilde case it transpired that Taylor's rooms had surreptitiously been searched by police. Wilde was tailed after the libel trial collapsed, and Mellors and Horton were kept under observation in 1906 and 1912 respectively. Park keepers were also on the look out for homosexual activity, and prosecutions were brought as a result of their vigilance. In 1909, for example, 21-year-old Arthur Humphries was fined £5 at Old Street Police Court in 1909 after he was 'observed' entering a public lavatory in Victoria Park with 16-year-old Joseph Purt.¹⁰¹ In the same year a keeper in Battersea Park arrested Frederick Harrison and Thomas Rhodes after seeing them 'commit[] an act of gross indecency' in a urinal. They were subsequently sentenced to 15 and 12 months with hard labour respectively.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ 'Oscar Wilde at Bow Street', Illustrated Police News, 20 Apr.1895: p.3.

⁹⁹ 'What We Think: A Word on the Scandals', Star, 25 Nov.1895: p.1. This rhetoric keys into what Daniel Pick has identified as 'a cross-disciplinary preoccupation with how we see and what we see' during the period. Daniel Pick, 'Stories of the Eye', in Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present, ed. Roy Porter (London, 1997), p.188.

¹⁰⁰ 'Police Raid in Fitzroy Square: 20 Persons Arrested', Globe, 13 Aug.1894: p.7.

¹⁰¹ The relative leniency may have been due to the reference the Salvation Army provided for Humphries. LCC Parks and Open Space Committee Papers, 23 Jul.-15 Oct.1909, p.209, LMA, callmark: LCC/Min/8892. This case is also noted by Susan Pennybacker, A Vision for London 1889-1914: Labour, Everyday life and the LCC Experiment (London, 1995), p.192, fn. 188.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* Park by-laws included provisions against 'using indecent or improper language [...] sleeping, sitting, or resting in an indecent posture, or being disorderly or wilfully or designedly doing any act which outrages public decency' (London County Council Parks and Open Spaces: Staff Regulations and By-Laws [1907], LMA, callmark: PK/Gen/1/13). Neither these by-laws nor the confidential handbook for park keepers refers specifically to indecency between men, and there seems to have been more concern about heterosexual transgressions. Heterosexual indecency on Clapham Common was the subject of a petition presented to the LCC Parks and Open Spaces Committee by the Battersea and Clapham Free Church in 1914 (LCC Parks &c Committee Papers, 22 May-24

This policing was supplemented by a wider watchfulness on the part of members of the public. In the trial of Ernest Parke for libelling Lord Euston in 1889, Ann Morgan of 22 Cleveland Street offered detailed information about the number of men who had entered and left number 19 (she claimed to have seen Lord Euston visit on several occasions, and spotted between 50 and 60 men entering the house over time), and in the Fitzroy Square affair police had been tipped off by a neighbour. In the blackmailing case of 1895 (in the midst of the Wilde trials) part of the evidence was supplied by Joseph Hawkins, a corn dealer, who had observed George Mooney and George Wilton 'frequenting the lavatory [just off Oxford Street] for months past'.¹⁰³ In 1902 Prince Francis Joseph of Braganza and two 'youths' were landed in court by the evidence of a Mr Burbage who claimed to have watched the three men having sex through a hole in the bedroom door at his house in Lambeth.¹⁰⁴ Finally, the inquest into the murder of Archibald Wakley heard testimony from George Miles, a salesman from the nearby Whiteley's department store. On May 23rd he had seen Wakley 'coming along the road in the company of a soldier of the Royal Horse Guards'. Wakley had entered the house followed by the soldier, 'the latter hesitating a moment. The soldier had spurs on, and no light had gone on in the room once they had entered'.¹⁰⁵ These were not casual observations, but the product of careful attention to what must have appeared suspicious behaviour: large numbers of men entering a single house, men visiting public toilets a little too frequently, an aristocrat taking two young men into a room in a lodging house, an artist in the company of a guardsman, and so on. These witnesses seemed to have a high degree of sensitivity to possible signs of homosexual activity in the city.

Jul.1914, LMA, callmark: LCC/Min/8915). Later, in 1917, extensive surveillance was carried out in various parks, but the report refers only to heterosexual sex (noting in particular whether soldiers and sailors were involved) (LCC Parks &c. Committee Papers, 13 Jul.-7 Oct.1917, callmark: LCC/Min/8923). From a sample of papers presented to the Parks and Open Spaces Committee during the period 1888-1918 it appears that cases of indecent exposure and sexual assault on young girls were reported by park keepers far more frequently than gross indecency between men. A certain pragmatism is suggested. Susan Pennybacker notes that despite 'the rhetoric of tight regulation park keepers were instructed to put by-laws into force "only when nuisance or damage is arising from the infraction of them"' (Pennybacker, *op.cit.*, p.198). Although park keepers were clearly on the look out for homosexual activity, the men involved were unlikely to complain to the authorities about it and were also undoubtedly more discreet given the potential penalties. Such behaviour thus perhaps caused less public 'nuisance' than more visible liaisons between men and women, and assaults on women and girls. Although more research is needed in this area (including a detailed analysis of the LCC and Royal Parks archives) it seems that the parks were perhaps more permissive spaces than the West End streets for discreet homosexual fraternisation. Ives's scrapbook includes relatively few prosecutions resulting from activity in the parks.

¹⁰³ 'The Extraordinary Charge of Blackmailing', *Daily Chronicle*, 11 May 1895: p.8.

¹⁰⁴ 'A Remarkable Case', *Sun*, 9 Sep.1902, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.3, p.61.

¹⁰⁵ 'The Studio Crimes: A Curious Verdict', *Daily Graphic*, 1 Jun.1906: p.3.

These signs were also picked up by blackmailers, ever watchful for potential victims. Statutes against homosexual activity had legislated these other criminals into existence. In The History of Penal Methods Ives suggests that there was an established blackmailing fraternity. 'A number of most villainous gangs are always badly wanted by the state', he wrote, adding that 'certain blackmailers are almost as "known" as politicians or actors, only the witnesses and victims will not come forward, and the police cannot get legal evidence enough to put before a jury'.¹⁰⁶ In 1908 one paper commented 'there is a numerous army of blackmailers in London, [...] and the nefarious crime of blackmail [...] is on the increase'.¹⁰⁷ Ives's scrapbooks include around two cases each year, but these represent only unsuccessful blackmailing operations: 'the law', Ives wrote in his diary after the conviction of five men in 1894, 'steps on two or three, and squashes them with a heavy tread; and fifty scamper off and prey on the putrefaction of the great cities'.¹⁰⁸ It was not only the police and general public that men like Ives needed to be wary of.

Between men in search of sex, blackmailers, park keepers, the police and watchful bystanders, a circle of vigilance was established. In the case of 1895 centring on a public toilet just off Oxford Street, for example, the blackmailers George Mooney and George Wilton watched for victims, the man who gave Mooney money at the exit of the toilet had presumably looked out for the possibility of sex. The corn dealer Hawkins had observed the blackmailers' activities, and finally the police had watched the comings and goings to clarify and verify details of a complaint made by Westly Francis, from whom Mooney and Wilton had attempted to extort money. The regime was effective only because of the anonymity of each observer: it was important that the man entering the toilet did not realise he was being followed by a blackmailer, and that neither of them were aware they were being observed by the police, or by a bystander. Each person (with the exception of Hawkins) was aware of the possibility of being seen, from the police who needed to survey incognito, to the blackmailers and the man in search of sex. The latter two risked hefty prison sentences if they became too visible, but they still needed to remain visible enough to effect a sexual or monetary transaction. It was a lack of such caution which led to Wilde's downfall, and he pulled out of the libel case only when he realised the extent of surveillance undertaken by the Marquis of Queensberry's private detectives. He expected his cosmopolitan milieu to act as a shield, and seemed to have been unaware of the number of people who had seen him entering and leaving various establishments, and who deemed (or had been persuaded to deem) such

¹⁰⁶ George Ives, History of Penal Methods: Criminals, Witches, Lunatics (London, 1914), p.355.

¹⁰⁷ 'Blackmail', 16 Sep.1908, in Ives, Casebook, vol.7, p.26 (newspaper not cited).

¹⁰⁸ Ives, Diary, vol.31, 5 Jul.1894, p.45.

comings and goings suspicious. Frank Harris, one of Wilde's biographers, noted that during the trials:

[Homosexual men] learned that such houses as Taylor's were under police supervision and that creatures like Wood and Parker were classified and watched. [...] It came as a shock to their preconceived ideas that the police in London knew a great many things which they were not supposed to concern themselves with.¹⁰⁹

The opportunities of the West End were constantly tainted by the possibility of being observed by an astute member of the public, a policeman, or potential blackmailer. Whilst it might have been necessary to betray markers of sexual identity (in dress, posture, or visits to particular places) in order to find sexual partners, such behaviour was clearly also risky, and much rested on careful self-regulation. Ives saw himself caught between blackmailer and policeman, writing in 1902: 'I know the real dangers in our wretched and hungry streets. No wonder I am wary of common courtesy'.¹¹⁰ Ives's obsessive secrecy - the codes in his diary, his reference to friends by their initials only, the closely guarded Order of the Chaerona, the precautions he took so that his home in Adelaide Road was secure and not overlooked, his relish of night-time in the city - all constituted a response to the dangers of revelation. Ives attempted to construct separate resistant worlds outside this panoptic dynamic, but the very obsession with secrecy indicates how this regime embraced Ives, his projects, and even his dreams.¹¹¹ The climate of fear, suspicion and rumour to which he refers was inescapable.¹¹² By encouraging self-regulation through fear of detection, the law (and the blackmailers) reined in homosexual behaviour in the city. Newspaper coverage of these stories provided a further level of revelation and was complicit in the sustenance of this regime.

Despite this rhetoric of exposure emanating from the press there was also a strong sense that homosexual activity was rife, was protected, and had not in fact been brought fully to light. This emanated partly from the perpetual euphemism which left judges, jurors, editors and MPs speaking of 'a certain offence', 'the hideous crime', or 'something objectionable'. Labouchere, having himself drafted the hazily worded addition to the Criminal Law Amendment Act, complained in *Truth* after the Cleveland Street affair that the lack of revelation emanated from the unmentionability

¹⁰⁹ Frank Harris, *Oscar Wilde* (London, 1938), pp.171-2.

¹¹⁰ Ives, *Diary*, vol.42, 10 Mar.1902, p.63.

¹¹¹ Ives wrote of his fear of enclosure, and dreamt about imprisonment after the Wilde trials. Ives, *Diary*, vol.29, 21 Aug.1896, p.19.

¹¹² See, for example: Ives, *Diary*, vol.35, 16 Nov.1899,p.122; *Diary*, vol.42, 5 Nov.1902,p.37.

of the subject.¹¹³ This lack of clarity suggested a malevolent presence which haunted the city. Despite an increasingly clear sense of what in fact was being spoken about, the coyness in directly referring to it perpetuated images of a heinous and shadowy criminal fraternity. Comments by judges, MPs and editors seemed to confirm this impression that the crime was on the increase. Labouchere proclaimed its resurgence at the time of the Cleveland Street scandal, the judge in the 1898 blackmailing case involving Clibborn reported an increase 'in recent years',¹¹⁴ and during a parliamentary debate about introducing flogging for soliciting offences in 1912 the home secretary, Reginald McKenna, remarked that 'the evil has been steadily growing of late years'.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile cases already discussed demonstrated a confident use of the West End by men in women's clothes or make-up both before and after the Wilde trials. Evidence brought into court (the incriminating address book found in Mellor's flat, Taylor's note book in Little College Street, Goodchild's diary in his East End rooms, the murdered Wakley's slips of paper with various addresses on them)¹¹⁶ indicated a large social and sexual network, and there was a repeated suggestion of a criminal confederacy between men in the city. The recorder in the Mellors case of 1906, Sir Forrest Fulton, observed that the defendant had belonged to 'another gang' of sexual criminals, which he had hoped would have been 'rooted out'.¹¹⁷ Julius Walters, the German caught masquerading as a woman in 1908, was said in court and in the newspapers to be an associate of 'well-known blackmailers and other infamous characters in the West End'.¹¹⁸ In the same year Robert Gathercole, a cross-dresser spotted by police taking an army officer home, was similarly said to be an associate of men 'of vicious habits'.¹¹⁹ Earlier the succession of witnesses at the Wilde trial indicated a network of male prostitutes and blackmailers.¹²⁰

In addition there was the suspicion that many of these men were protected. Ives suggested that Edward VII prevented a case involving Lord Battersea going to court in 1902, and earlier the Cleveland Street saga was seen as a wide-ranging cover-up

¹¹³ Labouchere wrote: 'ministers have taken advantage of the fact that the subject raised last Friday in the House of Commons was one which, from its nature, renders it impossible to enter into details. Were this not so, I could show that the offence has increased in London to a fearful extent'. Henry Labouchere, *Truth*, 6 Mar. 1890: p.473.

¹¹⁴ 'Seven Years for a Blackmailer', *Chronicle*, 12 Mar. 1898: p.7.

¹¹⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.43 (London, 1912), col.1858.

¹¹⁶ Mellors: 'West End Flat Scandal', *Reynolds*, 5 Apr. 1906: p.5; Goodchild: 'Other Serious Charges', *Reynolds*, 14 Apr., 1895: p.1; Wakley: 'The Studio Crime', *Daily Graphic*, 1 Jun. 1906: p.3.

¹¹⁷ 'Recorder's Regret: One of a Dangerous Gang', *Reynolds*, 6 May 1906: p.4.

¹¹⁸ 'Masquerading as a Woman', 13 Nov. 1908, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.7, p.26 (newspaper not cited).

¹¹⁹ 'Masquerading as a Woman', 31 May 1908, in *Casebook*, vol.7, p.7 (newspaper not cited).

¹²⁰ See, for example, 'Wilde/Some of the Mysteries of the Case/A list of Blanks Which Were Left Unfilled by the First Two Trials', *Star*, 28 May 1895: p.2; 'Some Mysteries of the Wilde Case', *Reynolds*, 2 Jun. 1895: p.5.

orchestrated by the 'old boys' network. Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, was accused of warning Somerset of the imminent arrest warrant; the police were accused of deliberate tardiness;¹²¹ and it was suggested that Veck and Newlove's trial had deliberately been left until last on the list for the day to avoid publicity.¹²² The sentence they received (of nine months and four months with hard labour respectively) was contrasted in the North London Press with that handed down to a Hackney vicar who was imprisoned for life (presumably under the statute against sodomy rather than gross indecency).¹²³ The same paper reported the anger of 'Hackney workmen' at the permissiveness of London's high society. One member of the London Fields Radical Club observed that: 'working men are free from the taint' and that 'FOR GOLD LAID DOWN our boys might be tempted to their fall'.¹²⁴

All this tended towards the impression of an extensive subculture sanctioned by the clubs, government and police, which made central London into an aristocrats' playground. The middle and working classes, meanwhile, faced severe penalties. Julius Walters and James Smith faced repeated jail sentences for their activities, and in the Braganza case the Prince was acquitted at the request of the counsel for the prosecution whilst both the youths he allegedly had sex with received two years imprisonment. As Sinfield points out the aristocracy lurked in the wings in each of these cases (Lord Alfred Douglas, Prince Francis Joseph, Lord Euston and Lord Somerset) but it *was* middle and working-class men who faced trial and imprisonment.¹²⁵ Wilde was a stand-in for the *louche* aristocrat, but he was crucially neither upper class nor English. Indeed whilst the Telegraph and the Evening News issued vindictive editorials on Wilde's conviction, Reynolds argued that the prosecution had been a screen for aristocratic homosexual activity in the city, and indicated the prevalence of such activity amongst 'our leisured and cultured class' and 'Tories'.¹²⁶ The paper implied that the emergence of the Wildean stereotype conveniently obscured other 'types' from view.

4.

Whatever ambivalence surrounded the messages of urban danger and opportunity court cases were times when the captured sexual dissident emerged to full scrutiny: they could be exposed and expelled from the city as part of a process in which moral

¹²¹ Parliamentary Debates (1890), *op.cit.*, col.1548.

¹²² 'Our Old Nobility', North London Press, 28 Sep.1889: p.5.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ 'The Scandals: Hackney Workmen Meet and Demand Equal Justice for Rich and Poor', North London Press, 14 Dec.1889: p.5. Original emphasis.

¹²⁵ Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.123.

¹²⁶ 'Male Prostitution', Reynolds, 26 May 1895: p.1.

codes were adjusted, clarified and re-articulated. For extended periods - six months with the Cleveland Street scandal, two months with the three trials involving Wilde - the cases gripped and apparently appalled the capital. During the debate on the Cleveland Street scandal in the Commons James Rowland, MP for Finsbury, spoke paternally of what the city's inhabitants had been through: 'the people of London have had a great scandal in their midst [...] no-one who was in London through the Autumn could have failed to recognise that these scandals have produced a great effect on the public mind'.¹²⁷ Lady Blanche Waterford, Lord Arthur Somerset's sister, complained in a letter 'the whole thing is being hawked in the street, and everyone invents his or her own story to it all'.¹²⁸ The tenor of the city was similar during the Wilde trials. Placards and newspaper boys shouted the latest details, and anger greeted those who appeared to have sided with Wilde. Rev. Stewart Headlam, who bailed Wilde out, was threatened with stoning by a mob outside his Bloomsbury home,¹²⁹ and the publishers of *The Yellow Book* had their windows smashed after it was suggested that Wilde had a copy of the journal under his arm when he was arrested. Later (and in the absence of the possibility of public pillory) the trials became the focus for urban reaction. In the courtroom the relationship between hegemonic values and sexual dissidence was cast in simplistic binary terms, which endorsed the idea of a parallel dualism between moral rectitude and dissipation in the city at large. Labouchere, for example, declared that 'outside a narrow but influential circle in London [public opinion about homosexuality] is exactly the reverse'.¹³⁰

The courtroom crowd became one collective body in these cases, representing the outraged city and reacting on its behalf. When Jack Saul gave evidence in the Ernest Parke libel case (part of the Cleveland Street saga) the *Star* reported that 'the brutal callousness with which the witness told his story SHOCKED AND REVOLTED THE COURT'.¹³¹ Five years later, when the focus in Wilde's first trial shifted from his writing to the Little College Street rooms, the *Evening News* reported that:

The Old Bailey recoiled with loathing from the long ordeal of terrible suggestion [...] when the cross-examination left the literary plane and penetrated the dim-lit perfumed rooms where the poet of the beautiful joined with valets and grooms in the bond of a silver cigarette case.¹³²

¹²⁷ *Parliamentary Debates* (1890), *op.cit.*, col.1605.

¹²⁸ Hyde, *Cleveland Street*, *op.cit.*, p.122.

¹²⁹ Hyde, *Trials*, *op.cit.*, p.122.

¹³⁰ Henry Labouchere, *Truth*, 6 Mar.1890: p.473.

¹³¹ 'Euston Libel Case', *Star*, *op.cit.* Original emphasis.

¹³² 'The Case Ends With a Verdict Against Oscar', *Evening News*, 5 Apr.1895: p.3.

As Cohen suggests, the personified court metonymically represents the supposed public horror at the revelations.¹³³ The journalist imagined a powerful enough evocation of the rooms (and what they represented) to elicit a dramatic, theatrical response from the courtroom and all it contained. Crowd reaction outside was also noted. When Wilde was convicted, the papers reported the cheers of the crowd outside, who celebrated the playwright's imminent incarceration and transformation: "e'll ave his 'air cut regular now [*sic*]" one woman was reported as shouting.¹³⁴ The inclusion of these details created the courtroom events as spectacle, and apparently confirmed the popularity of the judgement against Wilde. The city became one, unified in the battle against the sexual pariah. As the early sociologist G.H.Mead argued in 1918 'the cry of thief or murderer is attuned to the profound complexities lying below the surface of competing individual effort, and citizens [...] separated by diversified interests stand together against the common enemy'.¹³⁵ Whether or not the cry of pervert actually elicited this collective reaction, the press effectively portrayed it as such in their reporting of the Wilde and Cleveland Street scandals. As Walkowitz indicates with regard to the Maiden Tribute case in 1885, the press address a supposedly unified general public, who it imagines coalesced into 'a single moral entity'.¹³⁶

The Cleveland Street saga failed to provide a symbolic purge but this was achieved in other cases. When James Smith was sentenced for the final time in 1906, the Daily Chronicle was triumphant. Under the tautologous headline 'To Die in Prison: Bank Manager Sent to End His Days in Gaol', the journalist wrote 'uttering a querulous protest, the once prosperous bank manager hobbled [...] out of court - never to be seen again in public'.¹³⁷ Smith had apparently been enfeebled by his criminality, and was comprehensively removed from the city. With Wilde, of course, the purge was more dramatic, and the trials were cast as a process in which a subculture was exposed and its figurehead removed. In Truth Labouchere wrote that the case was 'a storm that will clear the moral atmosphere'.¹³⁸ The Daily Chronicle's editorial echoed the sentiment: 'there has been a purge, and we hope London is the better for it'.¹³⁹ In the Star the pall hanging over the city lifted at the result:

¹³³ Cohen, *op.cit.*, p.167.

¹³⁴ Hyde, Trials, *op.cit.*, p.273.

¹³⁵ G.H.Mead, 'The Psychology of Punitive Justice', American Journal of Sociology, vol.23 (1918): p.577-602, p.590.

¹³⁶ Walkowitz, *op.cit.*, p.84.

¹³⁷ 'To Die in Prison: Bank Manager Sent to End His Days in Gaol', Daily Chronicle, 20 Dec.1906, in Ives, Casebook, vol.5, p.108.

¹³⁸ 'A Righteous Verdict', Truth, 30 May 1895: p.332.

¹³⁹ 'Comment', Chronicle, 26 May 1895: p.4.

Wilde seemed to have lost control of his limbs. When at last he turned away, between two wardens, he trailed like a man smitten with paralysis, and descended with difficulty the steps leading to the cells. Already the voices of the newsboys could be heard crying 'Wilde verdict' in the sunny street, and the facile cheers of the ever virtuous British crowd had been audible throughout the judge's address.¹⁴⁰

The voices of the judge and crowd are heard together - justice for once speaking with the public. London is cleansed, and as the paralysed pariah is led down to the cells, the sun shines outside on the celebrating crowds. It is the final step in the gradual expulsion of Wilde from the city. His name had been taken from the theatre billboards after his arrest, he had been asked to leave the hotel in which he sought refuge after the collapse of the libel action, and now he was bound for prison, where his ill-health and depression were widely reported. His downward spiral was dramatically evoked by the Evening News, which presented three written descriptions. The first two detailed Wilde's former intelligence and 'youthful, fresh' face; the third described his appearance when the verdict was read out: 'the lines visibly multiplied on the man's face, his huge body seemed to shrink into littleness, and as the gaoler touched him on the shoulder he reeled in bewilderment'.¹⁴¹ Once a convicted sexual deviant his body undergoes a transformation: from larger than life, vivacious urban actor to diminutive, ageing wreck (more in line with Taylor, who, already enfeebled, undergoes no such mutation). In Discipline and Punish Michel Foucault argues that the development of the prison marked a standardisation of punishment, a movement away from a more public model in which the penalty was often symbolic of the crime that had been committed.¹⁴² In this case, however, the press revelled in Wilde's imprisonment as a singularly appropriate punishment for the urban decadent: he was to be removed from the territory that had fed his desires. The Evening News commented:

The brilliant wit was elbowed to the silence of solitary imprisonment, the man of fashion was condemned to shorn locks and the convict's garb; the voluptuary to the hard labour of the treadmill, the poet to the maddening torture of two years hard labour.¹⁴³

The events in the courtroom and his ultimate expulsion from the city provided the late-Victorian crowd with a figurative pillory through which a set of 'norms' could be forcefully rearticulated and dissident behaviour symbolically expunged.

¹⁴⁰ 'Wilde: Last Terrible Scene at the Great Trial', Star, 27 May 1895: p.2.

¹⁴¹ 'The Last Scene', Evening News, 27 May 1895: p.2.

¹⁴² Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, 1977), parts 1&2.

¹⁴³ 'The Last Scene', Evening News, *op.cit.*

The event removed only two sexual dissidents, however, and as was evident from subsequent trials the city seemed to change little in terms of the prevalence of this sort of behaviour. Moreover, however vociferous the newspapers, there were enough indications of sympathy for Wilde to tarnish the image of a city unified in outrage. During the trial itself applause greeted Wilde's defence of same-sex love, and in the month following the conviction Reynolds published a range of letters expressing dismay at the sentence and sympathy for Wilde. A letter signed 'A woman who believes in Oscar Wilde' took heart from the correspondence: 'I had begun to think, until I read those letters, that there was no gleam of pity or charity for him, for according to a very large section of the press, all seemed merciless'.¹⁴⁴ Reynolds's own measured editorial after the conviction sharply contrasted to those of other newspapers. Ives detected 'a change in the ethical atmosphere' after the trials, and four months later noted 'the change in public feeling, if one may judge from the gossip in the clubs etc., is truly wonderful; men very hostile a few months ago, now admit this or that, and seem truly on the road to reason'.¹⁴⁵ Whilst club gossip is not a sufficient gauge of public opinion, the trials clearly did not straightforwardly reaffirm prevailing attitudes about homosexual activity. They also provoked dialogue, and perhaps, Ives suggested, some change of heart. Later in 1909 Ives suspected a jury of acquitting a clergyman they knew to be guilty so as to prevent 'the dreadful consequences',¹⁴⁶ and he noted with pleasure the support of 'a clergyman, a captain and four or five ladies' for a proposal by the Prison Reform League to oppose the extension of legislation against solicitation by men in 1912. Just before the outbreak of war Ives wrote of his 'joy' at hearing a magistrate (Mr Chapman) 'denounce the senselessness and cruelty of the sentences passed on inverters' at a meeting of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology.¹⁴⁷

5.

Through the reporting and editing of court cases, the newspaper press produced a recognisable version of 'the homosexual', and indicated the places he supposedly frequented, his putative domestic arrangements, and his concomitant disregard for a middle-class ordering of public and private realms (a disregard tacitly legitimated by the wording of Labouchere's Amendment). The relationship between homosexuality and the city as described in these accounts was also fraught with contradictions, however. In the major scandals (which endured in the public memory) and the minor

¹⁴⁴ 'About Oscar Wilde', Reynolds, 16 Jun.1895: p.5.

¹⁴⁵ Ives, Diary, vol.24, 31 May 1895, p.42; and Diary, vol.25, 5 Oct.1895, p.90.

¹⁴⁶ Diary, vol.54, 19 Nov.1909, p.13.

¹⁴⁷ Diary, vol.60, 9 Jul.1914, p.112.

cases (which came as weekly reminders of them) there was the sense of a highly sensitised and vigilant public and police force on the one hand, and on the other of a subculture deeply embedded, tacitly accepted, and even possibly protected. The courts and the newspapers suggested a purge and the possibility of eradication, yet also showed an entrenched network. Such a dichotomy indicated the unacceptability of these activities whilst also advertising their existence as a permanent part of city life. This visibility was vital to the maintenance of the status quo. Some semblance of order in the city was maintained by confronting its inhabitants with the worst urban excesses. The reporting constituted an invocation to moral and social rectitude. Sexual and gender 'norms' took shape, and London's imperial image gained clarity and potency, partly through the threat supposedly posed by this figure and his use of city space.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the maintenance of this visibility and sense of outrage meant homosexual activity remained a controllable part of the city's sexual economy.¹⁴⁹ It was impossible for men like Ives and Wilde to function beyond the panoptic dynamic and the threat of exposure, prosecution or blackmail. Each of these factors became structurally important in their lives. For other writers on the subject - the sexologists, authors, poets, and commentators discussed in the chapters that follow - these court cases and newspaper reports were unavoidable: the messages and images they propagated had to be negotiated. Men who had sex with men necessarily existed within this legal framework, and, partly because of the attendant publicity, this position was perhaps the most important single arbiter of homosexual behaviour. Since London was the focus of reported prosecutions, it was there that the effects of the law and the newspaper press were most determinedly felt.

¹⁴⁸ Jonathan Dollimore argues that 'the negation of homosexuality has been in direct proportion to its actual centrality, its cultural marginality in direct proportion to its cultural significance'. Craig Owens develops a similar argument, indicating that homophobia acts upon both gay and straight identified men (condemning gay men and imposing limits on the behaviour of straight men). It is thus of central (rather than peripheral) cultural concern. Dollimore, cited by Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.9; Craig Owens, 'Outlaws: Gay Men in Feminism', in *Men in Feminism*, ed. Alice Jardine and Paul Smith (New York, 1987), p.231.

¹⁴⁹ Sinfield comments 'if it gets fully into the open, it attains public status; yet it must not disappear altogether, for then it would be beyond control, and would no longer effect a general surveillance of abhorrent desire'. Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.9.

Chapter 4

The Inverted City: Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Bloch and the Metropolis

This chapter looks at the broader links between homosexuality and the city in sexological literature published in English during the period. Sexology consolidated and essentialised the connection indicated by the courts, the newspaper press, and by the history of homosexual activity in London. It also highlighted a tenacious homosexual subculture in other European cities, and suggested that an urban homosexual identity might usurp or partially displace national or regional identifications. This international circuit emerged partly through case studies, which frequently indicated a self-confident engagement with different urban spaces. For some apologists of homosexual behaviour, including Henry Havelock Ellis, this urban connection was far from helpful. At a time when sexual continence and responsibility were being touted vociferously by purity campaigners and sections of the newspaper press, a sexual identity rooted in the degenerate and profligate city seemed to stand little chance of acceptance. The pages that follow examine the ways in which Ellis and other sexologists negotiated the seemingly necessary relationship between homosexuality and the city.

The first section looks at the scale of the sexological debate in England and at the reliance on translations of European texts. It also examines the theories of sexual pathology that were put forward and the ways in which they intersected with wider concerns about the city. The second section looks more specifically at the dynamics of this relationship in Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892), Henry Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (1897), and Iwan Bloch's *The Sexual Life of Our Time* (1908).

1.

The scientific study of homosexual behaviour largely took place in continental Europe.¹ The historian Gert Hekma charts its development from an article published in the French journal *Annales Médico-Psychologique* in 1843 in which the mental state of the 'pederast' was analysed rather than the physical sexual act he had been involved in.² Debate burgeoned and by the end of the century a series of conflicting and overlapping theories were circulating about possible causes. In the 1860s the German lawyer Karl Ulrichs argued for the existence of an inborn trait characterised

¹Vernon Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity* (Oxford, 1997), pp.83-84.

²Gert Hekma, 'A History of Sexology: Social and Historical Aspects of Sexuality', in *From Sappho to de Sade: Moments in the History of Sexuality*, ed. Jan Bremmer (London, 1989).

by gender misalignment. He developed a highly nuanced series of categorisations based on varying degrees of feminisation in men and a corresponding degree of desire for sex (and particular levels of sexual passivity) with other men. Working along similar lines, the German physicians Magnus Hirschfeld and Iwan Bloch suggested the existence of a third sex, existing between men and women. In Vienna in the 1880s and 1890s, Richard von Krafft-Ebing refuted this theory, but agreed that desire for the same sex and the somatic markers of this desire were largely inherited. Whilst Ulrichs, Hirschfeld and Bloch saw a benign condition, however, Krafft-Ebing initially considered homosexuality to be 'a functional sign of degeneracy', 'a dangerous by-path' from the evolutionary progression (a conclusion he later retracted).³ These ideas of degeneracy were largely accepted by Charles Féré and Jean-Martin Charcot, working at the Salpêtrière in Paris around the same time, and by Charles Forel, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Zurich.

These writers also considered the possibility that in some cases homosexual impulses might be acquired rather than congenital. The environment and external factors became significant in awakening a latent predisposition or inciting an entirely new configuration of desire. Most suggested the importance of schools, universities, prisons and military institutions in this process, but also indicated how life in the city might prompt sexual experimentation and excess, as will be shown later. Whilst Ulrichs and Hirschfeld were reluctant to accept these ideas, Bloch, Forel, Féré, and Krafft-Ebing lent more credence to them. Bloch talks of the 'pseudo-homosexuality' and Forel of the 'compensatory homosexuality' of men in single-sex environments. Féré suggested that it was possible to overemphasise the hereditary factor at the expense of mere 'licentiousness and depravity' which might follow from particular ways of life. He also considered the potentially damaging influence of homosexuals on nervous individuals who had 'less power of resisting exterior influences'.⁴ Forel echoed the sentiment. Krafft-Ebing, meanwhile, theorised an acquired condition born of masturbation or seduction which became irreversible after the initial stages and was ultimately inheritable. This theory (which owed more to the French naturalist Jean Baptiste Lamarck's idea of 'intelligent' adaptation than to the blind process described by Darwin) heightened the significance of external influences. They were dangerous not only because of the effect they had on the individual, but also because of the indirect risk they posed to his progeny.

³ Krafft-Ebing retracted the association in a 1901 article for the *Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (Yearbook for Sexually Intermediate Types). However, the English edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis* published in the same year maintained the connection. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, trans. F.J.Rebman (London, 1901), p.330.

⁴ Charles Féré, *The Evolution and Dissolution of the Sexual Instinct* (1899; Paris, 1904), p.185 & pp.261-262.

Whilst a wide-ranging debate about sexual 'abnormality' was gathering pace in continental Europe in the second half of the century, in Britain the discussion was muted and relatively late coming, and moreover relied largely on translations of continental writers. The Edinburgh doctor James Burnet complained in 1906 that little work had been done in this country on homosexuality. 'It is', he remarked, 'a great pity that medical men in this country, with almost unanimous consent, have agreed to ignore the study of sexual science in its bearing on practice'.⁵ Later in 1914 the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology noted in its statement of Policy and Principles that it 'was rather appalling that at a great international medical congress on sex-questions [...] there is only one official representative from this country, whilst others are sending doctors by the score'.⁶ The reasons for this are not entirely clear, although interestingly (as Daniel Pick points out) there was initially a similar reluctance to countenance European ideas of degeneracy.⁷ Writing in a different context, José Harris identifies a powerful culture of 'hard-headed, no-nonsense Anglo-Saxon empiricism', which, she suggests, 'dismissed all talk of group identity or social action as bogus rhetoric'.⁸ Whilst ideas of degeneracy and concerns about crowds did begin to take hold during this period, it seems that the emphasis on the individual and individual responsibility (particularly in sexual matters) might account partially for this reluctance to embrace and contribute to a debate about inherent sexual identities. The legal and press attacks on sexological texts in England surely acted as a further disincentive to publish.

It was not until the 1880s that work appeared on the subject in English. George Savage's page-long 'Case Study of Sexual Perversion in a Man' was published in the Journal of Mental Science in 1885, and Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis (1886) was translated in 1892 by Charles Chaddock.⁹ Krafft-Ebing's work was the first substantial scientific consideration of sexual anomalies in English, and included a lengthy consideration of 'contrary sexual instincts'. It received a cool reception from the medical press and its saving grace was apparently the use of '*terminis technicis*' and the fact that 'particularly revolting portions' were in Latin.¹⁰ Even so the British Medical Journal would have preferred that the whole text had been 'veiled in the

⁵ James Burnet, 'Some Aspects of Neurasthenia', The Medical Times and Hospital Gazette, 3 Feb. 1906: pp.58-59.

⁶ Policy and Principle: General Aims (London, 1914). The conference, scheduled to take place in Berlin in November 1914, was cancelled at the outbreak of war.

⁷ Daniel Pick, Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848-1918 (Cambridge, 1989), p.184.

⁸ José Harris, Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1870-1914 (Oxford, 1993), p.224.

⁹ George Savage, 'Clinical Notes and Cases: Case of Sexual Perversion in a Man', The Journal of Mental Science, vol.30 (1885), p.390.

¹⁰ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis: with Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct, trans. Charles Chaddock (London, 1892), p. v.

decent obscurity of a dead language'.¹¹ The response to Havelock Ellis's Sexual Inversion (1897) (the first volume of his Studies in the Psychology of Sex) was even more negative. George Bedborough, the editor of The Adult (a journal campaigning for the liberalisation of sexual attitudes), was fined £100 for selling the work, which had been categorised in the charge as a 'lewd, wicked, bawdy, scandalous libel'.¹² The prosecution meant booksellers were reluctant to sell the work and it constituted a virtual ban. Other texts followed, but none with the singular focus of Ellis's work. Charles Féré's The Evolution and Dissolution of the Sexual Instinct, which included a chapter on homosexuality, was published in English in 1904, and August Forel's The Sexual Question, which also had some consideration of the subject, in 1905. Sex and Character, the work of the young German philosopher Otto Weininger, appeared in the following year, and was particularly insistent on the congenital nature of homosexuality as well as fixed notions of gender and Jewishness. The professor of Sociology at the University of London, Edward Westermarck, included a more sociological chapter on 'homosexual love' in his Origin and Development of Moral Ideas (1908) and in the same year Iwan Bloch's The Sexual Life of Our Times in Relation to Modern Civilisation was belatedly published. It included a consideration of homosexuality from sexological and anthropological perspectives, and had initially been aimed at a general readership. In 1907, however, the book was condemned and destroyed by Bow Street Police Court. After an appeal to the House of Lords it was reissued on condition that it was sold only to legal and medical professionals. Whilst complimenting Bloch's erudition, the Review of Reviews suggested that it would have been better if 'half the book had never been published for general circulation'.¹³ In 1910 Freud's Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality were published in English, and were amongst the first of his works to be translated from the German, bringing with them rather different understanding of the development of homosexual desire.¹⁴

Other key figures in the European sexological debate (most notably Magnus Hirschfeld, Albert Moll and Veniamin Tarnowsky) were not translated into English during this period, although they were frequently cited. Hirschfeld was a particularly significant omission given his profound impact in Germany. A homosexual himself, he

¹¹ 'Reviews: Psychopathia Sexualis', British Medical Journal, vol.1 (June 24, 1893): p.1325.

¹² Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Homosexual Politics from the Nineteenth Century to the Present (1979; London, 1990), p.60. For Ellis's own account of the trial see H.Havelock Ellis, A Note on the Bedborough Trial (1898; New York, 1925).

¹³ 'The Origin of Moral Ideas', Review of Reviews, vol.38 (Dec.1908), p.591.

¹⁴ Although Freud's writing has had a profound effect on our contemporary understandings of sexuality, it is beyond the main current of debate in England during this period. Indeed Chris Waters argues that in Britain sexological understandings of sexuality largely prevailed over psychoanalytic conceptualisations until the 1940s. Chris Waters, 'Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud and the State: Discourses of Homosexual Identity in Interwar Britain', in Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires, eds Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge, 1998).

founded the Scientific-Humanitarian committee (which fought for homosexual law reform), and launched the Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen (Yearbook for Sexually Intermediate Types) in 1899. George Ives referred repeatedly to Hirschfeld in his diary, and Carpenter saw him as a valuable ally. There is, however, no reference to any attempts to translate his work into English during the period.¹⁵

The work that was published in England during this time was largely restricted to an elite audience. Ellis and Bloch's texts were both curtailed, Krafft-Ebing made extensive use of Latin, and Forel's work had the subtitle 'A Scientific, Psychological, Hygienic and Sociological Study for the Cultured Classes'. Even for this elite sexological texts and related literature could be difficult to get hold of. Magnus Hirschfeld complained in a letter to George Ives in 1904 that the British Library had not catalogued the Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen and had 'secreted [it] in some particular room'.¹⁶ Later Edward Carpenter battled with the library authorities over the cataloguing of his book The Intermediate Sex, and he subsequently suggested to Ives that 'a row ought to be made' when he discovered that Karl Ulrichs's works had been withdrawn from the catalogue.¹⁷ It seemed that the library authorities were deliberately restricting access to sexological material and especially those texts which attempted to legitimise homosexuality.

The significance of sexology in England should not be underestimated, however, particularly for men like Carpenter, Ives, and John Addington Symonds who had access to it and discussed sexological ideas in their own work.¹⁸ Symonds saw his collaboration with Havelock Ellis on Sexual Inversion as a means to gaining legitimacy; Carpenter propagated the theory of the intermediate or third sex in his work; and Ives's diaries indicate a whole-hearted embrace of sexology, which he considered a liberatory medical breakthrough. He corresponded with many of the key sexologists, including Magnus Hirschfeld, Edward Westermarck, Havelock Ellis and Iwan Bloch (to whom he gave one of his precious letters from Wilde), and repeatedly measured himself against the classificatory schema these writers put forward.¹⁹ His

¹⁵ Magnus Hirschfeld's translated work includes Sexual Pathology (1917), The Sexual History of the World War (1930), and Sexual Anomalies and Perversion (1936). These texts were published without Hirschfeld's prior knowledge and, James Steakley suggests, were 'mutilations' rather than translations. James Steakley, 'Per Scientiam ad Justitiam: Magnus Hirschfeld and the Sexual Politics of Innate Homosexuality', in Science and Homosexualities, ed. Vernon Rosario (London, 1997).

¹⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld to George Ives, 31 Aug. 1904, George Ives papers, box 1, folder 4, HRHRC.

¹⁷ Edward Carpenter to George Ives, 3 May 1916, Ives papers, box 1, folder 1. See also Weeks, Coming Out, *op.cit.*, p.117.

¹⁸ See, for example, John Addington Symonds, A Problem in Modern Ethics: An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion (1891; London: 1896), ch.4 &5; Edward Carpenter, Homogenic Love and its Place in a Free Society (Manchester, 1894); and Carpenter, 'The Intermediate Sex', in Selected Writings: Sex (1908; London, 1984).

¹⁹ Against a comment on the colour of his cricket cap, for example, Ives added a verso note explaining that 'like most of my species I always had a very keen aesthetic sense, and colour had an

diary is peppered with references to sexology and his library of (largely German) texts on the subject. It testifies to his belief in the efficacy of science, research and the written word in the quest for liberation. Indeed the entire diary seems to have been written not so much out of pleasure but out of a perceived duty to observe and record detail for his own edification and that of the future reader he confidently envisaged.

Sexology gained some further exposure through magazines like the Freethinker, the New Age, and the Humanitarian, as well as in review pieces in the medical press. None of these publications had vast circulations, but sexological ideas nevertheless began to trouble the legal approach to homosexual behaviour during the period. Ellis, Krafft-Ebing, Forel, Weininger and Bloch all advocated more legal tolerance, and even W.T.Stead (whose 'Maiden Tribute' articles prompted the swift passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act in 1885) agreed that medical research cast a different light on how homosexuality should be treated.²⁰

At a very general level, the hereditary and congenital understandings of homosexuality in these different sexological texts paradoxically aligned it (and indeed other sexual abnormalities) with space. The individual's forbears and progeny were important in determining both the cause of the condition and the potential effect it would have on the future of both the family and the race. The focus on time and the grand meta-narrative of development, however, suggested a strong relationship to the environment for those 'suffering' from these conditions. Eugenicists influentially argued that neurasthenic, degenerate, and homosexual men and women should ideally remain unproductive. Ellis, for example, proposed the voluntary sterilisation of the unfit in his pamphlet The Problem of Race Regeneration and again in an article in the Eugenics Review in 1907.²¹ Krafft-Ebing, Forel and Féré, specifically suggested that homosexuals should not reproduce. Forel even argued that they should be allowed to embark on same-sex marriage as a means of staving off the possibility of a heterosexual union.²² Bloch did not propose any such prohibition but assumed instead

immense influence on me'. He later worried about how true he was to type when he felt an attraction towards women, and wrote to Havelock Ellis for advice (Ellis replied that it 'was sometimes thus, but [that] more often men became more homosexual as they grew older'). George Ives, Diary, vol.2, 21 Jul.1888, p.87, HRHRC; Diary, vol.39, 19 May 1901, p.83.

²⁰ Stead wrote 'Dr Ellis's inquiry goes to the very root of the theory upon which one section of the Criminal Law Amendment Act is based, and if the conclusions at which he arrives are sound the principle of the legislation is unsound'. Cited by Ellis, A Note on the Bedborough Trial, *op.cit.*, p.8. The tension between the law and science echoed the larger controversy surrounding the place of psychiatry in the courtroom, and the challenge it posed to the classical approach to crime. See Roger Smith, Trial by Medicine: Insanity and Responsibility in Victorian Trials (Edinburgh, 1981).

²¹ See Siobhan Somerville, 'Scientific Racism and the Homosexual Body', in Bland and Doan, *op.cit.*, p.68.

²² Krafft-Ebing (1892), *op.cit.*, p.321; August Forel, The Sexual Question: A Scientific, Psychological, Hygienic and Sociological Study for the Cultured Classes, trans. C.F.Marshall

that homosexuals had no instinct for reproduction, and that they were 'intrinsically anti-evolutionistic'. He wrote:

The greatest spiritual values we owe to heterosexuals not to homosexuals. Moreover, reproduction renders possible the preservation and permanence of new spiritual values [...] The monosexual and homosexual instincts are permanently limited to their own ego [and are] therefore, in their innermost nature, dysteleological and anti-evolutionistic.²³

Bloch placed the homosexual in opposition to the heterosexual in terms of civilisation and the evolutionary process. He or she was thus explained through evolutionary theory, but imagined existing outside the actual process. This position was partially reflected in the status of the homosexual in these texts as objects of study, distinct and separate from the scientist who framed and rationalised their experiences.²⁴

The theories the sexologists put forward, and to some extent the methodology they used, thus emphasised the distance of the homosexual from the heterosexual progressive 'norm'. They constructed an explanatory narrative in which the homosexual was a 'dysteleological' subject. This separation is aligned with the putative distance between the concepts of space and time in which the (male) heterosexual existed on the temporal developmental path, whilst the homosexual, by being thrown off that path (and rendered a passive subject of study), was associated with the spatial.²⁵ Whilst their masculinity and middle-class status made the men in the case studies sharers in the progressivist culture, their newly consolidated identity - as invert or homosexual - associated them more closely with other disenfranchised and putatively degenerate groups (like the East End poor) who tended to be aligned with their environment rather than with the movement into the future.

This general association with space was focused on the city. This resulted firstly from the supposition that sexual pathology in general was linked closely to urban life. At the very start of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing noted: 'It is shown by the

(London, 1908), p.446; Féré, *op.cit.*, p.309.

²³ Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Times in Relation to Modern Civilisation*, trans. M.Eden Paul (London, 1908), p.534.

²⁴ The voice of the middle-class homosexual was at least included in many of the case studies, however, indicating a greater degree of agency in shaping scientific perceptions than the criminal (for example) ever had. See Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, 'General Introduction', in *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science*, eds Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge, 1998), p.2; and Harry Oosterhuis, 'Richard von Krafft-Ebing's "Step-Children of Nature": Psychiatry and the Making of Homosexual Identity', in Rosario, *Science and Homosexualities*, *op.cit.*

²⁵ This oppositional understanding of space and time is and was powerful and ingrained, though deeply problematic. For a discussion of the relationship and the supposed subservience of space to time see Doreen Massey, 'Politics and Space/Time', in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, eds Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London, 1993).

history of Babylon, Nineveh, Rome and also by the 'mysteries' of life in modern capitals, that large cities are the breeding places of nervousness and degenerate sensuality'.²⁶ The city appeared to be a vital element in the genesis of sexual abnormality and Krafft-Ebing went on to cite the case of a Parisian woman having sex with a trained bull-dog as 'a monstrous example of the moral depravity in large cities'.²⁷ Degeneracy and nervous disease (or neurasthenia) were key determinants in the development of this depravity and pathology, and both conditions were closely aligned with city.

Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1895) indicated how the degenerative process in the more fashionable classes would ultimately result in the legitimisation of homosexuality.²⁸ Krafft-Ebing, Féré and Forel also suggested a connection, whilst Ellis and Bloch (and ultimately also Krafft-Ebing) felt the need to reject it overtly. The link, although controversial, was influential. The British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (which was founded in 1913 and included Edward Carpenter, George Ives and Havelock Ellis among its members) saw itself as an arbiter of reason on sexual matters,²⁹ yet echoed the language of degeneracy in its discussion of homosexuality. The first policy and principles statement suggested that homosexuality was 'breeding apace' in the most 'deplorable underground conditions'.³⁰ The idea of uncontrollable proliferation and debased sexual expression resonated with late-nineteenth century images of the degenerate residuum discussed in chapter one.

The connection was difficult to discredit partly because those who refuted it did not offer any substantive evidence as to why homosexuality was *not* degenerate. Their theories did not differ substantially from those sexologists favouring a degenerate rationale, and their stance seemed rather more political than empirical. All wrote in a post-Darwinian context in which heredity was a key determinant, and 'the criminal', 'the genius', 'the homosexual' and 'the degenerate' were all accounted for through broadly similar theoretical models.

Homosexuality was less contentiously linked with neurasthenia, or nervous disease, a condition associated with 'the emotional excitement and often unhealthy conditions of life in the great city'.³¹ A familial history of nervous disorder was noted

²⁶ Krafft-Ebing, *op.cit.*, p.7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.405.

²⁸ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895; Lincoln, Neb., 1993), pp.538-9.

²⁹ For more information on the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology see Lesley A.Hall, "'Disinterested Enthusiasm for Sexual Misconduct": The British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, 1913-47', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.30 (1995): pp.665-686.

³⁰ *Policy and Principle*, *op.cit.*, p.10.

³¹ John Clarke, *The Practitioner's Handbook: Hysteria and Neurasthenia* (London, 1905), p.171 & p.176. See also Hugh Campbell, *A Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion and Diseases Induced By It* (London, 1874), p.1; and George Beard, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (or Neurasthenia)* (New York, 1880), p. 9. Neurasthenia was first noted as a specific medical condition

in many of Ellis and Krafft-Ebing's case studies, for example, and Féré observed that 'sexual inversion is often associated with a *neurasthenic* temperament'.³² The implicit suggestion was that sexual anomalies might be on the increase as a result of modernity and the confusion of urban life.³³

Homosexuality, by being associated with *neurasthenia* and degeneracy, represented on the one hand an atavistic return to a primitive state and on the other nervous collapse in the face of 'the feverish activity of modern life'.³⁴ Homosexuality was seen as both a primitive condition and a specifically modern disorder, symptomatic of contemporary dis-ease and decay. This sense was emphasised through the use of contagion imagery by some sexologists which resonated with longer-standing concerns about the dangers of urban living. Forel suggested that 'inverts' had to be prevented from 'becoming the centre of infection for their surroundings',³⁵ whilst Féré regarded 'the invert who obeys his impulses' as 'a corruptive agent'.³⁶ In Crime: Its Cause and Cure (1899) Cesare Lombroso argued that congenital homosexuals were 'a source of contagion and cause[d] a great number of occasional criminals'.³⁷ This contagious potential led Lombroso, Féré and the writer of an anonymous British Medical Journal piece (written in the immediate aftermath of the Wilde trials) to suggest that homosexuals should be permanently separated from others if they refused to suppress their desires. The BMI writer argued that 'pity cannot obscure the compulsory necessity there is to free society from their presence'.³⁸

by George Beard in a piece in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal in 1869. Around the same time Hugh Campbell was investigating nervous disease in England and published his Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion in 1874. The condition was subsequently discussed widely in a variety of texts.

³² Féré, *op.cit.*, p.244. Edward Carpenter argued that 'the validity of this [*neurasthenic*] characteristic [of the homosexual] has been exaggerated'. Carpenter, Homogenic Love, *op.cit.*, p.21.

³³ Forel noted that although sexual pathology was more prevalent in cities ('the excitement and innumerable pleasures' producing 'a restless and unnatural existence'), extreme rural isolation could also induce sexual abnormality, and incest and masturbation in particular. The ideal environment, he argued, was north America, where 'urbanised country' and 'countrified towns' allowed for the social control of sexual deviancy. Whilst sexual pathology was generally connected to the city, there was also the sense that it could not always be escaped in a move to the country. Forel, *op.cit.*, pp.326-330.

³⁴ Clarke, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

³⁵ August Forel, The Sexual Question: A Scientific, Psychological, Hygienic and Sociological Study for the Cultured Classes, trans. C.F.Marshall (London, 1908), p.484.

³⁶ Féré, *op.cit.*, p.297.

³⁷ Cesare Lombroso, Crime: Its Cause and Cure, trans. Henry Horton (1899; London, 1911), p.233. The imagery had popular appeal, and Michael Foldy suggests that during the Wilde trials the court and the press represented the defendants as 'pathological agents who had violated societal pollution laws'. Michael Foldy, The Trial of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality and Late-Victorian Society (New York, 1997), p.145.

³⁸ See Forel, *op.cit.*, pp.254-257; Lombroso, *op.cit.*; and 'Contra-Sexual Perversions', British Medical Journal, vol.1 (1 Jun.1895), pp.1225-1226.

In addition to the degenerative, neurasthenic, and broader contagious associations which tied sexual pathology to the city, particular aspects of urban life in the late-nineteenth century resonated with aspects of the sexological debate. First, as chapter one indicated, urban developments in the last thirty years of the century brought with them heightened concerns about excessive consumption and fears that the chaotic centre of the imperial city was symbolising anything but thrift, productivity and order. The work of the sexologists, meanwhile, looked specifically at sexual *disorder* (not just at homosexuality) and brought to the fore ideas of sexual plurality and sometimes excessive sexual consumption. The historian Harry Oosterhuis has noted that sexology made 'sexual variance imaginable and enlarge[d] the sphere allotted to idiosyncratic desires'.³⁹ Such variety and idiosyncrasy can be seen echoing the increasing (and increasingly visible) heterogeneity of the urban scene. Indeed Oosterhuis makes the larger claim that sexology marked 'the transition in the urban bourgeois milieu from the ethos of Christianity and productivity (which dictated self-discipline and control of passions) to a consumerist culture of abundance (which valued the satisfaction of individual desire)'.⁴⁰ It is a contentious argument, not least in imagining that such a transition was wholesale. However, what is compelling is Oosterhuis's observation of parallels between images of heterogeneous sexuality emerging from sexological textbooks on the one hand, and urban plurality and consumerism on the other.

A second and related point concerns the affront to conventions of gender posed by the confident and independent 'new' woman and the effeminate and unproductive decadent male.⁴¹ Both of these figures were associated specifically with the *fin de siècle* urban milieu. Several sexologists, meanwhile, centred their theories of homosexuality specifically on ideas of gender misalignment and were often keen to suggest the effeminacy of homosexual men and manishness of lesbians. Once again there is at least a conceptual parallel between features of city life and the sexologist's theories.

The commentary and case studies sexological texts contained made these connections between the city and sexual pathology more concrete, but they also suggested a particularly close relationship between homosexuality and the urban

³⁹ Oosterhuis, *op.cit.*, p.80. Lawrence Birken develops a similar argument. Sexology, he suggests, was 'caught in its own contradictory structure, suspended between a productivist culture of procreation and a consumerist culture of polymorphous perversion'. Lawrence Birken, *Consuming Desire: Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871 - 1914* (London, 1988), p.52.

⁴⁰ Oosterhuis, *op.cit.*, p.85.

⁴¹ See Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester, 1997), ch.4&6.

scene. Whilst other sexual pathologies are described largely in isolation,⁴² homosexuality is marked by willing alliances and sociability and is repeatedly linked to theatres, parks, streets and restaurants in a series of European cities. Sexology outlined a subculture for homosexual or inverted men and consequently also a particular personal investment in urban life

2.

The shaping of the invert or homosexual as a type owed much to popular stereotype, with effeminacy the most frequently noted characteristic. Krafft-Ebing carefully categorised different degrees of effemisation, and Bloch distinguished between the effeminate and the 'virile' homosexual, noting a clear complexion and a lack of facial hair in the former and the tendency of both to have skin that 'almost always feels warmer than their environment'.⁴³ Féré suggested that homosexuals 'are exceedingly vain and given to lying', and commented on their inability to whistle and their liking for 'the dress of the opposite sex'.⁴⁴ Forel observed that homosexuals 'generally [...] have a banal sentimentalism, [...] are fond of religious forms and ceremonies [and that] they admire fine clothes and luxurious apartments'.⁴⁵ The context of these observations - amidst the recapitulation of congenital and hereditary theories of homosexuality - suggested that these features were biologically rather than culturally or socially determined. The lies, banal sentimentalism, fine clothes and so on appeared to be intrinsic to the homosexual condition.

Amongst the sexologists it was only Ellis who emphasised the indistinct invert. He wrote: 'the average invert, moving in ordinary society, so far as my evidence extends, is most usually a person of average general health, though very frequently with hereditary relations that are markedly neurotic'.⁴⁶ Despite stressing elsewhere the exceptional artistic contributions inverts often made, Ellis uses the trope of normality here as a means of making them more acceptable. He thus talks of the 'average' invert, moving in 'ordinary' society, being of 'average health' (despite noting a neurotic heredity).

These ideas of a distinct soma, demeanour, and inheritance were influential. Ives, for example, noted that he was not effeminate, but also commented on his

⁴²Krafft-Ebing, for example, discussed fetishism, rape, lust murder, sadism, exhibitionism, violation of children and bestiality alongside the 'contrary sexual instinct'.

⁴³Bloch, *op.cit.*, p.497.

⁴⁴Féré, *op.cit.*, p.190.

⁴⁵Forel, *op.cit.*, p.243.

⁴⁶H.Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol.i, *Sexual Inversion* (London, Apr.1897), p.140. This edition is the only one to carry Symonds's name as co-author. At the insistence of Symonds's literary executor it was withdrawn from all subsequent editions (including the second of 1897).

relative hairlessness and lack of taut muscle despite being a regular swimmer.⁴⁷ The subjects of the first person case studies in Psychopathia Sexualis and Sexual Inversion also appear to have taken the sexologist's categorisations on board in their self-conceptualisations.

The sexologist's description of this figure owed much to observation of urban life. Many of the characteristics were associated closely to the sophistry and luxury of a particular, fashionable urban set, and more specifically to prevailing stereotypes of the decadent or dandy.⁴⁸ Jeffrey Weeks persuasively argues that the sexologists 'produced the definitions in order to understand a social phenomenon which was appearing before their eyes: before them as patients, before the courts, in front of them as public scandals, on the streets in a still small but growing network of meeting places'.⁴⁹ As the last chapter suggested, such scandals and networks were chiefly associated with cities, and this was where the sexologists worked: Krafft-Ebing in Vienna, Ellis in London, Féré in Paris, Forel in Zurich, and Bloch in Berlin. Their work in consequence tended 'to take the experience of the urbanised classes as universal'.⁵⁰

In Psychopathia Sexualis Krafft-Ebing returned repeatedly to the city. It seemed to confirm for him, as it did for Féré and Forel, the degeneracy of the individuals involved, and reinforced the sense of a causal relationship between the city and homosexuality. This set up a tension in the text. Krafft-Ebing, whilst sympathetic to the plight of the homosexual, outlined a pathological condition, exacerbated and confirmed by the urban lives of many of the men he described. Several of these men envisaged the city somewhat differently, however, and in the case studies described an urban subculture which provided excitement, sex and social contacts .

Induction into homosexual and effeminate behaviour frequently occurred in urban public spaces in Krafft-Ebing's text. In one of the case studies an 'effeminate' doctor noted that it was at the opera house in 'the capital' (presumably Vienna) that he learned from an old man 'the secrets of male love for males, and felt [his] sexuality was excited by it'. The old man told the doctor that 'male loving men were accustomed to meet on the "E" promenade', and he began to visit the area.

⁴⁷ Ives, Diary, vol. 54, 15 May 1910, p.77; Diary, vol.50, 1 Oct.1907, p.102. On the homosexual's supposed inability to catch and throw see Diary, vol.56, 9 Sep.1911, p.44.

⁴⁸ See Ellen Moers, The Dandy: Brummel to Beerbohm (Lincoln, Neb.,1978).

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Weeks, Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800 (London, 1981), p.94. Randolph Trumbach makes the same point. See Randolph Trumbach, 'Gender and the Homosexual Role in Modern Western Culture: The 18th and 19th Century Compared', in Homosexuality. Which Homosexuality?, ed. D.Altman (London, 1989), p.159.

⁵⁰ Birken, *op.cit.*, p.128.

Subsequently he moved to the country where he had 'to live like a nun', and only 'began to live again' when he returned to the city.⁵¹

Another case followed a similar pattern. Written partly in the third person, we are told the patient went to university in 'the city' at nineteen. He 'began to be dandified, wore striking cravats, and shirts that were low cut; he forced his feet into narrow shoes, and curled his hair in a remarkable way'. 'This peculiarity', Krafft-Ebing commented, 'disappeared' when he left the school and returned home. Later the man moved to Vienna, and he wrote (with a move in the case study from third to first person) 'by means of some recommendations I gained entrance to various circles of people like myself'.⁵² He abstained from sex for some time by using cocaine and living in the country, before being arrested for having sex with a man in a field just outside the city walls.

These case studies suggested a particularly close relationship between the city and homosexuality. In the first there was an almost fairy-tale sense of learning secret knowledge from an old man at the opera, which could only be acted upon in the metropolis. In the second the man was peculiarly passive in the face of urban life. The dandification (and the sexual activity that was increasingly associated with it) appeared to happen to him in the city and vanished when he left it. The city was assumed to be the active agent: he did not choose to dress in this way because he felt a greater freedom in the metropolis (for example) but rather because he fell under the city's spell. Once he moved to Vienna he regained his own voice, and became more active, but there was still a sense of mystery and secrecy, with almost Masonic recommendations into 'circles' of other homosexuals. Abstention was again only possible by abandoning the city altogether.

In his section on 'non-pathological pederasty' Krafft-Ebing abandoned case studies and used his own voice to detail the seduction of adolescents by 'old *roués*' in organised groups in cities.⁵³ He cited Veniamin Tarnowsky's research in St Petersburg, where pederasty was apparently cultivated in 'institutes', and A.Coffignon's *Paris Vivant: La Corruption à Paris* (1889), which detailed a complex hierarchy of seduction in the French capital. He turned finally to 'the demimonde' of Berlin, and 'the Women Haters Ball' of February 1884. Krafft-Ebing recounted a newspaper article which he defensively claimed 'fell into [his] hands by accident'.⁵⁴ The journalist described seeing acquaintances transformed at the ball: his shoe-maker to a troubadour and his haberdasher to Bacchus, for example. The faces were familiar,

⁵¹ Krafft-Ebing (1892), *op.cit.*, pp.198-199.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.270.

⁵³ Krafft-Ebing describes it as 'one of the saddest pages in the history of human delinquency'. *Ibid.*, p.414.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.417.

but they had reinvented themselves (or been reinvented) in their movement to this separate, extravagant urban arena. Krafft-Ebing's account in this section confirmed what had emerged in the preceding case studies: an essentially urban phenomenon which was not confined to one isolated city, but was a feature of them all, from Paris to St Petersburg. This urban circuit of homosexuality was echoed by the subject of another case study who mentioned the subcultures of Berlin, Vienna, Leipzig, Hamburg and Paris.⁵⁵ Each of these places apparently had a decadent *demimonde* with coherent groupings of initiates. They went largely undetected by the casual passer-by, but were uncovered by the prying journalist, rigorous sexologist, or confessing case study. A mobile, wealthy and self-confident homosexual was suggested, able to move from place to place despite national boundaries. Indeed the homosexual seemed to evade nationality and re-emerged in cities throughout Europe.

Within this general urban circuit specific places were particularly associated with homosexual activity. They became not just the settings for erotic transactions, but actually seemed to incite them. Museums were avoided by one man because of the frisson he gained from the statues, whilst another could not resist: 'I revelled in the sight of pictures and statues of male forms', he wrote, 'and could not keep from kissing [them]'.⁵⁶ Yet another was aroused by 'lower houses' in the city: 'the dark entrance, the yellow light of the lamps, and all the surroundings have a particular charm for me' he noted.⁵⁷ The buildings themselves seem to seduce him, on account, he conjectured, of the soldiers who 'frequent such places' in search of female prostitutes. Similarly in one of the few illustrative case studies in Féré's work, a predilection for crowded urban spaces was seen to be symptomatic of the subject's homosexuality. The man had felt 'impelled to enter public establishments, cafés, halls, assembly rooms' or anywhere where he might be pushed against other men.⁵⁸ In another of Féré's cases the subject's formative experience was in a crowded commuter train where he became fascinated by a non-commissioned officer. Féré wrote: 'the officer got up and was thrown against him, the result being the apogee of genital excitation and emission'.⁵⁹ These places and experiences, and not just somatic signs or familial history, became important in Féré's diagnosis. As with Krafft-Ebing and Bloch it was the urban public realm which was seen to be important in signifying desire for the same sex. In particular all three indicated the importance of the theatre as a meeting place (again confirming popular stereotype).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.273.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.259.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.245.

⁵⁸ Féré, *op.cit.*, p.219.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.226.

In Krafft-Ebing's account desires abated when the city was abandoned in a return to the family home, or in a move to the countryside. In these places levels of temptation were apparently diminished and some domestic policing could potentially take place.⁶⁰ The case study in *Psychopathia Sexualis* who did the reverse and moved to 'the capital' to 'force [him]self to cohabit with a woman' found his desires confirmed. Worse still, he discovered his voracious sexual appetite and claimed to have had six hundred sexual encounters with men.⁶¹ The city was a 'salvation' in just one case, in which a man being blackmailed was inspired to give up having sex with men by an earlier edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis*. He sought help and hypnotism from Krafft-Ebing in Vienna and was transformed.⁶² It seems that the city Krafft-Ebing, the scientist, inhabited was potentially redemptive, quite different from the secret city of the degraded homosexual.

One of Krafft-Ebing's most effusive devotees was the American Edward Stevenson, who wrote under the pseudonym Xavier Mayne. He published *The Intersexes*, an eclectic survey of sexology, in 1908, and dedicated the work to Krafft-Ebing as 'the pioneer in dispassionate, humane, scientific study of simisexualism'.⁶³ Mayne was himself an 'intersex' and found the close association between simisexualism and the city deeply problematic. Throughout *The Intersexes*, as in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, the city was prominent in the anecdotes and cases, leading to a damning indictment:

As the readers of large daily newspapers well know the world over, one need not revert to cases of degeneracy and simisexualism in past civilisations and centuries [...] Great capitals such as London, Paris, New York, Berlin, all large cities and many small ones of the world present [...] the Uranian of diseased appetites, and of proportionately contemptible, brutal, vitiated, and obscene practises.⁶⁴

These capitals and 'all' large cities were envisaged harbouring debased forms of sexual contact. For Mayne, the city corrupted the homosexual and rendered him beyond sympathy. Like Krafft-Ebing, he imagined a separate twilight world, with diseased individuals emerging 'as evening draws on'.⁶⁵ The revelation of this *demimonde* in

⁶⁰ Others were not so sure, however. The last chapter showed how the newspapers reported Wilde's flagrant disregard of domestic values, and Forel noted with distaste that 'the invert' 'invites his male lovers to his house and they indulge in orgies, especially when his wife, despised and neglected, has separated from him'. Forel, *op.cit.*, p.246.

⁶¹ Krafft-Ebing, *op.cit.*, p.261.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.337.

⁶³ Xavier Mayne (pseud. Edward Stevenson), *The Intersexes: A History of Simisexualism as a Problem in Social Life* (Italy, 1908), title page. 125 copies of the text were published.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.423.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.426.

New York exacerbated the city's neurasthenic propensities, apparently 'cast[ing it] into a quiver of nervous distress'.⁶⁶ Although lacking Mayne's melodrama, Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* depicted something similar. The city corrupted the sexual instinct and was itself undermined by the prevalence of sexual abnormality. Whilst several of the case studies testified to a confident subculture, which inculcated a social and sexual bond, Krafft-Ebing described something more debilitating. Such subcultures, he suggested, both confirmed and induced the homosexual's flawed desires and effeminacy.

It was this image of urban dissipation which led Henry Havelock Ellis to attempt to distance his invert from the city. What is striking about *Sexual Inversion* in the light of other sexological texts is the tendency to contain and excuse mention of an urban context. It seemed that the city might denigrate the invert by implicating degeneracy on the one hand and effeminacy or public indecency on the other. Edward Carpenter (one of Ellis's correspondents) complained that 'since the field of [the sexologist's] research is usually a great modern city, there is little wonder if disease colours his conclusions'.⁶⁷ Havelock Ellis apparently shared Carpenter's concerns.

Ellis conceded that cities were gathering grounds for homosexual men: 'it is true that in the solitude of the great modern cities it is possible for small homosexual coteries to form, in a certain sense, an environment of their own favourable to their abnormality'.⁶⁸ He was grudging in the concession, however, admitting only the possibility of isolated groups in the anonymous (and lonely) modern city. There was certainly not the sense of an embedded subculture. Mention of the city was sparse in *Sexual Inversion* and when it was discussed Ellis distanced himself. Thus details of male prostitution in Hyde Park and around Albert Gate in London were in another voice (anonymous informant 'Q') and footnoted, and so removed from the main discussion. Moreover, the footnotes referred not to the dynamic of homosexual life in the city but to Ellis's contention that there was 'a considerable lack of repugnance to homosexual practices [...] among the lower classes' and that they displayed 'a primitive indifference' in sexual matters.⁶⁹ His point was decontextualised: it appeared

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.423.

⁶⁷ Carpenter, *Homogenic Love*, *op.cit.*, p.30. He went on: 'In the case of [Albert] Moll, who carried out his researches largely under guidance of the Berlin police, [...] the only marvel is that his verdict is so markedly favourable as it is'.

⁶⁸ Ellis (Apr.1897), *op.cit.*, p.25.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9. There was little consideration of working-class sexuality in any of these sexological texts, even though desire for working-class men was mentioned frequently. Bloch's analysis was as cursory as Ellis's. He merely suggested that working-class homosexuals were generally more intelligent than their peers. See Bloch, *op.cit.*, p.502.

to be an intrinsic fact about the lower orders. Ellis did not consider why these particular liaisons took place or why they took place where they did.

The case studies were also largely barren of geographical context, but there were some notable exceptions which suggested the significance of the urban scene and exposed Ellis's reticence. In the 1897 edition, for example, the subject of one case study outlined a personal homoerotic geography of London:

When he was about thirty years of age his reserve and his fear of treachery and extortion were at last overcome by an incident which occurred late at night at the Royal Exchange Theatre, and again in the dark recesses of the Olympic Theatre when Gustavus Brooke was performing. From that time the Adelphi Theatre, the Italian Opera, and the open parks at night became his fields of adventure. He remarks that among people crowding to witness a fire he found many opportunities.⁷⁰

Given the lack of detail in previous case studies, the specificity here is intriguing. The city was imagined as an arena for sexual adventure, with liaisons emerging from the chaos of urban life and also from particular places (notably the theatre). The city was central to this man's relationships and sexuality. Significantly, this was one of the case studies dropped from the 1915 edition for being 'less instructive' than the others.⁷¹

In this later edition there was, however, a detailed description of an ostensibly heterosexual man's adventures in New York. It described a man's visit to a male brothel out of curiosity. Effeminacy rules: the 'boy-prostitutes' 'bore fanciful names, some of well-known actresses, others heroes in fiction, his own [the prostitute the man talks to] being Dorian Gray'.⁷² Subsequently, he met an 'invert' in Broadway, and wrote: 'with him in his room whence I had seen him emerge, I passed an apocalyptic night. Thereafter commerce with boys only in spirit ceased to be an end; the images were carnalised, stepped from that framework into the streets.'⁷³ The case illustrated the genesis of sexuality in the city, in the streets and shop windows of New York; places where a set of fantasies met reality. However, Ellis argued that the case was an exception:

[it] presents what is commonly thought to be a very common type of inversion, Oscar Wilde being the supreme exemplar, in which a heterosexual

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.64. Gustavus Brooke (1818 - 1866) was an Irish Shakespearean actor who impressed audiences in the West End theatres and on Broadway with his 'fine presence and noble voice'. *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol.2 (Oxford, 1921), p.422.

⁷¹ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol.ii, *Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia, 1915), p.iii.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.177.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.178.

person apparently becomes homosexual by the exercise of intellectual curiosity and esthetic [*sic*] interest. In reality the type is far from common.⁷⁴

The effeminate 'boy-prostitutes' and the men who had become inverted through their 'intellectual curiosity' were not typical according to Ellis, and the significance of context and environment was again downplayed.

In the case study of John Addington Symonds, Ellis's collaborator on Sexual Inversion, context was dropped completely, whilst it featured prominently in Symonds's Memoirs (as literary critic Wayne Koestenbaum has noted). An extract from the case study thus read:

In these [dreams] he imagined himself the servant of several adult naked sailors; he crouched between their thighs and called himself their dirty pig, and by their orders he performed services to their genitals and buttocks which he contemplated and handled with relish.⁷⁵

The same incident was described in the Memoirs as follows:

I used to fancy myself crouched upon the floor amid a company of naked adult men: sailors, such as I had seen about the streets of Bristol. The contact of their bodies afforded me a vivid and mysterious pleasure.⁷⁶

In the case study there was no reference to Bristol and the sailors came from nowhere. They were strange unrooted spectres in the genesis of the child's sexuality. In the Memoirs extract, however, Symonds was more specific, indicating 'how closely his ineffable desire abutted actual places and actual men'.⁷⁷

This reluctance to validate the significance of the urban context is intriguing. In his other works it was seen to be important. In The Criminal (1890) the environment was described as a significant factor in the development of the criminal psychosis, for example. In a later piece, The Nineteenth Century: A Dialogue in Utopia (1898), Ellis noted the stifling and denaturing effect of Victorian urban architecture. Finally, in Sex in Relation to Society (1910), he ascribed the cause of prostitution not to atavism (as Lombroso had done), but to 'the fascination of the city [...] the brilliant fever of civilisation [that] pulses around them in the streets'.⁷⁸ Each of these accounts

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.179.

⁷⁵ Ellis (Apr.1897), *op.cit.*, p.61.

⁷⁶ The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (London, 1984), p.62.

⁷⁷ Wayne Koestenbaum, Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration (London, 1989), p.59.

⁷⁸ Cited by Jane Caplan, "'Educating the Eye": The Tattooed Prostitute', in Sexology in Culture.

indicated the deleterious effects of the urban environment. This, however, perhaps explains Ellis's reticence about the city in Sexual Inversion, especially given his personal stake in the subject and his eagerness to see legal reform.⁷⁹ A detailed consideration of inversion in the city may have suggested an invert as debased as his environment, as it did for Krafft-Ebing and Mayne. Indeed those cases which mentioned the city in Sexual Inversion also implicitly suggested an urban perversion of the inverted instinct. The man who recounted his experiences in London was one of only three (out of twenty seven) who was directly described as effeminate in the 1897 edition,⁸⁰ whilst the aesthetic American in the 1915 edition was marked out as atypical.

In his conclusion to Sexual Inversion Ellis suggested that society 'cannot be expected to tolerate the invert who flaunts his perversions in its face'.⁸¹ Once 'flaunt[ed]', observed in anything other than his sexological panopticon, inversion became 'perversion' (a term he avoided in the rest of the text) and the limits of Ellis's tolerance were exposed. The case studies of other sexologists, newspaper reports of prominent trials, and those urban cases he included in Sexual Inversion all spoke precisely of this kind of visibility, however, and they detracted from the more discreet and 'normalised' figure Ellis was attempting to outline. Thus whilst the city cropped up a number of times in the various editions of Sexual Inversion, Ellis drew back from it. His typical invert was cut loose from his geographical context, rather than being either individuated or degraded by it. Not surprisingly, then, the appendix piece in the text by a 'Dr K', which discussed the significance of environment and culture in shaping the inborn inverted instinct, appeared only in the two 1897 editions and was subsequently dropped.

Despite this, it is precisely the inverts with an urban context who are the most memorable and interesting in the text. The details give them substance and complexity. Whereas with Krafft-Ebing the city allowed him to generalise about the homosexual's debasement, in Ellis's work the city seems to individuate to a greater degree, at least partly because it is mentioned comparatively rarely. Ellis pointed out the existence of inversion in the city, and began to suggest that its expression there

op.cit., p.101. Sex in Relation to Society was volume 6 of Ellis's mammoth Studies in the Psychology of Sex.

⁷⁹ Edith Lees, Ellis's wife, was a lesbian, and her case study (probably case 36) appears in Sexual Inversion. See Phyllis Grosskurth, Havelock Ellis: A Biography (London, 1980), pp.154-154 & p.179.

⁸⁰ As Laura Doan and Chris Waters note Ellis was keen to challenge the supposed connection between effeminacy and male homosexuality, whilst reinforcing ideas of lesbian 'mannishness'. See Laura Doan and Chris Waters, 'Homosexualities: Introduction', in Sexology Uncensored, *op.cit.*, p.43.

⁸¹ Sexual Inversion (Apr. 1897), *op.cit.*, p.15.

had taken a particular (to him less acceptable) form. He therefore sidelined it from his discussion as a distraction. However, the vividness of these particular cases inadvertently confirmed the widely credited association, particularly as Ellis made no explicit disavowal of it. The city and what it made possible haunted the text and proved more difficult to eliminate from the sexual equation than Ellis cared to admit.

There were parallels between Krafft-Ebing and Ellis's approaches to the city. For both it was disruptive of a 'normalised' sexual identity, and the homosexual or invert in the city was more distinct, and consequently less palatable. Iwan Bloch was less pejorative. He acknowledged an active engagement with the city and was unapologetic about outlining a confident and distinctive subculture. He wrote in The Sexual Life of Our Times:

Whilst in the smallest provincial towns and in the country homosexuals are for the most part thrust back into themselves, compelled to conceal their nature or at most to communicate with isolated individuals of like nature with themselves, in the larger towns from early days the homosexuals have been able to get in touch with one another.⁸²

Bloch imagined homosexuals disempowered in the provinces (they 'are thrust back into themselves' and 'compelled to conceal their nature'), but envisaged the city as a place of potential self-determination. Thus where Krafft-Ebing saw the city seducing the individual, in Bloch's account it granted permission and made things possible. Like Krafft-Ebing and Ellis he suggested a distinctive urban homosexual style, but he cast it in a more affirmative light. In every large town, he claimed, there were certain streets and squares, clubs and health resorts, which were frequented by homosexuals. He depicted an embedded sub-culture, which utilised city centre spaces, but redetermined them. He described, for example, the dark lateral alleys of the Champs Élysées in Paris, and the thickets between Place de la Concorde and the Allée des Vieves, as the places which 'served, from the commencement of twilight, for the rendezvous of homosexuals'.

They would not tolerate here the presence of any heterosexuals; they closed the entrance with cords, and placed guards at the openings of the alleys, who demanded a password from every comer. Even the police did not venture into this dark region.⁸³

⁸² Bloch, *op.cit.*, p.514.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

By night the area became inaccessible. Paris's homosexuals were seen to have developed into an exclusive fraternity and the scientist and policeman were both thwarted. The police were denied access, and Bloch could indicate the area but give no insight into what happened within it. The tables were turned and the heterosexual hegemony was displaced as the supposedly marginalised homosexual colonised parts of central Paris. This colonisation reshaped dominant images of the city, as grand boulevards gave way to a description of an enclosed 'dark region' with closely guarded 'entrances', 'openings' and 'alleys'. This sequestered space was figured with at least the suggestion of anality, as topography and sexuality intersected. In this way the space became, in Bloch's depiction, especially appropriate to the men who used it, and the city particularly accommodating. Bloch reported that such exclusivity was 'now' restricted to Turkish Baths (including one in Place de la Republique) and various brothels (of which he details two). Even this reduced 'scene' offered exclusive arenas in central Parisian locations, however.

These descriptions of actual places and streets in Paris gave solidity to Bloch's vision of a homosexual fraternity. In Berlin he was similarly particular, claiming that it 'doubtless' had many more 'social unions of homosexuals' than any other city. He cited Hirschfeld's reports of dinners, summer festivals, cafes, pubs, restaurants and annual picnics, and described a soldier's promenade popular with homosexual men.

Bloch's representation of this subculture maintained the association of effeminacy with homosexuality evident in Krafft-Ebing descriptions. He recounted a visit to an 'Urning's Ball' in Berlin and mentioned other cross-dressing parties in Paris.⁸⁴ He also described 'effeminate street Arabs' with soft skin and breasts, who were 'children of the great towns'.⁸⁵ A particularly close bond between the city and the effeminate homosexual was implied here, a relationship more in line with the causal one Krafft-Ebing suggested. Bloch largely avoided Krafft-Ebing's negativity, however. Whilst often verging on the sensational and revelling in the information he uncovered (in ways reminiscent of the broadsheet *The Lives of Boulton and Park*, discussed in chapter two), he also celebrated the opportunities such a semi-permanent and cohesive sub-culture afforded and the cosmopolitan diversity it indicated. Bloch basically saw the city as empowering: if the fact of being observed and categorised through 'the medical gaze' in some ways robbed the homosexual of agency, it was in his relationship with the city that he regained it.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.518.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.545.

3.

Sexology had a dual and in some ways contradictory effect. On the one hand it inscribed a division between the sexual mainstream and periphery in scientific terms, and suggested the pre-eminence of sexual preference as a classifier of identity. It reaffirmed prevailing stereotypes and made men who had sex with other men objects of study and sometimes treatment, rather than active agents in society as Ives and Carpenter preferred to see themselves. On the other hand, as Harry Oosterhuis suggests, there was liberatory potential in this writing: in the direct calls for legal reform; in the validation of the voices of homosexual men in case studies; and in the sexual and social possibilities (in the 'coteries', 'demimondes' and 'academies') their work suggested and advertised to varying degrees. Oosterhuis's research on Krafft-Ebing indicates a widespread appreciation of his work on the part of many middle-class men. They were happy to help in his research, and Krafft-Ebing, like Ellis, received large numbers of unsolicited case studies.⁸⁶ Their involvement meant at least a degree of self-determination, and the results instituted a powerful explanatory narrative. Sexology was central to Ives, Carpenter and Symonds's battle for legitimacy in the face of overwhelmingly negative rhetoric.⁸⁷ Consequently these men were much quicker to adopt the new labels and categories than the press and public were to apply them, even though they frequently suggested a connection with the city which Symonds and Carpenter in particular found troubling.

The association with the city was developed in Psychopathia Sexualis, Sexual Inversion, and The Sexual Lives of Our Times through their content, the discursive contexts in which they were written, and the theories of homosexuality they elaborated. The differences in their approach to this relationship, however, indicated an uncertainty about the role of the city and an ambivalence towards its seeming centrality in homosexual lives. Case studies and anecdotes were selected, omitted and contextualised to support the particular sexologist's agenda. Bloch and Ellis sought to legitimise homosexuality and inversion, and partly as a result Ellis found the

⁸⁶ Harry Oosterhuis and Wayne Koestenbaum develop opposing accounts of the agency of homosexual men in sexological work. Koestenbaum argues that they were marginalised and excluded, whilst Oosterhuis suggests persuasively that particularly with Krafft-Ebing they were active in shaping perceptions and defining the emergent identity. See Oosterhuis, 'Richard von Krafft-Ebing's "Step Children of Nature"', *op.cit.*; Koestenbaum, *op.cit.*, ch.2. See also Ed Cohen, 'The Double Lives of Man: Narration and Identification in Late Nineteenth-Century Representations of Ec-centric Masculinities', in Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle, eds Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge, 1995), p.96.

⁸⁷ Symonds felt the subject had been 'fearfully mishandled' by pathologists and psychiatrists, but did see an importance in psychological study. He suggested the Sexual Inversion project to Ellis via the symbolist poet Arthur Symons. Letter J.A.Symonds to Arthur Symons, 13 Jun.1892, cited by Roger Lhombreaud, Arthur Symons: A Critical Biography (London, 1963), p.92.

(degenerate) city difficult to countenance. Bloch, however, described the relationship much more fully. In The Sexual Life of Our Times there is an almost voyeuristic sense for the reader of looking in at a carnivalesque and cosmopolitan urban subculture. Krafft-Ebing described similar scenes to Bloch, but in Psychopathia Sexualis they served to illustrate an aberrant digression from sexual norms. The subcultural forms were a sign for Krafft-Ebing of pathology rather than sexual diversity.

Although different in their approach, the connection between homosexuality and a range of cities in these texts suggested the existence of a diffuse international urban circuit; the homosexual condition was seen to be too slippery to be contained within national boundaries. This was partly because the case studies focused largely on mobile, monied, and often well-travelled middle-class men, and because sexology developed as a pan-national discourse. Cases in Vienna thus sometimes appeared alongside others centring on Paris, Berlin, London, or New York (especially in The Sexual Life of Our Time and The Intersexes which drew wholly or partly on the research of earlier sexologists working in a range of cities).

In Britain these international associations were especially strong because most sexological texts came from continental Europe, and from France, Germany and Austria in particular. Homosexuality seemed to be the peculiar interest and problem of these nations. The attempts to stifle Sexual Inversion and The Sexual life of Our Time, and the reticence surrounding Psychopathia Sexualis, spoke of concerns about the influence such texts might have, and so also perhaps of a lack of faith in the hereditary theories they foregrounded. There was a fear of the continental vices which might insinuate their way further into the life of the capital; vices which by the 1890s appeared to be securing a stronger foothold in a decadent and aesthetic *avant garde*.

Chapter 5

The Decadent City: London, Paris, and 'the Orient'

The next two chapters primarily examine the nexus of homosexuality and London in fiction and poetry. They show how work by Oscar Wilde, Edward Carpenter and other less well-known writers constituted an imaginative exploration of what London could offer in terms of the fulfilment of desire and the formation of sexual and political identities. This chapter considers the significance of aestheticism, decadence, 'the Orient' and Paris in the exploration of homosexual desire in London, and examines the recreation of the city in Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891) and the anonymous pornographic novel Teleny, or the Reverse of the Medal (1893). It falls into three sections. The first outlines some key features of aestheticism and decadence and considers the significance of Paris and Western conceptualisations of 'the Orient' to these movements and to wider understandings of homosexual behaviour. The second section focuses on The Picture of Dorian Gray and Teleny, looking at their particular engagement with the city, and showing how they drew on these traditions and associations. The final part examines some of the parodies of aestheticism and decadence and looks at the significance of these movements after Wilde's prosecution.

1.

Aestheticism in the second half of the nineteenth century posited beauty as the ultimate arbiter in the valuation of art and literature. The genesis of the movement is complex: the critic R.V. Johnson aligns it with aspects of English Romanticism and Renaissance theatre, as well as work in Germany by Goethe, Winckelmann and Hegel.¹ Johann Winckelmann, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, in turn associated this validation of beauty with the ancient Greeks, a connection reiterated by Walter Pater and John Addington Symonds in thinly veiled homoerotic terms in the 1870s and 1880s.² Aestheticism also had strong links to a French literary tradition, springing from Théophile Gautier's contention in the preface to his novel Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835) that beauty in art could have no other end than itself. It was here that the aesthetic slogan '*l'Art pour l'art*' was coined.³ In England the

¹ R.V. Johnson, Aestheticism (London, 1969), p.1.

² Walter Pater, 'Winckelmann' (1867), in The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Literature, ed. Adam Phillips (1873; Oxford, 1986); John Addington Symonds, Studies in the Greek Poets (London, 1879).

³ Ian Small, ed., The Aesthetes: a Sourcebook (London, 1979), p.xii.

emergence of aestheticism was linked to Algernon Swinburne's Poems and Ballads (1866) and to the work of Walter Pater. Pater famously concluded his Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873) with what amounted to an aesthetic manifesto:

Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has most; for art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.⁴

Aestheticism, Regenia Gagnier argues, 'resisted the Victorian values of utility, rationality, scientific factuality, and technological progress'.⁵ 'Progress' and 'productivity' were downgraded in favour of the isolated beautiful moment, the only utility of which was the pleasure it could give. A different conception of time was evoked (temporal progression was sidelined in favour of the isolated moment), and it was suggested that artists and writers no longer needed to defer to a preordained natural or moral order in their work.

The corollary of an aesthetic conception of art was that life too should be cut free from 'natural' archetypes. 'What we have to do', wrote Pater, 'is to be forever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy'.⁶ Orthodoxy in general and the prescriptiveness of nature in particular were held in tension with aestheticism and were the factors against which aesthetic artists and critics like Wilde and Pater reacted. Aestheticism thus began to provide a model for a complex identity based on the valuation of beauty and the senses, rather than on social and cultural conformity or biological determinism.

This understanding of identity had significant implications for the individual's relationship with space. In the conclusion to The Renaissance Pater indicated the power of personal reflection to 'dissipate' and reconfigure the 'cohesive face' of external objects, a process which modulated the individual's sense of self and subjectivity in 'a strange perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves'. This shifting subjectivity could, Pater suggested, shape our experience of the material world. Oscar Wilde explored a similar idea sixteen years later in 'The Decay of Lying'.
Vivian comments:

⁴ Pater, 'Conclusion', in The Renaissance, *op.cit.*, p.153.

⁵ Regenia Gagnier, Idylls of the Market Place: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public (Aldershot, 1987), p.138. See also Linda Gertner Zatlín, Beardsley Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal (Cambridge, 1997), p.154. In Modern Painters (1847) Ruskin also indicated the fundamental importance of beauty but his conceptualisation differed from later aesthetic criticism in that it rested (to use Raymond Williams) 'on a belief in a universal, divinely appointed order'. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell (London, 1987), p.135. See also Harold Bloom's discussion of the relationship between Ruskin and Pater. Harold Bloom, 'Introduction', in Selected Writings of Walter Pater (New York, 1974), pp.x-xv.

⁶ Pater, 'Conclusion', *op.cit.*, p.152.

If you desire to see a Japanese effect, you will not behave like a tourist and go to Tokyo. On the contrary, you will stay at home and steep yourself in the work of certain Japanese artists, and then when you have absorbed the spirit of their work and caught their imaginative manner of vision, you will go the same afternoon and sit in the park or stroll down Piccadilly, and if you can not see a Japanese effect there you will not see it anywhere.⁷

Wilde's wit and flippancy here carried with it a more profound (and profoundly aesthetic) comment on the malleability of perception, and the effect shifts in perception might have on the way the self and the environment were experienced, Subjectivity, physical context and perception become interdependent, with a change or conscious manipulation of one prompting the others to shift and re-form. This allowed for new sensual experience and, in this instance, for 'a Japanese effect' to materialise in Piccadilly. The choice of Piccadilly was significant, since, as chapter one indicated, it was seen to invite just such fantastical transformations.

Given this understanding it is perhaps not surprising that the growing interest in aesthetic ideas was accompanied by a trend for domestic recreation. Max Beerbohm wrote in the aesthetic journal The Yellow Book:

Peacock feathers and sunflowers glittered in every room, the curio shops were ransacked for the furniture of A M wish days, men and women fired by the fervid words of Oscar Wilde, threw their mahogany into the streets.⁸

Symbols of Victorian propriety were rejected with the introduction of ornamentation that gestured to more ethereal times and places. Wilde valued Oriental art and furnishings in particular because of their 'frank rejection of imitation' and 'dislike of the actual representation of any object in Nature, of our own imitative spirit'.⁹ Oscar and Constance Wilde's home in Tite St, Chelsea, was carefully decorated in aesthetic style, as were the interiors of the homes of the playwright's fictional and theatrical protagonists. The interior private space represented the vision of the occupant, and aided in the perceptual recreation of the public realm. In the opening scene of The Picture of Dorian Gray, for example, Basil Hallward's garden is described through the open door of the artist's studio, which serves as an aesthetic prism for the narrator's gaze. Viewed from the 'divan of Persian saddle-bags' and through 'tussore-silk

⁷ Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying' (1889), in De Profundis and Other Writings, ed. Hesketh Pearson (London, 1986), p.82. There was a bohemian fashion for Japanese art in the 1880s. See Ian Fletcher, 'Bedford Park: Aesthete's Elysium', in Romantic Mythologies, ed. Ian Fletcher (London, 1967), p.181; and Zatlin, *op.cit.*

⁸ Max Beerbohm, '1880', The Yellow Book, vol.iv (Jan. 1895): p.276.

⁹ 'The Decay of Lying', *op.cit.*, p.70.

curtains', the world outside becomes part of the domestic artistry rather than a distraction from it. From this perspective the birds 'produce a momentary Japanese effect', and the bees and plants take on a languorous, decadent air. 'The distant roar of London' becomes like 'a bourdon note of a distant organ'.¹⁰ At a lecture in London in 1883 Wilde claimed that with this kind of aesthetic vision 'even Gower Street' could be beautiful.¹¹

In England in the late 1880s and 1890s the aesthetic validation of the individual perspective, and the quest for beauty in art and life, became closely associated with decadence. Decadence focused not just on the pleasure and intensity of looking, but also on novel experience and experimentation for all the senses. The value of Oriental art thus lay for decadence not only in its rejection of mimesis but in the erotic associations that could be communicated through it. It also drew on the idea of the decaying luxury of advanced civilisations, as depicted most famously by Edward Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1778). To the symbolist poet Arthur Symons decadence had 'all the qualities that mark the end of great periods [...] an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilising refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity'.¹² Whilst aestheticism sought personal epiphany and uplift through beauty, decadence sought sensual novelty however debilitating. In literature decadent writers often attempted to extend the sensory power of language and to describe and invoke new experience.

There was considerable cross-over between aestheticism and decadence, largely because of their common roots and emphasis on sensory intensity. Like aestheticism, decadence was strongly associated with Paris, and with some of the same writers and artists. Charles-Pierre Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) was seen as a foundational piece of decadent writing, but Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle du Maupin* (1835) was also influential, particularly because of its rich, heavily descriptive prose style. Later decadent writers in France included Jean Nicholas-Arthur Rimbaud, Joris-Karl Huysmans and Rachilde, the alias of Margu rite Eymery. In England decadence was associated with the poets Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson, and Lionel Johnson, and with the illustrator Aubrey Beardsley. Meanwhile Pater's luxuriant prose provided an echo of some of the writers of the French tradition, and his conclusion to *The Renaissance* seemed to endorse more than the quest for beauty and intensity in art, particularly in its exhortation to 'discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us'.¹³ The reclusive don withdrew his conclusion

¹⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891; London, 1985), p.7.

¹¹ Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London, 1985), p. 225.

¹² Arthur Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', in *Selected Writing*, ed. Roger Holdsworth (Manchester, 1974), p.72.

¹³ Pater, 'Conclusion', *op.cit.*, p.152.

from the 1877 edition explaining in a footnote when it was virtually reinstated in 1893 that it had been 'omitted [...] as [he] conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall'.¹⁴ Pater clearly saw decadence potentially licensing not only enhanced aesthetic perception and artistic fervour but also other dissident activities and pleasures.

The prosecution of Oscar Wilde seemed to confirm this crossover between aestheticism, decadence and a sexually hedonistic lifestyle. Wilde's writing was used as evidence against him, and was discussed in conjunction with details of his apparently excessive sexual and culinary consumption, and the luxurious surrounding in which this consumption had often taken place.¹⁵ As chapter three indicated, a series of alternative spaces (imagined in direct opposition to the middle-class home) were outlined in court. If the domestic interior could prompt an aestheticised or decadent vision of the world outside, it could also incriminate: speaking not only of the occupant's artistic philosophy but of behaviour at odds with prevailing sexual and social norms.

Oriental furnishings and ornamentation were a recurring feature of these interiors, introducing diffuse notions of a more libertarian sexual and moral order. These references were tied to absurdly broad ideas of behaviour across a huge part of the globe, but they were nevertheless compelling for those exploring dissident desires personally or in their writing.¹⁶ Ives, Carpenter, Wilde, and the anonymous authors of *Teleny* were all drawn to literature, art and furnishings from this ill-defined region (and more particularly from Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco) as if to instate an alternative space, and an accompanying erotic order, in the apparently more prosaic and restrictive British capital.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.186.

¹⁵ Wilde's position as a decadent icon is in many ways problematic, particularly given the moral imperative of much of his work (including *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in which the decadent hero self destructs). Raymond Williams comments: 'in Wilde the pursuit of an isolated aesthetic pleasure is accompanied by a general humanity which is a real ground for respect'. He was nevertheless seen as a figurehead, and Max Nordau viewed him as archetypal even before his prosecution. Williams, *op.cit.*, p.172; Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895; Lincoln, Neb., 1993), p.317.

¹⁶ The terms 'the East' and 'the Orient' had considerable cultural currency during this period, and were associated strongly with the colonial project. There is not space here to discuss the ramifications of this terminology but I use it self-consciously; it is certainly not my intention to endorse the cultural homogenisation of Asia and north Africa it implicates, but rather to show the level to which these assumptions were ingrained in contemporary (and indeed subsequent) debates about art, culture, and sexuality. For further discussion of Western conceptions of 'the East' and 'the Orient' see Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, 1991); and Rudi Bleys, *The Geography of Perversion: Male to Male Sexual Behaviour Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination* (London, 1996).

¹⁷ At an exclusively male dinner party Ives 'rigged up quite a Turkish display'. Carpenter included homoerotic poetry by Persian poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth century in *Iblaus*, his 'anthology of friendship', Wilde's library in Tite Street was 'executed in a style variously described as Turkish, Moorish, and north African'. George Ives, *Diary*, vol.37, 18 Apr.1900, p.34, HRHRC; Edward

The interest in these places was not restricted to 'homosexuals'. Colonial expansion had increased political and cultural contact with Australasia, southeast Asia, north Africa and the eastern Mediterranean for the French and British in particular. The establishment of treaty ports in China in the 1850s and 1860s and the completion of the Suez canal in 1869 made China and Japan more accessible. In the Pacific, Britain annexed Fiji in 1874 and France colonised Tahiti in 1880. Queen Victoria was made Empress of India in 1877, and a year later Britain formed an alliance with Turkey to prevent a Russian advance into Asia. In north Africa France colonised Algeria in 1848 and Tunisia in 1883. The British occupied Egypt in 1882. In London the first colonial conference was held in 1888 and the Colonial and Imperial Exhibition took place in Kensington in 1894. These colonial exploits, domestic conferences and exhibitions, not to mention the baffling array of imperial products being stocked in the new department stores, resulted in an increased general interest in (and literature about) these places.¹⁸ The interest in north African and Asian iconography on the part of Wilde, Ives, and Carpenter was thus not exclusive and reflected a wider cultural, political and economic phenomenon. It nevertheless provided a key source of inspiration and eroticism for men who were exploring their homosexuality. For those with aesthetic and decadent interests the imagery gained an added frisson by being filtered through Paris and the French language, bringing together ideas of Parisian hedonism and Eastern exoticism. French imperial adventuring in north Africa had begun with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, and there was consequently a substantial French literature of anthropological and colonial writing about the country and region.

Apart from a general perception of sensuality, these areas were also associated with greater levels of indulgence in homosexual sex. *Don Leon* (1866), the poem discussed in chapter two, described a visit to a Turkish male brothel.¹⁹ The homophile periodical of the 1890s, *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, published 'A Dream Fragment of Imperial Rome' in 1893 which eroticised the body of a murdered man through combined images of classical statuary and Eastern 'silks and gauze'.²⁰ In 1906 Edward Carpenter published his anthology of friendship, *Iölaus*, which focused almost exclusively on intense male bonding, and included extracts from Stanley Lane-

Carpenter, *Iölaus* (Manchester, 1906), pp.109-119; Ellmann, *op.cit.*, p.242.

¹⁸ See Said, *op.cit.*, esp. ch.1; Patrick Brantlinger, *Rules of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca, 1988), ch.8; C.C.Eldridge, *The Imperial Experience: From Carlyle to Forster* (London, 1996), ch.2; John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984), ch.1&2.

¹⁹ 'Lord Byron', *Don Leon* (London, 1866), p.17.

²⁰ 'A Dream Fragment of Imperial Rome', *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, vol.14-15 (March 1893): p.69. For further discussion of *The Artist* see chapter 6.

Poole's *Turkey* (1888), James Silk Buckingham's *Travels in Assyria, Media and Persia* (1829), and a number of thirteenth and fourteenth century Persian poets.

The most detailed and sexually explicit exposition of Oriental homosexual behaviour, however, came in Sir Richard Burton's translation of the *Arabian Nights* (1885) and Dr Jacobus X's *Untrodden Fields of Anthropology*, which was published initially in French and then in English in 1896 and 1898. Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights* was privately printed and distributed in ten volumes. It received largely hostile reviews. The *Edinburgh Review* compared it unfavourably to other versions such as Edward William Lane's 1839 edition (which had been reprinted in 1883) and John Payne's translation, which appeared for private circulation between 1882 and 1884. The reviewer observed that whilst Lane's edition might be suitable for the library, and Payne's (which he saw as vulgar in places) for a gentleman's study, Burton's was suitable only for the 'sewer': 'When [Burton] might have really added to our information on the general life of the Mohammedons, he has preferred to constitute himself the chronicler of the most degraded vices'.²¹ The reviewer seemed to accept the private titillation for gentleman that might have been offered by Payne's translation, but the content of Burton's rendered it beyond the pale. Burton had chosen to include the tale of 'Abu Nawas and the Three Boys' (a story omitted from Lane's collection) which tells of how three youths were seduced by Abu Nawas through verse. More significantly he also included a terminal essay expounding his sodadic theory of homosexuality, which saw geography and climate as determining factors in the genesis of sexual desire. Burton suggested the existence of a 'Sotadic Zone' which covered the area between the northern latitudes of 30 and 43 degrees and included the Iberian peninsula, Italy, Greece, Northern Africa, the Punjab, Kashmir, China, Japan and Turkistan. In these places homosexual behaviour was apparently especially common. The theory is somewhat confusing, not least because he also talks, without explanation, of 'born pederasts' and of 'pederasty' being 'carried' from one country or area to another through trade routes and colonisation.²² Despite this, his conclusions lent a certain credence to presumptions about excessive homosexual indulgence in these areas, and provided a detailed analysis of the places where it supposedly most took place. He suggested, for example, a strong association with the cities, writing that homosexuality 'of course prevails more in the cities and towns of Asiatic Turkey than in the villages' and was also common in Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers, as well as 'the cities of the south Mediterranean seaboard'.²³ The Chinese, meanwhile, were 'so far as we know them in the great cities, [...] the chosen people of

²¹ 'The Arabian Nights', *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 164 (July 1886): pp.166-199, p.185.

²² Richard Burton, 'Terminal Essay', in *The Arabian Nights*, vol.10 (London, 1885), p.232 & p.222.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.224.

debauchery' and further that 'their systematic bestiality with ducks, goats and other animals is equalled only by their pederasty'.²⁴

Many of Burton's observations were apparently confirmed in Untrodden Fields of Anthropology: Observations on the Esoteric Manners and Customs of Semi-Civilised Peoples. Charles Carrington, the Parisian publisher who issued the first English edition (and was also Charles Féré's publisher for the English translation of The Evolution and Dissolution of the Sexual Instinct [1904]), acknowledged Dr Jacobus X's debt to Burton in a lengthy preface, which rather defensively tried to justify the work. 'Our aim', he wrote, 'has been precisely the same as had in view by Sir Richard Burton, who was not afraid to illustrate his books on travels and voyages with facts of real anthropological interest'.²⁵ Carrington defended Untrodden Fields of Anthropology against accusations that it had an 'improper character', noting that Jacobus X (the alias of French army surgeon Louis Jarolliot) 'writes with the frankness of a medical student [...] laying open as with a scalpel, and exposing the vices of people who have brought depravity to the level of a fine art'.²⁶ Carrington carefully utilises medical metaphor to suggest a disinterested objectivity, but the text seems to serve sexual voyeurism as much as the expansion of anthropological knowledge. He provided wide-ranging and detailed accounts of various sexual proclivities and also corroborated Burton's mapping of homosexuality. He claimed that 'the East enjoys the wretched privilege of being the chief nucleus of pederastic vice', and suggested that it was particularly rife in China.²⁷ In north Africa, meanwhile the Arabs were said to be 'inveterate pederasts', who could be met in 'public squares and the Moorish cafes'.²⁸

Throughout these accounts there was a tacit connection between these 'vices' and high art and culture, and in this way they incorporate a sub-textual commentary on decadence. Jacobus X claimed that the Chinese were analogous to the ancient Romans in their levels of 'abandonment', and detailed the elaborate appliances (such as the 'anal violin') pederasts used.²⁹ Carrington indicated in the preface how some of these peoples had raised debauchery to 'a fine art', and in The Arabian Nights Abus Nawas seduced the three youths through poetry. In these texts art and sex were thus frequently brought together in the search for sensual novelty.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.236.

²⁵ Dr Jacobus X [pseud. Louis Jarolliot], Untrodden Fields of Anthropology: Observations on the Esoteric Manners and Customs of Semi-Civilized Peoples, vol.i (Paris, 1898), p.xiii.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.xx.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.107.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.294 & p.320.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.99 & p.118.

It is perhaps not surprising that these works appeared at the height of the decadent movement in Europe, and they tell us far more about this decadence than the cultures they ostensibly discuss. This becomes evident with the detail both works include on European sexual dissidence, despite the avowed focus on other countries. European sexual mores thus became conflated with ideas of Oriental degradation. The texts suggested the outrageous hedonism of these other cultures (using the language of moral censure), whilst simultaneously indicating the proximity of such pleasures to the European reader. They showed how the sexual plenitude of these distant, exotic locales might be accessed in Paris, London, Berlin and Amsterdam. Jacobus X cited Krafft-Ebing's account of 'the women hater's ball' in Berlin, and noted that 'the vices, practised with such revolting cynicism in Asia, were carried out with unseemly audacity in the great cities of Europe'.³⁰ Burton noted:

outside the Sotadic zone [...] the vice is sporadic, not endemic: yet the physical and moral effects of the great cities, where puberty, they say, is induced earlier than in country sites, has been the same in most lands, causing modesty to decay and pederasty to flourish.³¹

Burton went on to mention scandals in London and Dublin, and suggested that Berlin 'is not a whit better than her neighbours'.³² Burton and Jacobus X both also highlighted the homosexual activity in Paris. Each devoted several pages to an account of the colonisation of the Allée de Vieves, which was also described by Pisanus Fraxi in Centuria Librorum Absconditorum (1879) and by Iwan Bloch in The Sexual Life of Our Time.³³ The details of this and other scandals allowed Paris to emerge as the European centre of homosexual activity in texts ostensibly concerned with other places entirely. The textual coexistence of Paris with the sexualised East intensified the city's existing homoerotic associations, whilst the repetition of particular stories (notably the Allée de Vieves episode) in a number of texts consolidated the city's homoerotic geography.³⁴

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.126.

³¹ Burton, *op.cit.*, p.246.

³² *Ibid.*, p.248.

³³ Pisanus Fraxi, Centuria Librorum Absconditorum (London, 1879), p.414; Burton, *op.cit.*, pp.248-241; Dr Jacobus, *op.cit.*, pp.68-279; and Iwan Bloch, The Sexual Life of Our Times in its Relation to Modern Civilisation, *op.cit.*, p.515. For discussion of this episode see chapter 4 of this thesis.

³⁴ These and other anthropological accounts affirmed stereotypes developing in European sexology, particularly regarding effeminacy, ideas of sexual activity and passivity, and the association of homosexuality with degeneracy. Anthropological writing was, in other words, a key determinant in the development of stereotypes of European, urban homosexual behaviour. Additionally, these developing conceptions in European science and culture doubtless informed the European anthropological gaze at other cultures. Rudi Bleys comments that 'ethnographic depiction [was] reinforced by social and intellectual changes in the urban centres of Europe itself'. Bleys, *op.cit.*, p.81. Also see Jonathan Dollimore for his discussion of the role of Africa as an homoerotic Utopia

Alongside the Orient, then, Paris was symbolically central for decadent writers. The supposed sexual permissiveness of the French and Parisians in particular was legendary, and was emphasised during the period in case studies in sexology, in the anthropological observations cited above, and in other texts, such as Henri d'Argis's *Sodomé* (1888) and of A.Coffignon's *Paris Vivant: La Corruption à Paris*. Sections of the latter appeared in English in Jacobus X's *Crossways of Sex: A Study in Erotopathology* in 1904, along with further extensive details of homosexual antics in the Parisian streets, cafes and parks.³⁵ Ives was dismissive of Parisian sexual hedonism, preferring what he saw as the freer and less pretentious sexual ambience of Berlin.³⁶ The Russian *émigré* poet Marc André Raffalovich similarly contrasted 'the Sodom of Paris' with Berlin's supposedly less debauched homosexual subculture.³⁷ For those interested in precisely these more decadent modes of behaviour, however, Paris was an important reference point, and the place where Oriental eroticism and the decadent impulse for sensual exploration intersected.³⁸ This potential was captured perhaps most strikingly in J-K.Huysmans's *À Rebours*, a text significant for the way in which it imagined the city, gender and sexuality, and for the influence it exerted upon English decadent writers. It is the mysterious work which so influences Dorian Gray, and the lavish descriptions are echoed in passages of Wilde's novel and *Teleny*.

À Rebours (variously translated as *Against Nature*, *Against the Grain*, and *In Reverse*) was published in 1884 and presented, according to Arthur Symons, 'the history of a typical decadent' and 'the main tendencies, the chief results, of the decadent movement in literature'.³⁹ Huysmans had initially been associated with Émile Zola's Médan group of Realists, producing *Marthe* (1876), a story about a prostitute in a licensed brothel, and *Les Soeurs Varard* (1879), which was dedicated to Zola and dealt with working-class life. *À Rebours*, however, was written in a different vein: it drew on Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, as well as the lives of a number of the Parisian decadents with whom Huysmans had had contact. It centres exclusively on the quest of aristocrat Des Esseintes for new sensation and experience and is set largely in his secluded home. It offers lengthy descriptions of his

in André Gide's work. Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford, 1991), p.343

³⁵ Jacobus X, *Crossways of Sex: A Study in Eroto-Pathology*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1904), pp.108-143.

³⁶ Ives, *Diary*, vol.57, 14 Jul.1912, p.101.

³⁷ See Vernon Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity* (Oxford, 1997), p.106.

³⁸ For an analysis of the intersection of aestheticism, anarchism and the *avant garde* during this period see Alexander Varias, *Paris and the Anarchists: Aesthetes and Subversives During the Fin de Siècle* (London, 1997).

³⁹ Symons, *op.cit.*, p.78

acquisitiveness, and includes sections on his former exploits in Paris. The novel has little narrative impulse, and is, as David Mickelsen suggests, 'a succession' rather than 'a sequence' of scenes, which have no necessary interrelation.⁴⁰ This succession amounts to a structure which privileges space over time; foregrounding Des Esseintes's exploits in Paris and the fantastical recreations of his home, and impeding the narrative progression of the novel. It is a structure which can be seen in a less excessive form in The Picture of Dorian Gray and Teleny.⁴¹

Des Esseintes spares no expense in pursuing his obsessions, which seek to obscure nature and side-step orthodox experience. He collects artificial flowers, then grotesque real flowers that appear unnatural; buys a tortoise and has it gilded and encrusted with jewels; investigates perfumery, revelling in its artificiality, and casts sea-faring paraphernalia around part of the house so that 'he was able to enjoy quickly, almost simultaneously, all the sensations of a long sea-voyage, without ever leaving home'.⁴² He manipulates and controls his environment to invoke distant experience, sensation and beauty.

In Paris his quest for new and 'unnatural' sensation takes him through a number of sexual encounters, intensified and (homo)eroticised by physical context and association. Three are described in quick succession in chapter nine, building a vivid sense of what city space could offer in an exploration of desire. The first is with an American female acrobat called Urania, who he observes performing at the circus. As he watches her, admiring her suppleness and agility, he imagines a shift in gender: 'in short, after being a woman to begin with, then hesitating in a condition verging on the androgynous, she seemed to have made up her mind and become an integral unmistakable man'. Meanwhile Des Esseintes 'got to the point of imagining that he for his part was turning female [...] This exchange of sex between Miss Urania and himself had excited him tremendously'.⁴³ Miss Urania's performance of 'suppleness and strength', her name signifying ambiguous sexuality (as highlighted by contemporary sexologists), the carnivalesque context of the circus, and Des Esseintes's passive role in the circus audience, allow for a gender-shift in his fantasies.⁴⁴ He was seized with a definite desire to possess this woman, yearning for

⁴⁰ David Mickelsen, 'À Rebours: Spatial Form', French Forum, vol.3, no.1 (Jan. 1978): pp.48-55, p.53.

⁴¹ This structuring principle exemplifies the geographer Edward Soja's claim that the *avant garde* artistic movements of the *fin de siècle* understood 'the instrumentality of space'. Edward Soja, Post-modern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (London, 1989), p.34.

⁴² Joris-Karl Huysmans, Against Nature: A New Translation of À Rebours, trans. Robert Baldick (London, 1959), p.35.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.111.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of carnivalesque inversion see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London, 1986), pp.6-12.

her just as a chlorotic girl will hanker after a clumsy brute whose embrace could squeeze the life out of her'.⁴⁵ Des Esseintes wants sex with her as if she were a man, but in such a way as to maintain his own hold on power: this is *his* fantasy, created out of the performance *he* watches. He wants to possess this 'woman' (her 'true' gender definitively reasserted for a moment) and force her to play a particular role in his imaginary fragile girlhood. Out of place and performance he constructs and controls a fantasy of gender mutability, which yet preserves him as the locus of power, dictating the erotic events. When they come together, however, she subverts the illusion by 'being positively puritanical in bed' and forcing him to 'resume the man's part'.⁴⁶ The woman's muscular body is not enough to sustain Des Esseintes's interest: what excited him was the fantastical exchange of conventional gender roles which the circus made possible, but which falter in the mundane bedroom.

He is slightly more successful in his second encounter in a cafe with a ventriloquist 'with greasy hair parted on one side near the temple like a boy's'.⁴⁷ His sexual relations with this boyish girl rest on her ability to throw a masculine voice behind the bedroom door, which denigrates her and frightens him:

"Open up, damn you! I know you've got a cully in there with you! But just you wait a minute, you slut, and you'll get what's coming to you!" Straight away, like those lechers who are stimulated by the fear of being caught *flagrante delicto* in the open air, on the river bank, in the Tuileries Gardens, in a public lavatory or on a park bench, he would temporarily recover his powers and hurl himself onto the ventriloquist, whose voice went blustering on outside the room.⁴⁸

The erotic charge arises from the evocation of other places beyond the bedroom. First it comes from the space behind the door and the man who hammers on it, but this in turn is related to the erotic danger of cruising in the city's public spaces. He manages to have sex with the girl (who loses her gender to become simply 'the ventriloquist') only because she manages to maintain for him the fantasy of an encounter (sexual and/or aggressive) with a man, through a chain of spatial associations which leads to homosexual cruising grounds.

The final relationship of the chapter provides a consummation of these thinly veiled homoerotised affairs (with a mannish woman and a boyish girl with a man's voice), and significantly spring not from a fantasy of place - of a circus or of a cruising ground - but from a real juncture of roads and avenues:

⁴⁵ Huysmans, *op.cit.*, p.111.

⁴⁶ Huysmans, *op.cit.*, p.112.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.113.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.115.

As he was walking by himself along the Avenue de Latour-Mausbourg, he was accosted near the Invalides by a youth who asked him which was the quickest way to get to the Rue de Babylone. Des Esseintes showed him which road to take, and as he was crossing the esplanade too, they set off together. [...] They gazed at each other for a moment; then the young man dropped his eyes and came closer, brushing his companion's arm with his own. Des Esseintes slackened his pace, taking thoughtful note of the youth's mincing walk.⁴⁹

This encounter is specifically mapped out, with the meeting place and their destination mirroring the social status of their encounter and their future relationship (they meet at 'Invalides' and head off together for 'Babylone'). The city streets are foregrounded in the depiction of the meeting and in narrating and foreshadowing events, and the city functions here as 'a desire producing machine' (to use Prendergast's term).⁵⁰ Their walk through these streets meanwhile allows Des Esseintes to read the boy's body and begin to act upon the possibilities it suggests. Whilst the meeting is given specific place and extended description, the relationship itself is abstracted into what appears to be the decadent zenith, covering a range of sensations: 'never had he submitted to more delightful or stringent exploitation, never had he run such risks, yet never had he known such satisfaction mingled with distress'.⁵¹

City places create the erotic charge in each of these encounters, allowing for the elaboration of fantasy and sexual experimentation. More specifically the city permits an exploration of homosexual desire; invalid and Babylonian but accommodated and incited by the decadent French capital. The explicit artifice of the built environment reflects, sanctions, and facilitates these performances of mutable gender and sexuality, just as Des Esseintes's hermetic and overtly created domestic space allows him to explore other roles and sensations (though, as Camille Paglia persuasively argues, Des Esseintes is ultimately forced to submit to nature once his decadent explorations destroy his health).⁵²

The decadent impulse charted in the novel impels Des Esseintes into overtly constructed spaces (the domestic sphere and the city): places where nature does not obviously constrain and compel his gaze. In this respect the city was the ideal setting

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.116.

⁵⁰ Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1992), p.28. Prendergast draws a parallel between the city and narrative in this respect. He writes: 'Rousseau denounces the city for creating an endless multiplication of desires and a correspondingly restless quest for impossible gratification. [...] Similarly desire in narrative and desire for narrative are what keeps narrative going and what keeps our reading of narrative going'. *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Huysmans, *op.cit.*, p.22.

⁵² Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven, 1990), p.431.

for decadence or aestheticism.⁵³ Holbrook Jackson wrote of the 1890s: 'Art threw a glamour over the town, and all the artificial things conjured by that word. [...] Poets [...] found romance in streets and theatres, in taverns and restaurants, in bricks and mortar and the creations of artificers'.⁵⁴ The variety of different spaces in the city moreover suggested the possibility of wide-ranging experimentation with perception and sensation which could reach beyond the supposed dictates of 'the natural'. Moreover, the urban environment was more easily mastered and controlled than the forces of nature, amongst which, according to Vivian in Wilde's The Decay of Lying, 'one's individuality absolutely leaves one'.⁵⁵ The city was, like 'Art' in the preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray, 'at once both surface and symbol'. As such it was as integral to the aesthetic and decadent pose and experience as the private, domestic sphere.⁵⁶

Paris was clearly the archetypal decadent city, but in England London was the nearest counterpart. It was a pale shadow by comparison, but those interested in aesthetic and decadent ideas of art and life continued to live and work there, despite remaining, according to Holbrook Jackson, 'spiritual foreigners in our midst'.⁵⁷ These figures settled chiefly around Chelsea. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, (whose pre-Raphaelite circle prefigured the aesthetes in many ways) lived in Cheyne Walk, where he frequently played host to the artist Simeon Solomon and poet Algernon Swinburne.⁵⁸ James MacNeill Whistler, the artist who clashed swords with Ruskin over his *Nocturne* paintings, lived in The Vale, off the King's Road, in a house which Wilde's illustrators Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon took over in 1888. Wilde himself lived in Tite Street, and Aubrey Beardsley, whose work explored ideas of gender mutability and androgyny (most strikingly in his illustrations for Wilde's *Salome*), in nearby Pimlico. London was also where the periodicals associated with aestheticism were published.⁵⁹ London provided a convenient arena for privileged men to experiment with dress and desire, to toy (in Ellen Moers's phrase) with 'the art of the pose; sophistication and the mask',⁶⁰ and to publish work and illustration which explored aesthetic and decadent ideas.

⁵³ See R.K. Thornton, *Poetry of the 'Nineties* (London, 1970), p.57.

⁵⁴ Holbrook Jackson, *The 1890s: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (1913; London, 1927), p.105.

⁵⁵ 'The Decay of Lying', *op.cit.*, p.58.

⁵⁶ *Dorian Gray*, *op.cit.*, p.5.

⁵⁷ Jackson, *op.cit.*, p.58.

⁵⁸ Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West*, (London, 1994), p.65.

⁵⁹ For example, *The Yellow Book* (1894-1895), *The Savoy* (provocatively named after the hotel where Wilde had some of his sexual encounters) (1896), *The Pageant* (1895-1896), and *The Dome* (1897-1900).

⁶⁰ Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummel to Beerbohm* (Lincoln, Neb., 1978), p.286.

The city was not surprisingly a prominent theme in their work. In 'Impression du Nuit: London' (1899) Lord Alfred Douglas imagined the city at night personified as a woman, through which men 'creep like thought'.⁶¹ Symons similarly envisaged London as both seductive and malevolent in 'City Nights' (1896).⁶² In both poems the city was a screen for the projection of erotic fantasy. In his 'Ballad to London' Richard Le Gallienne also celebrated the city at night, and drew a direct comparison with Paris, which was only implicit in the other two poems.⁶³ Wilde focused on London repeatedly, transforming it through his aesthetic gaze in 'Symphony in Yellow' (1889) and 'Impression du Matin' (1881).⁶⁴ In his short story 'The Sphinx Without a Secret' (1891) Lord Murchison tells the unnamed narrator of his infatuation for a Lady Alroy, and of the air of mystery which surrounds her. In a gentle parody of the decadent drive for new sensation, and perhaps also of London's capacity to provide it, the woman's dark secret turns out to be tea-drinking in a room in Soho, which she had hired precisely to heighten her enigma.

Despite the sense of disorder, theatricality and disarray outlined in chapter one, London could not quite be squeezed into the Parisian decadent mould as described in À Rebours, and perhaps as a result the French capital was writ large, alongside the Orient, in English aesthetic and decadent writing.⁶⁵ These other places were often drawn into depictions of London to effect an imaginative transformation and they are significant in both The Picture of Dorian Gray and Teleny. These texts - one written for public consumption, the other for private enjoyment - outlined, with varying degrees of explicitness, the fantasy of a city rich in sensual possibilities.

2.

Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray is, of course, the better known of the two works: the tale of a man whose portrait takes on the signs of his transgressive behaviour and age, and leaves him unaltered in appearance. It was first published in 1891 by Ward Lock to a generally resistant press. Regenia Gagnier persuasively argues that the reception was not to do with the subject matter. Some of Wilde's short stories had dealt with related themes and The Picture of Dorian Gray in any case fulfilled the perceived need for moral censure by killing off the protagonist at the end. The

⁶¹ Lord Alfred Douglas, 'Impression du Nuit: London', in The City of the Soul (London, 1899), p.65.

⁶² Arthur Symons, 'City Nights', in Poems (London, 1924), p.152.

⁶³ Richard Le Gallienne, 'A Ballad to London', in Robert Louis Stevenson: An Elegy, and Other Poems (London, 1895), p.26.

⁶⁴ Oscar Wilde, 'Symphony in Yellow', in The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, ed. J.B.Foreman (Collins, 1983), p.808; 'Impression du Matin', in Poems (Boston, 1881), p.85.

⁶⁵ Brian Stableford describes decadence in England as 'but a pale shadow of French decadence'. Brian Stableford, ed., The Dedalus Book of Decadence: Moral Ruins (Sawtry, 1990), p.51.

problem, Gagnier suggests, was the milieu and setting Wilde chose to depict; the focus on *louche* aristocracy and the debt the text owed to the aesthetic and decadent movements. As has already been suggested, these countered the Victorian onus on productivity and industry as well as developing ideas of gentlemanly behaviour and middle-class identity.⁶⁶ Partly as a result the text unnerved some reviewers, especially given its veiled homoeroticism. A former friend of Wilde's, W.E.Henley, famously wrote in the Scots Observer:

The story - which deals with matters only fitted for the Criminal Investigation Department or a hearing in camera - is discreditable alike to author and editor. Mr Wilde has brains and art and style; but if he can write for none but outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph boys, the sooner he takes up tailoring (or some other decent trade) the better for his own reputation and the public morals.⁶⁷

Henley, like the prosecution in the Wilde trials five years later, was able to identify the hints at homosexual desire in the novel and connect them to the Cleveland Street Scandal which had erupted a year earlier. The novel is not explicit, but the obsession Basil Hallward and Lord Henry have with Dorian, the gaps and silences around many of Dorian's exploits, the trail of ruined young men (one of whom he is able to blackmail), the circuit of places, and even the choice of an ancient Greek name for the protagonist make Henley's extrapolations perfectly plausible. The luxuriant furnishings, moreover, signify at least a generalised Eastern sensuality, whilst the descriptive passages, the poised, mannered opening pages, and the debt to À Rebours link the work to the decadent tradition.⁶⁸

Teleny was published two years later in 1893 after the manuscript had reputedly passed through a chain of authors, supposedly including Wilde. Wilde apparently dropped the unfinished manuscript at Charles Hirsch's bookshop in Coventry Street, between Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square. From there it was picked up and deposited by various men who added to it, before it was handed to Leonard Smithers who published 200 copies in two volumes in 1893, and a further 200 in 1906.⁶⁹ The novel is structured as a dialogue between Des Grieux, a wealthy trader, and an unnamed male friend. Des Grieux relates the story of his sexual development, centring on his intense emotional and sexual relationship with Teleny, a

⁶⁶ Gagnier, *op.cit.*, p.65.

⁶⁷ Cited in Richard Dellamora, Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism (Chapel Hill, 1990), p.208.

⁶⁸ Dorian has nine large-paper copies of the first edition imported from Paris and bound in different colours to suit his changing moods (in a move worthy of Des Esseintes). Dorian Gray, *op.cit.*, p.142.

⁶⁹ Gagnier, *op.cit.*, p.57.

Hungarian musician. Des Grieux and Teleny identify themselves as constitutionally interested in the same sex, but they also desire and have sex with women.⁷⁰ In this decadent milieu erotic pleasure is not restricted and sexuality is fluid. A preference is suggested but the possibilities for these men are not limited. Teleny, for example, has sex with two women in the novel (one being Des Grieux's mother) and Des Grieux attempts to seduce his maid.

The depictions of homosexual and heterosexual love and sex are not interchangeable, however. Sex between men, whilst always tacitly associated with death, also carries with it multiple sensual possibilities and new levels of ecstasy and intensity. Heterosexual love meanwhile is associated by Des Grieux with 'a quiet chatty drawing room flirtation',⁷¹ and heterosexual sex with disease, abuse and enclosure. The bodies of the female prostitutes he visits early in the novel are 'cadaverous and bloated' and contained in a building which mirrors and prefigures them: the brothel looks as if it had 'some loathsome, scabby, skin disease'.⁷² The maid he attempts to seduce is locked in her room before being assaulted by Des Grieux and is subsequently raped by the coachman. These disturbingly misogynist and violent depictions of sexual relations with women take place in the circumscribed spaces of brothel and bedroom, to which the men have access, but from which the women can only escape through death (one of the prostitutes dies of consumption in the brothel and the maid commits suicide from her bedroom window). Des Grieux's mother is the only woman to emerge unscathed from heterosexual relations, although her lover, Teleny, commits suicide once he realises they have been discovered by Des Grieux. By contrast sex between men occurs in a fluid, urban circuit, in public, private and semi-public spaces.

The novel was supposedly initially set in London, but was transposed to Paris by Smithers.⁷³ The references are oblique, however, and are basically limited to mention of an unnamed Quai, the Lycée and the Latin Quarter. Smithers also neglected to expurgate reference to the legal prohibition of sex between men, which stood in England but not France. The city is sufficiently non-specific to be mobile, whilst the suggestions of Paris ensured that decadence loomed over the text.

Teleny was written with a different audience and a more obviously sexual purpose than Wilde's novel, and comparisons between them need to be made with caution. Examining them together, however, begins to reveal similar conceptualisations and fantasies of the city and sexual experimentation. *Teleny's*

⁷⁰ On this point see Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (London, 1994), p.18.

⁷¹ *Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal* (1893; Ware, 1995), p.33

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁷³ Gagnier, *op.cit.*, p.60.

conclusion moreover suggests an amoral reworking of the ending of The Picture of Dorian Gray, and gestures to the potential elaboration of the decadent sexual agenda, which in Wilde's novel is more conclusively closed down.

The novels are both set in the present, in an age of electric doorbells and telegrams, and the possibilities or dangers they are concerned with are consequently explicitly contemporary. Despite this in The Picture of Dorian Gray in particular the imperatives of time are evaded. Whilst its passing (and Dorian's atavism) are dramatically registered through the ageing (and degenerating) portrait, this is the only temporal indicator, and there is a sense of timelessness or stasis as the ever-youthful Dorian explores the city. Moreover, although the narrative structure draws the reader through the novel in a fairly conventional progression (as Dorian moves from innocence to corruption and then to punishment), in other ways the text pulls us into the protagonist's world in which the developmental path and the conventional process of ageing are side-stepped in favour of a decadent accumulation of experience and sensation. Pleasure in this novel is experienced for itself (and in the moment) and is essentially unproductive and unrelated to any hopes for the future. Thus whilst the novel has a stronger narrative impulse than À Rebours, the key focus is the circuit of spaces Dorian moves between in his search for new sensation. This alignment of dissident desire with space comes as a muffled echo of the images propagated by the sexologists who imagined the homosexual or invert defined by a relationship to space and an unproductive tendency. The difference, of course, is that whilst Bloch, Ellis and the others saw a biological imperative at work, Dorian is exercising his curiosity about the scope of his senses and the potential of the city. His exploration is predicated on a pact with the devil and his own imaginative and recreative resources, and not on an intractable inherited condition.

In The Picture of Dorian Gray Lord Henry focuses the first four chapters, and the narrator constructs his surroundings in detail to produce him as aesthete and dandy, and to sustain suggestions of his homosexual desires.⁷⁴ The description of Basil's garden and the 'divan of Persian saddle-bags' on which he lounges have already been discussed. Later his aesthetic credentials are confirmed in the blue vases and Persian rugs which adorn his library. His desires are suggested by his collection of seventeen photographs of Dorian and by his meticulously described route through the West End. From his home on Curzon Street he 'strolled' to the Albany off Piccadilly to visit his bachelor uncle. On leaving he 'passed up the low arcade into Burlington Street, and turned his steps into the direction of Berkeley Square',⁷⁵ to his aunt's, and

⁷⁴ Dorian Gray, *op.cit.*, p.24.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.43.

from there to the park. He is subsequently late home (in chapter four) because he 'went to look after a piece of old brocade in Wardour Street, and had to bargain for hours for it'.⁷⁶ The detailed mapping seems superfluous, except that these places each had a particular set of associations. The route re-treads parts of the homoeroticised map of the capital outlined in chapter two, and for those who knew the significance of these different places Lord Henry might emerge fairly clearly as a man interested in the homosexual possibilities of the city. Thus his route takes him from St James, which had long-standing associations with homosexual activity, into the Albany, where George Ives lived. From there he passes through the shopping arcade which featured prominently in the case of Fanny and Stella in 1881, and where dyed green carnations (symbol of transgressive desire in Paris) could be purchased. Then into the Park, where the guards' activities were well-known, and finally to Soho and a draper's in Wardour Street. It is in Soho that Mr Hyde, Dr Jekyll's dark and (Elaine Showalter suggests) homoeroticised double languishes in Robert Louis Stevenson's popular 1886 novel,⁷⁷ whilst the fictional Jack Saul in *Sins of the Cities of the Plain* was first solicited from a West End draper's shop. It is tempting to put a similar gloss on Lord Henry's hours of bargaining for fabric.⁷⁸

In chapter four the focus of the novel begins to shift to Dorian as he becomes increasingly independent. He has absorbed Henry's map of the West End and uses it in a similar way: he 'lounges' in the park and 'strolls' down Piccadilly watching people and contemplating the potential of the city. 'I felt that this grey monstrous London of ours, with its myriads of people, its sordid sinners and its splendid sins, as you once phrased it, must have something in store for me'.⁷⁹ There is a sense here that the 'monstrous' city belongs to them, they have control over it and can use it for their pleasure. However, whilst Lord Henry strays little from the fashionable West End, Dorian is more adventurous and 'wanders' east one evening - not as part of the sanctioned philanthropic passage, but in search of beauty, 'the real secret of life'.⁸⁰ The visit is described in direct speech, largely without narratorial intervention, and the East End becomes Dorian's creation. It is (in line with some of the other contemporary depictions outlined in chapter one) a mapless and abject space which both repels and seduces Dorian:

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.55.

⁷⁷ See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London, 1990), p.107.

⁷⁸ An association between homosexuality and tailoring would provide an interesting gloss on Henry's aforementioned comments in the *Scott's Observer* that Wilde should pursue a career in the profession.

⁷⁹ *Dorian Gray*, *op.cit.*, p.57.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

I went out and wandered eastward, soon losing my way in a labyrinth of grimy streets and black, grassless squares. About half past eight I passed an absurd little theatre [...] A hideous Jew, in the most amazing waistcoat I ever beheld in my life, was standing at the entrance smoking a vile cigar. He had greasy ringlets, and an enormous diamond glazed in the centre of a soiled shirt. "Have a box my Lord?" he said, when he saw me, and he took off his hat with an air of gorgeous servility.⁸¹

The Jew signifies both the horror and promise of the East End in the conjunction of grime and extravagance. He and Dorian are a distorted reflection of each other - they have the same curly hair and the same interest in jewellery and appearance - but whilst the Jew has the marks of degradation on his own body, Dorian's are displaced onto the portrait. Just as it is Dorian's double in the portrait which facilitates his perpetual youth and hedonistic indulgence, so it is this other double standing in the midst of the labyrinth who draws Dorian into the theatre - a realm of fantasy, offering the illusion of beauty and places beyond the here and now.

The theatre transforms Dorian into a desiring subject and allows a complex array of fantasies to develop. Rather as the circus provokes Des Esseintes's fantasy of Miss Urania, in this novel it is the theatre which allows for the creation of a fantasy around Sybil. She transforms herself in Dorian's eyes from Juliet to a 'pretty boy in hose and doublet and a dainty cap' and back again.⁸² Dorian is absorbed by his own spectatorial role and he returns repeatedly to the theatre as if to confirm his new-found desires. Lord Henry aptly diagnoses what has happened to him in terms of space and movement: 'out of its secret hiding place had crept his Soul, and Desire had come to meet it on the way'.⁸³

It is when the space ceases to be secret, described by the narrator rather than Dorian, and when Lord Henry and Basil visit the theatre as well, that the fantasy and the desires evaporate. Sybil ceases to fulfil the requirement of the space (just as Urania does in *À Rebours*) and she stops performing. As Rachel Bowlby indicates, she 'abandons the sexual, historical and imagistic mobility of her artistic persona for the third-rateness of finding a true, consistent self'.⁸⁴ The fantasy and the transformatory potential of the space remain only as long as Dorian himself shapes and controls it; as with Des Esseintes these fantasies are cursed when they intersect with the social realm beyond.⁸⁵ Dorian, uninterested in this orthodoxy, ceases to

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.60.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.64.

⁸⁴ Rachel Bowlby, *Shopping With Freud* (London, 1993), p.11.

⁸⁵ Paglia, *op.cit.*, p.431.

desire Sybil and retreats through the city's diverse spaces: through the dimly-lit streets of the East End with its coarse women and 'grotesque children'; through Covent Garden at dawn, with carters and barrow-boys; through his own frigid, closed square 'with its blank, close-shuttered windows, and its staring blinds',⁸⁶ and into his large octagonal bed chamber luxuriously hung with Renaissance tapestry. The theatre, at the other end of this chain of sexualised spaces, soon loses its mystery and is specifically located. The *St James's Gazette* reports that the Royal Theatre, Holborn was the *site* of Sybil's 'death by misadventure'.⁸⁷ The theatre is no longer the locus of desire in the midst of the labyrinth, but is instead mundanely mapped in Holborn, much further west than we expected.

The theatre and the whole romantic episode are subsequently erased by being rendered unspeakable. Dorian tells Basil 'if one doesn't talk about a thing, it has never happened. It is simply expression, as Harry says, that gives reality to things'.⁸⁸ From then on Dorian does not talk about his exploits, and they become mysterious and insubstantial as a result. The reader can not piece together the full extent of his personal map of the capital, a map which would perhaps reveal the nature of his desires. We can only guess the implications of the places that are mentioned and what it was about him that 'was so fatal to the lives of young men'.⁸⁹

Dorian's use of the city reveals its expansiveness: each place seems to lead somewhere else, to have somewhere beyond it where it might be possible to find new pleasures. We do not experience Dorian's townhouse as separate and private but are made aware of the garden, the square outside, and the balcony onto which Dorian steps after murdering Basil. The schoolroom housing the painting is significantly private and not open to the public gaze - but it is also bathed in light during the day, not shut away in the dark. Beyond the house and the square is the West End, Piccadilly, and 'the little Italian restaurant in Rupert Street',⁹⁰ which the same night gives way to the 'dingy box' in the theatre. From here Dorian moves into the fantasy spaces evoked by Sybil ('the forest of Arden' and 'an orchard in Verona') and backstage (the scene of his equally fantastic relationship with her).⁹¹ Beyond all this are 'distant parts of Whitechapel' and 'the dreadful places near Bluegate Fields'⁹² (places discussed by James Greenwood and other urban explorers).⁹³ There is always a place we were not expecting or did not know about in the novel: the secret

⁸⁶ *Dorian Gray, op.cit.*, p.102.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.139.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.121.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.167.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.87.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.156-157.

⁹³ See chapter 1.

cupboard where he hides Basil's hat and coat; the secret drawer containing the mysterious paste he takes to the docks with him; the exotic spaces he evokes within his rooms through his collections and concerts; and the places which exist beyond the novel where Dorian goes but from which we are excluded. We follow him east only once, but after the encounter with James Vane lose him. These various places stand in for Dorian's elusive secrets alongside the portrait's macabre transformation (which illustrates their effects).

The different places (and the possibilities they represent) are distinct yet Dorian moves between them and on from them (from the theatre and his relationship with Sibyl, for example) with ease. Whereas the spaces that define Lord Henry are unified by their aesthetic and dandified associations, Dorian's are connected only by his presence and ability to use them for sensual experimentation and gratification. Their multiplicity and his reinvention in and through each one echo his aesthetic and decadent philosophy of personality: 'to him, man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead.'⁹⁴ The abject nature of this 'creature' (it is both sensual and monstrous) is again reflected in the pleasure and horror each of Dorian's spaces yield.⁹⁵ In the East End, scene of drug-induced reveries, he is threatened by James Vane; the theatre is both squalid and fantastic (and his Jewish double both 'hideous' and extravagant); his home is the scene of his extreme acquisitiveness and wild concerts, but also has the schoolroom with the decaying portrait; finally the schoolroom itself holds both the picture and a mirror, which disgust and delight him in turn. Each of these spaces in the city reflects his own duality and become a projection of his decadence; a pose which holds both the promise of sensual intensity but also a process of gradual debilitation. With the narratorial voice focusing on Dorian, the city is reshaped to accord with his vision.

Dorian's decadent engagement with the city is facilitated by his ability to keep each of these spaces separate from each other, whilst maintaining his mobility between them. His independent movement through the city, by foot and cab, maintains his secret and disguises his locale and destination. This movement and evolving personal geography constitute what Steve Pile has called 'unmappable space'. This is a reworking of the cartographic city (or 'the view from above') and draws on the 'innumerable [...] subtle stubborn, embodied, resistant meanings' which would be

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.159.

⁹⁵ I use 'abject' here to denote a simultaneous repulsion from and attraction towards a person, object or place, what Julia Kristeva describes as 'an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion'. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. Leon S.Roudiez (New York, 1982), p.1.

invisible on a conventional map, and which are brought to the fore through aspects of the subject's own biography and desires.⁹⁶ The reader is never given an overview or panorama of London in the novel, but rather fragments of the city cobbled together as Dorian passes through them. The novel thus begins to suggest the malleable nature of space, showing how domineering associations might be evaded and remoulded through individual use and fantasy. Meanwhile, the associations of the spaces that do appear in the novel (of Mayfair, Piccadilly, Holborn, Bluegate Fields) are themselves expanded by their appearance in a text by the famous aesthete Oscar Wilde, and in their use by his decadent protagonist. The particular configuration of places that emerges and the perspective Dorian brings to them constitutes a reworked notion of what pleasures the city could yield. It signals London's ability to accommodate a whole range of activities which are uncontrollable precisely because they are fleeting and unmappable (even the reader is not aware of them). In other words even though Dorian's activities in the city are clearly based on assumptions of possibility consistent with his masculinity and class, they are nevertheless mysterious and elusive and part of an individualised engagement with the urban terrain. This is part of the potential the novel reveals - a potential suggested by Pile in his analysis of Michel De Certeau's The Practice of Everyday Life:

The City has an unconscious life which, we might say, carries out a guerrilla warfare with attempts to repress it: in other words, administrative rationality continually struggles to impose an order on people's everyday urban spatial practices, but must always fail.⁹⁷

The specificities of Dorian's personal map, and his precise desires and pleasures are rendered opaque in the novel, but this opacity is also partly the means through which Wilde suggests a departure from 'administrative rationality' and ideas of propriety. Whilst the bedroom and the family home might define and specify marital sexual relations, here it is the multiplicity of spaces and untracked movements between them that suggests Dorian's transgressive sexual appetite. It is a spatial dynamic (and opacity) that recurs in The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, where multiple personalities and dissident desires are again at work. In her analysis of the novel Elaine Showalter demonstrates the conflation of homoeroticism and anality with the foggy streets and the city by night.⁹⁸ By obscuring the protagonist in darkness and fog Stevenson indicates sexual and moral disorder. Dorian's dissidence is signalled in similar ways: he goes out at night and encounters Basil in the fog just before

⁹⁶ Steve Pile, The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity (London, 1996), p.226.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.227.

⁹⁸ Showalter, *op.cit.*, p.113.

murdering him. Perhaps more significant, though, is the fact that he explores the city more thoroughly than any other character in the novel. Dorian departs from the constrained circuit of Lord Henry and other more minor characters. Lord Henry treads a predictable West End route which contains and defines him, whilst Dorian's imitators are frozen in Mayfair balls and sit like shop dummies in Pall Mall club windows.⁹⁹ The carters only seem to know Covent Garden and London at dawn. Sybil and James Vane take a walk from their home, but James is a reluctant visitor to the park, feeling and looking out of place and aware of his inability to conform to expectation. They return on the set route of a public bus, which 'left them close to their shabby home in the Euston Road'.¹⁰⁰ Their excursion is predictable, traceable and public, and confirms their economic and social standing. Those ruined by Dorian find themselves shut out: Lord Henry's sister, Lady Gwendolen, is excluded from society, and when Dorian asks Adrian Singleton why he is in the opium den he replies 'where else would I be?'¹⁰¹ Dorian experiences the city and his own sensuality far more thoroughly than these other figures. This kind of urban exploration is, however, available only to those men who had the ability to perform and transform themselves, the mobility associated with wealth, and the drive to explore the multiplicity of desire. More abstractly - and this is where the novel's moral begins - it is available to those who have sold their soul and exist in disregard not just of convention (which might be lauded) but also of their affect on those around them.

The biggest danger Dorian faces is from James Vane who unmasks Dorian's pretence of youth, and pieces together enough of his personal map to trace him to Selby Royal - bringing the Royal Theatre and the opium dens of the East End into the privileged space of the country estate. This is the moment when Dorian's transgression of class and sexual boundaries, and his unauthorised use of city space, come dangerously close to exposure, and it is only Vane's unexpected death that saves him. Finally, of course, Dorian is betrayed by his own body as he attempts to destroy the mutating painting in the old schoolroom:

He seized [the knife], and stabbed the picture with it. There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke, and crept out of their rooms. Two gentlemen who were passing in the Square below, stopped, and looked up at the great house. They walked on until they met a policeman, and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but there was no answer. Except for a light in one of the top windows, the house was all dark. After a time, he went away and stood in an

⁹⁹ *Dorian Gray*, *op.cit.*, p.145.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.80.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.207.

adjoining portico and watched.[...] After about a quarter of an hour, [Francis, the butler] got the coachman and one of the footmen and crept upstairs. They knocked, but there was no reply. They called out. Everything was still. Finally after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof, and dropped down on to the balcony. The windows yielded easily: their bolts were old.¹⁰²

As soon as Dorian stabs the portrait the reader's identification (and complicity) with him ceases and we are shut out of the schoolroom. Our viewpoint shifts: having more or less followed Dorian through the novel (although not to the extent we might have liked) we are now aligned instead with the servants inside and the gentlemen outside the house. They are set up in two contrasting places (the semi-public square and the private house) but are galvanised by the scream - a final aural connection between inside and out. Although they ring on the bell, the servants do not let the gentlemen in. The servants, meanwhile, mirror the gentlemen by knocking on the schoolroom door (and obviously failing to gain entry). In the schoolroom the corrupted (and corrupting) body of the transgressor lies inaccessible from the private house, which is in turn is closed to the nocturnal visitors outside. The figure who provided the connection between these spaces is dead and those spaces consequently close to each other, as formal divisions are (re)imposed. The decadent phantasmagoria of urban experimentation evaporates in his death and 'administrative rationality' and conventional divisions between inside and out and public and private are reinstated. The policeman, absent in the rest of the text, finally makes his entrance.

Given this orderly ending it is interesting that the novel was still perceived by Lord Queensberry's defence to be 'calculated to subvert morality and encourage unnatural vice'.¹⁰³ However, the literary critic Peter Preston identifies fiction as a place where writers attempt to 'render and comprehend the multiplicity of the city'.¹⁰⁴ This is perhaps what was considered to be so dangerous about the work since it publicised what many already knew to be true: that there was a set of possibilities in the diverse spaces of the city and the potential for a self-conscious and self-determining exploration of them (which the ending of a novel could not eradicate). Dorian Gray takes his cue from a book, after all, and then creates himself and seals his fate through his use of (and perspective on) city spaces.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.247-248.

¹⁰³ Cited in Ed Cohen, Talk on the Wilde Side: Toward a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities (London, 1993), p128.

¹⁰⁴ Peter Preston and Paul Simpson-Housley, Writing the City: Eden, Babylon and the New Jerusalem (London, 1994), p.7.

Teleny elaborates this potential for decadent experimentation in the city, but with a restricted audience the writers are far more explicit and the vices consequently less mysterious than in The Picture of Dorian Gray. As in Sins of the Cities of the Plain, the city is itself an erotic component of the novel. Thus although Steven Marcus suggests that urban location is incidental to the eroticism of other Victorian pornographic texts, in Teleny the diverse spaces of the metropolis are pivotal.¹⁰⁵ The writers draw on the long-standing association between homosexuality and the city and the decadent reputation of Paris to explore homoerotic sensuality.

Des Grieux's relationship with Teleny takes some time to consummate and involves a protracted topographical foreplay, involving various real and fantasy spaces. It begins in the concert hall with a performance by Teleny which transports Des Grieux to the 'luxuriant loveliness' of the Alhambra (the Moorish palace in Grenada but also the famous music hall in Leicester Square), Egypt, and ancient Greece, and 'the gorgeous towns of Sodom and Gomorrah, weird, beautiful and grand'.¹⁰⁶ The space of the concert hall is transformed by Teleny's performance to a catalogue of homoeroticised places, which climax with a vision of the pianist standing naked in 'a rain of rubies [...] that was consuming the Cities of the Plain'.¹⁰⁷ The end of the concert leaves Des Grieux sexually exhausted: 'I was powerless to applaud, I sat there dumb, motionless, nerveless'.¹⁰⁸

Des Grieux is drawn back repeatedly to Teleny's performances, and it is art which transforms his understanding of his desires, rather as Dorian Gray is transformed through the theatre and the decadent French novel he reads. In the wake of these concerts Des Grieux is reluctant to return home and instead takes to the streets: he wanders around aimlessly one night, on another finds himself drawn towards Teleny's house, and on yet another follows Teleny and his aristocratic friend Braincourt to the 'Quai de ___', a popular cruising ground. Here Des Grieux finds an effeminate dandy, an 'old wiry simpering man' and a 'strong, sturdy' workman cruising.¹⁰⁹ It is an abject space, like the East End in The Picture of Dorian Gray, in which desire and disgust are mingled. Men 'spring up' and 'disappear' suddenly, and Des Grieux loses himself and his purpose among them:

I had been so taken up with all these midnight wanderers that I had lost sight both of [Teleny] and Braincourt, but all at once I saw them reappear. With them was a young Zouave sub-lieutenant, a dapper and

¹⁰⁵ Steven Marcus, The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-19th Century England (London, 1966), p.169.

¹⁰⁶ Teleny, *op.cit.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.79.

dashing fellow, and a slim and swarthy youth, apparently an Arab. The meeting did not seem to have been a carnal one [...] the soldier was entertaining his friends with his lively talk.¹¹⁰

The Quai is transformed by darkness and Teleny and Braincourt become like the other erotic spectres here, magically materialising in front of Des Grieux. There are numerous sexual possibilities with a range of different men, who accord with figures of homosexual fantasy: the working class youth (whom Wilde delighted in), the soldier (who attracted Symonds and Ashbee), and the Arab (who Burton and Jacobus X suggest had a predilection for sex with men). Aside from these objects of desire, there are the sexual consumers - the bohemian artist, the *louche* aristocrat and the dissipated old man. These men are not having sex, however, and the 'Quai de ___' seems also to provide the possibility for socialising. Uninitiated into this milieu, and, as a middle-class merchant, failing to accord with any of the archetypes, Des Grieux wanders off directionless, and finds himself 'standing in the middle of the bridge, staring vacantly at the open space in front of [him]'.¹¹¹ The park and the concert hall - both places for respectable recreation - have become overtly sexualised, challenging Des Grieux's conceptualisation of both the city and his own desires. He questions his own sanity and contemplates suicide, but in the midst of this crisis Teleny appears and the pair begin to have sex on the bridge 'amidst the thickening fog' (once again taking homosexual experimentation into darkness and opacity).¹¹² Des Grieux and Teleny continue to have sex in the cab as they travel through the city and as they 'grope [their] way upstairs in the dark' at Teleny's house. Their union culminates in a luxurious secret chamber ('a room', Teleny tells him, 'prepared to receive you, and where no man has ever set foot').¹¹³ Here they have anal sex, an act clearly prefigured by their passage through the house and the lengthy description of their ultimate destination (it has 'warm, soft, quilted' walls and floor).¹¹⁴ The sequence of spaces and the movement between them are explicitly sexualised, appearing to both mirror and produce these acts and desires (in ways which resonate with some of the sexological case studies discussed in the last chapter).

This meshing of place and sex continues in the exclusive subculture Des Grieux is initiated into by Teleny and Braincourt. From a secret balcony at Braincourt's house Des Grieux watches his fantastical experiences at the concert materialise in front of him. He sees a great room decorated with 'lewd art worthy of Sodom or Babylon' in

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.81.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.88.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.89.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.89-90.

which bodies are, as Neil Bartlett suggests, 'converted into objects, luxuries, additions to a fabulous collection':¹¹⁵

On faded old damask couches, on huge pillows made out of priests' stoles [...] on soft Persian and Syrian divans, on lion and panther rugs, on mattresses covered with a variety of cats' skins, men, young and good-looking, almost all naked, were lounging by twos and threes, grouped in attitudes of consummate lewdness [...] such as are only seen in the brothels of men in lecherous Spain, or in those of the wanton East.¹¹⁶

The men are syntactically held over until the end of the description, and are offered up by the luxurious divans and rugs; they become part of an elaborate tableau of Mediterranean and Oriental debauchery. It is another magical fantasy space like the cruising ground, but this is for a wealthy elite who can afford its creation and control the participants. Alan Sinfield rightly points out that these 'gatherings' are initially unavailable to the middle-class trader Des Grieux. It is only when he is invited in by the aristocratic Braincourt as a result of his affair with the bohemian Teleny that he gains entry.¹¹⁷ Des Grieux is comforted by his observation that 'men of the highest intelligence, of the kindest heart, and of the purest aesthetic feelings, were - like [him]self - sodomists'.¹¹⁸ The search for new sensation (which previously presented Des Grieux with effeminate old men, 'sturdy' workmen, and female prostitutes) was accompanied by the fear not of moral retribution but social degradation: hell, he imagines, would be made unbearable by 'the low society we might meet there'.¹¹⁹ Now these 'low' figures, fixed in their class and the spaces appropriate to it, are left behind. Meanwhile, the society of wealth, bohemianism, and decadence generates a homoerotic circuit in which he can be a free agent, explore different roles, and gain access to all areas. Once admitted into this milieu the city opens out for him and becomes his own decadent playground.

In The Picture of Dorian Gray sexual activity and identity are figured through a series of distinct urban spaces, and are sustained for as long as the full extent of the circuit can be kept secret. Once the revelation occurs the spaces available contract and the decadent gloss dissipates. A similar outcome attends Des Grieux's exposure: when the scandal of Des Grieux and Teleny's affair 'had appeared in every newspaper', and Teleny's suicide note has become public property, Des Grieux becomes the

¹¹⁵ Neil Bartlett, Who Was That Man? - A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde (London, 1988), p.177.

¹¹⁶ Teleny, *op.cit.*, p.114.

¹¹⁷ Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.138.

¹¹⁸ Teleny, p.130.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

subject of a 'famous clergyman's [...] edifying sermon' which prophesised that 'he shall have no name on the street' and 'shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world'.¹²⁰ As in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a conventional spatial dynamic is reimposed. The twist here, however, is that Des Grieux (unlike Teleny and Dorian Gray), lives to tell the tale, and his banishment is into the anonymity of the streets and into the darkness, both of which are associated with homosexual activity in the text (and more generally). Des Grieux moreover promises to detail further amorous adventures: of his mother and Braincourt, and, perhaps more intriguingly, of himself and his *doppelgänger*. As Des Grieux runs frantically through the streets after finding his mother having sex with Teleny, he collides with his 'own image'.¹²¹ It is this man who subsequently rescues Des Grieux from the river after a second suicide attempt. Des Grieux's anonymous interlocutor asks him if he ever saw his double again and Des Grieux replies 'that is another strange incident in my too-eventful life. Perhaps', he adds teasingly, 'I'll tell you some other time'.¹²² The suggestion of further adventures beyond the text, inverts the conclusion to Wilde's novel. There it was Dorian's relationship to his double (the painting) that both facilitated his decadent lifestyle, but also ultimately killed him. In *Teleny* there is at least the suggestion of an amorous engagement between the two. The novel thus re-works Wilde's conclusion, permitting further decadent adventuring. Des Grieux's personal geography is curtailed after he is branded a sexual outlaw, but there is still potential for decadent experimentation: existing in direct opposition to the prevailing moral order (and in a pornographic novel) yields its own sexual possibilities.¹²³

3.

À Rebours, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Teleny*, use the variety and indefinability of the city suggested in chapter one to explore fantasy and sensuality. Desire, identity and the city become mutable when viewed through an aesthetic and decadent prism, and the interaction of these three factors seemingly suggests boundless scope for new sensation. The result is the jettisoning of 'banal orthodoxy' in an apparently radical transgression of some of the conventional uses of city space, troubling divisions between public and private, and, in London, between east and west. However, whilst the texts that have been considered in this chapter existed (in different ways and to

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.158.

¹²¹ The events are related fairly prosaically but nevertheless suggest the influence decadence exerted on the text. Doubling is a classic feature of decadent writing, indicating a preoccupation with the complexities and intricacies of the self.

¹²² *Teleny*, *op.cit.*, p.153.

¹²³ *Teleny's* pornographic and restricted status allowed it in some ways to serve as (in Dellamora's phrase) 'a locus of resistance to social regulation and popular prejudice'. However, this text also reproduces reactionary sexual, political and social dynamics. Dellamora, *op.cit.*, p.13.

varying degrees) on the margins of acceptability and foregrounded the pursuit of pleasure and sensation, they also bolstered the *status quo*, challenging neither the social organisation nor the sexual economy of the city. It would in fact be more accurate to suggest that they drew on existing structures and spatial dynamics to explore homosexuality and decadence. This section will consider some of these limitations, and some of the responses to aestheticism and decadence which fixed these movements in stereotype and curtailed the potentially radical emphasis on an individualised engagement with the city.

The depiction of the city in these novels replayed familiar urban dynamics. Most obviously Dorian's journeys east replicated those of philanthropists, urban explorers and 'slummers'. The allusions to his exploits there reproduced a set of assumptions which conceived of the East End poor as sexually pliant and saw the Limehouse Chinese providing a passport to fantastical other worlds through opium. The transformation of the city by night and the transgressive use of public spaces like the theatre (in both *Teleny* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) were also well established, and used in renditions of both heterosexual and homosexual sexual behaviour. These authors were drawing on a set of relatively commonplace ideas about where sexual transgression might take place in London. Although the novels are significant in elaborating the homoerotic element, the visions they contain also have a perhaps surprising conformity. The activities of the protagonists are moreover reliant on existing social structures, and the antics of Des Esseintes, Dorian Gray, Des Grieux, Teleny and Braincourt constitute an exclusive engagement with the urban terrain. Whilst the texts might indicate an imaginative refashioning of the city, they also suggest that its possibilities are open only to a particular elite milieu.

In *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century* Walter Benjamin rounds on the aesthetic slogan '*l'art pour l'art*'. He notes: 'the solemnity with which it is celebrated is the corollary to the frivolity that glorifies the commodity. Both abstract from the social existence of men'.¹²⁴ The comparison is instructive since in these texts aestheticism and decadence are philosophically and practically dependent on the ability to consume; to consume those 'beautiful moments' but more practically to purchase the ornamentation necessary to aestheticise and eroticise the interiors. We see this in Lord Henry's library, in what Rachel Bowlby calls Dorian's 'passionate consumption' and wild concerts,¹²⁵ and in Braincourt's art collection which transforms his hall and seem to incite the sexual antics. Money and position not only

¹²⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century', in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms and Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz (New York, 1986), p.158.

¹²⁵ Bowlby, *op.cit.*, p.18. Bowlby argues convincingly that in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* aestheticism, advertising and consumerism converge.

enable these domestic transformations but also allow these men to participate in the rest of the homoerotic and homosocial circuit, with its clubs, restaurants, and theatres. The cabmen who transport them between these places also need paying. The aesthetic and decadent fantasies of city space are clearly dependent on privilege and the ability to engage with some of the changes to the cityscape examined in chapter one. They also rested on the maintenance of existing social structures: securing new pleasures and sensations required an underclass to facilitate them.¹²⁶

The heroes of this fiction share features with Benjamin's *flâneur*, of whom Steve Pile comments: 'he may be in the margins, but he is not of the margins. Indeed it is this male poet's location inside and outside power relations that gives him access to the streets, to the crowds, to the erotic underground of city life'.¹²⁷ The dissident sexual behaviour of Des Esseintes, Teleny, Des Grieux, and less explicitly Dorian Gray, might theoretically make them outsiders, but their particular exploration of desire indicates a privileged position within the dominant order. Whilst the sexological texts of the last chapter separated out the homosexual and invert by positing a fixed sexual identity, these texts show clearly the persistence of privileges associated with class, whoever one had sex with. They indeed suggest a much more diffuse concept of sexual identity altogether. This is partly because the men's desires are not labelled, partly because they are largely seen to be the product of experimentation rather than biology, and partly because the sexual objects are both male and female. Class identification is consequently perhaps stronger in these works than an affiliation to a putative homosexual identity.

The desires explored in these novels are thus associated not only with the city, but with the middle and upper classes in the city. There is the suggestion that this kind of urban sexual experimentation was the preserve of an elite group, with walk-on parts for soldiers, servants, workmen and exotic foreigners. The aristocratic and bohemian figures in these texts do transgress boundaries (between public and private and east and west, for example) but they also reaffirm them since it is the act of transgression itself which is erotic.¹²⁸ The boundary and the space on the other side are consequently essential, as are a series of restricted figures who serve as foils to the mobile protagonists. In *Teleny* the desires of these foreigners and lower class men and women are obscured or invented as receptive and ubiquitous, just as they often were in sexology, the anthropological texts of Burton and Jacobus X, and the newspaper press.

¹²⁶ William Morris discusses the reactionary implications of aestheticism in 'The Art of the People', *Humane Review* (1900), cited by Williams, *op.cit.*, p.527.

¹²⁷ Pile, *op.cit.*, p.231.

¹²⁸ On this point see Stallybrass and White's consideration of the relationship between upstairs and downstairs in the upper middle and upper-class Victorian home. *Op.cit.*, p.156.

Within the texts themselves the power dynamics and economic realities that structure the city impinge on decadent urban pleasures for two reasons. First, a decadent and aesthetic perspective places the onus on the individual and suggests his autonomy. This is something all the heroes ultimately lose, or never really possessed. Second, the fact that their experience is radically individuated and not shared means that social interaction almost inevitably disappoints. The cities over which Des Esseintes, Dorian Gray and Des Grieux imagine some sort of mastery ultimately defeat them because these cities also have an existence beyond the imaginations of these individuals. London and Paris had been constructed in other more domineering ways in accordance with other ideologies which counteracted the individual's decadent and aesthetic perspective. The disappointment or disaster each of these characters experience emanates from the intrusion into their fantasies of the wider social and economic structures on which their philosophies of experience are paradoxically reliant. In these texts the city thus both invites fantastical recreation but also thwarts it.

This implicit constraint was ridiculed in numerous parodies of the aesthetic and decadent movements, and of Oscar Wilde and his circle in particular. Chief among them were W.S. Gilbert's comic opera Patience (1881), W.H. Mallock's The New Republic (1877), George Du Maurier's cartoons in Punch, particularly between 1879 and 1885, and two novels, The Green Carnation by Robert Hichens and Autobiography of a Boy by G.S. Street, both published in 1894. They all predictably centred on London and defined the aesthete and decadent precisely for the wider public. They ironically produced a constrictive stereotype from a stance supposedly centred on innovative experience.

The Autobiography of a Boy is a series of episodes in the life of Tubby, a young effeminate aesthete who lives in Jermyn Street, just off Piccadilly (a street full of bachelor chambers and complete with Turkish bath). A friend edits the lengthy memoirs and adds an apology:

I perceived that if I published it in all its length nobody would read it: his life in England was not various, his orbit was circumscribed, the people he met and the situations he faced had a certain sameness, the comments he made on them dealt in repetition.¹²⁹

The Green Carnation elaborates this sense of restriction in a parody of Wilde's circle and episodes in The Picture of Dorian Gray. Wilde's novel even makes an appearance retitled The Soul of Bertie Brown. The two central characters, Araminth (who

¹²⁹ G.S. Street, The Autobiography of a Boy (London, 1894), p.vii.

smacked essentially of cities') and Lord Reggie, his young sidekick, are enmeshed in London, and only cope during a visit to the countryside by obsessively denaturalising what surrounds them.¹³⁰ They tread a well-worn West End circuit which incorporates Piccadilly, Wardour Street, and Covent Garden, and claim to undertake transgressions of east/west and public/private boundaries. Araminth proclaims:

There are moments when I desire squalor, sinister mean surroundings, dreariness and misery. The great unwashed mood is upon me. Then I go out from luxury. The mind has its West End and its Whitechapel. The thoughts sit in the park sometimes, but sometimes they go slumming.¹³¹

Dorian's abject decadent wanderings are here transformed into what Holbrook Jackson would call 'conventional wickedness', part of a fashion for slumming rather than a driven search for new sensation.¹³² After a conversation with Araminth, Lady Locke informs Mrs Windsor of another tenet of the decadent philosophy over tea: 'we are to sin on the housetop and in the street, instead of in the privacy of a room with a door locked. But what will the London County Council say?'¹³³

Hichens depicts the aesthete and decadent pose as pompous, predictable and fragile. It is endangered in the text by the prospective marriage of Reggie to Lady Locke. Luckily she refuses, and Araminth tells Reggie: 'you will still be living your marvellous scarlet life, still teaching the London tradesmen the exact value of your supreme aristocracy'.¹³⁴ The *status quo* is reaffirmed not challenged: class relations are underlined and it is continuation rather than innovation that is stressed.

Araminth and Reggie's pose is also associated with effeminacy and a disdain for Englishness. Lord Reggie is, to Lady Locke, 'not a man at all'¹³⁵ and is described mincing through the opera house.¹³⁶ Tubby in *The Autobiography of a Boy* despairs of conventional masculinity with the 'mania for outdoor sports that afflicts the country'.¹³⁷ He is more concerned about whether his smoking jacket matches his new rug.¹³⁸ This fear for the nation's masculinity was voiced more seriously in a cluster of articles in the mid-1890s. The *National Observer* noted shortly before the Wilde trials: 'the time has surely come when there should be an end of this, and when every man

¹³⁰ Robert Hichens, *The Green Carnation* (1894; London, 1992), p.46.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹³² Holbrook Jackson, *The 1890s: A Review of Art and Ideas* (1913; London, 1927), p.70.

¹³³ Hichens, *op.cit.*, p.17.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.182.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.60.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.15. This episode is a parody of a visit to the theatre by Wilde and some of his friends which was observed by Hichens and recounted in his autobiography. See Charles Hichens, *Yesterday* (London, 1947), p.70.

¹³⁷ *Street*, *op.cit.*, p.39.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.29.

who cares for the manhood of literature should lift his pen against so disgraceful a crew'.¹³⁹ A year earlier Grant Allen noted similar concerns in 'The New Hedonism': 'we see that each man and each woman holds his virility and her femininity in trust for humanity and that to play fast and loose with either [...] is fraught with danger for the state and for future generations'.¹⁴⁰

The danger became more pressing with the trials of 1895 when Wilde, decadent art and gross indecency all became conflated in condemnatory newspaper editorials. The Evening News labelled Wilde as 'one of the high priests of a school which attacks all the wholesome, manly, simple ideals of English life, and sets up false gods of decadent culture and intellectual debauchery'.¹⁴¹ The Star, at the opening of the trials, was more circumspect. It claimed that 'the literature of the decadence contains much which is admirable and something that will live' but also noted that beside the 'saner element' 'there has existed a parasite, an excrescence, an aberration which diligent advertisement has made more or less familiar to the public against its will'. The piece concluded: 'the ultimate effect of recent disclosures should be to strengthen health and right and reason - that kind of art which Plato had in mind when he spoke of the refreshing winds that blow from healthy regions'.¹⁴² The Telegraph, finally, reiterated the French connection after Wilde had been convicted:

Everybody can see and read for himself, and every honest and wholesome-minded Englishman must grieve to notice how largely this French and Pagan plague has filtered into the healthy fields of English life [undermining] the natural affections, the domestic joys, the sanctity and sweetness of the home.¹⁴³

At a time of escalating tensions between the European nations, such foreign insinuation into English life was especially threatening, and these commentators tended towards the promotion of a cleansing and tacitly pastoral Englishness (the winds blowing 'from healthy regions'). Decadence was the inverse: it was French, urban, excessive, contagious, and parasitic, vampirically draining the nation's life blood.

In the face of this rhetoric it is perhaps hardly surprising that Bram Stoker began Dracula in the summer of 1895, and that the text can be read as an ambivalent response to Wilde's conviction and the decadent menace. Talia Schaffer shows how a careful reading of the dates and detail in Dracula exposes a close association between the events of the novel and elements of Wilde's experience, whilst also hinting at parts

¹³⁹ Cited in Karl Beckson, London in the 1890s: a Cultural History (London, 1992), p.64.

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Jackson, *op.cit.*, p.29.

¹⁴¹ Cited in H.Montgomery Hyde, The Trials of Oscar Wilde (New York, 1973), p.18.

¹⁴² 'What We Think: A Check to Cant', Star, 6 Apr.1894: p.1.

¹⁴³ 'Dangerous Infiltration', Telegraph, 6 Apr.1895: p.4.

of Stoker's own biography and in particular his intense friendships with men.¹⁴⁴ An analogy between the novel and contemporary critiques of decadence and degeneracy is compelling. The novel imagines a foreign invader (significantly from eastern Europe, as with Svengali in George du Maurier's bestseller *Trilby* [1894]) with ambivalent desires, prowling the city for new victims, existing apart from the domestic arena, and potentially sapping the health of the new generation. This figure is also alluring, however, and Stoker's prose in places echoes the language of decadent excess and seems sometimes to be in the thrall of the sexually transgressive undercurrent in the work. In this sense the novel seems both to explore and curtail homoeroticism and decadence. It uncovers the disturbing potential for sexual transgression and disorder in the city, as in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but whereas in Wilde's novel the pleasures and consequences are focused on an individual, in *Dracula* there are wider implications. The defeat of the vampire marks not only the end of a lone sexual pervert, but also the salvation of the family, future generations and the nation. The individual intensity of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* opens out into an analysis of potential national crisis and eleventh-hour redemption in Stoker's novel, reflecting wider cultural fears of imperial and racial decline.

Sinfield and Cohen both show the Wilde trials to be a crucial moment of definition; the point when diffuse indicators of homosexuality cohered into a fixed stereotype and the long-parodied aesthetic and decadent pose became a more serious threat. Their analyses perhaps underplay the significance of precedent ideas of same-sex identity, which were signalled by specific tastes and modes of behaviour, as chapter two suggested. However, both critics powerfully indicate the new sense of an overarching and archetypal homosexual in Wilde. Sinfield observes that 'the notoriety of Wilde headed off the Victorian exploration of diverse models of same-sex relations, and, in a twin move, afforded a simple stereotype as a peg for behaviour and feelings that were otherwise incoherent or unspeakable'.¹⁴⁵

Whilst this new solidity in ideas about homosexual identity after Wilde's trials is compelling, the accompanying notion of increased puritanism and restrictiveness in the city is more debatable and has been overplayed, most famously by Holbrook Jackson. In his 1913 account of the 1890s he commented:

The chance romances of the streets were abandoned for the reputedly more certain realities of home life. Bohemians cut their locks, shed their soft collars

¹⁴⁴ Talia Schaffer, "A Wilde Desire Took Me": The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*, *Journal of English Literary History*, vol.61, no.2 (Summer 1994): pp.381-425. Christopher Craft has also shown the strong homoerotic vein running through the novel. Christopher Craft, 'Kiss Me on Those Red Lips', in *Speaking of Gender*, ed. Elaine Showalter (London, 1989).

¹⁴⁵ Sinfield, *op.cit.*, p.125.

and fell back upon suburbia [...] even dandyism of thought and word disappeared; for once you live in the suburb, there is nothing left but to become ordinary.¹⁴⁶

Jackson's claim is seductive, particularly given the mythology surrounding the *fin de siècle* and the decadence of the 1880s and the early 1890s. However, there was a limit to the libertinism and abandon of the pre-trial period, just as there was to the supposed restrictiveness of the period that followed.

Although The Picture of Dorian Gray suggests the possibilities associated with the city, in Wilde's prison 'letter' De Profundis, London in the early 1890s emerges as a place where free will might be surrendered rather than exercised. Wilde's sexuality (in terms of his relationship with Douglas and his liaisons with other men mentioned in the text) is inextricably bound up with London and what the city made possible. There is a sense of his being seduced by the city and exploring his sexual identity through it. Looking back, however, Wilde perceived both the city and the affairs he had there to be suffocating and ruinous. The text becomes a cautionary tale about the destructiveness of the urban scene. It details containment within a circuit of restaurants, clubs and hotels, intrusions into his home and chambers, and an attempted escape to Paris from London and his lover. The city that created him, gave him his celebrity, permitted his pose and made possible his construction of self and sexuality, initially distracts him from his art, and finally leads to his literal constraint.¹⁴⁷

If the city was not quite so libertarian before the Wilde trials, neither was it so restrictive afterwards. There was no purge on homosexual activity and nor was there a sudden drop in convictions. Arrests and prosecutions continued, rising intermittently, but showing no dramatic change until 1911, almost fifteen years after Wilde's conviction trials.¹⁴⁸ Men clearly did not 'retreat to suburbia' as Jackson claimed or abandon the city for the continent as Frank Harris suggests in his biography of the playwright. These accounts of events obscure the fact that a subculture endured in the city. It was perhaps more discreet, but it was nevertheless determinedly present. Newspaper reports of trials indicated numerous men cruising the West End, sometimes in women's clothes, and Roger Casement found plentiful sexual opportunities there.¹⁴⁹ Lord Anglesey, Iwan Bloch reports, could be seen

¹⁴⁶ Jackson, *op.cit.*, p116

¹⁴⁷ Huysmans indicated a similar sense of constraint in Paris in a letter to Marc André Raffalovich in 1886. 'Imagine this: the man who has this vice wilfully withdraws from association with the rest of mankind. He eats in restaurants, has his hair done at a coiffeur, lives in a hotel where the patrons are all old sodomites. It is a life apart, in a narrow corner, a brotherhood recognising itself by the voice, by a fixed gaze, and that sing-song tone they all affect'. Cited in Rosario, *op.cit.*, p.106.

¹⁴⁸ See the appendix.

¹⁴⁹ See chapters 2 and 3.

walking confidently through Mayfair in perfume and rings, and with a 'pink-ribboned poodle' in the first few years of the new century.¹⁵⁰ Later, in 1912, Madame Strindberg opened the Cave of the Golden Calf club in Heddon Street, just off Regent Street, which developed a reputation for sexual freedom and tolerance of same-sex relations.¹⁵¹ Soho, as chapter one suggested, maintained its bohemian and libertine associations throughout.

Meanwhile Wilde's A Woman of No Importance was staged in 1907 (at His Majesty's Theatre) and his collected works were published in 1908, in an acknowledgement of his cultural importance. Later in 1912 Richard Strauss's opera Salome, inspired by Wilde's banned play, made its London debut (albeit with revisions and after a four-year ban by the Lord Chamberlain). In 1905, Ives referred to an amateur production of Salome in which one of his house mates had appeared,¹⁵² and Ives himself continued to eulogise the dead playwright ('he had a soul, the sweetest most loving soul that I ever met').¹⁵³ Robert Ross, Wilde's loyal friend and literary executor, maintained both his aesthetic demeanour and his place in society, including his friendship with the Asquiths.¹⁵⁴ 'The cult of Wilde', as Philip Hoare terms it, was alive and well.¹⁵⁵

4.

Even though aestheticism and decadence did not radically disturb the existing social order, they were significant in suggesting an individualised engagement with the city and sexuality. Whilst sexology classified sexual identity, and the newspaper press confirmed and elaborated stereotype, decadence and aestheticism (beyond the parodic responses to them) suggested a more fluid way of understanding desire. Texts like À Rebours, The Picture of Dorian Gray and Teleny drew on the flux of urban life and the associations of other places to depict the city as an arena which could sustain a dissident sexual lifestyle. The developing dualistic (heterosexual/homosexual) understanding of sexuality was powerful and was to become ingrained, but the novels that this chapter has examined, and the associations of the Orient and Paris, conjured less deterministic conceptualisations and a more active engagement with the possibilities of urban life.

In the final pages of De Profundis Wilde imagined a desertion of the city and an

¹⁵⁰ Iwan Bloch, Sexual Life in England: Past and Present, trans. William Forstern (London, 1938), p.420.

¹⁵¹ Philip Hoare, Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy and the First World War (London, 1997), p.10.

¹⁵² Ives, Diary, vol.48, 19 Oct.1905, p.4.

¹⁵³ Diary, vol.46, 23 Feb.1905, p.69.

¹⁵⁴ Hoare, *op.cit.*, p.15.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ch.1.

embrace of nature on release; 'she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole'.¹⁵⁶ He envisaged a fragmentary urban self, set against the potential for a united, complete natural being, a figure who preoccupied the writers considered in the next chapter. Yet this melodramatic posture concealed another yearning, and in a letter to Robert Ross (accompanying the manuscript of De Profundis) Wilde wrote: 'tell me about the world of shadows I loved so much'.¹⁵⁷ Wilde wanted a last nostalgic return to the city he revisited so bitterly in De Profundis itself. He had constituted himself as an urban figure and his final retreat to Paris, the symbolic home of the movement which provided inspiration for his work, seemed both appropriate and inevitable.

¹⁵⁶Oscar Wilde, 'De Profundis', in De Profundis and Other Writing, *op.cit.*, p.208.

¹⁵⁷ Oscar Wilde, Four Letters by Oscar Wilde (which were not included in the English edition of De Profundis) (London, 1906), p.34.

Chapter 6

The Hellenic City: London, 'Greek Love' and Pastoralism

The last chapter suggested that in some aesthetic and decadent writing the body, desire and the city were inextricably interwoven. There was a fascination with lush interiors, the uncertainties and transformations of the city by night, and the penetration of forbidden and secret spaces. This chapter examines a negotiation of the city which was grounded in traditions of Hellenism and pastoralism. It suggests that the focus beyond the city on other spaces and other times was a means of establishing more stable identifications and of anchoring the profound instability of city life. George Ives and Edward Carpenter in addition showed the importance of urban life in the genesis of a political consciousness associated with homosexual identity. In their work the rural and the urban were brought together in an inclusive reconceptualisation of space driven by an eroticised sense of comradeship and democracy.

The pages that follow look firstly and briefly at the wider cultural investment in Hellenism and pastoralism, before indicating the importance of these discourses to men who desired other men. They go on to discuss writing in *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, the most consistent conduit of Hellenic homoerotic material in the late 1880s and early 1890s, before considering Ives's political activity and his attitudes towards the city. Finally there is a discussion of Carpenter's lengthy prose poem *Towards Democracy*, which shows how London emerged as a locus for the formation of both political and sexual identities.

1.

Wilde's appeal to the countryside in *De Profundis*, noted at the end of the last chapter, had strong resonances with prevailing ideas of Englishness. The transformation of central London in the building projects of the second half of the nineteenth century was an attempt to secure a triumphal imperial image for the city, yet national identity was often more closely aligned with images and fantasies of rural England. Raymond Williams and Martin Weiner both note the significance of this ideal of rural stability during this period and before, and see its importance burgeoning as the nation became increasingly urbanised.¹ The harsh realities of rural

¹ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973; London, 1985), p.248. See also Martin Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* (Cambridge, 1981), p.49; Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London, 1995), pp.181-184; and Glen Cavaliero, *The Rural Tradition in the English Novel, 1900-1939* (London, 1977), pp.3-8.

life were sidelined in these images which were propagated largely by a middle and upper-class elite who had been nurtured through the ordered worlds of the public schools (often in semi-rural settings).² This vision joined images of tamed nature and ordered community, apparently directly at odds with the chaos and social instability of London in particular. Indeed nature was repeatedly enlisted in the attempted salvation of the city and the city-dweller.

Ruskin famously extolled the virtues of architecture which reconnected with nature in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53),³ and in 'Great Cities and their Influence for Good and Evil' (1857) Charles Kingsley wrote of the potential reimposition of social order though new ruralised suburbs encircling London:

As the chest expands, the muscle hardens and the cheek grows ruddy [...] the temper will become more patient, the spirit more genial; there will be less tendency to brood angrily over the inequalities of fortune, and to accuse society for evils which as yet she knows not how to cure.⁴

For Kingsley urban discontent could be soothed through the balm of pseudo-country living. Bedford Park in West London (c.1881) and later Hampstead Garden suburb (c.1907) aimed at precisely this integration of urban and rural forms.⁵ William Morris's Utopian *News from Nowhere* (1891) redeemed London specifically by pastoralising it and Havelock Ellis's *The Nineteenth Century: A Dialogue in Utopia* (1899) similarly emphasised the restorative nature of rural life. In the 1880s and 1890s, meanwhile, the Arts and Craft Movement, Guild of Handicrafts, and Utopian Fellowship of the New Life associated themselves strongly with an ideal of rural working and living practises.⁶

Significantly, however, each of these texts and projects had to negotiate the city: Morris could not erase London from his Utopia and instead he re-invented it, and in Ellis's text the city dominates the structuring dialogue. The Fellowship of the New Life was based in a communal house in Mecklenburgh Square in London in the 1880s,

² Williams, *op.cit.*, p.256; Weiner, *op.cit.*, p.21.

³ See Phillippe Joudel, 'Ruskin's Vision of Two Cities', *Victorian Writers and the City*, ed. Jean-Paul Hulin & Pierre Coustillas (Lille, 1979), p.78.

⁴ Charles Kingsley, 'Great Cities and their Influence for Good and Evil' (1857), in *Sanitary and Social Essays* (London, 1880), p.212.

⁵ See Wiener, *op.cit.*, p.66; Ian Fletcher, 'Bedford Park: Aesthete's Elysium?', in *Romantic Mythologies*, ed. Ian Fletcher (London, 1967).

⁶ For more on these movements see Logie Barrow, 'The Environment of Fellowship Around 1900', in *The Dialectics of Friendship*, ed. Roy Porter and Sylvana Tomaselli (London, 1989); Alan Crawford, *C.R.Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven, 1985); Tony Brown, ed., *Edward Carpenter and Late-Victorian Radicalism* (London, 1990); Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (Southampton, 1977); Jeffrey Weeks, 'The Fabians and Utopia', in *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality and Identity* (London, 1991).

and Ashbee's Guild worked in the East End before it finally moving to Chipping Norton in 1902. The historian John Patterson notes that London was an important centre of radical organisation and publication and was to a large extent unavoidable.⁷

Alongside the pastoral, the other potential salvation for the nation lay for many Victorian commentators in ancient Greek culture, society and philosophy. Figures as diverse as John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, Charles Kingsley and Benjamin Jowett, the Oxford scholar, saw in Hellenism the potential to reinvigorate and reform the nation.⁸ If Kingsley valued the rural for its ability to temper discontent, he valued the ancient Greeks for their emphasis on the development of body and mind in tandem. In 'Nausicaa in London' (1873), for example, he compared the supposed perfection of ancient Greek bodily form to the modern urban degenerate in the capital. In the British Museum he found:

Fair and grand forms; the forms of men and women whose every limb and attitude betokened perfect health and grace and power, and self-possession and self-restraint so habitual and complete that it had become unconscious [...] I had been up and down the corridors of those Greek sculptures, which remain as a perpetual sermon to rich and poor amid our artificial, unwholesome, and, it may be, decaying, pseudo-civilisation.⁹

Kingsley stressed the Hellenic onus on physical development and argued that exercise and outdoor activity were the means through which the effects of urban degeneration might be avoided and (English) 'virtues' recovered. He suggested that through exercise and mental rigour the 'mothers of our future rulers' might measure up to the idealised figure of Nausicaa, the daughter of Alcinous, King of Phaeacians in Homer's *Odyssey*.¹⁰ Recourse to Hellenism was a means of strengthening national and imperial resolve, stressing discipline, obedience, and heroic vigour.¹¹

John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold also saw in Hellenism the potential for national renewal. As with Kingsley their discussion tended to draw on the social systems of the ancient city states, and of Athens in particular, rather than rural Greece. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) Arnold envisaged the obedience so prized by Kingsley emanating from a Hebraic rather than Hellenic tradition, and argued that this

⁷ John Patterson, *The Edwardians: London Life and Letter, 1901-1914* (Chicago, 1977), p.42.

⁸ Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (New York, 1994), p.31. For other accounts of the development of classical thought during the period see Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1980); Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance* (London, 1991); and Louis Compton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England*, (London, 1985).

⁹ Charles Kingsley, 'Nausicaa in London; or the Lower Education of Women' (1873), in *Sanitary and Social Essays* (London, 1880), p.107.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.115.

¹¹ See Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), p.259.

tendency needed balancing with the Hellenic pursuit of beauty and clarity in thought. 'The Greeks', he wrote, 'pursued freedom and pursued gymnastics not mechanically, but with a constant reference to some ideal of complete human perfection and happiness'.¹² Mill similarly found in Socratic and Platonic thought the potential for a unifying philosophy, stressing independence of opinion and self-development.¹³ Jowett, meanwhile, made Plato central to the reformed Greats curriculum in Oxford as part of his drive to develop a 'civic elite' serving nation and empire.¹⁴

In art, architecture, education, politics, philosophy, and social reform, the ancient Greeks were evoked and compared to Victorian society, either as a mirror to English virtues¹⁵ or as an endorsement to do better. More specifically ancient Athens seemed to indicate how, with a comprehensive social philosophy and sense of direction, urban life could serve as a force of social unity rather than fragmentation.¹⁶ Athens was in this respect a more helpful model than ancient Rome, which was tainted by its infamous 'decline and fall'.

The appeal to Hellenism echoed the appeal to the rural: both discourses were seen to provide stability, a counter to degeneracy, and a clearer idea of national identity; both heralded other spaces - variously Athens, Arcadia, and the English greenwood; and both focused on the body. The countryside in Kingsley's vision was a place of bodily health and vitality, whilst in Hellenic philosophy the body was the symbol and focus of personal endeavour, independence, and commitment to society.¹⁷ At a time when fears about the city were focused on the degenerate, criminal, prostituted, and effeminate body, these versions of corporeal perfection provided an

¹² Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. J. Dover Wilson (1869; Cambridge, 1948), p.162.

¹³ J.S. Mill, 'On Liberty' (1859), in *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government*, ed. H.B. Acton (London, 1972), p.112 & p.130. Dowling notes, however, that 'Mill's Hellenic ideal represented no direct recovery of an ancient model so much as the powerfully mediated version of Greece produced by eighteenth-century German Hellenism'. Dowling, *op.cit.*, p.60.

¹⁴ Dowling, *op.cit.*, p.77.

¹⁵ Walter Pater, for example, compared the discobus to the English cricketer and the Oxford student, and Richard Livingstone was confident that the ancient Greeks would feel at home at Oxford or Cambridge, among people 'mainly young, active, well-developed in body and mind'. Pater, 'The Age of Athletic Prizemen', *Greek Studies* (1895; London, 1901), p.282 & p.296; Livingstone, cited in Jenkyns, *The Victorians*, *op.cit.*, p.221.

¹⁶ Plutarch's 'Life of Theseus' described the foundation of Athens and this account of the supposedly orderly classical city was widely available: more than fifteen complete editions of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* were published between 1850 and 1914. Evelyn Abbot's *Pericles and the Golden Age of Athens* (London, 1891) meanwhile emphasised the putatively unifying social structure of the city. Recent commentators have argued that this holism was in fact fractured. See Paul Cartledge *et al*, eds, *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1998); David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and the Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1991).

¹⁷ See Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilisation* (London, 1994), ch.1&2.

important counter.¹⁸ An athletic physique could signify not only personal vitality, but also national strength and prowess. It is significant that the Olympic games were revived during this period.¹⁹

The appeals to Hellenism and pastoralism in the name of urban and national revival were echoed by many middle and upper-class men who sought justification for their homosexual desires. Pastoralism allowed an appeal to nature, whilst Hellenism conjured a social system in which homosexuality had supposedly been an accepted and integrated part.²⁰ Together they provided a compelling alternative to prevailing images of urban debauchery, effeminacy and disenfranchisement.

Hellenism provided two particular justificatory strands. The first centred on the Theban bands, who were described in 'The Life of Pelopidas' in Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans.²¹ The Theban bands were composed of men fighting alongside their male lovers and were revered for their bravery. They stood undefeated until the Battle of the Chaerona in 338BC when Greece was colonised by the Romans. George Ives named the support and pressure group he formed in the early 1890s after the battle, and repeatedly imagined his own fight for legitimacy in terms of martial force, persistence and bravery (interestingly aligning himself with the current of militarism described in chapter one). In 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' (1883) John Addington Symonds described their defeat presaging the decay not only of a unique form of comradeship but also of a supreme military spirit.²²

The second line of justification blended ideas of martial prowess and stoical comradeship with the Hellenic pedagogical philosophy and wider ideas of personal self-development. The crucial texts were Plato's Republic and Symposium, which had been introduced into the classics curriculum at Oxford by Jowett in the 1850s and 1860s.²³ The Symposium provided a pedagogical basis for male same-sex relations,

¹⁸ Pastoralism and Hellenism combine in William Morris's 'dream' of London in the opening of The Earthly Paradise. He writes of 'the clear Thames bordered by its gardens green' and 'the pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill'. William Morris, The Earthly Paradise: A Poem (London, 1868), p.3.

¹⁹ The first modern Olympic games were held in Athens in 1896 following a campaign by the Frenchman Pierre de Fredi, Baron de Coubertin. See Eugen Weber, 'Pierre de Coubertin and the Introduction of Organised Sport in France', Journal of Contemporary History, vol.5, no.3 (1970): pp.3-26.

²⁰ The place of homosexuality in ancient Greek society was idealised during this period (not least by Carpenter and Symonds) but David Cohen argues that it caused considerable concern, and that responses to it differed significantly from place to place. See Cohen, *op.cit.*, esp. ch.7.

²¹ Plutarch, The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, trans. John Dryden (Chicago, 1990), p.239. See also fn 16 above.

²² John Addington Symonds, 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' (1883), in H.Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, vol.i, Sexual Inversion (London, Apr. 1897), p.231. Ten copies of 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' were published 'for the authors use' in 1883.

²³ Dowling, *op.cit.*, pp.69-70.

though it asserted that the love of a beautiful youth could lead to a love of beauty and wisdom itself. Less directly, the ancient Greek invocation to self-realisation, so valued by John Stuart Mill, fed into Symonds's argument for the acceptance of individual impulses, implicitly including homosexual desires. 'We must acknowledge', he wrote in *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 'the value of each human impulse, and aim after virtues that depend on self-regulation rather than on total abstinence and mortification'.²⁴

Both justificatory strands found a cogent symbol in Greek statuary and the image of the perfect male body. As for Kingsley and the proponents of physical culture, such statuesque perfection signified not only health and vigour but also self-possession, and an ordered understanding of identity and desire. Walter Pater noted in his deeply homoerotic piece on Johann Winckelmann that the Hellenic male nude showed 'man at unity with himself, with his physical nature, with the outward world'.²⁵ Statues had an unbroken surface and fixed relationship to their surroundings (as well as any observers) and so seemed to provide a model of certainty in the face of the complexities of sexual desire.²⁶

Such statues were moreover legitimate objects of fascination and study. The *Modern Man* recommended them as appropriate bedroom ornamentation and they of course featured in the collections of the national museums.²⁷ The august settings of the British Museum or the Louvre placed male nudity outside a compromised urban scene. There was apparently no concealment, no threat, and no degeneracy or disease, and so the observer was free to look at the male forms unhindered by the complicated array of discourses the city street outside might evoke.

Ancient Greece (with certain of the more repressive elements of its social organisation sidelined) thus represented a panacea for many men: it provided a private logic for dissident desires as well as a wider justificatory model. Carpenter, Symonds and Ives each described adolescent epiphanies prompted by Greek statuary,²⁸ and more publicly Wilde eloquently employed Platonic logic at his trial to justify his friendships with younger men. Dowling comments: 'Against [the] older discourse of the English common law [...] Wilde deployed a new and powerful vocabulary of personal identity, a language of mind, sensibility and emotion, of inward

²⁴ John Addington Symonds, *Studies in the Greek Poets* (London, 1879), p.437.

²⁵ Walter Pater, 'Winckelmann', in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873; Oxford, 1986), p.143.

²⁶ Alex Potts describes the conflict inherent in Pater's response, which sought 'an unperplexed realm of self-realisation and freedom' but in fact exposed 'complexities and erotic tensions'. Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven, 1994), p.239.

²⁷ F.G.Mitchell, 'Athletes in Sculpture: What Art and the Sportsman Owe to Each Other', *Modern Man*, 15 Jan.1910: p.5.

²⁸ Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams* (London, 1918), pp.67-68; John Addington Symonds, *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (London, 1984), p.286; George Ives, *Diary*, vol.70, 8 Mar.1917, p.43, HRHRC.

and intellectual relations'.²⁹ Hellenism provided a forceful argument for reform, a place for homosexuality within a wider social system, and a physical ideal and arena in which to take imaginative resort. It also gave a language in which to discuss male love and beauty which side-stepped the prevailing legal and journalistic vocabulary. Finally, and underpinning all else, for those men conversant with Plato and Dorian history Hellenism provided a discourse of desire at least partially shielded by a wider cultural interest. Symonds, Carpenter and Pater were elaborating an existing and accepted discourse, and as such it was harder to contest than the decadent and aesthetic movements which did not have the same cultural kudos (even though they were also ultimately rooted in the Hellenic ideal of beauty).

There were increasingly clear lines connecting 'Greek love' to the acts of gross indecency reported in the papers, but despite this, homoerotic writing drawing on the Hellenic tradition was published throughout the period.³⁰ It is possible that once these connections were clear, Hellenism, though more potentially dangerous to utilise, was more potent: retaining its legitimacy and employing a largely respected imagery and language, Hellenism was able to make a more direct address during these years. It had become a barely obscured code, which yet enabled continuing communication about an outlawed set of practices. The poetry and fiction that dealt with homosexuality through the Hellenic prism also tended to allude not to the Greek city states but to Arcadian settings in which Hellenism was melded with pastoralism, a prized symbol of Englishness. The rural settings allowed homosexual desire to take on an air of naturalness and to appear unfettered by fashion and affectation. The assumptions and settings were so much a part of dominant literary forms and of prevailing cultural interests that they could not be as easily dismissed as decadence had been. The

²⁹ Dowling, *op.cit.*, p.2. Dowling notes that the self-conscious assumption of these values fed into modern understandings of homosexual identity, as men began to see that their homoerotic desires might 'belong to human experience in its fullest historicity and cultural density'. Dowling, *op.cit.*, p.134. See also: Gert Hekma, 'Sodomites, Platonic Lovers, Contrary Lovers: The Background of the Modern Homosexual', in *The Journal of Homosexuality*, vol.16, no.1/2 (1988): pp.433-457, p.43.

³⁰ The association between Hellenism and homosexuality was widely understood by the end of the century. The homoeroticism associated with Oxford Hellenism in particular was (according to Linda Dowling) 'thrust into a scandalous visibility on the national stage' following a series of scandals and the publication of W.H.Mallock's *New Republic* in 1877. In the same year, in the *Contemporary Review*, Richard St John Tyrwhitt attacked Symonds for his failure to censure Greek homosexuality in his *Studies of the Greek Poets*. Wilde's subsequent invocation of Greek love in court failed to win him an acquittal, and the Hellenic ideal was consequently rendered proximate to his sexual behaviour. In 1899 Ives noted being asked to remove a line from a poem by the editor of an unnamed magazine because it had 'a Greek tendency', and the warm review of Carpenter's *Iölaus* in the *Daily Chronicle* in 1902 was qualified by a criticism of the text's overemphasis on 'the Greek institution of friendship between man and man'. Dowling, *op.cit.*, p.100; Richard St John Tyrwhitt, 'The Greek Spirit in Modern Literature', *The Contemporary Review*, vol.29, Mar.1877: pp.522-566, p.557; Ives, *Diary*, vol.35, 7 Nov.1899, p.124; 'Comrades', *Daily Chronicle*, c. Mar. 1902, in Ives *Casebook*, vol. iii, p.47, BLY.

impulses behind this writing may have been clear, but it was also distinct from the fragmented and obscure presentation of the desiring subject in the cityscapes of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *À Rebours*. Such urban sexualities troubled Carpenter and Symonds especially. Whilst arguing that most inverts were 'athletic and masculine in habits', Symonds noted the 'disease' of effeminacy in modern cities. In modern society, he claimed, 'the inverted passion has to be indulged furtively, spasmodically, hysterically', completely countering the idealised Greek expression.³¹ In *Homogenic Love* Carpenter wrote that in 'the great cities there are to be found associated with this form of attachment prostitution and other evils comparable with the evils associated with the ordinary sex attachment'.³² Pater's homoerotic exploration of Renaissance art similarly suggested (in a more coded way) the difficulty of attaining the Greek ideal amidst 'the gaudy, perplexed light of modern life'.³³

The city was too chaotic to accommodate the supposedly more settled and certain understandings associated with Hellenism, and was too disturbing a context for self-exploration. Writing in the early 1890s, for example, Symonds described his earlier sexual arousal in 'the sordid streets' near Regents Park:

Wandering [one] day for exercise through the sordid streets between my home [near Paddington Station] and Regents Park I felt the burden of a ponderous malaise [...] While returning from this fateful constitutional, at a certain corner, which I well remember, my eyes were caught by a rude *graffito* scrawled with pencil upon slate. It was so concentrated, so stimulative, so penetrative a character - so thoroughly the voice of vice and passion in the proletariat - that it pierced the very marrow of my soul [...] now the wolf leapt out: my malaise of the moment was converted into a clairvoyant and tyrannical appetite for the thing which I had rejected five months earlier in the alley by the barracks. The vague and morbid craving of the previous years defined itself as a precise hunger after sensual pleasure, whereof I had not dreamed before save in repulsive visions of the night.³⁴

Symonds finds himself profoundly affected by the urban fabric - not only do the 'sordid streets' seem responsible for his 'malaise', but the *graffito* ('an emblematic diagram of phallic meeting, glued together gushing', accompanied by the words 'prick to prick so sweet')³⁵ incites and focuses his desires. This labyrinthine part of London produces appetites which are, for Symonds, vicious and predatory. What seems to disturb him particularly is the precision the urban context gives them: 'vague cravings'

³¹ *A Problem in Modern Ethics: An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion* (1891; London, 1896), p.15, p.77 & p.13.

³² Edward Carpenter, *Homogenic Love* (Manchester, 1894), p.15.

³³ Pater, *The Renaissance*, *op.cit.*, p.146.

³⁴ Symonds, *Memoirs*, *op.cit.*, p.187.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

become 'concentrated' and 'precise', apparently precluding human and admitting only genital contact. Symonds is transported into his tortured dream world and the city becomes nightmarish. This response in the city to 'the voice of vice and passion in the proletariat' shifted in his move to the Graubünden in the Swiss Alps. There he enthused about the purity and simplicity of the (proletarian) people, and their unity with their surroundings. 'When I came to live among peasants and republicans in Switzerland', he wrote, 'I am certain that I took up passionate relations with men in a more natural and intelligible manner - more rightly and democratically - than I should otherwise have done'.³⁶ Symonds reported that he 'kept aloof in the Graubünden 'from those who had been sophisticated by residence in foreign cities'.³⁷ He shielded himself from what he saw as his own potentially depraved longings by shunning the city and those who lived there. In the Graubünden his desires could be framed by his philosophy of comradeship, whilst the city introduced something more disturbing than Symonds could countenance. Most particularly, perhaps, rural Switzerland softened the implications of abuse that often accompanied cross-class relations in the city (and which were suggested by the Cleveland Street scandal as Symonds was beginning his memoirs).

Symonds conceptualised his sexual identity in relation to particular spaces, the meanings of which had been determined by a number of discourses which touted urban depravity on the one hand and pastoral simplicity and Hellenic self-possession on the other. His logic echoed Kingsley's description of the degenerate city, the wholesome countryside, and the inimitable Greeks in 'Nausicaa in London'.

The appeal to Hellenism and pastoralism on the part of apologists for homosexual relations thus mirrored the wider cultural importance of these discourses. The city was perceived as the key impediment to social and cultural development, just as it was to the legitimisation of homosexual desire. It detracted and debased both ideas of Englishness and ideas of homosexuality. Paradoxically, however, just as the city had to be negotiated in the wider appeals to Hellenism and pastoralism by Morris, Kingsley, and Ellis (amongst others) so it was amongst the advocates of Greek love. Indeed in terms of ideas of community and political solidarity, which preoccupied Carpenter and Ives in particular, the city was pivotal. The next section will begin to explore this ambivalent relationship with the urban scene, indicating an apparent rejection and then an uncertain embrace of the city.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.191.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.268.

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English homosocial institutions and the favoured holiday destinations of many middle and upper-class men were frequently rich in Hellenic and pastoral associations, and these places often lent tacit support to exclusive male relationships.³⁸ Public schools fostered close friendships between boys, whilst Oxford University had no women in the colleges until the 1880s, when female students were finally admitted and fellows permitted to marry. As Dowling points out, graduates emerging from Oxford in the mid-1880s, and who were 'making their way' in the 1890s and early part of the twentieth century, had enjoyed 'a unique moment of Oxford masculine comradeship, a window or halcyon interval of particularly intense homosociality'.³⁹ Oxford and Cambridge were often idealised when compared to London. They appeared to maintain a closer link to the classics, to this homosocial intensity, and to nature (both cities boasted city centre meadows, playing fields and river walks). Describing a summer's day in Cambridge, Ives wrote: 'we all ran about quite naked, and the fair forms among the trees and along the grass-banked river would set me dreaming in a sort of Greek ecstasy'.⁴⁰ Post-university, the gentlemen's clubs in London preserved a homosocial haven in the heart of the city, with one of the most famous, the Athenaeum, actively drawing on the Greek idiom.⁴¹ The city's university settlements provided a further arena for male bonding and interaction which were more in line with romantic socialist ideas of cross-class comradeship.

This institutionalised homosociality in England was complemented by areas of Greece and Italy, which, historian Robert Aldrich argues, were the 'spiritual homes of men who loved other men'.⁴² These places were strongly associated with important precedents for homosexual activity: ancient Greece, pre-Christian Rome and Renaissance Italy. Italy was also seen to have more of a peasant culture than rural England, a more earthy appreciation of nature, and most importantly a greater degree of pliancy in

³⁸ See Jeffrey Richards, "'Passing the Love of Women": Manly Love in Victorian Society', in Manliness and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940, ed. J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (Manchester, 1987).

³⁹ Dowling, *op.cit.* p. 85. See fn 15 above for the connections drawn between the universities and ancient Greece.

⁴⁰ Ives, Diary, vol.13, 31 May 1892, p.36.

⁴¹ Iwan Bloch wrote in Sexual Life in England: 'The development of pseudo-homosexuality has probably been helped by the unique nature of the English club, frequented exclusively by men. The intensive cultivation of games in England may also have had something to do with it, in the same way as this was regarded by the Greeks as having given the original impetus to the cult of homosexuality'. Iwan Bloch, Sexual Life in England: Past and Present, trans. William Forstern (London, 1938), p.288.

⁴² Robert Aldrich, The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy (London, 1993), p.40. See also John Pemble, The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South (Oxford, 1987), p.9.

sexual affairs. It was consequently a place where fantasies of comradeship and liberated sensuality could potentially be explored. It was in the Italian countryside that the adolescent Eustace finally breaks free of his stifling middle-class entourage in E.M.Forster's short piece 'The Story of a Panic' (1904). He encounters Pan (who was born in Arcadia) and as a result feels able to embrace Genaro, the rough Italian waiter.⁴³ The small Sicilian town of Taormina became a place of near pilgrimage for many men, and it was here that Wilhelm von Gloeden took many of his homoerotic photographs and 'tried to recreate the ancient Greek life'.⁴⁴ In Sardinia, meanwhile, Ives found 'two boat lads' who 'seemed quite Greek in ideas'.⁴⁵

Some of the Italian cities were also appealing. Symonds's short essay 'In the Key of Blue' (1892) explored the various complexities of the colour as they related to Augusto, a 20-year-old gondolier he observed posing (and also induced to pose) in various locations. In London Symonds found himself lost in a labyrinth, ambushed by his own desires, but in Venice he gained perspective and poise in his writing. He observed Augusto on bridges, in the lagoon and in the Euganean Hills, and moves easily between these settings, attaining a series^{of} aesthetic transformations that echo some of Wilde's poetry, in particular 'Impression du Matin' (1881) and 'Symphony in Yellow' (1889).⁴⁶ Venice (and being an outsider)⁴⁷ liberated Symonds from his often didactic and earnest prose, and in this essay he plays lightly over the effect of colour and setting, and trespasses into a literary mode he avoids elsewhere. The settings allowed Symonds the intellectual distance to analyse the colourful transformations as they played on Augusto's body, whilst also communicating clearly the desire that braced their relationship.⁴⁸

These real alternative spaces were thus symbolically very significant. In themselves and in the ancient social and pastoral systems they evoked they could represent an alternative organisation of sexuality. This allowed denial, fantasy, an imagined Utopia of liberated relationships, and an arena for personal affirmation. It is

⁴³ E.M.Forster, 'The Story of a Panic' (1904), in *The New Collected Short Stories*, ed. P.N.Furbank (London, 1984).

⁴⁴ Aldrich, *op.cit.* p.152.

⁴⁵ Ives, *Diary*, vol. 27, 4 Feb.1896, p.26.

⁴⁶ Symonds himself described the piece being 'in the line of impressionism'. J.A.Symonds to Arthur Symons, 13 Jun.1892. Cited in Roger Lhombreaud, *Arthur Symonds: A Critical Biography* (London,1863), p.92.

⁴⁷ Rudi Bleys argues that being a visitor is fundamentally liberating, and suggests that 'the nomadic desire is [...] an aspiration to a sociality that is amorphous, temporary, orgiastic and atomic'. His analysis, however, evades the persistence of the cross-class power dynamics that still structured these relationships. Rudi Bleys, 'Homosexual Exile: The Textuality of the Imaginary Paradise, 1800-1980', *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol.25, vol.1, no.2 (1993): pp.165-179, p.167.

⁴⁸ In his analysis of Venice Tony Tanner suggests that the city was a place of 'reason and desire'. This is precisely the sense that emerges in Symonds essay. Tony Tanner, *Venice Desired* (London, 1992), p.4.

consequently not surprising that these places, and the pastoralism and Hellenism with which they resonated, were recurrent reference points in writing by men who desired other men during the period.

The most consistent conduit for this material in the late 1880s and 1890s was The Artist and Journal of Home Culture, under the editorship of Charles Kains Jackson. This monthly journal, selling relatively cheaply at 6d, ran from 1880 to 1902, and offered reviews of exhibitions, literature, music and drama, as well as correspondence and art gossip. Jackson edited The Artist from 1888 to 1894 and during this time he actively cultivated what Laurel Brake calls a 'visible gay discourse' constituted through a complicity between the editor, publisher and contributors.⁴⁹ The journal specifically addressed the Hellenic clique and rendered an idealised alternative space through poetry, reviews and suggestions of suitable art subjects. There was a repeated direct evocation of ancient Greece, as well as a multitude of poems placing adolescent boys in watery settings, where they could be observed and described bathing naked. The boys have the idealised bodies of the Greek statues discussed earlier, and they are self-contained and unselfconscious. The fixed dynamic of the observer and the observed is also evoked as the boys bathe unaware of the frequently personified narrator who watches from a distance (but who is also within the reader's view). The settings and Hellenic inferences give assent to this voyeurism and the oblique power dynamic that attends it (a muffled echo of the pedagogical relationship between the older and the younger man). The boys are perceived to be at one with their environment, whilst the erotic interest of the elements stands in for what the reader suspects to be the poet's own desires. In S.S.Saale's 'Sonnet', for example, the sun 'dallies' with the boys' bodies:

They strip and plunge into the stream below;
 Changed by a miracle, they rise as though
 The youth of Greece burst on a later day,
 As on their lithe bodies many a ray
 Of sunlight dallies with its blushing glow.⁵⁰

Similarly in 'Sonnet on a Picture by Tuke' Jackson notes that 'the kisses that make red each honest face/ Are of the breeze and salt and tingling spray'.⁵¹ Virtually every edition during Jackson's tenure included pieces which evoked this fantasy, and often there are several, interactively reinforcing Hellenic themes and images. In September

⁴⁹ Laurel Brake, 'The Artist and Gay Discourse' (unpublished paper presented at the conference 'Defining and Redefining: Male Homosexuality in Nineteenth Century Britain', Victoria and Albert Museum, 22 Nov.1997).

⁵⁰ S.S.Saale, 'Sonnet', The Artist and Journal of Home Culture, vol.10/11 (Sept. 1890), p.275.

⁵¹ Charles Kains Jackson, 'Sonnet on a Picture by Tuke', The Artist, vol. 10/11 (May 1889), p.145.

1890, for example, a piece on nude bathing appeared alongside three poems dealing with youths bathing naked in the sea.⁵²

The last issue of *The Artist* produced with Jackson as editor (April 1894) contained multiple images of male homosexuality. These included Lord Alfred Douglas's 'Prince Charming', a love poem for a 16-year-old boy; another bathing ballad by John Gambriel Nicholson; a review of Beardley's work by Theodore Wratistlaw (whose poem 'To a Sicilian Boy' had been published in *The Artist* the previous year);⁵³ and most notoriously Jackson's 'The New Chivalry', written under his pseudonym PC (the initials of his middle names). 'The New Chivalry' suggested that where the Old Chivalry found its ideal in the 'youthful feminine ideal', 'the flower of the adult and perfect civilisation will be found in the [...] exaltation of the youthful masculine ideal'. The piece went on to argue that this new civilisation will especially value 'Nature's most intimate and instructive bond of sympathy', Jackson's euphemism for homosexual relations. This he legitimised through nature and by evoking the Hellenic 'tenderness of elder for younger'.⁵⁴ In a letter to Jackson (written from Wilde's chambers in St James) Lord Alfred Douglas called the piece 'brilliant and daring'.⁵⁵ Whether it was also the herald of his departure from the journal is unclear.⁵⁶ Whatever the reasons *The Artist* changed considerably under its new editor, Lord Mountmorris, an Oxford contemporary of Douglas. Douglas complained in a further letter to Jackson: 'I never heard that he was at all sympathetic. I know he was recently married'.⁵⁷ Under Mountmorris the format and style were altered, and the 'Journal of Home Culture' suffix was dropped. In September 1894 an obituary to the 'old' magazine was published, which acknowledged both the escapist and idyllic fantasy in which the journal had indulged to that point, and the 'bitter' practicality of its business thereafter.

A change is to come over the nature of our dream. After fifteen years
wandering through the peaceful land of perpetual afternoon *The Artist* is to

⁵² John Quill, 'On Art in Dress'; S.S.Saale, 'Sonnet'; 'Ballad to GW'; Palgrave Morrison, 'On the Cliffs', *The Artist*, vol.10/11 (Sept.1890): p.259, p.275, p.260 & p.255. The name John Quill is almost certainly a pseudonym, and the choice is significant: the jonquil represents 'violent sympathy and desire'. Ernst and Johanna Lehner, *Folklore and Symbolism of Flowers, Plants and Trees* (New York, 1960), p.119.

⁵³ Lord Alfred Douglas, 'Prince Charming'; John Gambriel Nicholson, 'On the River's Bank'; Theodore Wratistlaw, 'The Salome of Aubrey Beardsley', *The Artist*, vol.14/15 (Apr.1894): p.102, p.105, & p.100.

⁵⁴ 'The New Chivalry', *The Artist*, vol.14/15 (Apr.1893): pp.102-103.

⁵⁵ Lord Alfred Douglas to Charles Kains Jackson, 9 Apr.1894, Douglas, letters, HRHRC.

⁵⁶ The change in editor may also have been due to the journal's financial problems. It was pressed by competition from *The Studio*, which had its first issue the previous year, and (unlike *The Artist*) included illustrations and photographs.

⁵⁷ Douglas to Jackson, 29 Nov.1893, Douglas, letters.

set forth a commercial warrior to conquer the regions of money and trade, and henceforth it will lead its followers, not through the valleys [...] and veil-like, slow-dropping waterfalls, but in the busy haunts of men amid the strife and turmoil of the city.

The piece went on to herald 'the deadly, bitter, unwelcome return to life and reality' as the reader 'rise[s] and set[s] out to huddle in the crowded mart'.⁵⁸ The writer explicitly noted a return to the city, from which the journal had turned its back, but suggests that this departure had in any case only been a flight of fancy, and that the 'business' of art, artists, and the magazine itself were grounded in 'reality', in the 'crowded mart' of the metropolis.

Jackson's demise as editor did not mark an end to published versions of the Hellenic and pastoral fantasy, however. The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Arts published Wilhelm von Gloeden and Frederick Rolfe's photographs of naked male youths in pseudo-Greek and north African settings in its second issue of June 1893 alongside an article called 'The Nude in Photography'.⁵⁹ Later, interestingly just after the Wilde trials, the same magazine published a photograph of Henry Scott Tuke at work painting a naked teenager.⁶⁰ George Ives collected images printed in other magazines, including one of two naked youths embracing with the by-line 'The spirit of ancient Greece recreated for the camera'.⁶¹ In Sexual Heretics Brian Reade traces homoerotic poems which drew on Hellenic and pastoral imagery to the Art Review and The Athenaeum, and Laurel Brake has found others in the Magazine of Art.⁶² There were also novels and collections of poetry published throughout the period which explored homosexual attachments through similar themes and images.⁶³ These idealised Hellenic and pastoral images were not simply literary postures but significant indices of identification which continued to be important well beyond the Wilde trials, and, the critic Timothy d'Arch Smith argues, until at least the 1930s.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ 'The Artist', The Artist, vol.14/15 (Sept. 1894): p.323.

⁵⁹ 'The Nude in Photography, with some studies taken in the open air', The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Arts, vol.1, no.2 (Jun. 1893): pp.104-107.

⁶⁰ 'Afternoons in Studios: Henry Scott Tuke at Falmouth', The Studio, vol.5 (June 1895): pp.90-95. Kains Jackson had previously drawn attention to the homoeroticism of Tuke's pictures in his poem 'Sonnet on a Picture by Tuke', which appeared in The Artist, *op.cit.*

⁶¹ 'The Spirit of Ancient Greece Recreated for the Camera', c.Jul.1905, in Ives, Casebook, vol.v, p.92 (magazine not cited).

⁶² Brian Reade, ed., Sexual Heretics: Male Homosexuality in English Literature from 1850-1900 (London, 1970), p.42 & p.44; Brake, *op.cit.*

⁶³ Among them were George Ives's Book of Chains (1896) and Eros's Throne (1900), A. W. Clarke's novel of platonic schoolboy friendship, Jasper Tristram (1899), Horatio Brown's Drift (1900), Carpenter's Iölaus (1902), Forrest Reid's The Garden God (1905), Montague Summers's Antinous and Other Poems (1907), and John Gambriel Nicholson's Love in Earnest (1892), A Chaplet of Southernwood (1896), and A Garland of Ladslove, (1911).

⁶⁴ Timothy d'Arch Smith, Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889 to 1930 (London, 1970).

Mention of the city in this work was infrequent and disparaging (Harold in Forrest Reid's *The Garden God* talks of his 'unhurried, anyhow existence' in London, for example)⁶⁵ but it was not so easy to evade, especially in a society as culturally centralised as England.⁶⁶ The vision of open, unconstrained pastoral space evoked its urban antithesis, particularly given the long-standing association between homosexuality and the city. The writers were haunted by the spectre of the metropolis even as they tried to evade it, and the apparently ordered identifications and stable power relations were achieved only through the specific exclusion of urban referents which might complicate the picture.

Given the impossibility of a complete escape from this urban scene it is tempting to suggest that this philhellene literature was one of dashed hopes and dreams, of lost times and distant memories. This is certainly a repeated theme of the writing.⁶⁷ However, the Hellenic idiom and the references to contemporary Greece and Italy were also a means of legitimising and sustaining a set of desires in more immediate, though less ideal, times and places. In *The Artist* mention of the city was minimal in the years 1888 to 1894, and focuses the reader's attention beyond it, as the editorial after Jackson's departure suggested. Yet the journal was published in London (by Wells, Gardner, Darton and Co), and Jackson and many of the contributors also lived in the city, together forming something of an artistic clique and support network.⁶⁸ Ives wrote congratulatory letters to Jackson after particular issues, and was invited a number of times to dine with Jackson and Scott Tuke in Richmond. Lord Alfred Douglas was also a frequent correspondent. His letters indicated a sense of common purpose. In 1893, for example, Douglas asked for help from Jackson 'in the name of the cause' for 'a poor man Burnand [of Buckingham Palace Road] who is now awaiting trial for an assault on a boy'.⁶⁹ Later he wrote again demanding from Jackson an explanation as to why he had given up the editorship: 'I look in vain for any sympathetic matter [in the latest edition]. Surely you have not deserted the cause and deprived us of our only organ of expression'.⁷⁰

The magazine clearly functioned as a rallying point for men with shared desires, and whilst its ostensible focus was beyond the city, the advertisements it contained and the exhibitions it recommended indicated that London was the social and cultural centre of its readership. A set of fantasy spaces were evoked which carried the reader

⁶⁵ Forrest Reid, *The Garden God: A Tale of Two Boys* (London, 1905), p.67.

⁶⁶ Raymond Williams (1985), *op.cit.*, p.229.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Morrison, 'On the Cliffs', *op.cit.*; and Reid, *op.cit.*

⁶⁸ Brake, *op.cit.*; Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Market Place: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot, 1987), p.147.

⁶⁹ Lord Alfred Douglas to Charles Kains Jackson, 29 Nov.1893, Douglas, letters, HRHRC.

⁷⁰ Douglas to Jackson, 16 May 1894, Douglas, letters.

out of the urban *mêlée* and thus provide sustenance for life within it. These spaces also, of course, legitimised representations of relationships which an urban context might have sullied. Significantly The Artist did not attract the criticism and notoriety that attended The Picture of Dorian Gray. It trod a fine line successfully for six years, and became an important source of homosexual expression for a particular group of men in London and beyond (the exiled Lord Arthur Somerset lent Douglas his copy of The Artist in Florence).⁷¹ It also highlighted the pleasures of the naked male form and statuary and indicated where they could be found in the museums and galleries of the city.

The most obvious arena was the British Museum, and it became a key focus for middle and upper-class men who were erotically interested in other men. The Artist, was enthusiastic about the neo-classical museum, and described it as an island in a dreary part of the city ('a fine building' which yet 'cannot redeem the ugliness of Bloomsbury or expel Gower Street from misery').⁷² The journal reported developments in the Parthenon collection, and commented on its display: 'They are set forth in a hall of magnificent dimensions, and especially constructed for their reception, where they can be seen and studied and admired, at leisure and at ease, from every point of view'.⁷³ The endorsement to study and admire 'from every point of view' was eagerly taken up by various writers, recalling the importance of museum statuary to some of Krafft-Ebing's case studies. Pater repeatedly referred to statues in the British Museum, and teased out their muscular sensuality. He wrote in 'The Age of Athletic Prizemen':

The face of the young man, as you see him in the British Museum for instance, with fittingly inexpressive expression, (look into, look at the curves of, the blossom-like cavity of the opened mouth) is beautiful but not altogether virile.⁷⁴

At first it is not entirely clear that this is a statue: it could almost be another visitor to the museum, noticed (even cruised) by Pater. He then teasingly (breathlessly) evokes the sensuality of his opened mouth in a three-part parenthesis which draws us closer, and holds us back from it.⁷⁵ Finally (and characteristically) there is the partial denial of the statue's virility. In The Renaissance he offers a similarly sensual and almost

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² A.C. Whitmore, MP, 'Architecture: London', The Artist, vol.8/9 (July 1888): p.212.

⁷³ The last fragments of the frieze, The Artist reported, arrived in 1893. 'The British Museum', The Artist, vol.14/15 (Feb.1893): p.41.

⁷⁴ Pater, 'The Age of Athletic Prizemen', *op.cit.*, p.288.

⁷⁵ This is an example of what Linda Dowling calls Pater's 'aesthetic of delay'. Linda Dowling, Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle (Princeton, 1986), p.130.

sado-masochistic description of the Parthenon frieze, with its 'line of youths on horseback, with their level glances, their proud patient lips, their chastened reins, their whole bodies in exquisite service'.⁷⁶

E.M Forster's imagination was similarly caught by a figure in the Museum. He observed (around 1904):

[a] wonderful boy with the broken arm [...] stands all the afternoon warm in thick yellowy sunshine. He simply radiates light: I never saw anything like it. Right across the Assyrian transept he throbs like something under the sea.⁷⁷

As with the earlier Pater citation there is a suggestion of the Pygmalion myth here: the statue almost becomes human, as if standing in the sun-drenched transept for the afternoon were his choice.⁷⁸ The languid stillness of a summer's day frames and actuates him (making him an apparent source of light) and the boy could almost be transposed to one of the beaches or riverbanks described earlier (though not to the city streets just outside the Museum). Imagined in this way he 'throbs' sensually for the enrapt observer. The sculptures were also a source of solace for the poet A.E Housman who was living in London and missing his Shropshire home and the 'lads' bathing in the River Severn he eulogises in other poems:⁷⁹

Loitering with a vacant eye
 Along the Grecian gallery,
 And brooding on my heavy ill,
 I met a statue standing still.
 Still in marble stone stood he,
 And steadfastly he looked at me.
 "Well met", I thought the look would say,
 "We both were fashioned far away;
 We neither knew, when we were young the Londoners we live among

'[...] Courage, lad, 'tis not for long:
 Stand, quit you like a stone, be strong".
 So I thought his look would say;
 And light on me my trouble lay,

⁷⁶ Pater, *The Renaissance*, *op. cit.*, p.140.

⁷⁷ Cited in P.N.Furbank, *E.M.Forster: A Life* (London, 1978), p.110. Unreferenced.

⁷⁸ Pygmalion was a popular late-Victorian myth. It was the subject of Edward Burne-Jones's Pygmalion series of paintings (1868-78); William Morris's poem *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70); W.S. Gilbert's comedy *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1872); and later George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (1912). Once again a popular contemporary motif was being used in the imagery associated with homosexuality.

⁷⁹ A.E.Housman, Poems xx and lv, in *Collected Poems and Selected Prose*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London, 1988), p.42 & p.82.

And I stepped out in flesh and bone
Manful like a man of stone.⁸⁰

As with Pater and Forster the scenario is implicitly sexual, and again redolent of West End cruising and fleeting urban encounters: the narrator 'loiters' in the museum, and 'meets' the statue, 'standing still', waiting, it seems, for their chance meeting. The imagined conversation emphasises the alien nature of the city for them both and affords comfort for their urban existence. The narrator imagines the Pygmalion myth in reverse: becoming stoical stone in order to face metropolitan life 'manfully'. The transformation is hardly redeeming. Life, the statue suggests, is to be endured rather than enjoyed for the displaced. Their unified dissidence in the British Museum is, however, at least a means to that endurance.

Other city spaces served a similar function. Symonds enjoyed visiting the Serpentine and the Embankment. 'Early in the morning', he wrote, 'I used to rise from my sleepless bed, walk across the park, and feed my eyes upon the naked men and boys bathing in the Serpentine'.⁸¹ He went on to quote from a piece he had written at the time, expressing the strain between the city and his desires as he departed from Charing Cross by train:

Four young men are bathing in the pond by the Embankment. I pass; the engine screams and hurries me away. But the engine has no power to take my soul. That stays, and is the pond in which the bathers swim, the air in which they shout, the grass on which they run and dress themselves, the hand that touches them unfelt, the lips that kiss them and they know it not.⁸²

Whereas chapter two showed how transport itself was a locus of erotic exchange, here it is superseded by Symonds's soul and its affinity with nature (with the air, the grass, the water); it clings to the site, mutating so as to embrace and arouse the bathers (as in some of the poems from *The Artist* discussed earlier). Symonds could thus imagine himself touching and kissing the men in an elemental return to the pastoral amidst the clamour of the modern city. At the suggestion of a friend Symonds later visited a male brothel near Regents Park, and unexpectedly found comradeship and contentment there.⁸³ In a homosocial arena, characterised by cross-class intimacy he found (albeit briefly) the relationship for which he yearned, and which he only found again in the Graubünden in Switzerland with Christian Buol, and in Venice with Angelo Fusato.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Poem LI, p.77.

⁸¹ Symonds, *Memoirs*, *op.cit.*, p.166.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.167.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.254.

The political and social significance of Hellenism and pastoralism for homosexual men in London becomes even clearer in Ives's diaries, and in the elusive Order of the Chaerona he founded around 1891. The name alone indicates the importance of Hellenism in the conceptualisation of homosexual identity at this time, and Ives drew on the Theban bands as part of his argument for the legitimacy of homosexual relations. The evocation of Chaerona and the secrecy that surrounded the order also served to create an exclusive mobile space within the city; it existed beyond the conventional places of socialisation like pubs, parks and restaurants, and was to this extent intangible. It nevertheless established links between a diverse group of men in London and in other cities across Europe, and (at least in Ives's understanding of it) fortified them through the invocation of more heroic times and spaces. To Ives the secret affiliation, and the ritual that cemented it, constituted an invisible boundary between 'them' and 'us'. He wrote in 1904: 'If an enemy got hold of [the ring of membership] he would not be able to translate the signs. The Order moves upon a dream of an ideal not easy to explain, except [to] those who have seen and believed'.⁸⁴

Ives conceived of the Order as a broad church, writing in 1892: 'the cause must be served and followed by all sorts of men, each to work in his own sphere - the issue and the hope is great enough to bind even the most heterogeneous society'.⁸⁵ In the spirit of this diversity he lauded both Wilde and Carpenter as heroes of the cause, though neither joined the Order itself.⁸⁶ Indeed the actual membership remains uncertain. Ives referred to bumping into members in the street, to a member losing his ring (the subject of the citation above), to the work of others in Berlin and Paris, and to various initiation ceremonies. Throughout, however, he was careful not to divulge names. Indeed, Ives himself would not necessarily have known who other members were since it took only two existing members to create a third. It is consequently difficult to discern how large the Order was, particularly as it is sometimes unclear whether Ives is talking about people who had actually been initiated or more general 'workers' for 'the cause'. However, Montague Summers, John Gambril Nicholson, Charles Kains Jackson and C.R.Ashbee were all probably members,⁸⁷ and it is

⁸⁴ Ives, *Diary*, vol.44, 7 Jun.1904, p.998.

⁸⁵ *Diary*, vol.12, 14 Aug.1892, p.79.

⁸⁶ *Diary*, vol.19, 31 Mar.1894, p.67.

⁸⁷ See Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (1979; London, 1990), p.122-124. Laurence Housman is also named as a member by Weeks, but a letter from Housman to Janet Ashbee suggests that although Ives promised to bequeath his sacred ring to Housman if he joined the order, he refused: 'I hadn't the faith for it', he commented. Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life: C.R.Ashbee in the Cotswolds* (Berkeley, 1981), p.144. I am grateful to Anna Davin for directing me to this reference.

notable that several of these men (Summers, Nicholson, and, of course, Jackson) were also contributors to *The Artist*.

Whilst the achievements of the grouping as a whole and the seriousness with which it was treated more generally remain obscure, what is clear is Ives's dogged commitment to it. The service of initiation upheld the sanctity of 'heart love', be it 'legal and illegal, wise and unwise, happy and disastrous', and included various poems on the theme of comradeship and sustaining love.⁸⁸ Ives also saw the Order more practically as a campaigning body, a means through which networks of contacts might be established, and pressure brought to bear on figures of influence. To this end he maintained contact with several of the sexologists, and broached the topic of law reform with George Bernard Shaw and the MP John Burns, amongst others.⁸⁹ Individuals also seem to have been considered for the Order on account of their position or expertise. Ives commented on one individual: 'being a learned figure, we had thought he might have been of use to the order, but so far as I know, he was never in it'.⁹⁰ In 1893 he wrote: 'I am hopeful [of the character of several London workers] but they are so far as I know untried and some are too apathetic for Us at present'.⁹¹ Ives also saw his voluminous diaries, compilation of press cuttings, letters to the press and dedication to research as part of his crusade. He studiously kept pace with sexological developments, for example (attending conferences in London and Berlin) and was keen to share his knowledge. He wrote in 1901: 'Have sent Ellis's great work away to Australia, it cost me £2 but I look upon it as a duty. Let us spread the truth, the blessed seed of knowledge'.⁹² After Wilde's conviction Ives supplied articles he had collated to Frank Harris for a petition to the Home Secretary, which he hoped would 'rescue or alleviate the sufferings of poor Oscar'.⁹³ He also diligently maintained contact with foreign campaigns and events, and clearly saw the movement for reform as an international one.⁹⁴

The Order was not intended for the pursuit of sexual partners, and Ives is damning of those who attempted to use it frivolously. Just before the outbreak of the 1914-18 war Ives wrote: 'met accidentally a member of the Order who ought never to

⁸⁸ Ives, 'Service of Initiation' (1899), Ives's papers, HRHRC.

⁸⁹ Ives, *Diary*, vol. 41, 6 Jun. 1902, p.56; *Diary*, vol.44, 4 Jul.1904, p.110.

⁹⁰ *Diary*, vol.38, 12 Nov.1900, p.62.

⁹¹ *Diary*, vol.18, 29 Oct.1893, p. 1.

⁹² *Diary*, vol.39, 3 Apr.1901, p.56. This evangelism is typical of much of Ives's writing about 'the cause'.

⁹³ *Diary*, vol. 29, 25 Aug.1896, p.24. This is perhaps why the scrapbook for this year is missing.

⁹⁴ He wrote at different times: 'I hear excellent reports of the state of our people from Italy and even from Paris'; 'Our people are no longer liable to persecution in Russia, the unjust ancient law having lately been altered'; 'trouble in Holland, victory in Norway; talk of a petition of 30,000 in Germany; we will make them hear yet'. *Diary*, vol. 45, 7 Oct.1904, p.54; *Diary*, vol. 45, 20 Oct.1904, p.65; *Diary*, vol.59, 12 Oct.1913, p.67.

have been elected. He does nothing save amuse himself [...] I do regret he ever heard our first service. X is another feeble creature who is not worthy of our movement'.⁹⁵ Elsewhere in the diary he insisted: 'nothing personal must be attempted on duty'.⁹⁶

What Ives imagined was a kind of Athenian social contract in the face of an apparently more self-indulgent exploration of the possibilities of the city. He was critical of the urban scene both in terms of its homosexual subculture and its more general organisation. He was, for example, ambivalent about Wilde's set: 'after going among [them] it is hard to mix in ordinary society, for they have a charm which is rare and wonderful: I wish they were less extravagant and more real; [...] we must not be led astray by luxury or even beautiful things'.⁹⁷ Later, in 1911, he found the 'style of the men' in a Parisian bar 'contemptible' (although he finds the women fascinating),⁹⁸ and on Bastille day the following year he was dismissive of the 'silly invert' dancing together in the streets.⁹⁹ This urban frivolity seems to Ives to be almost a betrayal of the 'cause'.

More generally he advocated a pastoralism in the city and the fostering of spaces where people could retreat from the streets and find privacy at night, areas he called 'spoonitoria'. 'In the future', he wrote, 'such places will be provided and there will be no spies or restrictions'.¹⁰⁰ He abhorred street lighting and the policing of parks, and was outraged by a proposal to close Hyde Park at night.¹⁰¹ He consequently compared London unfavourably to Berlin, where he admired the Thiergarten, with its 'meandering paths, thick trees and waterways right in the middle of the capital!' It was, he went on: 'unfenced and open as a spoonitorium at all times; [...] much more free than London'.¹⁰² He saw in Berlin a wholesomeness, freedom and lack of pretension that both London and Paris lacked for him. He found something similar in his visits to Sydney and Portsmouth. To Ives each of these cities (despite warnings that the Thiergarten, for example, was dangerous at night) had a compact with nature, and partly in consequence an apparent toleration of 'natural' desires.¹⁰³

⁹⁵ *Diary*, vol. 60, 5 May 1914, p.87.

⁹⁶ *Diary*, vol. 38, 12 Nov.1901, p.62.

⁹⁷ *Diary*, vol. 22, 1 Jan.1895, p.84.

⁹⁸ *Diary*, vol. 55, 8 Jan.1911, p.48.

⁹⁹ *Diary*, vol. 57, 14 Jul.1912, p.100.

¹⁰⁰ *Diary*, vol. 50, 15 Aug.1906, p.52.

¹⁰¹ *Diary*, vol. 57, 26 Jan.1912, p.15. Ives also argued that darkness was necessary in the parks in a piece in *The Saturday Review*. Ives, 'Some Needs of a Great City', *The Saturday Review*, 11 Nov.1912: p.609.

¹⁰² *Diary*, vol.50, 15 Aug.1907, p.52.

¹⁰³ In Havelock Ellis's *A Dialogue in Utopia* it was precisely this kind of pastoral society which facilitated the natural expression of sexual feeling, although as with Morris's vision in *News from Nowhere* these feelings were depicted as exclusively heterosexual (implicitly aligning 'abnormal' desire with the city and modernity). Ellis, *op.cit.*; Morris, *op.cit.*

Ives was nevertheless drawn to the city. He found the country and even Cambridge tiresome, and announced that in London he 'ha[d] always been [him]self'.¹⁰⁴ London was the centre of his social life and support network, and also of his campaigning work. He announced melodramatically in 1894 'I renounce Nature to live among friends, among the faithful - I wouldn't care to be alone, no, not in paradise, so I must needs live in London, and besides I can do much work there'.¹⁰⁵ His diary indicates a wide social network based not around the bars and restaurants of the West End, but in the homes of middle and upper-class men, including C.R.Ashbee, Wilde, Lord Alfred Douglas, Henry Scott Tuke, and Kains Jackson. The diary also reveal a wider tolerance beyond this homosexual milieu. Shaw was said to be sympathetic, as were Janet Ashbee (C.R.Ashbee's wife), Havelock Ellis, and Edward Westermarck. Lytton Strachey indicated a similar (and well-known) liberalism amongst his Bloomsbury friends. In 1910 he noted in his diary: 'dinner at Gordon Square. Clive very fat. Discussion as to whether sods were *a priori* better than womanisers. Very dull'.¹⁰⁶ London may have been the place of greatest danger in terms of arrests and blackmail, but it was also a place of considerable tolerance, where individuals could act (to use Deborah Nord) at a 'distance from provincial and familial expectations'.¹⁰⁷ It was in the city that Ives felt the greatest sense of common cause, and the closest comradeship to that of the Theban Bands he idealised. London, he said, was where 'the attack' would 'commence'.¹⁰⁸

Given this experience and understanding of the possibilities of the city it is perhaps not surprising that one of the poems which featured in the initiation ceremony for the Order of the Chaerona was Walt Whitman's eulogy to a democratic fraternity in 'a city invincible', a 'new city of friends'.¹⁰⁹ The nostalgia of the solitary observer and the eroticism associated with bathing youth was replaced by an image of active fraternity and political, sexual and social consciousness emanating specifically from the city. It was this image and potential that underpinned Ives's campaigns and, despite the familiar appeals to the pastoral in his diaries, it was the city which compelled him both in his personal and political life.

¹⁰⁴ *Diary*, vol. 46, 17 Feb.1905, p.63.

¹⁰⁵ *Diary*, vol.19, 9 Mar.1894, p.37.

¹⁰⁶ Lytton Strachey, *Lytton Strachey By Himself: A Self Portrait*, ed. Michael Holroyd (London, 1994), 24 Mar.,1910, p.128,

¹⁰⁷ Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (London, 1995), p.182.

¹⁰⁸ *Diary*, vol. 10, 22 Apr.1891, p.98.

¹⁰⁹ Ives, 'Service of Initiation', *op.cit.* The poem appears in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855; New York, 1965), p.107. Whitman turned repeatedly to the city in his exploration of homoeroticised comradeship. See 'City of Orgies', 'Behold the Swarthy Face', and 'I hear it was charged against me', *op.cit.*, pp.103-4

A similar political project inspired Edward Carpenter and in Towards Democracy he, like Ives, explored the potential of the city and the significance of bonds of friendship there. The work relates in part to a radical tradition which saw change in environment as crucial to wider shifts in social and political consciousness. This included the projects of Charles Fourier in France in the 1820s and Robert Owen in Scotland in 1830s, as well as later movements such as the Guild of Handicrafts and the Utopian Fellowship of the New Life.¹¹⁰ Morris and Ellis's Utopias also foregrounded environmental transformation.¹¹¹ The reinvention of space, and, most notably in Morris, the integration of nature into the city, were seen as crucial to the liberation of the subject. In Towards Democracy Carpenter similarly centred on space and its effects, and drew heavily on pastoral imagery. He did not, however, outline a reformed space, but rather encouraged a different perspective on existing spaces, in order to consolidate ideas of democratic comradeship. Within this vision the city was an important site, though his life and work have been associated with a return to the land. Carpenter visited London frequently from his smallholding in Millthorpe, near Sheffield, and in Towards Democracy the city featured as a place of potential radicalism, and most importantly human connection. Along with Symonds, Ives and Whitman, Carpenter saw such connections as the root of democratic progress and a Hellenic revival.¹¹²

The four parts of Towards Democracy were published separately between 1883 and 1902, but received little critical attention and sold slowly. In 1905, however, Swann Sonnenschien published the first collected edition, and by 1916 it had sold 16,000 copies. Carpenter became something of a celebrity and he received 'pilgrims' from all over the country. The text itself is composed of a single lengthy prose poem (part one) and three additional sections which contain shorter poetic pieces. In the work he outlined his political and social vision, which had a deified figure of democracy at its heart, representing the spirit of comradeship. This figure is the motor of social change, bringing forth an alternative to a stifling set of values and urban

¹¹⁰ See Barbara Taylor, Eye and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1983); Weeks, Against Nature, *op.cit.*

¹¹¹ Some Utopias included visions of a reformed sexual life. Morris and Ellis imagines a more 'natural' but exclusively heterosexual expressions of desire, whilst Fourier imagined a commune where 'lesbians, pederasts, flagellants, and others with more recondite tastes such as heel scratching and eating live spiders will all have their desires recognised and satisfied'. John Carey, ed., The Faber Book of Utopias (London, 1999), p.212. See also Saskia Poldervaart, 'Theories About Sex and Sexuality in Utopian Socialism', Journal of Homosexuality, vol.29, no.2/3 (1995): pp.41-67.

¹¹² See Edward Carpenter, 'The Intermediate Sex' (1908), in Selected Writings: Sex, ed. Noël Grieg (London, 1984), p.217-221; Symonds, A Problem in Modern Ethics, *op.cit.*, pp.276-279; Whitman Leaves of grass, *op.cit.*, pp.94-107; Ives, 'The Search for a Kindred Soul', The Saturday Review (14 Mar.1906), in Ives, Casebook, vol.vi, p.6, BLY. See also Logie Barrow on the political significance of the idea of friendship in socialist discourse around this time. Barrow, *op.cit.*

forms which Carpenter saw strangling humanity. He noted, for example, the 'long lines of princely mansions stretch[ing] through Belgravia and Kensington - closeclipped, deaf, plague stricken', and 'the lines of carriages' (not people) that 'crowd the park'.¹¹³ In the streets he saw people 'stitched up, in clothes, fearing a chill, a drop of rain, [...] running back to their suburban runs and burrows'.¹¹⁴

However, whilst noting this sense of urban individualism and fragmentation, Carpenter also suggested the potential offered by the city and more particularly its people and crowds. In part one he wrote:

Through the city crowd pushing wrestling shouldering, against the tide, face after face, breath of liquor, money-grubbing eye, infidel skin, shouts, threats, greetings, smiles, eyes and breasts of love, breathless, clutches of lust, limbs, bodies, torrents, bursts, savage onslaughts, tears, entreaties, tremblings, stranglings, suicidal, the sky, the houses, surges and crest of waves, white faces from afar bearing down nearer nearer, almost touching, and glances unforgotten and meant to be unforgotten.¹¹⁵

A random collection of diverse impressions, from the ecstatic to the desperate, are equalised here in an outpouring of jumbled verbs, adjectives, and nouns. The passage represents the multiplicity of the urban crowd, which, Christopher Prendergast argues, is 'the opposite of community' in which 'the self has fewer reference points of orientation'.¹¹⁶ In Carpenter's rendition, however, there is also a rhythmic movement which unifies the elements into an eroticised totality: from an alienating entry to 'breath of liquor, money grubbing eye, infidel skin', to an orgasmic surge in the middle of the passage ('eyes and breasts of love, breathless, clutches of lust, limbs, bodies, torrents, bursts'), a post-orgasmic despair (of 'tears, entreaties, tremblings'), and finally, from the passionate embrace of the crowd, enduring memories (reiterated in the first line of the stanza that follows: 'I do not forget you: I see you quite plainly'). The crowd is imagined as a sexual experience and whilst chaotic it does not dissolve 'conscious personality', as Gustav Le Bon suggested it might.¹¹⁷ To Carpenter the crowd offered the potential for cohesion, connection and resolve.¹¹⁸ The image is not unproblematic - there is violence and despair in this scene - but it also contains something erotically irresistible, and a connection forged specifically through the crucible of the city.

¹¹³ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, (1883-1902; London, 1985), p.51.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.220.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.34.

¹¹⁶ Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1992), p.143.

¹¹⁷ Gustav Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London, 1896), p.2.

¹¹⁸ Raymond Williams points out Wordsworth's earlier invocation of the city crowd as a vision of the potential 'unity of men'. See Williams, *The Country and the City*, *op.cit.*, p.151.

Carpenter came to terms with the urban through its outdoor places of congregation. Stephen Kern refers to these places in the late nineteenth century as 'positive-negative' spaces; areas 'formerly regarded as a void' which 'now had a constituent function in common with the progress of political democracy, the breakdown of aristocratic privilege, and the secularisation of life: they all levelled hierarchies'.¹¹⁹ It was precisely these positive-negative city spaces which most interested Carpenter. Part three, for example, includes the short poem, 'St James Park':

An island ringed with surf -
A cool green shade and tiny enchanted spot of trees and flowers and fountains
The ocean raging around it.¹²⁰

The city surrounding the park is a raging ocean, evoking the familiar imagery of the dangerous incessant 'mob'. The pastoral perspective offered by St James's Park is redemptive, however, and within it the narrator discerns a series of individuals brought together in a less chaotic way than in the crowd sequence of part one. He characteristically rehearses the biographies of the people there, sketching 'the baker's man', 'the pousy old gentleman', 'the footman', 'the rather elegant young lady', 'the middle-aged widower', and 'the tramp' (a series of urban types, in fact). As with the street, the space links rather than separates, and it becomes increasingly clear that it is these points of confluence which most excite and interest Carpenter. In part one it is in a London park that we find the mysterious attractive stranger 'easy with open shirt and brown neck and face' who draws everyone's attention, and so embodies 'one of the slowly unfolding meanings of democracy'.¹²¹ The diverse people in the park are linked by their attraction to this unselfconscious, masculine figure, unspoilt by urban manners. 'The delicate lady', for example, 'secretly loathes her bejewelled lord and desires piteously the touch of this man's muscular lithe sun-embrowned body'.¹²² The spirit of connectivity is thus channelled through desire, and finds its locus in the outdoor space of the city.

In outlining a radical socialist project the city could not be ignored, and the sheer mass of people offered potential for change and unified political action (as Raymond Williams indicates).¹²³ Carpenter certainly drew on the pastoral in his version of the city, but whereas Morris evoked an idealised rural economy (in News

¹¹⁹ Stephen Kern, The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918 (London, 1983), p.175.

¹²⁰ Towards Democracy, op.cit., p.254.

¹²¹ Ibid., pp.43-44

¹²² Ibid., p.44.

¹²³ Williams, The Country and the City, op.cit., p.231.

From Nowhere), Carpenter used the pastoral as a means of allowing a reconnection with 'natural' desires and impulses in an urban context. It was these impulses, he suggested, that potentially motivated connection and unity, and which necessarily found their most frequent expression amidst a mass of people. In another section of book one, for example, Democracy, personified in the first person, is at home in the city:

At night I creep down and lie close in the great city - there I am at home -
 hours and hours I lie stretched there; the feet go to and fro, to and fro, beside
 and over me. [...]
 You, soaring yearning face of youth threading the noisy crowd, though you
 soar to the stars you cannot escape me.
 I remain where I am. I make no effort. Wherever you go it is the same to me:
 I am there already.¹²⁴

The passage echoes the imagery associated with the urban predator in the fiction of Stevenson and Stoker, in some of the news coverage of court cases, and in the extract from Symonds's memoirs cited earlier; Democracy creeps through the streets, lies in wait, is inescapable. He is, however, transformed into a redemptive force, and is envisaged representing a positive rather than degenerate set of desires. The destructive and perverted forces of the city are transfigured by the incorruptible force of democracy. The crowd thus ultimately yields connection, the people in the park are unified in their desire for the muscular young man, and the dangerous streets harbour not a sexual monster but an omnipresent guardian angel.

This linking figure of democracy is repeatedly imagined in iconic, homoerotic terms. In the poem 'As a Woman of a Man' (part two) Carpenter wrote:

Come! Who art no longer a name:
 Gigantic Thou, with head aureoled by the sun - wild among the mountains -
 Thy huge limbs naked and stalwart erected member
 [...]
 I will draw thee closer and closer,
 I will drain thy lips and the secret things of thy body,
 I will conceive by thee Democracy.¹²⁵

Here, as with the free-standing Greek statues, a complete, unified and perfect male form is described, embodying a social and political philosophy. The engagement is explicitly sexual and fecund. The same-sex liaison here yields spiritual, philosophical

¹²⁴ *Towards Democracy, op.cit.*, p.36.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.141.

and political progeny.¹²⁶ This figure recurs in various forms throughout the text, at times assuming the narrative voice, at other times, as here, the subject of it. In the first part 'disrespectable democracy' appears as a 'black and horned Ethiopian' whose 'powerful brows and huge limbs please me well' and shortly after he discloses himself as Pan to the narrator: 'goat footed and sitting on a rock - as to the Athenian runner of old'.¹²⁷ This mutable, omniscient deity forms a unifying thread through the diverse spaces evoked in the text, moving between them and emphasising their simultaneity:

I am a seeing unseen atom travelling with others through space or remaining centuries in one place; again I resume a body and disclose myself [...]
I enter the young prostitute's chamber, where he is arranging the photographs of fashionable beauties [...] and stay with him; we are at ease and understand each other [...] I dance at the village feast [...] I go down to sea with fisher folk [...] The budder of roses bends among the low bushes [...] the bathers in the late twilight, almost dark, advance naked under the trees by the waterside, five or six together, superb, unashamed, scarcely touching the ground.

Carpenter undermines ideas of spatial hierarchy at this and similar moments in the text. He foregrounds a range of spaces, though emphasises the workshop, the countryside, the public spaces of the city, and those places redolent of homosexual desire (here the prostitute's bedroom and the pond-side). The text repeatedly opens the reader's awareness to these other places, with each one envisaged as part of an interconnected web which links diverse people and different desires over vast distances. It is this spatial dynamic which structures the text, rather than a strong linear narrative. Through this structure and spatial preoccupation Carpenter suggested a different perspective on sociability and desire as wider connections were illuminated. He did not elevate a simple individualised narrative of sexual and social development but rather a series of parallel stories and spaces. The literary critic Scott McCracken describes it as an atemporality through which a new subjectivity might be imagined.¹²⁸

Carpenter's reconceptualisation of space, underpinned by this eroticised sense of democracy, joined an idealised rural muscularity to the seductive fabric and figures of the metropolis. The enervated urban expressions of homosexuality which Carpenter (and Ives, Symonds and Havelock Ellis) criticised elsewhere were reinvigorated, and the social and political possibilities of the city were reconfigured partly through its sexual potential.

¹²⁶ See also, *ibid.*, p.137 & p.293.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹²⁸ Scott McCracken, 'Writing the Body: Edward Carpenter, George Gissing and Late-Nineteenth Century Realism', in ed. Brown, p.187.

This power of comradeship to pull spaces and the people within them together into a new social formation suggested a political productiveness in a set of desires elsewhere conceived as sterile, degenerate, or nostalgic. The Hellenic ideal of masculine love, which was perceived to embody and produce social stability and progress, was conjured anew within contemporary space. Moreover, a temporal generative dimension to homosexual desire, denied by the sexologists, was recovered. This was a theme which ran through Carpenter's other writings; he repeatedly conceived the intermediate sex to be the redeeming and mediating force in human society. In 'The Intermediate Sex' (1906) and 'Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folk' (1914) Carpenter suggested the educative, philanthropic and artistic talents of inverts, and their ability to bridge the gulf between the sexes:

The double life and nature certainly, in many cases of inverts observed today, seems to give to them an extraordinary humanity and sympathy, together with a remarkable power of dealing with human beings. It may possibly also point to a further degree of evolution than usually attained, and a higher order of consciousness, very imperfectly realised, of course, but indicated.¹²⁹

The stasis and possible degeneration that characterised the portrayals in the newspaper press and sexology discussed earlier here gives way to an idea of advanced evolution, and of a productive role within society (something like Jowett's civic elite). Carpenter's eroticised depiction of confluence in the city thus carried with it implications of a higher consciousness, as well as social and pedagogical development. This extended the invert's sphere of influence beyond the immediate physical environment which tended to enclose and define in the fields of writing considered in previous chapters. Carpenter did not evoke alternative, removed and exclusive spaces to counter the disruptive and fragmentary urban scene (as the poetry discussed earlier in the chapter tended to) and instead disinterred the potential offered by the city's streets and parks.

Beneath the urban phantasmagoria Carpenter thus discovered not the crude mechanisms of capitalism (as Walter Benjamin did) but a series of human bonds which could override them. It was this that he attempted to foreground. Carpenter implicitly recognised the importance of the city in terms of political and erotic action, and despite his own personal rejection of London in his move to Millthorpe, he continued to incorporate images of the city into his work, and to recast and idealise particular urban figures. In this latter respect especially he echoed Ives, C.R. Ashbee and Symonds. In their diaries and memoirs these men described the attractiveness of the

¹²⁹ Edward Carpenter, 'Intermediate Types Amongst Primitive Folk' (1914), in Selected Writings: Sex, *op.cit.*, p.276.

soldier, the male prostitute, and the East End 'lad', figures who appeared in the newspaper reports and pornography discussed earlier. In this rather different context they were imagined quite differently, however. Encounters with them (in a brothel, in the streets, outside Charing Cross station, in a public swimming bath)¹³⁰ were not seen to be symptomatic of urban debauchery and abuse. Nor were they cited as evidence of the grasping and cunning nature of the urban working class. The understandings these men had of their encounters, together with their writings on the subject, indicated the meshing of political and sexual identifications, albeit in heavily romanticised and idealised ways.¹³¹ The city still emerged as an important focus of these relationships, but instead of being aligned with urban degeneration and decadence, they keyed into ideas of working-class comradeship and fraternity. The city emerged as an arena for productive sexual and social relations, and Carpenter and Ives in particular saw it as a potential base for political progress and social reform.¹³²

3.

The homosexual is not someone who sleeps with boys, instead of sleeping with girls; he (or at least the homosexual who thinks about his destiny, who contributes to 'homosexual culture') is also someone who feels and thinks differently from the mass of his fellows, someone who holds back, who does not admit the current values, someone who cuts himself off from his time, his country; who seeks outside the beaten tracks of opinion, who is not only satisfied with the system in place, and who aspires ceaselessly to another world, an unknown elsewhere.¹³³

In the works discussed in this chapter space is central: each writer imagined an affirmative arena where identities and desires could be explored without fear of the law and social censure. The struggle proposed by Dominique Fernandez in *Le Rapt de Ganymede* (cited above) was thus prefigured at the turn of the nineteenth century in the drive to imagine a bucolic and Hellenic 'elsewhere' and to seek an associated and accommodating social system. This merging of Hellenism and pastoralism became central to the ways in which many men conceptualised their homosexuality and constructed their relationships. The associated writing constituted an implicit and sometimes explicit critique of the urban frame in which male homosexual behaviour

¹³⁰ See chapter 2.

¹³¹ For discussion and illustration of cross-class homosexual relationships during the period see Weeks (1990), *op.cit.*, pp.39-42; and Rupert Croft-Cooke, *Feasting With Panthers: a New Consideration of Some Late-Victorian Writers* (London, 1967), p.103.

¹³² For a discussion of the Fabian's response to sexual radicalism see Weeks, *Against Nature, op.cit.*, pp.174-6.

¹³³ Dominique Fernandez, *Le Rapt de Ganymede* (1989) cited in Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London, 1990), pp.203-204.

had largely been placed, and it sought both to detract from the city and provide a means of sustaining a sense of self within it.

The realisation of Fernandez's vision is also an impossibility, however. There can be no doubting the desire on the part of Carpenter, Ives and Symonds to do each of the things he proposes; it was virtually their stated project. However, their work and ideas about sexual dissidence were informed by prevailing social and cultural 'norms'. They were constrained by the very forces they were seeking to challenge and escape. Their particular seizure of Hellenism as a justificatory discourse, for example, was not just coincident with the more general interest in the ancient Greeks, it was dependent on it. It was further dependent upon the particular pedagogical structures at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge through which each of these men passed. The quest for orderly Hellenic sexual and social relationships also mirrored a wider cultural impulse to control and define errant and unpredictable desire. The use of Hellenism in the exploration of homosexuality was in many way inherently conservative. Moreover, this Hellenic vision could never be all-embracing; these writers had other allegiances, commitments and prejudices, which tied them into other identifications and milieu. They clearly could not 'cut [themselves] off from [their] time'. Indeed, for many Hellenism and pastoralism merely provided an escape, nostalgia, and a convenient justification for the adoration of youth. Others saw their radical potential, and their ability to sustain and structure a socialist agenda. For Ives and Carpenter this radicalism often involved the urban present and not 'an unknown elsewhere'. It seemed to them that the city might be the place where the solidarity and eroticised comradeship of the ancient Greeks might begin to be realised, and where a process of social and cultural transformation might commence.

Conclusion

Coming to London meant moving into a life that already existed - I started to talk to other people for the first time, to go to places that already had a style, a history if you like. What I've done, I suppose, is to connect my life to other lives, even buildings and streets, that had an existence prior to mine. This is in itself remarkable, because for the longest time imaginable I experienced my gayness in complete isolation, just like any other gay child in a small town. And now, gradually, I've come to understand that I am connected with other men's lives, men living in London with me. Or with other dead Londoners.¹

Neil Bartlett explores his sense of belonging in contemporary London partly through the very different lives of Fanny and Stella, Jack Saul, and Oscar Wilde, and through the theatres, pubs, parks, and streets of the city in the late nineteenth century. They are part of a subcultural history which affirms his own lifestyle and choices. The individuals, writings and images he recovers had a parallel and complex significance for men who had homosexual relationships during the period itself. The analysis of George Ives's scrapbooks and diaries, for example, has indicated their impact on one individual's politics, social life, and self-conceptualisation. Sexology shaped his understanding of sexual desire and gave him a sense of biological affiliation with other 'similarly constituted' men. This understanding, together with a Hellenic conception of comradeship and battle, informed his fight for legitimacy. The law and the newspaper press motivated his struggle, but in addition brought him bad dreams, a fear of anonymous contacts, and an obsession with privacy and secrecy. Decadent images of sexual profligacy both attracted and repelled him. Each of these representations also referred Ives back to the city; to what it threatened, what it made possible, what it symbolised; to its social divisions and inequalities.

The thesis has shown how the proliferating accounts of homosexuality during the period consolidated the sense that London played a central role in the lives of men who had sex with other men. They bound the city and ideas about homosexuality together in a number of different ways.

Firstly, men involved in 'acts of gross indecency' were seen to be symptomatic of a broader sexual disarray in the city at this time. The contingent nature of policing and press reporting made these acts (and the effeminacy that was increasingly associated with them) seem especially urban phenomena. Moreover, the threat of prosecution, exposure and blackmail meant that men exploring the homosexual

¹ Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde* (London, 1988), p.xx.

possibilities of the city had to police their behaviour carefully. This is apparent in all the writings considered here - from the themes of secrecy and revelation in The Picture of Dorian Gray to the fantasies of an unimpeded and 'natural' arena for homosexual relations in the poetry published in The Artist and Journal of Home Culture.

Self-conceptions and public understanding of homosexual behaviour were in addition informed by ideas about urban disease and degeneration. Viewed within this framework the homosexual condition was a personal disaster and a threat not only to public decency and morality but to the strength and vigour of the nation. Such conceptions influenced sexology, a field of writing which suggested a necessary link between homosexuality and the city. Together with decadent writing and the newspaper press, sexology also highlighted an international urban circuit, which associated the 'homosexual' and 'invert' not with their country but with other cities. Berlin and Paris were mentioned particularly frequently, and they attained considerable symbolic importance for many men during the period.

This writing also sketched a homoerotic map of the city, incorporating new places of entertainment and leisure, the stations, the Embankment, the parks, and the docks. An entrenched subculture was exposed and shown to be taking full advantage of metropolitan developments. Stories of Mollies, sodomy trials, and cross-dressing in the city in the preceding decades and centuries further indicated that homosexuality was an enduring part of city life. These mappings and histories marked out a series of personal and group engagements with London which consolidated a presence and sense of belonging. They also caused considerable anxiety, not least because they implicated sites that had other roles in the life of the city: important symbols of London's imperial power, and technological and cultural advance, were being used for outlawed sexual practices which suggested neither propriety nor order.

This lack of propriety was further suggested by the association of homosexuality with images of urban theatricality, excessive consumption, cosmopolitanism, amorality, and decadence. These became defining factors in the way homosexuality was perceived both by men having sex with other men and by a wider public. They marked a refusal to heed the invocation to moral and social rectitude, and constituted a constant and visible counter to these ideals. They also led some middle and upper-class men to write the city out of their vision of sexual relations between men, and to focus on other times and places. Images of ancient Greece and rural life suggested a stability and endurance that the accounts in the press, sexology, pornography and decadent writing seemed to lack. Importantly, though, these alternative spaces were often a means of conceptualising an identity, lifestyle, and set of social relations *within* the city. Ives and Carpenter in particular attempted to

counter the associations of frivolous consumption, disease and degeneracy, but they also perceived the city to be a positive component in the lives of 'homosexual' and 'uranian' men.

London was clearly a prominent component in the discussion of homosexuality, and it served in many ways as a unifying factor in emerging (and existing) ideas about male same-sex relations. The different relationships between homosexuality and the city were not, however, conducive to shaping a single, coherent urban homosexual identity. Sexual relations between men took many forms and were seen in many different ways. They could be situational, casual, and opportunistic; a way of earning some extra money; part of a self-consciously assumed and labelled identity and subculture; a component of an intense friendship. These different understandings often overlapped: a man who self-consciously assumed a homosexual identity might also charge for sex, enjoy casual encounters, and find himself at times isolated, at others the centre of a supportive social network.

Circulating ideas about homosexuality were thus variously embraced and resisted by men exploring the sexual potential of the city and their own sexual identity. Whilst Oscar Wilde provided the most famous image of urban homosexuality, there were clearly other possibilities which were less risky. Middle and upper-class men drew on existing urban types such as the bachelor and bohemian, for example, and found affirmation in sanctioned activities and places: museum visits, settlement work, swimming, and club membership. Connections between such activities and homosexuality were hinted at in the newspapers, but with the flamboyant Wildean image uppermost after the 1895 trials, they were never quite as suspect. The emergence of a distinguishable figure in many ways facilitated the development of a less overt, but no less active, subculture in the city. The period thus saw the consolidation of a public image of homosexuality, but this image did not fully overlap with other less publicised expressions and understandings. Networks of support and sociability developed, for example, which belied newspaper accounts of urban predators, 'dens of infamy', and 'gangs' of prostitutes and blackmailers. Ideas of comradeship with working-class men propagated by Carpenter, Ives, Symonds, and Ashbee did not usurp the wider conception that cross-class sexual relationships were actuated by abusive sexual appetites and the desire for monetary gain. Neither, of course, did prevailing images account for the relationships which were beyond the public gaze, but which may nevertheless have been crucial in the self-conceptualisation and attitudes of those who knew the men involved.

The different works and ideas considered in this thesis were central to the ways in which homosexuality was perceived and experienced, but they also affected individuals (and groups of individuals) in different ways. They clearly informed the way

Ives (for example) saw himself, the city and his peers, but they had a somewhat different impact on him than on Wilde, Symonds, and Carpenter. The relationship between representation and behaviour was neither simple nor transparent, and was modulated by a range of personal, social, economic and cultural factors. This thesis has focused on representation and the circulation of ideas, but it has also suggested the need for a flexibility in approach which allows the historian to remain sensitive to this kind of complexity. Such an approach allows for language and discourse to be examined alongside the traditional concerns of social history, and also accommodates the possibility of idiosyncratic histories in which an individual might (to use Lyndal Roper) 'think and feel against the social grain'.²

As international tensions increased and war broke out, concern about homosexuality in London reached new heights. Arrests and prosecution rose³ and the association of homosexuality with foreigners (and foreign cities) burgeoned. After Robert Ross's inconclusive libel action against Lord Alfred Douglas in 1914, Douglas hit back with 'The Rossiad', a poem echoing the rhetoric of eighteenth-century pamphleteers considered in chapter two. The Cities of the Plain had been built again in London, the poem suggested, and in terms of 'the cultured sin' London 'could give points even to Berlin'.⁴ Characterising the threat to the nation as 'filthy fog' (for which London was, of course, notorious) Wilde's former lover continued:

Two foes thou has, one there, one here,
One far, one intimately near,
Two filthy fogs blot out thy light:
The German and the Sodomite.⁵

Early in 1918 Noel Pemberton Billing, MP, appeared to confirm Douglas's assertions by claiming that the Germans had a list of 47,000 prominent homosexuals in England, many of whom were supposedly being blackmailed to undermine the British war effort.⁶

²Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994), p.9.

³ For the increase in arrests and prosecutions between 1912 and 1915 see the appendix, table 1. Arrests increased significantly during this period, and were at their highest in the first year of the war. In his diaries Ives talked of a sharp rise in cases during the war years, including a 'pogrom' of 23 men in 1916. George Ives, *Diary*, vol.64, 3 Mar. 1916, p.96, HRHC. See also *Diary*, vol.65, 19 May 1916, p.40; vol.67, 4 Jan.1917, p.32; and Ives, *Casebook*, vols.9-11, 1914-1918, BLY.

⁴ Lord Alfred Douglas, *The Rossiad* (1914; London, 1916), p.10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁶ Ives included numerous press reports of the scandal in his scrapbook. *Casebook*, vol.11, pp.40-45. For a full account of the Pemberton Billing affair see Philip Hoare, *Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy and the First World War* (London, 1997).

Perhaps in response to such negative rhetoric, social and support networks continued to strengthen. The Order of the Chaerona was active and growing,⁷ and Ives wrote of meetings of the newly formed British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology.⁸ He also detailed the sympathetic response of 'an MP' to his protest at the extent of war-time prosecutions for homosexual activity in London.⁹ When A.T.Fitzroy's *Despised and Rejected*¹⁰ was banned in 1918 because of its pacifist sentiments and discussion of homosexuality, Ives, Carpenter, and Laurance Housman all rallied to her support. Carpenter also began a campaign to raise money for the legal expenses of the publisher, C.W.Daniel.¹¹

Throughout the war Robert Ross continued his aesthetic lifestyle. He wore a large turquoise scarab ring, used a jade-green cigarette holder, and had a flat in Half Moon Street, Piccadilly, which he had decorated in gold.¹² The nearby Café Royale was still popular with a bohemian, artistic, and sexually dissident crowd.¹³ In 1915 a new 'West End Scandal' erupted after a midnight raid on Gerald Hamilton's 'luxurious' Westminster flat. Police found rouge, powder puffs and a number of incriminating letters, and arrested Hamilton (dressed in 'a flimsy dressing gown'), an officer and several soldiers.¹⁴ The following year the *World* reported an 'unprecedented increase in unnatural vice' and a level of prosecutions under the Criminal Law Amendment Act which 'pass[ed] all belief. According to the article the West End was 'overrun with these pests'.¹⁵

Socialising, sex, support, cross-dressing, and prostitution continued during the war, causing additional concern and offence because of the ongoing conflict. The luxury of Hamilton's flat, for example, was mentioned at a time of supposed austerity, and such sexual profligacy was seen to pose a threat to the moral and physical health of the nation's forces. London was the hub of the British war effort but also the centre of an apparently burgeoning homosexual subculture. Once again the disorderliness of urban life was apparent; a disorderliness which, with its attendant dangers and possibilities, was continuing to shape homosexual experience in the city.

⁷ In 1916 Ives wrote that 'there are several new members in the making'. Ives, *Diary*, vol.61, 7 Aug.1914, p.23. See also *Diary*, vol.66, 7 Sep.1916, p.44; vol.68, 5 Aug.1917, p.80; & vol.69, 20 Nov.1917, p.64.

⁸ *Diary*, vol.64, 23 Feb.1916. Ives noted that the organisation 'seems to flourish in spite of the war'.

⁹ *Diary*, vol.64, 27 Jan.1916, p.72.

¹⁰ A.T.Fitzroy, *Despised and Rejected* (1918; London, 1988). A.T.Fitzroy was the pseudonym of Rose Allatini.

¹¹ See Edward Carpenter's appeal letter. Carpenter, letters, HRHRC.

¹² Hoare, *op.cit.*, p.15 & p.24

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹⁴ 'West End Scandal: Midnight Raid on Luxurious Flat', *Reynolds*, 14 Nov.1914, in Ives *Casebook*, vol.9, p.76.

¹⁵ 'Abnormal Vice Rampant', *World*, 15 Aug.1916, in Ives, *Casebook*, vol.10, p.45.

This homosexual history and geography gave Neil Bartlett a series of reference points when he moved to London in the early 1980s. Along with Derek Jarman, Alan Hollinghurst, and many other writers and artists, he in turn responded to new urban and sexual dynamics in his work; to the AIDS crisis in the city, a different legal situation, a more obvious cross-over between north American and English culture, a more trenchant gay politics, a more visible gay 'scene', and a fresh instability in the categories of sexual identity which had prevailed for almost a century. Conceptualisations of homosexuality had shifted and London had clearly changed both physically and in the way it was perceived and represented. There can consequently be no facile equation between the city and homosexuality *circa* 1900 and *circa* 2000. Despite this, some of the places, associations, debates and anxieties discussed in this thesis are still familiar, and there are continued resonances with the late Victorian and Edwardian inverted city.

Appendix

Table 1. Arrest (arr.) and conviction (con.) figures for 'sodomy', 'intent to commit sodomy', and 'gross indecency between males', 1880-1915.

Year	Sodomy (see note 1)		Intent to commit Sodomy (see note 1)		Gross Indecency with Males		Total	
	Arr.	Con.	Arr.	Con.	Arr.	Con.	Arr.	Con.
1880	7	1	4	0	n/a	n/a	11	1
1881	1	0	5	1	n/a	n/a	6	1
1882	1	0	8	5	n/a	n/a	9	5
1883	7	5	see note 2		n/a	n/a	7	5
1884	1	1	3	3	n/a	n/a	4	4
1885	4	2	4	1	2	0	10	3
1886	3	1	see note 2		18	5	21	6
1887	2	1	3	2	11	5	16	8
1888	2	0	2	0	8	5	12	5
1889	1	0	3	1	17	3	21	4
1890	7	1	10	8	20	12	37	21
1891	13	5	4	3	27	13	44	21
1892	5	3	3	2	24	11	32	16
1893	8	2	7	5	42	21	57	28
1894	2	0	3	1	35	7	40	8
1895	3	1	6	3	35	28	44	32
1896	6	0	9	7	27	10	42	17
1897	2	2	14	7	32	17	48	26
1898	6	4	5	2	52	30	63	36
1899	9	1	10	6	39	19	58	26
1900	7	4	15	6	28	12	50	22
1901	8	2	12	5	39	15	59	22
1902	4	3	12	5	38	14	54	22
1903	3	1	8	5	41	12	52	18
1904	9	5	7	3	38	18	54	26
1905	5	3	5	4	40	14	50	21
1906	8	3	15	14	44	20	67	37
1907	4	0	19	15	30	10	53	25
1908	9	2	15	6	35	11	59	19
1909	7	5	12	4	45	23	64	32
1910	2	2	20	9	35	12	57	23
1911	6	4	18	4	44	21	68	29
1912	5	4	20	6	46	16	71	26
1913	3	2	52	14	35	15	90	31
1914	6	4	42	13	46	13	94	30
1915	3	0	38	14	73	32	114	46

Source: Compiled from the annual reports to parliament from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.¹

¹Usually figures for each year appear in the police commissioners report of the succeeding year, so figures for 1880 would appear in the report of 1881. There are anomalies, however, and in some

Note 1. There are some anomalies in the categorisation of crimes. In 1895 'sodomy' changed to 'unnatural offences', and 'intent to commit sodomy' to 'intent to commit unnatural offences'. There is no accompanying explanation, but it seems that the only additional crime that might be included in these categories is bestiality. There is no listing for arrests and prosecutions for bestiality after 1885, but in the preceding five years there were three convictions and an average of 3.4 arrests per year. This causes a problem in the analysis of statistics after 1895, and may mean that the figures for 'sodomy' and 'intent to commit sodomy' as listed here may include some bestiality cases.

Note 2. In these years figures for sodomy and intent to commit sodomy were combined without explanation.

Table 2: Average annual arrest (arr.) and conviction (con.) figures for 'sodomy', 'intent to commit sodomy', and 'gross indecency between males', 1880-1914.

Year	Sodomy		Intent to commit Sodomy		Gross indecency between males		Total	
	Arr.	Con.	Arr.	Con.	Arr.	Con.	Arr.	Con.
1880 -	3.4	1.4	4	1.8	n/a	n/a	7.4	3.2
1885 -	2.4	0.8	2.4	0.8	11.2	3.6	16	5.2
1890 -	7	2.2	5.4	3.8	29.6	12.8	42	20.6
1895 -	5.2	1.6	12	5	37	20.8	51	27.4
1900 -190	6.2	3	10.8	4.8	36.8	14.2	53.8	22
1905 -	6.6	2.6	13.2	8.6	38.8	15.6	58.6	26.8
1910 -	4.4	3.2	30.4	9.2	41.2	15.4	76	27.8

Source: Compiled from the annual reports to parliament from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

years reports are included for the preceding two years. Page references refer to the beginning of the 'Report from the Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis'. **Report from the Commissioners: Police**, vol.51 (London, 1881), p.14; vol.33 (1882), p.14; vol.31 (1883), p.15; vol.42 (1884), p.17; vol.37 (1885), p.13; vol.34 (1886), pp.20-21; vol.40 (1887), p.21; vol.57 (1888), pp.26-27; vol.40 (1889), pp.26-27; vol.42 (1890-91), pp.28-29; vol.41 (1892), pp.28; vol.45 (1893-94), pp.26-27; vol.42 (1894), p.32; vol.42 (1895), p.32; vol.42 (1896), p.34; vol.39 (1897), p.35; vol.46 (1898), p.38; vol.42 (1899), p.46; vol.40 (1900), p.49; vol.42 (1902), pp.51-52; vol.34 (1904), p.52; vol.36 (1905), p.56; vol.49 (1906); vol.51 (1908), p.50&56; vol.36 (1909), pp.60; vol.45 (1910), p.50; vol.43 (1912-13), p.39&47; vol.44 (1914), p.39; vol.32 (1914-16), p.39; vol.14 (1916), p.16.

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