

**Seduced and Dying:
The Sympathetic Trope of the Fallen Woman in Early and
Mid-Victorian Britain, c. 1820-1870**

by

Deborah Deacon
Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Victoria, 2015

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History

© Deborah Deacon, 2018
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without the permission of the author.

**Seduced and Dying:
The Sympathetic Trope of the Fallen Woman in Early and
Mid-Victorian Britain, c. 1820-1870**

by

Deborah Deacon
Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Victoria, 2015

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Simon Devereaux (Department of History)
Supervisor

Dr. Andrea McKenzie (Department of History)
Departmental Member

Abstract

In early and mid-Victorian Britain, men and women from all classes demonstrated a strong fascination with, and sympathy for, seduced and dying women. Though such women were unchaste or “fallen” women, they did not excite the same anxiety and condemnation as did other sexually transgressive women like prostitutes and adulteresses. This thesis demonstrates that the sympathetic trope of the seduced and dying woman in British culture from 1820 to 1870 was a combination of (and an interplay between) fiction and reality. Through a study of melodrama – a largely working-class genre – and “expert” literature – a predominantly middle-class genre, comprised of medical, social, religious and prescriptive writings – this thesis shows how the seduced and dying woman inspired sympathy both across and along class lines. Finally, an analysis of nineteenth-century newspaper accounts of “Seduction and Suicide” illustrates that, while this popular trope inspired sympathy for a certain kind of fallen woman – the feminine, passive and (most importantly) suffering and dying victim of seduction – it also distorted the reality of sexual fall, reinforced patriarchal understandings, and created an exclusive and unattainable standard of sympathy which normalized suicide for fallen women.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Dedication	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Seduced and Dying Woman of Melodrama	14
Melodrama and the Working Classes	16
The Seduced and Dying Heroine	19
The Heroine’s Femininity	20
The Heroine’s Passivity and Innocence	28
The Heroine’s Suffering and Death	32
Conclusion	39
Chapter Two: The Seduced and Dying Woman of Expert Literature	41
Explaining Sympathy: Middle-Class Morality and the ‘Cult of Sensibility’	45
Seduction and Death	49
Femininity	57
Female Passivity and Responsibility for Sexual Fall	63
Conclusion	66
Chapter Three: Real Women and the Trope of Seduction and Death	69
Patriarchal Understandings, Distorted Realities, and Exclusive Sympathy	70
Death and the Fallen Woman	79
Conclusion	95
Conclusion	97
Bibliography	101
Appendices	112
Appendix I. Melodramas	112
Appendix II. “Seduction and Suicide” Newspaper Accounts	113

List of Figures

Figure 1. George Elgar Hicks, <i>Woman's Mission: Guide of Childhood</i> , 1863	26
Figure 2. George Elgar Hicks, <i>Woman's Mission: Companion of Manhood</i> , 1863	26
Figure 3. George Elgar Hicks, <i>Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age</i> , 1862.....	27
Figure 4. Phiz (Hablot K. Browne), <i>The River</i> , 1850	81
Figure 5. Augustus Leopold Egg, <i>Past and Present, no. 3</i> , 1858.....	82
Figure 6. Thomas Rowlandson, <i>She Died for Love and He for Glory</i> , 1810.....	83
Figure 7. George Frederic Watts, <i>Found Drowned</i> , 1850	89
Figure 8. John Everett Millais, <i>Ophelia</i> , 1851-1852	90
Figure 9. Gustave Doré, <i>The Bridge of Sighs</i> , 1844	93

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to every person who has supported me in the completion of this thesis. They have helped me through challenges that I could not have overcome alone, and so if I have accomplished something it is thanks to them.

First, I thank my supervisor, Dr. Simon Devereaux and my second reader, Dr. Andrea McKenzie, for their patience, kindness and good humour, which have been invaluable to me in this process. I owe my passion for history to their teaching and am profoundly grateful for all the advice and encouragement they have given me over the years.

I must also thank my friends, Kristi Martinson, Chandler Freeman-Orr, Kalin Bullman, Isobel Griffin, Alexie Glover, Allison Wardle, Nadia Berard, Celina Booth, Alyssa Reese, Michael Wickham, Shaun Williamson, Max Cameron, Liang Han, Neil Griffin and Kaitlin Findlay. I have depended on this group of people more than any of them can know and truly could not have completed this thesis without them.

I am incredibly grateful for Ai Lan Chia, who helped me through my hardest moments, and for Barb Marshall, Carolyn Felderhof, Megan John, Terry Moore and Dorothee Friese for their constant encouragement and understanding.

I would also like to thank Dr. Sara Beam, Heather Waterlander, Karen Hickton, Theresa Gallant, and Consuela Covrig for supporting me during my time in the History Department at the University of Victoria.

My greatest thanks are reserved for my family. Nick, Meghan, Megan, Eli and McKayla have consistently lifted my spirits when I most needed it, and I am so tremendously lucky to have their love and support. Finally, my parents, Warren and Laurie, have been my strongest supporters throughout my life and especially during this process. I owe them more gratitude than I will ever be able to express, but will do my best to return their phone calls faster now that this thesis is finished.

Dedication

To Gladys

Introduction

After an 1832 performance of a seduction drama in Dublin, a local newspaper commented on the intense sympathy that the seduced and suicidal heroine elicited from the audience:

Pathos.—A gentleman was remarking to a friend last evening, how exquisitely pathetic was Mrs. Yeates in *Henriette the Forsaken*. Sir, replied the other, I was seated in the pit, and obliged to seek shelter under an umbrella from the shower of tears that fell from the boxes.¹

As this passage suggests, sympathy for victims of seduction was such a familiar sentimental trope in Victorian Britain that it could easily be satirized as excessive and absurd. From 1820 to 1870, men and women from all classes were eager to hear about, and express sympathy for, these tragic figures, whether real or fictional. Plays, novels, poems, paintings, newspapers, and medical, social, religious and prescriptive writings all offered similar depictions of this woman: feminine, passive and innocent, she is seduced and abandoned by a wealthy man, and after a period of intense shame and suffering, she dies (or nearly dies). Sexually transgressive figures like the adulteress and prostitute provoked condemnation throughout the nineteenth century, but the seduced and dying woman—while technically a fallen woman, or a woman who had sex outside of marriage—was upheld as an ideal of femininity, passivity and innocence: the perfect object of sympathy. However clichéd, the trope of the seduced and dying woman resonated with a wide range of people for the greater part of the nineteenth century, and ultimately shaped their understandings about, and sympathy for, fallen women.

The term “fallen woman” was, according to literary scholar Amanda Anderson, a “wide umbrella term” that described a variety of women in the nineteenth century, including prostitutes, adulteresses, “victims of seduction” and any other women who had sex outside of

¹ “The Fashionable World,” *Freeman’s Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 28 November 1832.

marriage.² Though the term could be applied to women from any class, it was ultimately a bourgeois concept rooted in notions of property and respectability.³ Having lost her chastity, the fallen woman was thought to threaten the system of middle-class property, as well as the “bourgeois ideology of the home and the construct of the ideal a-sexual woman.”⁴ But while all fallen women theoretically transgressed middle-class standards of property, chastity, respectability, and domesticity, some of these women—prostitutes and adulteresses—were deemed to be more dangerous and condemned more harshly than were victims of seduction. According to Judith Walkowitz, the prostitute was seen as a “dangerous source of contagion” by the 1840s.⁵ Lynda Nead similarly points out that the prostitute was often defined “as a figure of contagion, disease and death” and a “sign of social disorder and ruin to be feared and controlled.”⁶ While the adulteress was not thought to threaten disease and contagion in the same sense as the prostitute, she similarly was condemned because she violated middle-class standards of domesticity and respectability and threatened the legitimate transmission of male property.

Despite the transgressive nature of sexual fall, sympathetic depictions of fallen women could be found in a variety of genres across class lines throughout the nineteenth century. In

² Amanda Anderson, *Tainted Souls, Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 2.

³ J. B. Bullen notes that “[t]he narrative of the fallen woman is one which takes place on the margins of the bourgeois home.” (J. B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998], 50)

⁴ Lynda Nead, “Seduction, Prostitution, Suicide: *On the Brink* by Alfred Elmore,” *Art History* 5, no. 3 (September 1982): 320. Eric Trudgill explains that this “premium on feminine purity” rose out of the “property mentality of the emergent middle-class,” in which woman was treated as “the hereditary custodian of man’s treasure” and as “a treasure herself.” Economically speaking, her chastity or sexual purity was a defense against “improper inheritance.” (Eric Trudgill, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* [London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1976], 16) Historian Keith Thomas also argues that female chastity was “a matter of property,” though he suggests it was less about “the property of legitimate heirs” and more about “the desire of men for absolute property in women.” (Keith Thomas, “The Double Standard,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 2 [April 1959]: 209, 216)

⁵ Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22. J. B. Bullen points out that in response to “considerable increase in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the 1840s,” the prostitute was increasingly viewed as “a medical threat,” and a “source of moral pollution” and “physiological pollution.” (Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body*, 53)

⁶ Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), 106.

painting, fiction, poetry and drama, the fallen woman was repeatedly cast as “a potent symbol of innocent suffering.”⁷ Laura Hapke explains that many novelists, including Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Dinah Craik, Matilda Houston, Anthony Trollope and Wilkie Collins, emphasized the possibilities of the fallen woman’s “successful reformation” and “for the most part avoided traditional stereotypes of harsh atonement.”⁸ According to Susan P. Casteras, paintings depicting prostitutes as “soiled doves” were increasingly displayed at the Royal Academy through the 1840s, 50s and 60s, and were a powerful appeal “to the spectator’s sympathy.”⁹ Linda Nochlin explains that the painter George Frederic Watts and poet Thomas Hood attempted to “arouse feelings of sympathy and compassion rather than condemnation” in their representations of fallen women.¹⁰ At face value, these sympathetic representations seem to indicate a more tolerant or benign attitude towards fallen women than the Victorians are typically credited with. In fact, this sympathy contains far more complex meanings about Victorian attitudes towards these women, and towards all women in general.

The seduced and dying woman existed in stark contrast to other sexually transgressive women. While the rhetoric of seduction and the narrative of death could be applied to any fallen woman to make them more sympathetic, the seduced and dying woman was a widely recognizable, distinct kind of “fallen woman” who did not inspire the same transgressive meanings as did prostitutes or adulteresses. She was not seen as a threat or danger to society. Instead, she was depicted as a feminine, passive, suffering victim. The narrative of seduction, suffering and death emerged in the eighteenth century, most memorably in Samuel Richardson’s

⁷ Christopher Wood, *Victorian Panorama: Paintings of Victorian Life* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1976), 135.

⁸ Laura Hapke, “He Stoops to Conquer: Redeeming the Fallen Woman in the Fiction of Dickens, Gaskell and Their Contemporaries,” *Victorian Newsletter* 69 (Spring 1986): 17. George Watt also shows how many nineteenth-century novelists “questioned the absolute nature” of sexual fall. (George Watt, *The Fallen Woman in the 19th-Century English Novel* [Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1984], 7)

⁹ Susan P. Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987), 132.

¹⁰ Linda Nochlin, “Lost and Found: Once More the Fallen Woman,” *The Art Bulletin* 60, no. 1 (March 1978): 143.

1748 novel *Clarissa*. Clarissa Harlowe is depicted as an innocent, virtuous and kind young woman who is “deceived, imprisoned, persecuted, drugged and raped, and finally impelled to her death” by Richard Lovelace, an aristocratic libertine.¹¹ After *Clarissa*, this sympathetic narrative of seduction (or rape, in Clarissa’s case) and death was reproduced in a variety of genres through the late nineteenth century. In art, fiction, poetry, melodrama and newspapers, as well as medical, religious, social and prescriptive writings, real and fictional women were repeatedly described through the sympathetic narrative of seduction and death. But why was this trope so popular? How was it constructed in these various genres? And what can these constructions tell us about contemporary attitudes? These are some of the questions that this thesis seeks to answer.

The sympathetic trope of the seduced and dying woman served different purposes for different groups in the early to mid-nineteenth century. The trope became popular among the working classes during this period because it spoke to their resentment of the social-economic changes brought on by industrialization and urbanization. Mary Poovey evokes the end of “the old paternalistic system of reciprocal duties and responsibilities” and the emergence of “a laissez-faire economy and the creation of an antagonistic class society.”¹² In this new society, the working classes experienced increasing anxiety about the loss of traditional values as well as feelings of powerlessness and exploitation. These feelings were exacerbated by repressive social policies like the 1834 New Poor Law, which, as Lisa Cody explains, “radically altered the welfare relationship between the state and the poor.”¹³ Working-class people particularly

¹¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 63-64.

¹² Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 9.

¹³ Lisa Cody, “The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform: Women, Reproduction, and Political Economy in England’s New Poor Law of 1834,” *Journal of Women’s History* 11, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 131, 133.

detested the New Poor Law's bastardy clauses, which made unmarried mothers solely responsible for the care of their children. These punitive clauses were passed to stem growing rates of illegitimacy, which were actually caused by economic hardship that undermined working-class courtship customs involving pre-marital sex.¹⁴ Opponents often described these clauses "as an aristocratic plot to ease the seduction of poor women." As Anna Clark shows, this image of the poor seduced woman came to symbolize not only the oppressive nature of the New Poor Law, but the general exploitation felt by the working classes in the early nineteenth century.¹⁵

The trope of the seduced and dying woman was also popular for the ascendant middle class in the early and mid-nineteenth century, as it cultivated and spread the ideals of respectability and sensibility. Rosalind Crone explains that the "main exertion of dominance" by the middle class "was in the formation and promotion of an ideology of respectability," and G. J. Barker-Benfield suggests that "sensibility was the means whereby the middle class defined itself against a lower class still vulnerable to severe hardship."¹⁶ While the fallen woman technically

¹⁴ Anna Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845* (London: Pandora Press, 1987), 88; Anna Clark, "The Politics of Seduction in English Popular Culture, 1748-1848," in *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction*, ed. Jean Radford (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 59-60, 63. In his study of illegitimacy in eighteenth-century Westminster, Nicholas Rogers similarly suggests that illegitimacy was "the product of failed courtship or the breakdown of consensual unions brought on by unemployment, war or premature death." (Nicholas Rogers, "Carnal Knowledge: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century Westminster," *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 2 [Winter 1989]: 369) Clark explains that during periods of economic depression and unemployment, "men found it difficult to live up to their promises" and were more likely to "desert their pregnant lovers." Due to the acceptance of premarital sex as a part of courtship, many women in the working classes "would enter sexual relationships expecting their lovers would marry them or at least support a household, only to find themselves abandoned and pregnant." (Anna Clark, "Rape or Seduction? A controversy over sexual violence in the nineteenth century," in *The Sexual Dynamics of History: Men's Power, Women's Resistance*, ed. The London Feminist History Group (Australia: Pluto Press Ltd., 1983): 15; Clark, "The Politics of Seduction," 53, 63) As Ginger Frost explains, upper-working and lower-middle classes "aspired to the middle-class standard of respectability and domesticity" but lacked "the financial resources" to obtain it, so couples within these classes experienced "long engagements, frequent separations and unfortunate pregnancies." (Ginger S. Frost, *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class, and Gender in Victorian England* [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995], 79)

¹⁵ Clark, "The Politics of Seduction," 60.

¹⁶ Rosalind Crone, *Violent Victorians: Popular entertainment in nineteenth-century London* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), 31; G. J. Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility," in *An Oxford Companion to*

transgressed middle-class standards of respectability, the seduced and dying woman could be made to conform to these standards. In middle-class representations, this woman was depicted as an ideal of femininity, passivity and suffering innocence. This sympathetic depiction not only made the fallen woman palatable to middle-class standards of respectability, it also provided an opportunity for the middle classes to demonstrate their sensibility, benevolence and reformed masculinity, and to differentiate themselves from the “immoral” upper and lower classes. Finally, the trope of the seduced and dying woman helped the middle classes spread their ideals of gender and sexuality throughout British society. As Crone explains, “new gender-role definitions” emerged in the eighteenth century, emphasizing men as “more dangerous and more in need of control” and women as “passive, delicate damsels” who were “less dangerous and more in need of protection.”¹⁷ This dynamic of male aggression and female passivity also shaped middle-class understandings of male and female sexuality. The trope of the seduced and dying woman perfectly embodied and helped spread these middle-class understandings of gender and sexuality to other parts of society.

This thesis offers a critical examination of the sympathy that was shown for the seduced and dying woman in nineteenth-century British culture. While this sympathy can be found in countless sources spanning the nineteenth century, my research focuses primarily on melodrama and medical, religious, social and prescriptive—or “expert”—texts written between 1820 and 1870. While the trope I study can be found outside this period, it was during these years that it achieved its greatest popularity. During this period, the seemingly unrelated genres of melodrama and expert literature collectively embraced the same sentimental trope. In melodrama

the Romantic Age: British Culture, 1776-1832, ed. Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102. In *Violent Victorians*, Crone questions the social and cultural reach of this middle-class “culture of respectability.” While the ideal of respectability was a powerful “social discourse” that “dominated in the seat of social, economic and political power,” it did not eradicate the popular “culture of violence.” (Crone, *Violent Victorians*, 33, 264)

¹⁷ Crone, *Violent Victorians*, 5.

(a working-class genre), the seduced and dying woman served as a compelling symbol for working-class feelings of exploitation and discontentment. In expert literature (a middle-class genre), the seduced and dying woman allowed the middle classes to cultivate their refined sensibility and reformed masculinity, assuage fears of female sexual transgression, and differentiate themselves from upper- and working-class people. These two genres are studied together so as to provide a comparative analysis of working- and middle-class sympathetic representations. And while this thesis cannot examine every representation of the seduced and dying woman, the choice of sources evokes the prevalence of this trope in early to mid-nineteenth century British culture.

Historian Sos Eltis suggests that the “repetition and reproduction of central tropes reinforced the power of these plots, making them so familiar as to be accepted as self-evident truths.”¹⁸ The trope of the seduced and dying woman was so pervasive that it was accepted as a fact of life and was thus confidently and consistently applied to fictional and real women alike. In Chapter Three, following my analysis of melodrama and expert literature, this thesis explores the ways in which this trope scripted cultural understandings of women, sex and death, and the ways in which it both contradicted and shaped the experiences of ordinary women. It describes how this trope distorted the reality of sexual fall, reinforced patriarchal notions of gender and sexuality, created an unattainable standard of sympathy, and idealized and normalized female suicidal behaviour. In this chapter, I juxtapose seduction dramas and expert texts with newspaper reports of seduced female suicides in an attempt to illuminate the impact of this trope on popular understandings of real women. While it is difficult to infer much about the experiences and mindsets of these real women from newspaper accounts that appear to follow a script, this thesis

¹⁸ Sos Eltis, *Acts of Desire: Women and Sex on Stage, 1800-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19, 39-40.

attempts to show the possible ways in which this trope may have impacted these women. These newspaper articles, which have not yet been systematically examined or tied to the pervasive trope of seduction and death, allow me to further interrogate the tensions between fiction and reality in which this trope is grounded.

This thesis often exposes the ambiguous line between representation and reality as it concerns the seduced and dying woman. This unclear boundary has, at times, felt like a weakness in this thesis; in fact, it is arguably its very foundation. The seduced and dying woman was neither pure fiction nor pure reality. The three substantive chapters take us from an obviously fictional representation (melodrama) to an ostensibly factual one (expert literature) and finally to the women themselves — the victims of “Seduction and Suicide.” Each chapter draws attention to the unclear line between representation and reality. They do not attempt to explain which representations were more “authentic” or “real,” nor do they explore the degree to which various expressions of sympathy were more ‘truly’ compassionate than others. It is impossible (and ahistorical) to gauge the degree to which people felt unqualified sympathy for these women. Sympathy exists within the realm of human feeling and emotion and so it is difficult to historicize. One cannot authoritatively argue that the sympathy expressed for fallen women in the nineteenth century was detached from genuine compassion. Rather, this thesis offers a thorough and systematic examination of sympathetic representations of sexual fall and shows how blurry the lines between fiction and reality were in these representations.

My examination of the seduced and dying woman is aided by decades of important historical and literary work on the fallen woman. Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, historians and literary critics began to seriously consider the place of the fallen woman in the Victorian imagination and society. In particular, Linda Nochlin, Nina Auerbach, Sally Mitchell,

Susan Staves, Lynda Nead, and Anna Clark ushered in a new understanding of the ways in which fallen women were represented in British culture.¹⁹ In her 1981 article “The Rise of the Fallen Woman,” Auerbach emphasized the importance of studying the fallen woman “not only as she was but as she was created.” Her study showed how the fallen woman was an object of both “abasement and exaltation” in nineteenth-century literature and art.²⁰ Some historians have focused primarily on the fallen woman as an object of abasement and condemnation. They have explained that the punishment of the fallen woman in various representations was a function of the dominant bourgeois cults of chastity and respectability. In these studies, the downward path of the fallen woman is also seen as a mechanism for warning all women about the consequences of unchastity. In her 1981 study of the fallen woman in nineteenth-century fiction, for example, Mitchell remarks that the “overt purpose” of the narrative was “to illustrate to young women” the dangers of unchastity.²¹ This interpretation of the fallen woman’s role in Victorian culture is persuasive insofar as it addresses condemnatory depictions, but it does not account for sympathetic and romanticized depictions like those of the seduced and dying woman.

Several historians and literary critics have explored sympathetic depictions of the fallen woman, with a particular focus on the role of seduction. In 1981 Susan Staves explored the image of the “seduced maiden” in eighteenth-century literature and suggested that this image was popular because it embraced dominant notions of femininity and spoke to fears about the

¹⁹ Nochlin, “Lost and Found;” Nina Auerbach, “The Rise of the Fallen Woman” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 35, no. 1 (June 1980); Nina Auerbach, *The Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Nina Auerbach, *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Sally Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women’s Reading, 1835-1880* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981); Susan Staves, “British Seduced Maidens,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14, no. 2 (Winter 1980-81); Nead, “Seduction, Prostitution, Suicide;” Lynda Nead, “The Magdalene in Modern Times: The Mythology of the Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting,” in *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*, ed. Rosemary Betterton (London: Pandora Press, 1987); Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*; Clark, “Rape or seduction?;” Clark, “The Politics of Seduction;” Clark, *Women’s Silence, Men’s Violence*.

²⁰ Auerbach, “The Rise of the Fallen Woman,” 50, 51.

²¹ Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 9.

disintegration of the family and the loss of patriarchal control.²² Clark has written extensively on “the myth of seduction” and its role as a symbol for working-class exploitation.²³ Others like Toni Reed (1988), Donna Bontatibus (1999), Katherine Binhammer (2009) and Marcia Baron (2013) have explored the seduction narrative in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature.²⁴ Historians have also explored the ways in which the sympathetic trope of seduction influenced breach of promise suits in the nineteenth century. Ginger Frost’s 1995 *Promises Broken* is the most thorough account of these suits. She shows how female plaintiffs successfully sued their “seducers” by appealing to widespread sympathy for the victim of seduction.²⁵ Susie Steinbach (2000, 2008) also explores these breach of promise suits and how they were influenced by melodramatic plots of seduction.²⁶ Each of these scholars provides valuable insight into the narratives of seduction which are drawn upon throughout this thesis.

However, historians and literary critics have also left gaps in this field of study that this thesis will attempt to fill. They have effectively shown how pervasive the sympathetic trope of seduction was in the nineteenth century, offering compelling explanations for its popularity. Yet no one has adequately explored the construction of this trope and what this construction reveals about contemporary attitudes about women, sex and death. Some historians have studied the sympathetic narrative of seduction in melodrama, but they often focus on proving that this narrative was popularized *by* melodrama and transplanted into other genres. For example, in her

²² Staves, *British Seduced Maidens*, 118-121.

²³ Clark, “The Politics of Seduction,” 49; Clark, *Women’s Silence, Men’s Violence*; Clark, “Rape or seduction?”

²⁴ Toni Reed, *Demon-Lovers and Their Victims in British Fiction* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1988); Donna R. Bontatibus, *The Seduction Novel of the Early Nation: A Call for Socio-Political Reform* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999); Katherine Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain, 1747-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Marcia Baron, “Rape, Seduction, Purity, and Shame in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*,” in *Subversion and Sympathy: Gender, Law, and the British Novel*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Alison L. LaCroix (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

²⁵ Frost, *Promises Broken*.

²⁶ Susie L. Steinbach, “The Melodramatic Contract: Breach of Promise and the Performance of Virtue,” *Nineteenth Century Studies* 14 (2000); Susie L. Steinbach, “From Redress to Farce: Breach of Promise Theatre in Cultural Context, 1830-1920,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 13, no. 2 (2008)

2013 book *Acts of Desire: Women and Sex on Stage, 1800-1930*, Sos Eltis offers a detailed exploration of the seduced heroine of melodrama, but she is primarily concerned with showing how “the theatrical magdalen was a widely accepted, universally recognizable figure” that was imported into other genres, including expert literature. She too suggests that the seduced heroine’s intense suffering and near-death was “a moral warning to potentially errant women.”²⁷ While I agree that melodrama was an important genre that influenced British culture, I do not engage in the discussion of which genre (if any) was primarily responsible for spreading the sympathetic trope of the seduced and dying woman. Instead, this thesis is concerned with how each genre constructed their version of the seduced and dying woman and what these constructions reveal about contemporary understandings.

While scholars have recognized the narrative of seduction as an important part of the sympathetic construction of the fallen woman, they have largely neglected the equally important narrative of death. These scholars have generally presented the narrative of death as a product of the rigid Victorian moralism that ultimately punished and condemned all fallen women, including the sympathetic ones. Nead’s 1982 article “Seduction, Prostitution, Suicide: *On the Brink* by Alfred Elmore” is one of the only studies that gives equal consideration to the seduction and suicide of the fallen woman, but it argues that the narrative of seduction and death was a warning to women that they would die if they transgressed “the ‘respectable’ prescribed roles of wife and mother.”²⁸ On the other hand, scholars like Margaret Higonnet (1985), Howard Kushner (1985, 1993), Barbara Gates (1989) and L. J. Nicoletti (2004) have explored nineteenth-century understandings of female suicides, but they have neither adequately explored the relationship between seduction and suicide, nor have they appreciated the significance of suicide

²⁷ Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 13, 19.

²⁸ Nead, “Seduction, Prostitution, Suicide,” 320.

or death in establishing sympathy for fallen women.²⁹ This thesis argues that the narrative of death was a crucial part of the sympathetic construction of the fallen woman, and that it had significant implications for real women.

Although the focus on death in this thesis sheds new light on sympathy for the fallen woman, it should also be emphasized that the Victorians' cultural obsession with the seduced and dying woman reveals a persistent and morbid fascination with, even a fetishizing of, female death. This thesis could be accused of demonstrating a similarly morbid fascination with female death and, more particularly, female suicide. It was this topic that first captured my attention and which ultimately led me to investigate the Victorian trope of seduction and death. Suicide invites interpretation in a way that other kinds of death do not. It is a deeply personal action and experience driven by a conscious choice. As such, suicide both invites and resists our attempts to understand the mindset and motivations of those who choose it. As this thesis will suggest, the meanings that we place on suicides – and female suicides in particular – often reveal more about ourselves than they do about these people. So, the same questions I ask about my sources might also be asked of this thesis. What meanings do I place on female suicide? Does such work perpetuate a potentially harmful cultural preoccupation with female death? Worse still, might it romanticize or fetishize female suicide? To what degree is work such as this thesis motivated by an authentic sympathy for these women? And how might such sympathy shape one's interpretations and judgments of the past? No one can be a perfectly impartial arbiter of historical truth; any historian's motivations and biases deserve to be interrogated. Any account of

²⁹ Margaret Higonnet, "Suicide: Representations of the Feminine in the Nineteenth Century," *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1-2 (1985); Howard I. Kushner, "Women and Suicide in Historical Perspective," *Signs* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1985); Howard I. Kushner, "Suicide, Gender, and the Fear of Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Medical and Social Thought," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1993); Barbara T. Gates, *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); L. J. Nicoletti, "Downward Mobility: Victorian Women, Suicide, and London's 'Bridge of Sighs,'" *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representations of London* 2, no. 1 (March 2004)

the Victorian fascination with, and sympathy for, the seduced and dying woman should encourage further critical reflection on that subject.

Chapter One - The Seduced and Dying Woman of Melodrama

After discovering she has been deceived with a fake wedding, Susan Greenwell—the seduced heroine of John J. Stafford's 1827 play *Love's Frailties*—contemplates her situation next to the Serpentine River in Hyde Park:

What is the unusual fate of an abandoned female? The pointing finger of reproach, the jeerings of a cruel, persecuting world, the disgust, the hatred of herself. I shall be considered such! Branded! Stigmatized! For I listened to cruel man and am betrayed.¹

Susan wrestles with her tortured conscience, then rushes offstage and throws herself into the river. Thankfully, her brother rescues her, her repentant seducer offers to *really* marry her, and her father gives his blessing.

Seduced, abandoned and suffering heroines like Susan were popular figures in melodrama of the early to mid-nineteenth century. They were also some of the most sympathetic fallen women in British culture. Historians generally agree that, in melodrama, which was a working-class genre, the fallen heroine was viewed sympathetically because her struggle spoke to working-class anxieties and feelings of exploitation in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. While this argument effectively explains *why* melodrama treated this fallen woman so sympathetically no one has fully shown *how* this sympathy was constructed or what it can tell us about contemporary attitudes. This chapter will show how sympathy for the fallen heroine was grounded in the trope of seduction and death (or near-death). Through her seduction, abandonment, suffering and redemption, the fallen heroine became an ideal of femininity, virtue and innocence. An examination of this trope in melodrama will provide insight into working-class sympathy for fallen women and into the attitudes and beliefs which informed this sympathy.

¹ John J. Stafford, *Love's Frailties, or, Passion and Repentance: A Domestic Drama in Two Acts* (London: W. Kidd, 1835. First performed in 1827), 30.

My examination of the seduced and dying woman is rooted in eight popular seduction dramas published and performed between 1820 and 1870: W. T. Moncrieff's *The Lear of Private Life* (1820), John Howard Payne's *Clari; Maid of Milan* (1823), John J. Stafford's *Love's Frailties* (1827), C. A. Somerset's *Crazy Jane* (1828), John Baldwin Buckstone's *Victorine; I'll Sleep On It* (1831) and *Henriette the Forsaken* (1832), Thomas E. Wilks's *Michael Erle* (1839), and Alexis Lewis's *Grace Clairville* (1843). These dramas were all produced in playhouses throughout England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, each over the span of several decades (see Appendix I). Many were performed well into the 1870s and 1880s. While these plays were generally written and performed for working-class audiences, many were adaptations of plots from middle- and upper-class authors. Moncrieff's *The Lear of Private Life*, for example, was an adaptation of Amelia Opie's 1801 novel *Father and Daughter*.² Others closely resemble Samuel Richardson's novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748). Though not entirely original, the plot of seduction and death in these plays gained an increasingly popular appeal in melodrama throughout the nineteenth century. An examination of these plays will help reveal the popular attitudes that shaped sympathy for fallen women.

Several historians have studied nineteenth-century seduction dramas and the figure of the seduced heroine. Merle Tönnies has examined the fraught relationship between seduced girls and their fathers in seduction dramas.³ Sos Eltis has detailed how the subject of the fallen woman occupied the Victorian theatre and how its depictions of sexual fall influenced other genres and art forms.⁴ Ginger Frost and Susie L. Steinbach have shown how the melodramatic narrative of

² Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 13.

³ Merle Tönnies (Bochum), "Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers: Female Sexuality, Patriarchal Power and the Direction of the Audience's Sympathy in 19th-Century British Melodrama," *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* 9, no. 2 (2002)

⁴ Eltis, *Acts of Desire*.

seduction was transported into courtrooms over breach of promise suits.⁵ And historians like Peter Brooks, Martha Vicinus, Anna Clark and Judith Walkowitz have effectively explained the popularity of the seduced heroine of melodrama.⁶ These historians have demonstrated the wide cultural impact of the melodramatic narrative of seduction, particularly explaining the purposes which it served for the working classes. But this work does not provide an exhaustive account of the fallen heroine. Historians have yet to fully examine how the genre transformed the fallen woman into a sympathetic figure. More particularly, they have failed to fully appreciate the significance of death in this sympathetic construction. This chapter utilizes popular plays, many of which have already been examined in part by some of these historians, but there is much more to be gleaned by a systematic and sustained analysis of these sources. By focusing on the construction of the seduced and dying woman in these plays, this first chapter will provide a deeper understanding of these dramas and of working-class expressions of sympathy for fallen women.

Melodrama and the Working Classes

Though melodrama is not currently held in high regard as a genre, it was “the most popular dramatic form” of the nineteenth century.⁷ In Britain, it emerged in the 1790s and had become “the dominant theatrical genre” by the 1840s.⁸ Melodrama eventually attracted audiences from all classes, but it was first and foremost working-class entertainment. Theatres for melodrama

⁵ Frost, *Promises Broken*, Steinbach, “The Melodramatic Contract.” Other important works on Victorian melodrama include: Ellen Bayuk Rosenman, “‘Mimic Sorrows’: Masochism and the Gendering of Pain in Victorian Melodrama,” *Studies in the Novel* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2003); Theresa Rebeck, “Your Cries Are In Vain: A Theory of the Melodramatic Heroine” (Dissertation. Brandeis University, 1989)

⁶ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976); Martha Vicinus, “‘Helpless and Unfriended’: Nineteenth-Century Domestic Melodrama,” *New Literary History* 13, no. 1 (Fall 1981); Clark, “The Politics of Seduction;” Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*.

⁷ Michael R. Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), 13. For more on melodrama as popular entertainment, see Crone, *Violent Victorians*.

⁸ Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 11.

were primarily located in working-class areas and were built rapidly in the first half of the nineteenth century to meet the “insatiable demand for melodrama” spreading through all industrial cities and towns in the country.⁹ Tönnies explains that the genre’s predictable and entertaining plot, “grandiose scenes,” and “exaggerated displays of emotions” gave it an “unequivocally ‘popular’ appeal.”¹⁰ Melodrama also provided a clearly-defined moral universe that appealed to its working-class audiences’ social and political anxieties. In each play, good and evil were manifested in the stereotypical, exaggerated characters of hero, heroine and villain.¹¹ In this moral universe, “good triumphs over and punishes evil, and virtue receives tangible material rewards.”¹² This emphasis on moral justice has earned melodrama a reputation as a genre of wish fulfillment. According to historian Michael Booth, melodrama offered “the world its audiences want but cannot get.”¹³ Vicinus similarly explains that melodrama was “a world of wish fulfillment and dreams” that was not concerned with “what [was] possible or actual” but with what was most desirable for the audience.¹⁴ In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, this emphasis on wish fulfillment made melodrama an increasingly popular genre for working-class audiences.

Several historians have argued that melodrama, as a whole, was a working-class response to social changes brought on by industrialization. Brooks, Vicinus, Clark and Walkowitz all suggest that the genre’s popularity was due in large part to the socially-empowering narratives it

⁹ Booth, *English Melodrama*, 13, 52, 54-55.

¹⁰ Tönnies, “Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,” 185.

¹¹ Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 11; Through these characters, melodrama “ma[de] the moral visible” and easy to comprehend. (Vicinus, “‘Helpless and Unfriended,’” 137) As Booth suggests, the clarity of this moral ordering was “one of the great appeals” of the genre. (Booth, *English Melodrama*, 14)

¹² Booth, *English Melodrama*, 14.

¹³ Booth further describes melodrama as “a dream world inhabited by dream people and dream justice” that provided its audiences with “the fulfillment and satisfaction found only in dreams.” (Booth, *English Melodrama*, 14) Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador also describes melodrama as “an imaginary world of dreams and wishfulfilment [sic]” (Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador, “Victorian Theories of Melodrama,” *Anglia* 95, no. 1-2 [1977]: 103)

¹⁴ Vicinus, “‘Helpless and Unfriended,’” 131-132.

offered its working-class audiences which, in the early nineteenth century, feared the loss of traditional values and struggled with feelings of powerlessness and exploitation. Brooks argues that melodrama was an expression of “the anxiety brought by a frightening new world in which the traditional patterns of moral order no longer provide the necessary social glue.”¹⁵ Vicinus suggests that melodrama was so appealing from 1820 to 1870 because it “served as a cultural touchstone for large sections of society that felt both in awe of and unclear about the benefits of the new society being built around them.”¹⁶ According to Clark, the seduction drama in particular provided an “entertaining and moving” explanation for the “personal and political traumas” of the working classes. The seduction of the “poor maiden” by the aristocratic villain represented working-class feelings of oppression and anxieties about the destruction of their values.¹⁷ Walkowitz similarly suggests that the villain’s “sexual exploitation of the daughter” in melodrama was a “personalized” representation of class exploitation, the “infringement of male working-class prerogatives,” and the destruction of family values.¹⁸ Having thus accounted for the popularity of the melodramatic trope of seduction, we can begin to explore the ways in which melodrama constructed this trope.

¹⁵ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 44.

¹⁶ Vicinus, “‘Helpless and Unfriended,’” 128. Melodrama assured its audiences who were “faced with cataclysmic religious, economic, and social changes” and who struggled with feelings of powerlessness in light of these changes. (128, 131)

¹⁷ Clark, “The Politics of Seduction,” 47, 49, 52, 64-67. According to Clark, the myth of the seduced woman arose out of the middle-class novel, which often portrayed “bourgeois heroines struggling with aristocratic villains.” In such texts, the heroine’s virtue “illustrated bourgeois claims to moral and eventually political hegemony” and the seducer’s villainy challenged the aristocrat’s “suitability to rule.” (50) Though originating in middle-class literature of the eighteenth century, this myth “acquired new meaning” for the working classes of the early nineteenth century in popular genres like melodrama. As a “class metaphor,” the myth of seduction—which had previously symbolized the “bourgeoisie against the aristocracy”—began to represent “the working class against capitalists.” (52, 64) Class continued to play an important role in the seduction narratives of Victorian fiction. According to Mitchell, the “unchaste girl” in 1840s fiction was almost always from a lower class than the seducer, who was “almost invariably” an aristocrat. These stories thus had an “undercurrent of class antagonism.” (Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 31, 78) In her study of sexual fall in Victorian literature, Beth Kalikoff claims that class was “almost always a crucial element in the equation of seduction.” In the novels of the period, a lower-class woman might be tempted by “the powerfully appealing possibility of (...) social mobility,” or her social status could make her an “easy target” for an upper-class seducer. (Beth Kalikoff, “The Falling Woman in Three Victorian Novels,” *Studies in the Novel* 19, no. 3 [Fall 1987]: 358)

¹⁸ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 86.

The Seduced and Dying Heroine

The seduced and dying heroine of melodrama was a sympathetic character who deserved, and [therefore] received, a happy ending. This sympathetic transformation of the fallen woman was not a simple process. As a kind of fallen woman, the seduced heroine technically violated cultural standards of appropriate female behaviour. By leaving her father's home and having sex outside the bonds of marriage, this heroine rejected patriarchal authority, the law of chastity and her proper social place as an obedient and virtuous daughter, as well as her future place as a wife and mother.¹⁹ Despite her status as a fallen woman, however, the seduced heroine was not treated as a transgressive or subversive figure in melodrama. In my study of seduction dramas first performed between 1820 and 1843, the fallen heroine is routinely depicted as a model of femininity, virtue and innocence. In each play, an aristocratic villain deceives, threatens or abducts the virtuous, working-class heroine and then ruins her. Once fallen, the heroine quickly descends into a state of isolation, poverty and self-hatred. She lingers on through the second act in a state of intense shame and suffering, and after nearly dying, is redeemed by her repentant seducer's promise to marry her. It was through this narrative of seduction, suffering and near-death that the fallen heroine became such a sympathetic figure.

While other characters treat the fallen heroine with contempt throughout the play, the audience is assured of her virtue and innocence from the beginning. Beautiful, passive and clad in virginal white, the heroine is a perfect embodiment of feminine purity, beauty and weakness. Her seduction did not diminish her innocence: it reinforced it. Indeed, her many ideal feminine qualities both marked her as an ideal target of seduction and prevented her from resisting. She is preyed upon, deceived and overpowered, but she is never an active participant in her fall, often fainting before the seducer has his way with her. In stark contrast to the virtuous heroine, the

¹⁹ Tönnies, "Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers," 189; Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 15.

villain/seducer is the perfect embodiment of vice. He is a “powerful combination of lust, violence, and avarice.”²⁰ Motivated by a greedy and aggressive sensuality, his primary objective is to “win [the heroine] by ardent wooing, threats, relentless persecution, and abduction.”²¹ In this dynamic of seduction, the heroine is necessarily seen as a helpless victim. After her seduction, the heroine’s seemingly endless suffering reinforces her status as a sympathetic victim. Abandoned by her seducer and shunned by her family and friends, she is faced with numerous physical, emotional and mental torments and self-hatred. She repeatedly expresses an eager desire to die rather than live on in shame, and she often attempts to kill herself. The heroine’s suffering, self-hatred, and desire to die further prove that she is a virtuous, moral character deserving of sympathy. After (or rather, because) she suffers, she is rewarded with a happy ending involving a marriage proposal from her repentant seducer. The fallen heroine of melodrama was sympathetic and deserved a happy ending, because the trope of seduction and death effectively drained her of all subversive meaning and replaced it with the passivity and suffering of appropriate femininity.

The Heroine’s Femininity

Upon the heroine’s “seduction” (abduction) in Thomas Egerton Wilks’s 1839 play *Michael Erle, the Maniac Lover*, her working-class fiancé is shocked “to find her (...) unworthy.” He had previously “deemed her a pattern of innocence and virtue” and was convinced “that perfection sat upon her brow, and regulated her every act and thought.”²² While this disappointed fiancé—along with most characters in each play—is made to doubt the heroine’s womanly perfection, the

²⁰ Vicinus, “‘Helpless and Unfriended,’” 138.

²¹ Booth, *English Melodrama*, 24.

²² Thomas Egerton Wilks, *Michael Erle, the Maniac Lover, or, the Fayre Lass of Lichfield* (Boston: William V. Spencer, 1856. First performed in 1839), 20.

audience never questions it. From the beginning, the heroine embodies “precisely those qualities the culture found desirable in women.” She was beautiful, virtuous, reserved, sexually unknowing, self-sacrificing, affectionate, trusting, weak, submissive and obedient.²³ As literary scholar Sally Mitchell argues, the seduced heroine could be seen as “the ideal woman” because she successfully embodied popular perceptions of gendered and sexual difference and represented “the ideal balance of power between the sexes.” She symbolized “the ultimate femininity”: “self-abnegation, total yielding, the absolute suppression of individual interests.”²⁴ Her many ideal qualities marked her as an ideal woman, but they also made her an ideal target for seduction. Her beauty, virtue, sexual ignorance, trustfulness and affectionate nature made her “vulnerable to seducers,” while her submissiveness – in the right context, an appropriate and even requisite feminine characteristic – prevented her from defending herself or resisting.²⁵ Both before and after her seduction, the heroine is a perfect model of femininity – and thus a perfect object of sympathy.

The seduced heroine of melodrama was always beautiful. As Nead suggests, “conventional notions of feminine beauty” were necessary in sympathetic depictions of fallen women.²⁶ In melodrama, the heroine’s beauty captured the attention of her seducer, but it also served as an outward reflection of her inner purity. First, the heroine’s good looks were emphasized as a reason for her seduction. In Somerset’s *Crazy Jane*, Lord Raymond blames his

²³ Staves, “British Seduced Maidens,” 120. Staves suggests that the seduced woman’s “beauty, simplicity (or ignorance, to call it a harsher name), trustfulness, and affectionateness” were among the many traits that emphasized her ideal femininity. (118) Tönnies similarly suggests that the seduced heroine of melodrama “embodies all qualities of the femininity stereotype.” (Tönnies, “Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,” 187)

²⁴ Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 49-50, 174.

²⁵ Staves, “British Seduced Maidens,” 120; Tönnies, “Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,” 188. Tönnies claims that the heroine’s “‘ideal’ nature (...) single[d] her out as the typical victim” for seduction. Idealized traits like “retiring passivity, submissiveness to male authority and the dependency on social reputation” made the heroine defenceless against the seducer. (187-88)

²⁶ Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 168-169. For example, in Thomas Hood’s poem *The Bridge of Sighs*, a dead prostitute is depicted as slender, “young, and so fair!” (Thomas Hood, *The Bridge of Sighs in The Victorians: An Anthology of Poetry & Poetics*, ed. Valentine Cunningham. [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000], 66) Nead suggests that this fallen woman’s beauty was crucial “in the poem’s appeal for sympathy.” (168-169)

seducing ways on nature, which created Jane—a “poor peasant girl” and “perfection’s model”—to “vex the rich.” Though he knows seducing her will be a “hazard” to his soul, he cannot resist: “Her beauty dazzles me; and I will have her.”²⁷ Other characters were aware of the dangers of feminine beauty in attracting seduction. In Buckstone’s *Luke the Labourer*, for example, Dame Wakefield worries that her daughter will be seduced because “a fair flower hazards the plucking of every hand.”²⁸ In Stafford’s *Love’s Frailties*, the seducer explains to the heroine that he can think of nothing “but thy beauty and thy virtue,” for they “have taken full possession of [his] soul.”²⁹ Here, the heroine’s beauty is seen as contributing to her seduction, but it is also closely related to her virtue.

In melodrama, the heroine’s outer beauty served as proof of her inner purity or virtue.³⁰ Nead explains that “popular nineteenth-century pseudo-sciences,” such as physiognomy and phrenology popularized the notion that a person’s inner character – their “mental and moral condition” – was reflected in their outward appearance.³¹ Indeed, the seduced heroine’s virtue was continually established through her physical beauty. Leading up to her seduction, other characters repeatedly emphasized the heroine’s beauty and virtue, as if one were proof of the other. She was almost always clad in white dresses, which symbolized her virginal innocence. In *The Lear of Private Life*, the seduced Agnes’s father (who mistakenly believes she is dead) remembers her “arrayed in virgin white, her golden ringlets playing luxuriantly o’er her snowy

²⁷ C. A. Somerset, *Crazy Jane: A Romantic Play in Three Acts* (London: John Cumberland, 1828), 19.

²⁸ John Baldwin Buckstone, *Luke the Labourer, or, the Lost Son: A Domestic Melo-drama in two acts* (Baltimore: Jos. Robinson, 1838), 15.

²⁹ Stafford, *Love’s Frailties*, 12.

³⁰ Rebeck similarly suggests that beauty was “the outward sign of the heroine’s goodness” though it was “doomed by its power to elicit evil in the men who witness it.” (Rebeck, “Your Cries Are In Vain,” 23)

³¹ Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 170. Physiognomy involved the study of “the feature of the face” and “the form of the body” to reveal a person’s character, and phrenology focused in particular on measurements of the human skull to reveal one’s personality and character.

brow,” her “heaven blue eyes” and “that seraph form.”³² Here, Agnes’s physical beauty is explicitly tied to ideals of sexual, racial and moral purity that melodramatic heroines were thought to embody. Later, Agnes is described by a friend of her seducer’s as “a perfect mirror of virtue.”³³ Though seduced heroines rarely died in these plays, those who did were also held up as ideals of beauty and virtue. In Lewis’s *Grace Clairville*, the body of the seduced and “beauteous” Mabel is discovered a month after her murder, and though her “limbs are frightfully broken,” her body had not decomposed.³⁴ Mabel’s physical beauty remains even after death as a saintly sign of her preserved, everlasting virtue. In each of these plays, the heroine was established as a remarkably beautiful and virtuous character, an ideal woman, and a worthy object of sympathy.

The heroine also embodied several ideal feminine traits—like sexual ignorance, trustfulness, affection, weakness and submission—that were crucial in her construction as an object of sympathy. Indeed, it was this collection of traits that most clearly situated the heroine as a victim, for they each made her a target for seducers and prevented her from resisting or protecting herself. First, the heroine was always extremely innocent, trusting and affectionate. In *The Lear of Private Life*, Captain Alvanley promises to marry Agnes and implies that he will die if she refuses him. Agnes, who trusts and loves Alvanley, decides that she “cannot be cruel” and thus surrenders to him.³⁵ Agnes’s surrender is not a result of any willful, subversive desire of her own, but is instead caused by her innocence. In *Clari*, the eponymous heroine laments her seduction and states that she “did not mean to leave [her parents].” When Duke Vivaldi promised

³² W. T. Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life; or, Father and Daughter: A Domestic Drama* (London: G. H. Davidson, 1840. First performed 1820), 28, 41.

³³ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁴ Alexis Lewis, *Grace Clairville, or, the Crime at the Symon’s Yat: A Romantic Drama in Three Acts* (London: John Dicks, 1883. First performed 1843), 17.

³⁵ Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life*, 15. Alvanley begs Agnes to “reflect on [his] despair” and warns her that “the consciousness of [his] destruction” will weigh on her “pure soul” if she rejects him. (20)

to immediately marry her, “some spell, some horid [*sic*] spell” was cast over her, and she had “no further recollection” of what followed.³⁶ Like Agnes, Clari was deceived by false promises of marriage that she believed because of her trusting and unknowing feminine nature. As Mitchell points out, “[t]he ideal Victorian woman” had absolutely no knowledge of sex and so “could not consciously decide to engage in sexual activity.”³⁷ Far from diminishing her femininity, the heroine’s seduction served as a perfect illustration of her sexual innocence (or ignorance) and feminine trustfulness. When a man promises to wed her, the heroine is naturally inclined to trust him and is too ignorant about sex to suspect that he may have ulterior motives.³⁸ The sexual transgression or sin that typically constituted sexual fall did not apply to the heroine’s fall because she was essentially asexual. Though she technically lost her chastity, her sexual ignorance and lack of sexual desire meant that her “fall” could be seen as something inflicted upon her. Although she had fallen, she did not jump—she was pushed.

The seduced heroine’s weakness, dependence and submissiveness further established her as an ideal woman and object of sympathy. As Mitchell suggests, women were seen as “naturally pure, passive, and helpless” through the nineteenth century.³⁹ Thus, in melodrama, they were depicted as being naturally weak, submissive and helpless. In Douglas Jerrold’s *Black-Eyed Susan*, for example, the villain explains that women are “like sealing-wax” and, once melted, “will take what form you please.”⁴⁰ The heroines themselves recognized that their innate weakness led the way to their seduction. In *The Lear of Private Life*, Agnes eventually surrenders to her seducer and calls up to the “Great Heaven” that gave her “all a woman’s

³⁶ John Howard Payne, *Clari: or, the Maid of Milan. A Drama, in three acts* (Boston: W. V. Spencer, 1856. First performed 1823), 14.

³⁷ Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 49.

³⁸ Staves points out that the seduced heroine of eighteenth-century literature “usually finally falls because she is simple, trusting, and affectionate.” The fall itself was seen as tragic but “the eighteenth century was quite certain it did not want young girls to be knowing, suspicious, or hardhearted.” (Staves, “British Seduced Maidens,” 118)

³⁹ Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 51.

⁴⁰ Douglas William Jerrold, *Black-Eyed Susan; Or, “All in the Downs”* (Boston: William V. Spencer, 1856), 14.

weakness,” asking to be judged “as a woman” and not “blame[d] ... for the absence of that strength, which thou hast not bestowed upon me.”⁴¹ Here, Agnes’s surrender is explained and justified by her natural feminine weakness. In *Clari*, Duke Vivaldi blames Clari for being “weak enough” to be deceived by his false promises. Here too the heroine’s weakness is emphasized as one of her defining characteristics and a major reason for her fall.⁴² The heroine’s natural sense of obedience could also be interpreted as a reason for her fall. Though her surrender to her seducer was, in theory, an act of disobedience to her father, it was primarily framed as a passive act of submission towards a husband-to-be. Instead of willfully disobeying her father, the heroine unknowingly submitted to the wrong person, who took advantage of her weak and submissive womanly nature.

The seduced heroine was also a perfect—though tragic—embodiment of “relational femininity,” which defined woman through her relationships with others, and with men in particular.⁴³ This aspect of femininity is vividly illustrated, as Nead shows, in George Elgar Hicks’s 1863 triptych *Woman’s Mission*. (Figures 1-3) The three paintings depict the “feminine ideal” in each of her ideal roles or identities: “woman as mother, woman as wife, and woman as daughter.” This triptych defines woman “through her relationships to man” and places her “in a subordinate position through notions of mission, duty and responsibility.”⁴⁴ Tönnies claims that “relational femininity” is “based on [a woman’s] acceptance by patriarchy” and that seduced heroines are “deprived” of this relational femininity after they are “cursed by their fathers.”⁴⁵ While borrowing this term from Tönnies, I disagree that a woman lost her relational femininity after seduction. Rather, a woman’s relational femininity depended on her own sense of identity

⁴¹ Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life*, 18, 20.

⁴² Payne, *Clari*, 22.

⁴³ Tönnies, “Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,” 190.

⁴⁴ Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 12-14.

⁴⁵ Tönnies, “Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,” 190.

as a daughter, wife, mother and sister. Literary scholar Margaret Higonnet suggests that gendered social training has led women “to perceive themselves through their relationships to family rather than as isolated individuals.”⁴⁶ Indeed, relational femininity depends as much on women’s self-identification as it does on male prescriptions—like Hicks’s triptych—for women’s identity.



Figure 1. George Elgar Hicks, Sketch for *Woman’s Mission: Guide of Childhood*, 1863.



Figure 2. George Elgar Hicks, *Woman’s Mission: Companion of Manhood*, 1863.

⁴⁶ Higonnet, “Suicide,” 108.



Figure 3. George Elgar Hicks, *Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age*, 1862.

Though the melodramatic heroine struggles to fulfill the roles of wife, mother and daughter, she is always defined—by others and by herself—through her relationships with men. In seduction drama, the heroine is always introduced as an ideal daughter. For example, in *The Lear of Private Life*, Mr. Fitzarden declares that his daughter Agnes is “all a parent’s fondest wishes can desire” and that she “loves [him] as never daughter loved a father!” Even after her seduction, Agnes’s love for her father is a recurring theme. Her greatest suffering is the pain her seduction has caused him, and she declares that she would rather die than leave him again.⁴⁷ In each seduction drama, the heroine’s ultimate goal is to be the perfect daughter, wife and eventually mother. These aspirations emphasize her as a respectable and feminine character, but they also make her vulnerable to false promises and seduction. Her sense of self is so connected to her relationships with her father and seducer that, when she is cast off or abandoned by these

⁴⁷ Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life*, 13, 37.

men, her suffering is completely centered on the loss of these relationships, and she entirely loses her will to live until they are restored at the play's end. In *The Lear of Private Life*, *Clari*, *Love's Frailties*, *Crazy Jane*, *Henriette the Forsaken*, *Michael Erle*, and *Grace Clairville*, each heroine's identity, happiness and suffering are all centered on her relationships with men, whether it be her father, brother, fiancé or seducer. In each play, her greatest desire is to submit to these men, and be protected by them. Because she aspires to transition to the next phase of her womanly submission (from daughter to wife), she is easily deceived, overpowered and exploited. She never rejects patriarchal authority; rather, she is thwarted in her attempts to submit appropriately to it.

The Heroine's Passivity and Innocence

In J. Pocock's *The Miller and His Men*, Claudine's fiancé and father wonder how she will ever be safe from seduction by "a libertine." Claudine's father suggests that her virtue will protect her, but her fiancé is doubtful: "what can her resistance avail against the powerful arm of villainy?"⁴⁸ In this and other seduction dramas of the early nineteenth century, the heroine is understood to be too passive and thus unable to resist seduction. The very concept of seduction is rooted in an imbalance of power; regardless of circumstances, the seducer and the seduced are defined by the power they do (or do not hold) in relation to each other. For melodramatic heroines—and for other fictional and real fallen women throughout the nineteenth century—the language of seduction was an indispensable part of their narratives because it emphasized their passivity and thus their lack of responsibility for their sexual fall. The heroine's feminine weakness, sexual naïveté and submissiveness established her as naturally passive. But her passive innocence was further emphasized when she was deceived, threatened, overpowered,

⁴⁸ J. Pocock, *The Miller and His Men. A Melodrama in two acts.* (Philadelphia: C. & J. C. Neal, 1831), 5.

abducted or when she lost consciousness. In each play, although the heroine sincerely wishes and intends to remain chaste, she does not have the ability to avoid or resist seduction, so her sexual fall is entirely unblameworthy.

One of the most common and effective ways melodrama diminished the heroine's responsibility was by emphasizing the villain's use of deception to seduce her. In *The Lear of Private Life*, Captain Alvanley tricks Agnes with "fine words and fair promises" of marriage. After seducing Agnes, he brags to his friend Lord Saunter that "the thing was simple enough." Once he convinced Agnes that he would marry her, he led her on "by one plausible excuse or another" while he planned a real marriage with an upper-class woman.⁴⁹ In *Henriette the Forsaken*, the Marquis de Monval promises Henriette and her father that he will marry her, but like Alvanley in *The Lear of Private Life*, he is secretly planning a marriage with a wealthier woman.⁵⁰ In *Clari*, Duke Vivaldi promises Clari that if she goes with him, "the sacred rite should be performed," and he will "present [her] ... as his bride." After several days, Clari confronts him about "those vows which are registered on high, however man may slight them," and Vivaldi asks her how she could ever have believed "that it was possible for one of [his] rank to wed a girl in [hers]."⁵¹ In *Love's Frailties*, Squire Belgrade promises to marry Susan and actually stages a fake wedding ceremony with the help of a friend dressed as a clergyman. When Susan finds out the wedding "was a false one," Belgrade explains that his "love for [her] was too great" and that "there were no other means to gain [her], but to deceive [her]."⁵² In *Michael Erle*, Lord Thornford also uses the promise of marriage to seduce Mary: "Wed her!—ha, ha! No, no, she

⁴⁹ Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life*, 20, 28. Before seducing Agnes, Alvanley also asked her father if he could marry her, later laughing that "the old dotard" could "believe me serious in my offer of marriage": "Marriage! ha! Ha! It would ill suit my roving inclination." (18) Agnes's father, though believing the offer to be serious, refuses because Alvanley's father has not given his permission.

⁵⁰ John Baldwin Buckstone, *Henriette the Forsaken: A Drama in Three Acts* (London: William Strange, 1834), 20, 26.

⁵¹ Payne, *Clari*, 14, 22.

⁵² Stafford, *Love's Frailties*, 13, 22, 35.

must be mine upon easier terms than that. [...] Of course I shall *promise* marriage.” Like Squire Belgrade in *Love’s Frailties*, Lord Thornford arranges for a friend to “play the parson” in a fake ceremony.⁵³ In every seduction drama, the heroine’s eventual consent is dependent on, and thus undermined or negated by, deceit. Since the heroine was naturally too trusting and ignorant to suspect such deceit, she was understood to be a passive victim of seduction instead of a willful and transgressing woman.

The heroine’s passivity or powerlessness was further established when the seducer threatened or abducted her, or when she fainted during the seduction. In *Crazy Jane*, Lord Raymond threatens to evict Jane and her father from their house and to imprison her father for debt unless she marries him. He even considers setting fire to their house so that “she must submit” to him or “be doom’d to wander [a] beggar through the world.”⁵⁴ Though Jane is ultimately saved from seduction, she is driven mad by Lord Raymond’s threats. Mentally, she is powerless against the villain. The heroine’s passivity is similarly established in plays where the villain abducts or attempts to abduct her. In *The Miller and His Men* and *Luke the Labourer*, the villain attempts to abduct the heroine and is only thwarted by other men who hear her screams.⁵⁵ In *Michael Erle*, Mary attempts to fight off Lord Thornford, but faints when she sees him stab her would-be rescuer, Michael Erle. Thornford then kidnaps Mary and imprisons her in his estate, where he tells her that she is “totally in [his] power.” Though Mary displays considerable fortitude in escaping Thornford’s estate, he follows her and convinces her family that he had successfully ruined her (had sex with her), making Mary “stupefied with despair” and again unable to resist him.⁵⁶

⁵³ Wilks, *Michael Erle*, 8, 16. Italics not mine.

⁵⁴ Somerset, *Crazy Jane*, 44-45, 48.

⁵⁵ Pocock, *The Miller and His Men*, 26; Buckstone, *Luke the Labourer*, 24.

⁵⁶ Wilks, *Michael Erle*, 18-19, 24, 33.

The heroine also demonstrated her powerlessness when she fainted during the seduction scene. After finally agreeing to marry Alvanley in *The Lear of Private Life*, Agnes's begins to "sink with unknown terror": "Ah! My eyes grow dim, my senses fail me, my limbs refuse—oh!" Alvanley catches the unconscious Agnes in his arms and carries her to his carriage where he will ruin her.⁵⁷ Eltis notes that the seduced heroine always demonstrated "an extraordinary degree of passivity" and that her "vulnerability and helplessness frequently bordered on the semi-conscious."⁵⁸ The fainting woman was also a popular trope of the eighteenth-century "culture of sensibility," which prized female physical weakness. As historian G. J. Barker-Benfield explains, "signs of vulnerability" and frailty like illness, kneeling and fainting were increasingly sexualized in this period.⁵⁹ In the nineteenth century, and in seduction dramas more particularly, physical vulnerability remained an important and romanticized aspect of ideal womanhood. When heroines fainted before their seductions, they demonstrated the physical and mental weakness that was expected of their gender and further proved their natural inability to resist male sexual determination.

When the melodramatic heroine is deceived, threatened, abducted or faints, she demonstrates her inability to control her own circumstances. In her assessment of the fallen woman's agency in mid-nineteenth-century fiction, Mitchell observes that "[m]en may alter events; women are simply acted upon."⁶⁰ And indeed, for better or worse, the heroine's narrative is always shaped by the actions of men. On the one hand, her seduction and suffering are completely outside of her control. As Eltis suggests, "the responsibility for safeguarding a

⁵⁷ Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life*, 20-21.

⁵⁸ Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 18.

⁵⁹ G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 345.

⁶⁰ Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 13.

tempted woman” also falls “outside her own inadequate hands.”⁶¹ Even the heroine’s happy ending, which usually involves a marriage proposal from her repentant seducer, “comes about without any activity on her part.”⁶² By depicting the seduced heroine in various states of passivity and powerlessness, melodrama further established the heroine as an object of sympathy and a symbol of working-class victimization. But these plays also reinforced the notion of women as “weaker vessels who must be protected” by men and who were unable to control their own lives.⁶³ The melodramatic heroine emphasized that, although women could be ruined by the actions of men, they also depended on them for protection. This image of the seduced and powerless heroine also encouraged the idea that – to use Binhammer’s phrasing – “sex was something that happened to women, not an act originating in affective and erotic choice.”⁶⁴ Though her passivity made her blameless for her seduction, the seduced heroine suffered for her fall.

The Heroine’s Suffering and Death

After her seduction, the heroine goes through various stages of struggle, suffering, and near death: pleading with her father for forgiveness; locked away by her seducer, begging for death; wandering through the snow with her illegitimate child; collapsing from physical and mental exhaustion; or throwing herself into a river or lake. Her suffering, as Booth suggests, is “[a] cardinal rule of melodrama,” so she “goes from one agony to the next” until her happy ending.⁶⁵ On the one hand, the emphasis on the heroine’s suffering and possible death can be seen as a

⁶¹ Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 18. Eltis’s observation is made regarding the seduced Nelly Armroyd in Watts Phillips’s 1867 play *Lost in London*, whose “physical helplessness” solidifies her innocence. (18)

⁶² Tönnies, ““Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,”” 188.

⁶³ Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 13.

⁶⁴ Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain*, 175.

⁶⁵ Booth, *English Melodrama*, 24-25.

kind of “cautionary tale,” warning real women about the dangers of seduction.⁶⁶ But these themes also gave added force to the villainy of seduction, further establishing the heroine’s innocence and her entitlement to sympathy. In particular, the seduced heroine’s suffering and desire to die served as a kind of penance, as well as a proof of her morality which precluded the possibility of wilful sexual transgression. When other characters anticipated the heroine’s death or mistakenly believed her to be dead, they affirmed the wickedness of seduction and encouraged the notion that women were too innocent and weak to survive it. Even when the heroine actually died—though such cases were rare in melodrama—her death represented her passive surrender and solidified her as a martyr of wronged womanhood. The heroine’s suffering and possible death also inspired her seducer to repent and offer her marriage, thus allowing the heroine a happy ending. By emphasizing the heroine’s intense suffering and connection with death, melodrama further established the heroine as an object of sympathy, while simultaneously encouraging the notion that fallen women inevitably faced a downward path, from which only men could save them.

One of the most compelling displays of the heroine’s suffering was her strong desire to die rather than live with the shame of her fall. Most heroines declared that they felt death approaching and were eager to die, while some actually attempted to kill themselves. In *Henriette the Forsaken*, the seduced heroine notes that “every thing that I gaze on seems to wear

⁶⁶ Nina Auerbach suggests that the connections made between fallen women and death in novels, painting, and poetry were the result of a culture that “feared female sexuality and aggression” and so created a “respectably sadistic cautionary tale” for all women. (Auerbach, *The Woman and the Demon*, 157; Auerbach, “The Rise of the Fallen Woman,” 31) Mitchell similarly suggests that the “overt purpose” of the narrative of seduction and death was to “illustrate to young women ‘the fatal consequences’” of sexual fall. (Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 9) Some seduction melodramas offer particularly explicit examples of this trend. For example, in Buckstone’s *Victorine*, the heroine has a dream in which she is seduced and then commits suicide. She awakes, realizes she has been dreaming, and declares that “the lesson shall not be lost” on her. (John Baldwin Buckstone, *Victorine; Or, ‘I’ll Sleep on It,’ A Drama, In Three Acts* [London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1840], 52) In *Michael Erle* too, the heroine receives a warning about the dangerous effects of seduction from Michael Erle, whose fiancé was seduced and died shortly afterwards. The heroine declares that she “will not disregard the warning a merciful Heaven has sent me!” (Wilks, *Michael Erle*, 17-18) In these two plays, the narrative of seduction and death serves as a warning for the heroine *and* for any women in the audience.

the hue of death.” She twice says goodbye “for ever” to her friends and sister and says that her seduction “has forbidden [her] to have a hope beyond the grave.”⁶⁷ In *Grace Clairville*, the seduced Mabel begs the villain to marry her and tells him that “the cold hand of death is already descending upon me.” When she finds out he is engaged to someone else, she vows to tell his fiancé about his actions: and then, “welcome death!”⁶⁸ In *Love’s Frailties*, Susan begs her seducer to “stab [her] to the heart,” begs heaven to strike her with “its avenging lightnings [*sic*]” and begs “earth to swallow [her]” up. After agonizing over her shame, she throws herself into the Serpentine River. When her brother pulls her out of the water, she begs him to throw her back in: “Do not, do not, suffer me to live in shame and misery.”⁶⁹ In *Victorine*, the heroine has a dream in which she is seduced and abandoned. In the dream, she decides that “rest is to be found” in death, so she throws herself into the Thames.⁷⁰

By anticipating and desiring death, and especially by actually attempting suicide, seduced heroines like Henriette, Mabel, Susan and Victorine displayed penitence, proved that they were morally virtuous, and were thus “worthy of the audience’s sympathies.”⁷¹ When they treated death as a probable or desirable outcome, these heroines upheld the notion that sexual fall stripped them of all value and purpose in life, proving that they were subject to the same moral code that more formally virtuous characters followed. As Tönnies suggests, melodrama placed seduced heroines “unambiguously on the side of moral ‘virtue.’”⁷² The genre’s emphasis on their shame, suffering and suicidal behaviour effectively solidified the heroine as a remorseful, morally virtuous character. Even heroines who narrowly avoided seduction used suicidal

⁶⁷ Buckstone, *Henriette the Forsaken*, 32, 56, 61.

⁶⁸ Lewis, *Grace Clairville*, 6.

⁶⁹ Stafford, *Love’s Frailties*, 22, 30, 32.

⁷⁰ Buckstone, *Victorine*, 50-51.

⁷¹ Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 19.

⁷² Tönnies, “Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,” 190.

language to emphasize their morality. In *Crazy Jane*, the heroine is driven mad by Lord Thornford's pursuit of her and says she will only obey him if he tells her "to plunge into the raging ocean [...] or drink in copious draughts the rankest poison." She says that there is "no peace but in the grave," where she can "rest amongst grim skeletons."⁷³ In *Michael Erle*, the kidnapped and imprisoned Mary similarly contemplates her looming seduction and declares, "Death—death sooner than dishonour." When attempting her escape, she asks a gardener to unlock a gate to "save [her] from a fate far worse than death." Finally, when she returns home to find her fiancé convinced of her fall, she cries, "Burst, then, my heart, for I have no wish to live!"⁷⁴ Like other heroines, Jane and Mary use the language of death to demonstrate their sexual morality. They both stress that death is preferable to sexual fall and Mary suggests that death is preferable even to the *perception* of herself as fallen. Whether she avoided or succumbed to her seducer, the heroine's allusions to death served as powerful indications of her morality, innocence and victimhood.

In the rare cases where the heroine actually died, her death could similarly diminish her sexual guilt, emphasize her beauty and redeem her with other characters and with the audience. In *Grace Clairville*, the seduced Mabel is redeemed through her murder and emphasized as an ideally beautiful woman. Though her body is discovered a month after her seducer throws her from a cliff, her body has not decomposed at all and her murderer must "look upon her beauteous face." Here, Mabel's perfectly preserved body evokes her preserved virtue.⁷⁵ In *Maria Martin, or, Murder in the Red Barn*, William Corder murders Maria after promising to marry her, and buries her under the floor of a barn. This story – described by Crone as "one of the most popular melodramas of the century" – was inspired by the sensationalized murder of Maria Marten by

⁷³ Somerset, *Crazy Jane*, 49-50, 54.

⁷⁴ Wilks, *Michael Erle*, 24, 26, 32.

⁷⁵ Lewis, *Grace Clairville*, 17.

William Corder in 1827. The sensational nature of this murder necessitated an intensely sympathetic treatment of Maria despite her suspect sexual history. Crone explains that though the real Maria Marten “had been sexually involved with a number of men before Corder” and had illegitimate children, “this sexual past was eliminated” in melodrama. Instead, she was depicted as having only one lover (Corder) whom she attempts to marry and thus “recover her morality.”⁷⁶ She is killed before she can be redeemed through marriage but her death serves a similar purpose. In one edition of the play, Maria is not only sexually fallen, but has also apparently committed infanticide with her seducer. Yet after she is murdered, her ghost appears and commands Corder to “Look on thy sinless victim.”⁷⁷ In this play, violent death at the hands of her seducer completely erases Maria’s transgressions and restores her innocence. Her dubious sexual and moral status marks her as an exception to the typical construction of the seduced and dying woman but further illustrates the power of death in redeeming sexually fallen women. For such women as Mabel and Maria, death represents the ultimate passive surrender, emphasizes their lack of consent, and offers an honourable and beautiful end to the stigma and shame of sexual fall.

While the heroine rarely died, other characters generally either expected her to do so or believed that she already done. In representation as well as reality, sexual fall suggested a kind of death—the death of a woman’s virtue and social reputation. In the melodramatic universe, however, many characters treated sexual fall as a *literal* death. These responses emphasized the wickedness of seduction and elicited more sympathy for the heroine. In *The Lear of Private Life*, Agnes’s father hears that she has been seduced and immediately decides that she is in fact

⁷⁶ Crone, *Violent Victorians*, 141-142. For more on the public excitement aroused by this murder and on its representation in melodrama and other forms of popular entertainment, see Crone, *Violent Victorians*, 89-93, 141-144.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, *Maria Martin; or, The Murder in the Red Barn. A Drama in Two Acts* (London: Samuel French, n.d), 11-12, 19-20.

actually dead. He wanders through the snow looking for her grave, draws her tomb on the walls of his asylum cell, and repeatedly declares that his daughter is “dead---dead and gone!”⁷⁸ In *Clari*, the heroine’s entire community is convinced that she is dead after her seduction.⁷⁹ When she returns to her town from her seducer’s mansion, her friends are certain they are actually seeing her ghost; one even runs to “fetch a priest to speak to it.”⁸⁰

In other cases, the heroine was merely expected to die. This expectation often led the seducer to repent and make amends. For example, in *The Lear of Private Life*, when Agnes’s seducer Alvanley notices she has fled from him, he assumes she has thrown herself into the river because she was unable to cope with the consequences of her seduction: “Her father mad and impoverished—herself scorned and deserted by her seducer! What firmness could survive it?” He is ultimately made repentant by the thought of her killing herself: “Agnes a suicide—I am a MURDERER! [...] Agnes! Agnes! I knew not half thy value till thy loss!” Convinced she is dead, Alvanley decides to “follow” Agnes and attempts to shoot himself in the head. He is prevented from killing himself, and upon realizing that Agnes is actually alive, sets out to make her his wife.⁸¹ In *Clari*, the seducer similarly worries that Clari’s “desperation may attack her life” and tells his servant to watch over her, since “her life’s not safe in her own hands.” He later finds her at her parent’s home, apologizes and asks her to marry him.⁸²

In most seduction dramas, the heroine ultimately receives a happy ending. Instead of dying, she is often rewarded with an offer of marriage from her repentant seducer, discovered to have never succumbed to her seducer in the first place, or is avenged through the death of her

⁷⁸ Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life*, 47.

⁷⁹ Tönnies also notes that the fallen heroine is, in some cases, “believed dead by her community.” She points to two such cases, Thomas Egerton Wilks’s *Woman’s Love* (1841) and G. D. Pitt’s *First Friendship* (1848) (Tönnies, “Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,” 190.)

⁸⁰ Payne, *Clari*, 28.

⁸¹ Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life*, 25, 35-36, 38, 45-49.

⁸² Payne, *Clari*, 22-23, 25, 27-28.

seducer. But while this fallen woman does not follow the same downward path that others were thought to, her suffering and the possibility of her death still play an important role in bringing about her happy ending. First, in several plays, the heroine's suffering or near-death drives the seducer to repentance. In *The Lear of Private Life*, for example, the seducing villain is made remorseful by the thought of his victim killing herself and proposes marriage, thus restoring the heroine's reputation and relationship with her father.⁸³ In *Clari*, the heroine's intense suffering awakens her seducer's "sense of duty," and she is rewarded with a marriage proposal.⁸⁴ And in *Love's Frailties*, the seducer declares that "it is never too late for repentance" and offers to marry the heroine as "atonement...for her sufferings."⁸⁵ In these instances, the seduced heroine's suffering has the added effect of reforming the villainous seducer. The reformation of men was an important element of the "culture of sensibility" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Suffering women like the seduced heroine were believed to have a particularly powerful effect in inspiring this reform.⁸⁶ As will be seen in Chapter Two, this move towards sensibility was, generally speaking, a middle-class project. Yet melodrama was also concerned with the reform of men through the suffering of women. In this working-class genre, the repentance and reform of the wealthy seducer arguably spoke to popular feelings of social exploitation and hopes for the reform of the upper classes. It was ultimately through the seduced and dying woman, however, that this reform came about.

Though the heroine's happy ending often depended on her marriage to her seducer, she could also be redeemed by her seducer's death or by the discovery that she had never lost her virtue in the first place. In *Henriette the Forsaken*, a man courting the fallen and suicidal heroine

⁸³ Moncrieff, *The Lear of Private Life*, 51.

⁸⁴ Payne, *Clari*, 35.

⁸⁵ Stafford, *Love's Frailties*, 39. According to Eltis, these marriages (and the paternal blessing that they received) represented "the sinners' reabsorption within a larger system of social responsibility." (Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 15)

⁸⁶ Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility," 104, 110; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 266.

avenges her honour by killing her seducer. As the seducer dies, he repents and tells Henriette that “justice is appeased” through his death.⁸⁷ In some plays, the heroine’s family and friends discover that she never actually succumbed to her seducer. In *Michael Erle*, the kidnapped heroine suffers as a fallen woman, even though she never actually submitted to her would-be seducer. By the play’s end, her family, friends and fiancé discover her innocence and welcome her back as an honourable woman.⁸⁸ In *Clari*, the heroine escapes her seducer and returns to her family, pleading her innocence. They refuse to believe her until her repentant seducer confirms that her “virtue was triumphant” against his villainy. Her innocence and his subsequent marriage proposal restore her good name.⁸⁹ In each play, the seduced heroine only receives her happy ending after she suffers sufficiently and demonstrates an eager desire to die. Her mental anguish, self-hatred and suicidal behaviour all prove that she is a moral, victimized character who deserves sympathy and redemption.

Conclusion

The seduced heroine of early to mid-nineteenth-century melodrama was a compelling and sympathetic figure whose innocence was accepted despite the sexual transgression associated with sexual fall. She was beautiful, virtuous, reserved, sexually innocent, self-sacrificing, affectionate, trusting, weak, submissive and obedient. Her many ideal feminine qualities not only marked her as an ideal victim for seduction; they also prevented her from avoiding or resisting seduction. Whether she was deceived, threatened, overpowered or abducted, her sexual fall was

⁸⁷ Buckstone, *Henriette the Forsaken*, 63. In fiction too, the death of the seducer could offer a just ending for the seduced woman. For example, in Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1850), after Little Em’ly is seduced and abandoned by James Steerforth, justice is ultimately served when Steerforth’s ship is wrecked off the coast of Yarmouth and his body washes ashore. Meanwhile, Little Em’ly makes plans with her uncle and Martha—another redeemed fallen woman—to start a new life in Australia. (Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* ed. Nina Burgis. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981])

⁸⁸ Wilks, *Michael Erle*, 34.

⁸⁹ Payne, *Clari*, 34-35.

depicted as a crime committed *against* her, not *by* her. After her seduction, the heroine's immense suffering and connection with death further established her morality and the tragedy of her seduction. Having suffered sufficiently, the fallen heroine was rewarded with a happy ending that simultaneously redeemed her and reformed her seducer. It was through this trope of seduction and near-death that the heroine became an ideal object of sympathy. Indeed, melodrama offered one of the most sympathetic depictions of sexual fall in the nineteenth century.

As we have seen, however, this sympathy was restricted to a very specific trope and was thus a narrow and exclusive sort of sympathy. The fallen heroine of melodrama had a powerful effect on popular understandings of, and sympathy for, the fallen woman. As Eltis suggests, melodrama's fallen heroine was "a widely accepted, universally recognizable figure." This "melodramatic model of the fallen woman" extended into many other discourses throughout the century and arguably shaped real fallen women's depictions of their own circumstances.⁹⁰ Chapter Three will explore how the trope of the seduced and dying woman both contradicted and shaped the experiences of ordinary people. First, though, we will examine another genre—expert literature—which similarly demonstrated sympathy for the fallen woman through this trope of seduction and death.

⁹⁰ Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 19, 23.

Chapter Two - The Seduced and Dying Woman of Expert Literature

In his 1840 study of prostitution in Edinburgh, Scottish surgeon William Tait noted with approval that “a feeling of sympathy” for fallen women was “pervading all classes of the community.”¹ Within Tait’s own class—the professional or “expert” middle class—this “feeling of sympathy” was certainly pervasive, but it was a narrow and exclusive kind of sympathy. In this chapter, I examine the sympathetic construction of the fallen woman in the writings of this expert middle class between 1820 and 1870. During this period, many doctors, clergymen, journalists and other social writers took to the troubling subject of sexual fall to offer their expertise and, in many cases, their sympathy for fallen women. Historians have offered varying explanations for *why* experts expressed sympathy for the fallen woman at all, given her obvious transgression against middle-class ideals of female behaviour and sexuality. But until we understand *how* this sympathy was constructed, our understanding of it will be lacking. This chapter shows that this expert sympathy was directly tied to the popular trope of the seduced and dying woman, because – like the victim-heroine of popular melodrama – she embodied many middle-class ideals of gender and sexuality. Her femininity, passivity and suffering marked her as a victim instead of a threat, thus making her a worthy object of middle-class sympathy, chivalry and charity. Examination of this trope of the seduced and dying woman in expert literature reveals how sympathy for the fallen woman was constructed and what such constructions can tell us about nineteenth-century understandings of gender and sexuality.

This chapter examines the writings of a group of middle-class men (and a few women) whom I often refer to as “experts.” In fact, it is difficult to classify this group of writers with any one term because they are incredibly varied in their professions; among them are ministers,

¹ William Tait, *Magdalenism: An Inquiry into the Extent, Causes, and Consequences of Prostitution in Edinburgh*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: P. Richard, 1842. First published in 1840), vi.

missionaries, physicians, psychiatrists, surgeons, social reformers, investigative journalists, essayists, guidance-book authors and other evangelical and social writers. While not united by an individual profession, these writers all claimed expertise on various aspects of life and wrote primarily for middle-class male readers. In the early nineteenth century, such expertise was increasingly valued as it explained and offered solutions to social problems brought on by industrialization.² Beginning in the late 1820s, these experts formed what historian Lawrence Goldman describes as a “fragmented” kind of social science, which was understood as a “guide to legislation and ‘improvement’” rather than “an academic discipline pure and simple.”³ By the mid-nineteenth century, expert data and analysis had encouraged and informed a variety of reform movements and social policies, including the controversial 1834 New Poor Law.⁴ These influential experts were, as historian Harold Perkin suggests, a distinct and important part of the ascendant middle class in nineteenth-century England. Described by Perkin as the “non-capitalist or professional middle class,” this group of (primarily) men was dedicated to “expert service and the objective solution of society’s problems.” Together with the capitalist or entrepreneurial middle class, this professional middle class won control over the country’s “heart” (morality) and “mind” (public opinion) and gained “political control” of the State.⁵ Expert writings on fallen

² Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969), 269, 276-277; Lawrence Goldman, “Victorian Social Science: From Singular to Plural,” in *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*, ed. Martin Daunt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 90.

³ Goldman, “Victorian Social Science,” 111, 113. Goldman explains that the various “institutions and networks” that had “a claim on social science” were incredibly varied, ranging from the academic to the political to the religious. (89)

⁴ *Ibid.*, 97. According to Goldman, this period “witnessed the first systematic social policies, and social information was crucial to the process.” He lists the “Royal Commissions of the 1830s and 1840s...the foundation of the General Register Office in 1836; and the improvement of the decennial census from 1841” as examples of social policies that were influenced by Britain’s developing ‘social science.’ (97)

⁵ Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 209, 215, 225, 264.

women were a crucial part of this development, as they helped establish middle-class ideals of gender and sexuality throughout British society.⁶

From 1820 to 1870, members of this professional or ‘expert’ middle class were increasingly drawn to the subject of the fallen woman. In response to a perceived growth in prostitution in the country, many medical, religious and social writers published on the state of prostitution in the country and possible ways to eliminate or to regulate it. While writing about prostitution, which was often depicted as the worst step along the downward path of sexual fall, experts also offered more general insights into female sexuality, education, character and morality, health and disease, suicide, the protection of women and, of course, sympathy for fallen women. Historians have already made extensive use of expert writing on prostitution. Many historical and literary studies of the fallen woman have drawn on the writings of Dr. William Acton and W. R. Greg, two prominent authorities on prostitution in the nineteenth century.⁷ Acton’s 1857 study *Prostitution*, for example, is perhaps the most well-known nineteenth-century study on the fallen woman and widely-recognized for the influence it had on the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s.⁸ Other experts, like William Tait and

⁶ Nead explains that “physicians and surgeons used their professional status and scientific authority to validate hegemonic definitions of femininity and female sexuality” and that their writings “contributed to the attitudes of respectable middle-class society.” She similarly suggests that social investigation was “one of the centres in the nineteenth century which produced definitions of sexuality.” Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 142-43, 150.

⁷ Amanda Anderson, Nina Auerbach, Sos Eltis, Deborah Anna Logan, Sally Mitchell, Lynda Nead, Eric Trudgill, Mariana Valverde, and Judith Walkowitz are just a few of those who have examined expert writings on fallen women, including those of Acton and Greg. (Anderson, *Tainted Souls, Painted Faces*; Auerbach, “The Rise of the Fallen Woman”; Eltis, *Acts of Desire*; Deborah Anna Logan, *Fallenness in Victorian Women’s Writing: Marry, Stitch, Die, or Do Worse* [Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998]; Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*; Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*; Nead, “Seduction, Prostitution, Suicide”; Trudgill, *Madonnas and Magdalens*; Mariana Valverde, “The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse,” *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 2 [Winter 1989]; Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian society: Women, class, and the state* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980])

⁸ The Contagious Diseases Acts were intended to stop the spread of venereal disease in several garrison towns. The passing of the Acts was, as Frank Mort describes, “the single most important legislative intervention addressing sexuality throughout the nineteenth century.” (Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-moral politics in England since 1830* [London: Routledge, 1987], 68) Under the first Act, any woman suspected of being a “common prostitute” in the designated towns could be arrested and pressured to “volunteer” for monthly examinations for venereal disease, or else appear in a police court to defend her character. (Thomas, “The Double

William Logan, have been studied as well. By focusing on this sentimental trope of seduction and death and how it was constructed in expert texts, this chapter offers new ways of looking at these old and much-studied sources.

This chapter also seeks to expand our understanding of what constitutes “expert” literature. This genre can and should include female authors of guidance and advice books, like Elizabeth Sandford, Sarah Ellis and Sarah Lewis. Though these writers did not share the same professional status, audience or influence as many of the doctors, clergymen and essayists herein examined, they too were voices of authority on women who provided insight into the issues of seduction and sexual fall. The audience for expert literature was almost entirely male, so it is difficult to make assertions about these texts without entirely excluding middle-class women whose values and opinions may or may not have been reflected in, or informed by, such texts. Women were certainly “not expected to read medical treatises” or “articles in the *Westminster Review*,” as Mitchell points out, but many guidance and advice books written by and for women similarly offered expertise on women and sexual fall.⁹ And while there are many differences between these female-authored texts and the medical, religious and social writings of middle-class men, I am primarily interested in what unites them: the sentimental trope of the seduced and dying woman, as well as the gendered and sexual attitudes that informed this trope. By incorporating these female authors into my study of expert literature, this thesis more clearly shows the ways in which the middle class constructed their sympathy for the fallen woman.

Standard,” 199) If the woman was found to be suffering from venereal disease, she could be confined to a lock hospital for up to nine months. (Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, 1-2) The Acts, and regulation more generally, have been acknowledged as “one of the most compelling illustrations of the Victorian sexual double standard.” (Philip Howell, “Prostitution and Racialised Sexuality: The Regulation of Prostitution in Britain and the British Empire before the Contagious Diseases Acts,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18, no. 3 [June 2000]: 323)

⁹ Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel*, 22.

Explaining Sympathy: Middle-Class Morality and the ‘Cult of Sensibility’

The trope of the seduced and dying woman occupied a unique place within the moral landscape of the middle class. On the one hand, as a kind of fallen woman, she transgressed middle-class standards of ideal womanhood to which medical, religious and social writers adhered. First and foremost, by having sex outside of marriage, the fallen woman forfeited her “choicest treasure” as a woman—her chastity.¹⁰ As historian Barbara Welter explains, sexual purity was one of the essential virtues that women were expected to maintain in the nineteenth century. A woman who lost her purity or chastity was “un-natural and unfeminine”; she was, “in fact, no woman at all.”¹¹ Chastity was, according to nineteenth-century periodical-writer John Wade, the “first among female virtues” in all countries and time periods. Without it, a woman could rarely become a wife and mother, and so “the two main ends of her existence [were] foreclosed.”¹² In an 1858 book of advice, novelist Dinah Craik argued that it was better to “beg, or hunger, or die in a ditch ... than live a day in voluntary unchastity.”¹³ Irish social reformer Frances Power Cobbe claimed that it was “small praise” to tell any woman she was chaste, because “any inclination to be otherwise [was] already a disgrace.”¹⁴

The fallen woman also posed a potential challenge to the notion that women lacked sexual desire. Acton’s 1865 study of the reproductive organs was the most famous defence of this notion. He believed that “the majority of women (happily for them) [were] not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind” and instead experienced “a persistent aversion” to sex. For animals as well, Acton explained, sex was undoubtedly “an unmitigated distress and

¹⁰ John Wade, *Women, Past and Present: Exhibiting Their Social Vicissitudes, Single and Matrimonial Relations, Rights, Privileges, and Wrongs* (London: William Tegg, 1865), 264.

¹¹ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 154.

¹² Wade, *Women, Past and Present*, 264.

¹³ Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, *A Woman’s Thoughts about Women* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1861. First published in 1858), 273.

¹⁴ Frances Power Cobbe, *The Duties of Women: A Course of Lectures* (London: Williams and Northgate, 1881), 41.

annoyance to the female.” He could “scarcely believe that any pleasure at all attends the act” for many female animals.¹⁵ Historian Michael Mason dismisses Acton’s denial of female sexual desire and claims that it was “without a parallel in the sexual literature of the day.” He suggests that Acton’s remark, which is made in a chapter on male impotence, was intended to put his male readers at ease.¹⁶ However, other experts similarly described female desire as passive or absent compared to the active and aggressive sexual desire of men, so Acton’s remarks were in fact representative of a general expert and middle-class understanding of female sexuality. Dr. Michael Ryan argued that the “genital sense” was stronger in men than in women, and evangelical writer James Miller explained that male sexual desire was both aggressive by nature and stronger than woman’s.¹⁷ English essayist W. R. Greg also claimed that, while “sexual desire [was] inherent and spontaneous” in men, in women it was “dormant, if non-existent, till excited ... by undue familiarities” and “actual intercourse.”¹⁸ Whether describing it as passive, weak, muted, dormant or completely non-existent, these experts encouraged the notion that an active female sexual desire was unnatural. As a symbol of active, awakened female sexuality, the fallen woman not only violated middle-class sexual morality, she was also an unnatural phenomenon who undermined expert understandings about the very existence of female sexual desire.

At the same time, however, the fallen woman also elicited great sympathy from experts.

In his dedication to his 1843 study on prostitution, Scottish missionary William Logan wrote “to

¹⁵ William Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Youth, in Adult Age, and in Advanced Life...*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston: 1867. First published in 1865), 144, 147, 119-120 Footnote 2.

¹⁶ Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 195-196. Howell argues that the “Victorian discourses of sex and sexuality” relied on the notion that while male sexual desire was “natural and not to be denied,” women experienced “no innate enjoyment of sex.” (Philip Howell, “A Private Contagious Diseases Act: Prostitution and Public Space in Victorian Cambridge,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 26, no. 3 [2000]: 376)

¹⁷ Michael Ryan, *Prostitution in London* (London: H. Bailliere, 1839), 358. Ryan referenced Franz Joseph Gall and Johann Spurzheim, two German doctors and pioneers of phrenology, who shared this opinion; James Miller, *Prostitution considered in relation to its cause and cure* (Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox, 1859), 10.

¹⁸ W. R. Greg, “Prostitution,” *Westminster Review* 53 (1850) Reprinted in W. R. Greg, *The Great Sin of Great Cities* (London: John Chapman, 1853), 10.

the unhappy females themselves, for assuring them that though their wickedness is abhorred, there are those who commiserate their wretchedness.”¹⁹ Miller argued that, while all should “hate [prostitution] with a perfect hatred,” they should “be kind—most kind—to the fallen one” and show “no harshness, even, to the poor prostitutes.”²⁰ Greg objected to the way prostitutes were “regarded, spoken of, and treated” throughout the country, insisting that the causes that led women to fall were “of a nature to move grief and compassion rather than indignation and contempt.”²¹ In the introduction to Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, Rev. William Tuckniss remarked that the country’s prostitutes had “a strong claim upon the sympathy and compassion of the benevolent public.”²² Finally, Craik argued that the immense burden of sexual fall “must be the most awful punishment to any woman,” so the “chaste woman’s first feeling” towards a fallen one should be “that of unqualified, unmitigated pity.”²³

This sympathy for the fallen woman was, on the one hand, a product of the middle-class movement towards sensibility and sentimentality in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which encouraged (among other things) kinder treatment of women and the reformation of men and manners. As Barker-Benfield explains, this “cult of sensibility” served as a kind of moral benchmark for the middle classes as they defined themselves against the upper and lower classes. It was defined by the “aggrandizement of feeling and its investment with moral value.” More particularly, the “culture of sensibility” encouraged a new “masculine ideal” in which men “gave up their physical harassment of women” and stopped causing them

¹⁹ William Logan, *An Exposure, from Personal Observation, of Female Prostitution in London, Leeds, and Rochdale, and Especially in the City of Glasgow...*, 3rd ed. (Glasgow: G. Gallie and R. Fleckfield, 1843), 4.

²⁰ Miller, *Prostitution*, 29, 35.

²¹ Greg, “Prostitution,” 3, 11.

²² William Tuckniss, introduction to *London Labour and the London Poor; Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work*, by Henry Mayhew (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1862. First published 1851), xxxviii. Tuckniss was chaplain to the Society for the Rescue of Young Women and Children.

²³ Craik, *A Woman’s Thoughts about Women*, 264.

“psychological pain.” Instead, the new “man of feeling” was respectful and sympathetic of women and their feelings.²⁴ Though potentially transgressive, the seduced and dying woman provided an opportunity for the middle classes to cultivate their sympathy and benevolence, and particularly for middle-class men to demonstrate their reformed masculinity. On the other hand, sympathy for the fallen woman helped to diminish the threatening power that she posed to middle-class society. Nead first made this argument in *Myths of Sexuality*, where she suggested that the prostitute was often defined “as a social victim rather than a social threat” in an effort to navigate the fears and anxieties that she provoked.²⁵ Literary scholars Amanda Anderson and Nina Auerbach have similarly suggested that middle-class philanthropists and writers defined the fallen woman as a victim in order to minimize her transgressive nature.²⁶ Expert sympathy for the fallen woman was arguably a product of *both* middle-class sensibility *and* fears of prostitution. But while it is important to understand why experts demonstrated sympathy for the fallen woman at all, it is equally important to examine how this sympathy was constructed. Such an examination will reveal that sympathy for the fallen woman was grounded in the trope of the seduced and dying woman.

Seduction and Death

Though they wrote about real women, experts embraced the same sentimental trope found in melodrama of the seduced and dying woman. Young, naïve and innocent, this woman was typically seduced by promises of marriage from a wealthy man and then abandoned. She immediately started on a downward path that usually ended in death; she often killed herself, but she could also die of a broken heart, starvation, exposure or disease, or even murder. Experts

²⁴ Barker-Benfield, “Sensibility,” 102; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, xix, 249.

²⁵ Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 138-139.

²⁶ Auerbach, “The Rise of the Fallen Woman,” 31; Anderson, *Tainted Souls, Painted Faces*, 65.

provided some statistical and medical evidence for their claims about fallen women, but the existence of this seduced and dying woman was primarily supported by anecdotal evidence, metaphor, trope and cliché. Historian Martin Daunton suggests that experts used “myth and poetry” to assert “findings and theories which strained comprehension.”²⁷ The notion of the seduced and dying woman did not, however, strain comprehension. Hers was such a widely-accepted cultural narrative that experts could effectively describe it with figurative language instead of – or rather, as if it were – scientific evidence. Of course, there were real women in this period who identified themselves as being seduced, and such women did sometimes commit suicide in response to circumstances resulting from their “seductions.” These women will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three. For now, it is important to note that experts constructed the seduced and dying woman in much the same way that playwrights of melodrama did: through language, not scientific fact. By paying attention to the language experts used in their construction of this trope, we can gain better insight into their attitudes about fallen women and the ways in which they set restrictions on sympathy for these women.

First, expert sympathy for fallen women was closely connected with the narrative of seduction. In his 1859 study of prostitution, Miller suggested that, although people should “be kind to all,” they should “be specially [*sic*] so to the newly fallen—to the victims of seduction.”²⁸ Much like the fallen heroines of melodrama, the seduced women described by experts were beautiful, trusting, weak and unknowing figures, easy targets for villainous seducers. Experts agreed that they were typically seduced by false promises from wealthy men. In 1826, an

²⁷ Martin Daunton, ed. *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2. Literary scholar Shalyn Claggett similarly shows how one expert, Dr. William Acton, utilized “allusions, etymologies, and metaphors, to substantiate political arguments he could not support with medical and statistical evidence.” (Shalyn Claggett, “Victorian Pros and Poetry: Science as Literature in William Acton’s *Prostitution*,” *Prose Studies* 33, no. 1 [April 2011]: 19) Nead also notes how investigative journalists relied on “narrative and anecdote” in their writings. (Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 150)

²⁸ Miller, *Prostitution*, 35.

essayist (identified only as R. M----y) for the *Inspector and Literary Review* claimed that men were almost always the “cause of female ruin.” They easily took advantage of woman’s “tenderest anxiety to oblige, observe, and gratify” them. This essayist described the seduced woman, wandering “unsuspectingly in the path of love” and “lost to the vigilance of reason and prudence.” She ultimately “yields to her lover, who, like the snake winding itself round the object he poisons, consummates her love in shame and disgrace.”²⁹ This image of the seducing snake is a striking invocation of the biblical narrative of Genesis, in which the serpent seduces Eve—the first fallen woman—to eat from the forbidden tree. Rev. Solomon Piggott used similar imagery in his 1824 description of seduction. Piggott’s “unsuspicious” and virtuous woman was “beguiled by the serpent smiles” of her seducer, who had “spoiled the lily purity of the flower [he] hast caressed, and then abandonest it to be trodden under foot.”³⁰ Both authors emphasized the fallen woman as a victim by using this image of a serpentine seduction. Later, Acton explained that the “gates of a woman’s honour” were not made “of brass.” The gates were guarded by a woman’s modesty, but this guard could “slumber or be bribed, or may make a fair fight against the foe and be beaten.”³¹ Here, Acton emphasizes the weak and unguarded nature of female honour and suggests that sexual fall resulted from an unfair fight which naturally favoured the seducer. In these and other expert descriptions, woman’s sexual fall was caused in part by her weakness or “unsuspicious” innocence. The main responsibility lay with the seducing snake, who took advantage of these traits.

²⁹ R. M----y, “Sketches from Life,” *Inspector and Literary Review* 1, no. 1/6 (May 1826): 364.

³⁰ Solomon Piggott, *Suicide and its Antidotes, a Series of Anecdotes and Actual Narratives with Suggestions on Mental Distress* (London: J Robins and Co., 1824), 301. Piggott was Rector of Dunstable, Bedfordshire from 1824 to 1845. (“Clergy Deceased,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* 178 [July-December 1845], 431)

³¹ William Acton, *Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects in London and other Large Cities with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of its Attendant Evils* (London: John Churchill, 1857), 174.

Experts also agreed that the average seducer typically came from a higher social class than his victim and that he accomplished his criminal task by making false promises of marriage. Tait claimed that wealthy men were “mainly instrumental” in the ruin of young girls. He estimated that, of all women who had been seduced, eighty percent were “led astray by individuals moving in a higher sphere than themselves.”³² An 1844 article on prostitution in London claimed that young women were “almost invariably seduced by persons in a station superior to their own.”³³ London missionary R. W. Vanderkiste raised the “undisputed fact that *immense* numbers” of domestic servants became prostitutes after being seduced by their masters or by “some junior branch of the family.”³⁴ Acton noted that the seduction of young women in rural areas was “a sport and a habit with vast numbers of men” who were “placed above the ranks of labour” and who employed young women.³⁵ This tendency to blame higher-class men for seduction was shared by both melodrama and expert literature. But while melodramas used upper-class seducers to symbolize working-class exploitation, experts likely depicted seducers as upper-class men to emphasize both the licentiousness and profligacy of the aristocracy and the superiority of middle-class sexual morality.

False promises and false weddings were other important parts of the expert understanding of seduction. Just as in melodrama, these false promises and weddings further established the innocence of the seduced woman and the villainy of the seducer. Acton noted with disdain that the seducer’s “cheap promises” of marriage were “made to be broken.”³⁶ Greg mournfully reflected on the countless women who were deceived by false promises of marriage. Such

³² Tait, *Magdalenism*, 19, 143.

³³ “Prostitution of Young Females in London,” *Lloyd’s Weekly London Newspaper*, 26 May 1844.

³⁴ R. W. Vanderkiste, *Notes and Narratives of a Six Years’ Mission, Principally Among the Dens of London* (London: James Nisbet, 1852), 296. Italics not mine.

³⁵ Acton, *Prostitution*, 175.

³⁶ Acton, *Prostitution*, 175.

women fell “from pure unknowingness” because they suspected nothing and were “led on ignorantly and thoughtlessly” until “resistance [became] almost impossible.” Many, he noted, were even seduced through “unreal marriages.” These women were “the most innocent and the most wronged of all.”³⁷ Whether these women were seduced by false promises, men of a higher class, or both, the narrative of seduction played a crucial role in their sympathetic construction. Such women were victims of deception and only surrendered to their seducer under pretence of marriage, not through any inherent desire for intercourse.

The other important theme in experts’ sympathetic construction of the fallen woman was death. Indeed, death featured prominently in most middle-class representations of sexual fall. In novels, paintings and poems, for example, fallen women routinely drowned or poisoned themselves. It was expert literature, however, that most effectively posited this artistic narrative of death as a concrete social reality. Experts believed that the sexually fallen woman was immediately and irrevocably placed on a downward path that usually ended in death. She might kill herself, die of a broken heart, become a prostitute, and finally die of starvation, exposure or disease—even, in some cases, be murdered. As James Beard Talbot (Secretary to the London Society for the Protection of Young Females) explained, “all their practices have a tendency to degradation, disease, and death.”³⁸ This narrative of death arguably made all fallen women more sympathetic to the experts who wrote about them. However, experts’ greatest sympathy was always reserved for newly fallen victims of seduction who killed themselves out of remorse. By first examining the grim and seemingly unsympathetic depictions of dead and dying prostitutes in expert literature, I will begin to show how experts constructed sympathy in varying degrees for different fallen women through the narrative of death.

³⁷ Greg, “Prostitution,” 12.

³⁸ James Beard Talbot, *The Miseries of Prostitution* (London: James Burns, 1844), 26. Talbot’s book grew out of a series of lectures given in Norwich in December 1843.

The notion of the fallen woman's downward path can be traced far before the nineteenth century, but the discussion of it in Britain as a natural law began in the early 1840s. In 1840, Tait claimed that "the general law" regarding the prostitute was "like that of gravitation, always pressing downwards."³⁹ In 1842, Scottish Presbyterian minister Rev. Ralph Wardlaw wrote that "*the tendency is all downwards*" with prostitutes: "*rising is a thing unknown.*"⁴⁰ In 1844, Talbot noted that, when a woman was seduced, she "plunges deeper, and still deeper, into vice and iniquity, until she is irrecoverably lost." She carries on a "lingering life" for a couple of years but eventually "sinks down to the grave."⁴¹ And in 1850, Greg argued that the fallen woman's downward path was a "marked and inevitable one" from which she "*may NOT recover.*"⁴² Attempts at delaying or escaping this path were generally believed to be futile. However hard these women tried to reform themselves, they ultimately continued along the downward path toward an early grave. Tait suggested that women who tried and failed to "return to a more virtuous life" were likely to attempt suicide. And even those who reformed were likely to die from diseases they acquired as prostitutes.⁴³ Wardlaw claimed that, even if a fallen woman returned to her "abandoned and dishonoured home," her return would be tainted: "the venom which the barbed arrow carried with it to the heart, can never be thoroughly extracted."⁴⁴ A report from the London Society for the Protection of Young Females stated that women who returned to their parents would soon find themselves "polluted, probably in mind as well as in

³⁹ Tait, *Magdalenism*, 46.

⁴⁰ Ralph Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution: Its Nature, Extent, Effects, Guilt, Causes, and Remedy*, 3rd ed. (Glasgow: J. Maclehose, 1843. First published in 1842), 57-58. Italics not mine.

⁴¹ Talbot, *Miseries of Prostitution*, 26.

⁴² Greg, "Prostitution," 4, 8. Italics not mine.

⁴³ Tait, *Magdalenism*, 47, 227.

⁴⁴ Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution*, 87.

body” and upon returning to prostitution, would “eventually perish, either by suicide or disease.”⁴⁵

Believing death to be the inevitable outcome of sexual fall, experts were certain that the lifespan of a prostitute was short and that thousands of them died every year. In 1839, Ryan estimated the prostitute’s life span to be between four and seven years upon beginning her trade, though he acknowledged that there was little information about “when death occurred” for these women. He further claimed that 8,000 prostitutes died each year in London and that the number was increasing.⁴⁶ A year later, Tait claimed that many prostitutes died before turning twenty-two, few lived past twenty-five, and “almost all of them” died before turning thirty. He estimated the prostitute’s life span to be between three and four years.⁴⁷ Wardlaw agreed with Ryan and Tait’s estimates and cited Captain Miller, chief of the Glasgow Police, who claimed the lifespan of prostitutes in that city to be approximately five years.⁴⁸ In 1843, Logan claimed that women lived an average of six years once they became prostitutes and that a sixth of Glasgow’s prostitutes died annually.⁴⁹ In 1844, Talbot expressed his certainty that “numbers of them die,” even though “no statistics [were] in existence from which a conclusion [could] be deduced.”⁵⁰ Other studies published between 1844 and 1859 suggested that the life span of a prostitute ranged between four and seven years.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Sixth Report of the London Society for the Protection of Young Females. Quoted in Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution*, 87.

⁴⁶ Ryan, *Prostitution in London*, 118, 184-185. Ryan drew these numbers from the London Society for the Prevention of Juvenile Prostitution.

⁴⁷ Tait, *Magdalenism*, 99, 227.

⁴⁸ Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution*, 40.

⁴⁹ Logan, *An Exposure*, 20, 25.

⁵⁰ Talbot, *Miseries of Prostitution*, 47.

⁵¹ “Prostitution of Young Females in London,” *Lloyd’s Weekly* (4-7 years); Anonymous, *Our Plague Spot: in connection with our polity and usages: as regards our women, our soldiery, and the Indian empire* (London: T. Newby, 1859), 48 (4 years); Miller, *Prostitution*, 12 (4 years)

Many experts emphasized the severe physical decay and early death that prostitutes experienced. Wardlaw noted that venereal disease destroyed “the soundest constitutions, deform[ed] the fairest and emaciat[ed] the stoutest and healthiest frame, bringing on premature exhaustion, and an early grave.”⁵² Tait claimed that prostitutes showed “evident marks of their approaching decay” within a year of starting their careers and experienced both “premature Old Age and early Death.” These women went blind, their flesh rotted away, their “bloodvessels, nerves, and bones, [were] attacked and destroyed,” and their hearts felt “the pervading poison” of disease. Tait believed that the “course of action” that prostitutes took was so “contrary to the laws of nature, and so injurious to the organic structure of their bodies,” that disease was almost inevitable. He claimed many women died even “before the affection [was] fairly formed” and those who were cured of one disease were quickly “seized with another.” The suffering that these diseases caused was “much more severe than that which arises from any other disease.” He recalled one particularly gruesome case of a woman whose face was “literally rotten, and present[ed] a large opening, into which an ordinary-sized fist may be thrust without difficulty.”⁵³ This extraordinarily graphic description is a powerful (though extreme) example of the expert understanding of the dying prostitute. In expert writing, if a woman did not die quickly after her fall, she became increasingly hardened through prostitution, slowly decayed (in body and mind), and eventually died. These dying women were not described as sympathetic victims but as rotting bodies to be studied or—in the case of Tait’s gruesome observation—physically violated.

Experts demonstrated far greater sympathy when describing women who died soon after their fall. Such women did not live long enough to become diseased and decaying prostitutes, so experts generally avoided describing their bodies except in complimentary terms. Dying from

⁵² Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution*, 43.

⁵³ Tait, *Magdalenism*, 60, 97, 208, 220-226.

heartbreak or suicide, these women most closely resembled the trope of the seduced and dying woman, and so were described poetically as tragic and lovelorn victims. First, experts believed that some women died from being broken-hearted. In 1840, English psychiatrist Forbes Winslow claimed that the term “broken heart” was more than a “poetic image.” He explained that there were cases “in which that organ has been ruptured in consequence of disappointed hope.”⁵⁴ Vanderkiste likewise claimed that a “broken heart” was an actual disease that could “disturb the heart’s action,” stop circulation and cause death. He believed that this condition was “more common than [was] often imagined.”⁵⁵ By dying of a broken heart, these women experienced the shortest possible downward path, passing directly from seduction and abandonment to death. Unlike the lingering deaths of prostitutes, these broken-hearted deaths were conceived of as immediate and natural. As will be suggested in the following section, such deaths also embraced the notion that women were overly affectionate by nature and lived only for others. By dying of a broken heart, a fallen woman could be reimagined as a tragic, feminine victim – and a perfect object of sympathy.

Fallen women who committed suicide also inspired sympathy in expert writings. Experts believed that a “very considerable” number of fallen women killed themselves every year. Suicide and attempted suicide were widely accepted as routine actions for all fallen women, but particularly for those who had “recently departed from the paths of virtue.” Tait claimed that one-third or one-fourth of all fallen women attempted suicide “at one time or other,” but that the initial “mental agony” often led them to attempt suicide shortly after their fall. According to Tait, attempts at suicide by women in “a later part of their career” were generally caused by jealousy

⁵⁴ Forbes Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide* (Boston: Milford House Inc., 1840), 56-57.

⁵⁵ Vanderkiste, *Notes and Narratives*, 271.

or quarrelling, and not by the mental suffering that initially followed sexual fall.⁵⁶ Wardlaw likewise agreed that attempts at suicide were most common among the recently fallen. The initial “anguish of spirit,” “stings of conscience” and “a keen sense of the loss of honour” were enough to make any young woman “tired of life.”⁵⁷ Winslow also described suicidal behaviour as natural for the recently fallen woman. Considering that the “heart is seared” and “all hope is banished,” he was not surprised that “that the quiet and rest of the grave [was] eagerly longed for” by the fallen. After being seduced and abandoned by “some heartless and profligate wretch,” the typical fallen woman was then “[s]corned by the world, shunned by her relations and friends” and “driven to a state of agonizing distraction.”

Her mind recurs to the past; she recalls to recollection her once happy state of innocence and peace. . . . Despair, in its worst features, takes possession of her mind, and under this feeling she puts an end to her existence.⁵⁸

Unlike the prostitute, who survived the initial heartbreak and mental agony of her fall and became increasingly hardened and diseased, this kind of fallen woman demonstrated such strong remorse for her fall that she could not survive it. Together with the women who died from heartbreak, these remorseful female suicides were the perfect objects of middle-class sympathy. Such themes of seduction and quick death were the foundation of this sympathy because they effectively transformed the fallen woman into a paragon of femininity, passivity and innocence.

Femininity

In 1850, Greg suggested that “a vast proportion” of women fell “in the first instance from a mere exaggeration and perversion of one of the best qualities of a woman’s heart”—she was generous

⁵⁶ Tait, *Magdalenism*, 228.

⁵⁷ Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution*, 60.

⁵⁸ Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide*, 58, 70.

and affectionate by nature, and could not help but yield to those whom she loved.⁵⁹ Despite the fact that the fallen woman transgressed middle-class standards of respectable female behaviour, Greg and other writers emphasized the seduced and dying woman's femininity as one of the reasons for her fall, thus transforming her into a tragic and sympathetic ideal of womanhood. Through her seduction and death, she became the ultimate manifestation of female tenderness, weakness, passivity, delicacy and submissiveness. She was dependent, she aimed to please, and she lived for others. Though she lost her chastity through her fall, her death (or her desire to die) demonstrated her morality and washed her of sin or transgression, leaving her purely feminine. Whether or not they acknowledged the fallen woman's femininity as the cause of her fall, experts successfully transformed her into an ideal woman, worthy of sympathy.

Experts repeatedly asserted that love and affection were at the core of woman's character. Not only were women naturally predisposed to be tender and affectionate, the act of loving was also their main duty and goal in life. Women's author Elizabeth Sandford suggested that romance was the "charm of female character" and "no woman [could] be interesting" without it.⁶⁰ Sarah Ellis, another women's author, noted that "women almost universally consider[ed] themselves, and wish[ed] to be considered by others, as extremely affectionate; scarcely [could] a more severe libel be pronounced [*sic*] upon a woman than to say that she is not so." Affection was also her duty in life: "To love, is woman's duty—to be beloved, is her reward." Ellis claimed that since "the whole law of woman's life is a law of love," any failure of their female duties could "imply an absence of love." Love was the core of a woman's life. It was "woman's

⁵⁹ Greg, "Prostitution," 12-13.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Sandford, *Woman, in Her Social and Domestic Character* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831), 91.

all—her wealth, her power, her very being... In that *she lives*, or else *she* has no life.”⁶¹ The seduced woman was sympathetic, in part, because she exemplified this feminine aptitude and inclination for love. Yet it was this feminine affection, among other traits, that made her susceptible to seduction and subsequent suicide. In his study of suicide, Winslow described love as integral to woman’s constitution:

A woman’s life is said to be but the history of her affections. It is the soul within her soul; the pulse within her heart; the life blood along her veins, “blending with every atom of her frame.”⁶²

Winslow reasoned that, when a woman lost this love, whether through a seduction and abandonment or the death of her sweetheart, she had little to live for and thus often considered suicide. Understood in these terms, suicide was a natural – and *feminine* – response to seduction and abandonment.

Dependence and submission were also crucial aspects of ideal womanhood that the seduced and dying woman embodied. First, a woman’s dependence on the man she loved was, according to Craik, the “very sweetest thing in the world.” Craik reflected on “how delicious” it was to “resign one’s self totally and contentedly into the hands of another” and “be guided and cherished, guarded and helped.”⁶³ Ellis described woman as having the “trusting dependence of a child,” always looking “up to man as her protector, and her guide.”⁶⁴ Women were also thought to be naturally submissive to the men upon whom they depended. Welter argues that “submission was perhaps the most feminine virtue expected of women” in the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ In 1865, Wade claimed that women were, “by natural constitution,” more passive and

⁶¹ Sarah Ellis, *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character & Responsibilities* (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1842), 11, 12, 315. Italics not mine.

⁶² Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide*, 56.

⁶³ Craik, *A Woman’s Thoughts about Women*, 28.

⁶⁴ Ellis, *The Daughters of England*, 315.

⁶⁵ Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” 158.

“prepared to accept” than men.⁶⁶ This was especially the case when they were in love. R. M-----y suggested that a woman in love was one of “the most pliable and submissive creatures imaginable.”⁶⁷ The seduced and dying woman was the perfect embodiment of woman’s trusting dependence and submissiveness. Indeed, these traits were partly responsible for her seduction. Her feminine nature led her to trust and to surrender to her seducer, at great risk to herself. She then made the ultimate surrender by dying after he had abandoned her.

Experts also described women as having a natural selflessness, a desire and duty to please others, and to please the men whom they loved in particular. In her guidebook for women, author Sarah Lewis affirmed the “fundamental principle” that “women were to live for others.”⁶⁸ Sandford also wrote to her female readers that they should always do their “utmost to please.”⁶⁹ Some writers suggested that this desire to please and submit to man was partly to blame for instances of sexual fall. R. M-----y noted that a seducer’s affection often overcame his victim’s “every other consideration, but the tenderest anxiety to oblige, observe, and gratify him.”⁷⁰ Greg remarked that “the perversion of generosity” was partly responsible for a woman’s fall. He claimed that women “yield to desires in which they do not share, from a weak generosity which cannot refuse anything to the passionate entreaties of the man they love.”

There is in the warm fond heart of woman a strange and sublime unselfishness, which men too commonly discover only to profit by,--a positive love of self-sacrifice,--an active, so to speak, an *aggressive* desire to show their affection, by giving up to those who have won it, something they hold very dear.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Wade, *Women, Past and Present*, 266.

⁶⁷ R. M-----y, “Sketches from Life,” 364.

⁶⁸ Sarah Lewis, *Woman’s Mission* (London: John W. Parker, 1839), 50.

⁶⁹ Sandford, *Woman, in Her Social and Domestic Character*, 8.

⁷⁰ R. M-----y, “Sketches from Life,” 364.

⁷¹ Greg, “Prostitution,” 12-13, 21.

The seduced and dying woman was selfless and self-sacrificing; she submitted to her seducer because she placed his desires above her own, and her seduction and death were each a kind of self-sacrifice. Like her feminine affection, dependence and submissiveness, woman's selflessness and desire to please others were important factors that facilitated seduction. Ultimately, the seduced woman's fall was not caused by any deviance from the feminine norm on her part, but rather by the seducer who took advantage of her all-too-apparent feminine virtues.

The seducer also took advantage of woman's weakness and mental inferiority. Often used interchangeably with "delicacy," weakness was understood as natural and "the point of honour" in women.⁷² Wardlaw lamented that seducers took advantage of that quality which "should interest every heart" in her protection.⁷³ Wade claimed that "the delicacy of females" restricted the full "exercise of their powers." Women were "the weaker vessel" and "naturally more shy, reserved, and cautious than the stronger sex."⁷⁴ Mentally, too, women were weaker than men. Greg claimed that the female "cerebral organization" was "far more delicate than that of man," and Wade emphasized that woman was "a child always in physical debility [and] in limited intelligence." Wade also described woman as "always an invalid" whose "want of forethought" was natural. As a mentally inferior being, she required "constant care and kindness."⁷⁵ Others acknowledged that woman's mental weakness was itself partly responsible for sexual fall. One author suggested that "any woman endowed with sentiments of virtue" would be unable to anticipate a seduction due to the "innocency [*sic*] of her heart."⁷⁶ Greg similarly suggested that

⁷² Sandford, *Woman, in Her Social and Domestic Character*, 6.

⁷³ Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution*, 170.

⁷⁴ Wade, *Women, Past and Present*, 232-233, 264.

⁷⁵ W.R. Greg, *Why are Women Redundant?* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1869), 32. Wade, *Women, Past and Present*, 231-232.

⁷⁶ R. M-----y, "Sketches from Life," 364.

many women fell “from pure unknowingness.”⁷⁷ Miller also claimed that ignorance made women “less capable of resisting temptation to sensual indulgence.”⁷⁸ Through the narrative of seduction, the fallen woman became the perfect example of feminine weakness. She was no match for her seducer’s mental and physical superiority, and thus her fall was a natural product of her femininity. The narrative of death similarly emphasized that the fallen woman was too weak to resist the pull of the downward path.

Experts could feel sympathy for the seduced and dying woman because she embodied these standards of ideal womanhood. She was the ultimate manifestation of feminine affection, dependence, submission, selflessness and weakness. Through seduction, she even became more beautiful, as Acton suggested, because “the fact of a girl’s seduction generally warrant[ed] her possession of youth, health, good looks, and a well-proportioned frame.”⁷⁹ Death also made her more beautiful and innocent. As Welter argues, the beautiful, dying woman was depicted in fiction as “the innocent victim, suffering without sin, too pure and good for this world but too weak and passive to resist its evil forces.” Though the fallen woman suffered for her sin, the narrative of seduction and death shifted the focus away from her sin and onto her feminine qualities. Through death, she proved that she was indeed “too pure and good” to live in the world without her chastity and thus demonstrated the strength of her morality and her womanhood more generally.⁸⁰ When describing the female aversion to sexual intercourse, Acton noted that many wives endured it “with all the self-martyrdom of womanhood.”⁸¹ Whether described as submissive, selfless, self-sacrificing or self-martyring, the ideal woman lived and loved for

⁷⁷ Greg, “Prostitution,” 12.

⁷⁸ Miller, *Prostitution*, 9.

⁷⁹ Acton, *Prostitution*, 60.

⁸⁰ Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” 162.

⁸¹ Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, 145.

others, not herself. Though no longer chaste, the seduced and dying woman was a powerful embodiment of this belief.

Female Passivity and Responsibility for Sexual Fall

The seduced and dying woman's many feminine traits not only marked her as an ideal of womanhood; they also emphasized her passivity and thus her lack of responsibility for her fall. Her natural dependence, submission, selflessness and weakness were almost entirely passive traits that shifted the responsibility for seduction onto the active male seducer. Her affectionate nature, though more of an active trait, still defined her as acting for others and not herself. Through the narrative of seduction and death, experts could define the fallen woman as a physically, mentally and sexually passive victim, worthy of sympathy rather than outrage. At the same time, this narrative effectively stripped the fallen woman of any ability to act in a way that would better her situation. Experts were certain that men, not women, were responsible both for causing this kind of sexual fall and for protecting women from it. Women were thus trapped in a paradox of female passivity. Their passivity was a virtue, but it also made them vulnerable to sexual fall and prevented them from protecting themselves or from changing their circumstances after the fact. The many feminine traits already discussed played a large part in establishing the passivity of the seduced and dying woman. In this final section, we will see how expert sympathy for fallen women was dependent on this paradoxical female passivity.

The seduced and dying woman was worthy of expert sympathy, in large part, because she was depicted as a sexually passive victim of male lust. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, experts were convinced that all women lacked sexual desire. And although the fallen woman posed a theoretical challenge to this notion, many experts continued to believe that female desire

played no part in sexual fall. Acton claimed everyone knew “that uncontrollable sexual desires of her own play[ed] but a little part in inducing profligacy of the female.”⁸² Greg claimed that ninety percent of fallen women fell “from motives or feelings in which sensuality and self [had] no share.” He further emphasized that female desire rarely caused their fall because “the desire scarcely exists in a definite and conscious form, till they *have* fallen.”⁸³ Experts believed that women had sex, not out of any personal sexual desire, but for the sake of the man they loved. Acton claimed that the virtuous woman did not have any sexual desire herself and “submit[ted] to her husband, but only to please him.” He described the case of one woman he met with who was “a perfect ideal of an English wife and mother” because she was “utterly ignorant of and averse to any sexual indulgence, but so unselfishly attached to the man she loves, as to be willing to give up her own wishes and feelings for his sake.”⁸⁴ A woman similarly surrendered to her seducer because she was selfless and loving, not because of any sexual desire on her part. This notion of female sexual passivity operated perfectly within the narrative of seduction to shift all responsibility for sexual fall away from the fallen woman.

Though the very fact of seduction implies that the seducer is the active, responsible party, experts made sure to emphasize both the seducer’s responsibility and their disapproval of his actions. Piggott condemned the seducing “monster” and “assassin” of female honour and promised that eternal damnation awaited such men.⁸⁵ R. M-----y expressed their disgust for the “treacherous seducer” and “cowardly deserter.”⁸⁶ Ryan hoped that “the odium, disgrace, and punishment of seduction, bastardy, and adultery, would also be inflicted on him, who

⁸² Acton, *Prostitution*, 20.

⁸³ Greg, “Prostitution,” 13, 10. Italics not mine.

⁸⁴ Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, 145-146.

⁸⁵ Piggott, *Suicide and its Antidotes*, 301.

⁸⁶ R. M-----y, “Sketches from Life,” 364.

perpetrate[d] such crimes.”⁸⁷ By denouncing the seducer, experts emphasized that men and not women were responsible for sexual fall. Women were seduced, or rather deceived, by false promises from rich men who had a mental, physical and economic advantage over them. This understanding of sexual fall aligned with expert claims about male and female sexuality, as well as broader understandings of courtship. Male sexuality was active, spontaneous and aggressive; female sexuality was passive, dormant or non-existent. By emphasizing man as solely responsible for female sexual fall, experts placed both the seducer and his victim within the bounds of “natural” male and female sexuality. Similarly, this understanding of seduction reflected the cultural understanding that a woman’s role in courtship was “to be pursued, not to do the pursuing.”⁸⁸ The narrative of seduction thus transformed sexual fall from an act of female deviance into an incident of female victimization arising out of the normal sexual behaviour of men and women.

Just as they agreed that men were to blame for sexual fall, experts also believed that men were responsible for protecting women from seduction and sexual fall. In other words, as seducer and protector, men were both the cause of sexual fall and its remedy. Tait reasoned that, since men had “greater mental power and activity” than women, they should “extend towards [women] that sympathy and protection to which they [were] entitled in virtue of their weak and unprotected condition.”⁸⁹ Wardlaw reminded his male readers that they were “the natural guardians of the feebler sex” and encouraged them to protect women. He called on his readers “*as men*, to stand forward on their behalf; to come with the shield of your protection between them and danger.” Only men could “prevent their degradation...vindicate their honour...screen

⁸⁷ Ryan, *Prostitution in London*, 172.

⁸⁸ Thomas, “The Double Standard,” 214.

⁸⁹ Tait, *Magdalenism*, 204.

their purity from the putrid breath of pollution” and “maintain and elevate their virtue.”⁹⁰ The expert emphasis on the protection of women as a masculine, chivalrous duty is an example of the “reforming impulse of sensibility” which sought a “different kind of manhood” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Vulnerable and suffering women were thought to inspire men to abandon their old licentious behaviour and reform themselves.⁹¹ The seduced and dying woman was one such figure, through whom many experts could demonstrate their reformed, ideal masculinity. The utterly passive and helpless woman was unable to prevent seduction and she was entirely reliant on men for protection. This emphasis on passivity expunged the seduced woman of all responsibility for sexual fall and made her intensely sympathetic to experts. It also chained women to a set of idealized feminine traits that contributed to their “fall” and afforded them no legitimate means by which to alter their circumstances for themselves.

Conclusion

When William Tait declared in 1840 that “a feeling of sympathy” for the fallen woman was everywhere increasing, he was correct – to a certain extent.⁹² From 1820 to 1870, artists, novelists, poets, playwrights and experts increasingly provided sympathetic depictions of fallen women. But this sympathy was not given equally to every fallen woman. It was fixed within the trope of the seduced and dying woman and was thus a narrow and exclusive kind of sympathy that could only apply to a certain kind of woman: the young, tender, and weak woman to whom seduction would be fatal. In expert literature, this trope of seduction and death created a feminine, passive and innocent version of the fallen woman that appealed to middle-class

⁹⁰ Wardlaw, *Lectures on Female Prostitution*, 170. Italics not mine.

⁹¹ Barker-Benfield, “Sensibility,” 104, 110; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 266.

⁹² Tait, *Magdalenism*, vi.

sensibilities. Seduced by a wealthy man with false promises of marriage, this woman was beautiful, affectionate, weak, submissive, dependent and lived to please. She was also completely passive. Man was made solely responsible for her fall, and equally responsible for protecting her from it. Unlike the slowly decaying prostitute, this sympathetic woman died quickly, succumbing to the heartbreak of abandonment and shame. Rather than threatening middle-class values with wilful deviance and active sexuality, this seduced and quickly dying woman allowed experts and their middle-class readers to exercise their benevolence and masculine chivalry without compromising their standards of ideal gender and sexual behaviour for women.

While the trope of seduction and death was cultivated in a range of texts and images throughout the nineteenth century, expert literature most effectively asserted this trope to be a reality. Through their roles as distributors of knowledge, these physicians, psychiatrists, ministers, journalists, social reformers and other expert writers legitimized several notions about women, sex and death. By locating their sympathy within this trope, experts promoted the “feminine” traits that this trope embodied. Though they emphasized traits like affectionateness, mental and physical weakness, submissiveness, dependence and selflessness as contributing to sexual fall, they also continued to valorize these traits as essential to womanhood. Rather than encouraging women to be stronger, wiser, less dependent, less trusting and less eager to please, experts portrayed seduction as a tragic event that was entirely outside a woman’s control. By making men solely responsible for the cause and prevention of sexual fall, experts also implied that women never actively chose to have sex outside of marriage and thus reinforced the notion that they lacked sexual desire. The expert emphasis on death and the inevitability of the downward path also promoted the idea that women who lost their chastity had nothing to live for

and were doomed to die. Though this emphasis made the fallen woman into a worthier object of sympathy, it also romanticized death as a feminine, redemptive and natural ending to the tragedy of sexual fall. In the final chapter, this normalization and idealization of death will also be shown to have shaped real women's responses to sexual fall – and particularly, to have positively encouraged female suicidal behaviour. This myth of seduction and death created an unrealistic standard of sympathy and charity against which real fallen women were measured. This trope of the seduced and dying woman, found in expert literature and melodrama alike, may have been sympathetic in formal terms. But it ultimately had many negative implications for real women.

Chapter Three - Real Women and the Trope of Seduction and Death

In late September 1826, two newspapers reported on the “Seduction and Suicide” of a young woman named Miss Hyde, who had fallen “an easy prey to a designing villain.” After being seduced and abandoned by a Captain of the infantry, this “fainting and unhappy victim of treachery” swallowed a dose of laudanum and died.¹ Around the same time, a different newspaper reported that this particular account of seduction and suicide was “from beginning to end a wicked fabrication” and that the “*dramatis personae* of this tragical narrative never existed, except in the imaginative brain of the writer of the article.”² Eight years later, in September 1834, a similar account of “Seduction and Suicide” appeared in British newspapers, describing how a “pretty lady’s maid” named Mary Wilson had slit her throat after being abandoned by her seducer. Here, too, newspapers soon reported that this account was “a fabrication” and that “[e]very exclamation in this case against man’s inconstancy, or tear of sympathy for the poor girl’s sake, has been thrown away.”³ Though these particular accounts turned out to be fictional, British people were clearly eager to read about and express sympathy for real “fainting and unhappy victim[s] of treachery.” As suggested at the beginning of this thesis, the sympathetic trope of the seduced and dying woman was so pervasive in British culture that it was confidently and consistently applied to fictional and real women alike. Even when newspaper reports of seduction and suicide were discovered to be “wicked fabrications,” British people unwaveringly upheld this trope as a fact of life.

This chapter explores how the pervasive trope of seduction and death scripted popular understandings of real women. In particular, it reflects on the negative implications of

¹ “Seduction and Suicide,” *The Morning Post*, 25 September 1826; “Seduction and Suicide,” *Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet & Plymouth Journal*, 30 September 1826.

² “Seduction and Suicide: A Fabrication,” *The Morning Chronicle*, 25 September 1826. Italics not mine.

³ “Seduction and Suicide,” *The Standard*, 24 September 1834; “Seduction and Suicide,” *The Morning Post*, 25 September 1834; “Seduction and Suicide,” *The Belfast News-Letter*, 26 September 1834.

melodramatic and expert depictions of seduced and dying women. Other scholars have recognized the potential harm done by these narratives. Ginger Frost, Anna Clark and Katherine Binhammer have discussed how the narrative of seduction reinforced patriarchal notions about women, distorted the reality of sexual fall, and created an exclusive standard of sympathy for fallen women. This chapter will briefly highlight each of these arguments, offering additional insights about the roles of melodrama, expert literature and the narrative of seduction and death in creating these negative implications. The particular role of death in these nominally sympathetic constructions of the fallen woman – the central focus of this thesis – has not yet been sufficiently appreciated. This final chapter continues to explore the death of the seduced woman, showing how the trope of seduction and death not only trivialized cases of female suicide but also effectively normalized – perhaps even encouraged – suicide as a romantic, redemptive and quintessentially feminine escape from the consequences of sexual fall. Though this trope may have encouraged sympathy for a certain kind of fallen woman, it also had many unfortunate implications for real women.

Patriarchal Understandings, Distorted Realities, and Exclusive Sympathy

In a variety of genres, the narrative of seduction offered a compelling explanation for sexual fall which diminished the possibility of female sexual transgression and emphasized the morality (or immorality) of different social classes. It also, as many historians have argued, upheld many patriarchal beliefs about women and sex and created an unrealistic picture of premarital sex, working-class courtship, rape and illegitimacy. First, expert and melodramatic representations of fallen women were structured by patriarchal understandings of women and sexuality. Compared to the primarily working-class genre of melodrama, expert literature may be more clearly seen as

rooted in notions of patriarchal power. But although the melodramatic representation of the seduced and dying woman articulated feelings of (working-class) powerlessness and exploitation, it was similarly “structured by patriarchal assumptions” about women.⁴ Tönnies suggests that melodrama was an “inherently escapist” genre that “ultimately support[ed] the power structures in which its female spectators [were] caught,” and Crone explains that melodrama’s “[p]lots were inherently conservative.”⁵ Indeed, both melodrama and expert literature reinforced a patriarchal, restrictive ideal of womanhood that encouraged women to be weak, passive, ignorant, submissive and dependent on men. The trope of seduction also reinforced an unequal dynamic of sexual power in which women were always seduced and never active participants in sex.

Through the narrative of seduction and death, melodrama and expert literature transformed the fallen woman into an ideal of womanhood, and thus an ideal object of sympathy. But this version of the fallen woman also reinforced a highly restrictive and patriarchal understanding of womanhood. Clark explains that the narrative of seduction “contributed to the understanding of women as weak and passive victims.”⁶ Indeed, the seduced woman embodied—and thus promoted—qualities like weakness, passivity, fragility, innocence, trustfulness, submissiveness, obedience, dependence and selflessness that were deemed to be naturally feminine. In melodrama and expert literature, the fallen woman was so weak, passive, trusting, submissive, obedient and dependent that her seduction was seen, in part, as resulting from these feminine qualities. But though these qualities were clearly shown as contributing to

⁴ Clark, “The Politics of Seduction,” 65. As Ann E. Kaplan explains, these melodramas were “ultimately enunciated from a patriarchal position.” (Ann E. Kaplan, “Melodrama / subjectivity / ideology: Western melodrama theories and their relevance to recent Chinese cinema,” in *Melodrama and Asian Cinema*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 13)

⁵ Tönnies, “Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers,” 185; Crone, *Violent Victorians*, 145.

⁶ Clark, “The Politics of Seduction,” 61.

her fall, neither genre suggested that women should be more assertive, strong or independent. Instead, as Clark points out, this narrative encouraged the notion that greater “male protection” was needed to prevent seduction.⁷ The vast number of male-authored expert texts and melodramas devoted to these fallen women in this period can be seen as a testament to this protective, patriarchal impulse within the writers.

The narrative of seduction also reinforced restrictive notions about female sexuality. In melodrama and expert literature, the sexually unknowing and innocent victim of seduction reinforced the notion that women lacked all knowledge of and desire for sex. Though this seduced woman had intercourse, she never actively sought it out, nor did she show any knowledge of it before it happened. She was always deceived, coerced or forced into sex. This passive representation of female sexuality became a pervasive standard to which women were expected to aspire. According to Binhammer, the “dominance” of this “sexually passive and restrictive definition of femininity” influenced the way female plaintiffs in breach of promise suits depicted their failed courtships. She explains that “judges overwhelmingly believed in women’s modesty ... against charges of erotic agency” because only one scenario was thought to be possible: “male exploitation of female sexual passivity.”⁸ This understanding, which formed the foundation of the seduction narrative in melodrama and expert literature, discouraged expressions of sexual desire as unfeminine and thus restricted women’s experiences with sex and sexuality.

The notion that sex was something imposed on unknowing and unwilling women by active and aggressive men did not necessarily reflect the reality of female sexual experience in the nineteenth century. Since the social and economic repercussions of premarital sex were so

⁷ Clark, “The Politics of Seduction,” 61; Eltis similarly points out that the “downward spiral of a sexually fallen woman” often “impl[ie]d the need for greater male protection.” (Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, 30)

⁸ Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain*, 173-174.

severe for women throughout the nineteenth century, many of them were certainly hesitant or unwilling to risk it. Pregnancy in particular could have disastrous implications for a woman's employment and financial situation. Even so, the narrative of seduction distorted the reality of female sexual experience. According to Frost, women weighed the risks of sexual intercourse (pregnancy and abandonment) against the rewards (enjoyment, affection and a successful courtship resulting in marriage). Their decisions to have sex were complicated, so "their responses to sexual overtures" would vary dramatically "from enthusiasm to reluctant acquiescence." Particularly in the upper-working and lower-middle classes, many women displayed a "readiness to engage in sexual intimacy." Other women had sex in order to secure their romantic relationships or to "push a reluctant fiancé to the altar."⁹ Despite many women's varied and active experiences with sex, the narrative of seduction effectively shaped popular understandings of male-female sexual relationships. Women were repeatedly depicted as passive, asexual victims "helplessly yielding" to male sexual desire. As Clark suggests, this image likely "impart[ed] a sense of shame" to women "who had enjoyed sexual pleasure" or had taken a more active role in a sexual relationship.¹⁰ It also effectively blurred the boundaries between seduction and rape and diminished the importance of female consent.

In her work on sexual violence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Clark suggests that "the rhetoric of seduction obscured the difference between rape and seduction." This confusion between rape and seduction permeated "middle-class discourses," "men's behaviour" and even women's own understandings of their experiences with sex and rape. Clark explains that both "seducers and their critics" believed that violence was "one means of seduction."¹¹ Judges, lawyers, juries and defendants in rape trials "consistently confused surrender to violence

⁹ Frost, *Promises Broken*, 105-106.

¹⁰ Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence*, 82, 89.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 77, 82; Clark, "Rape or seduction?," 18.

with consent.”¹² As historian Susan Mumm points out, records at Victorian convents for fallen women frequently used the terms “wronged,” “led astray” or “deceived” to describe “girls who have fallen owing to violence.”¹³ Expert literature and melodrama similarly blurred the boundary between violence and seduction. From the late 1830s through the 1840s, experts promoted the idea that women did not experience sexual desire and framed female sexual activity in terms of surrender. Therefore, as Clark explains, “force and coercion could be paradoxically accepted as normal ‘persuasion,’” and sex itself “could be seen as painful rather than pleasurable” for women by nature, not “as a result of rape.” In melodrama, heroines were often deceived, coerced, abducted and/or imprisoned. While each method negates (or at least undermines) consent to sex, they were all depicted equally as elements of “seduction.” The “romantic tone” of seduction effectively situated these different predatory methods – from deception to abduction to rape – within the framework of acceptable male sexual behaviour and thus minimized the problem of rape. The pervasive and romantic language of seduction also made it difficult for women to distinguish between rape and seduction and to “articulate and protest their experiences of rape.”¹⁴

The image of an upper-class man seducing a working-class woman was a popular and important element of the trope of seduction. Though this narrative was more prominently featured in seduction melodramas, many experts also suggested that seducers came from a higher social class than their victims. The trope of the upper-class seducer further established the seduced woman as a sympathetic victim in both of these genres. In expert literature, it solidified the fallen woman as a non-threatening party in a dynamic of social and sexual power. In melodrama, the notion gave “added political force” to the narrative of class exploitation and

¹² Clark, “Rape or seduction?,” 17.

¹³ Susan Mumm, “‘Not Worse Than Other Girls’: Convent-Based Rehabilitation of Fallen Women in Victorian Britain,” *Journal of Social History* 29, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 531.

¹⁴ Clark, *Women’s Silence, Men’s Violence*, 81-83, 89.

successfully “claimed morality as a working-class prerogative.”¹⁵ However, the notion of the upper-class seducer both evaded issues of gender and sexual inequality for questions of social inequality and distorted the reality of sexual exploitation. In melodrama particularly, the heroine’s seduction was treated primarily as an issue of class exploitation. As a result, issues of gender and sexual inequality that are crucial to understanding the theme of seduction were minimized and contained within the broader narrative of social inequality. This narrative evaded important issues regarding seduction, but it also “falsified reality” because, as Clark observes, “class exploitation was exercised economically and politically, not sexually.” In reality, working-class women were far more vulnerable to sexual coercion and assault by men of their own social class. The emphasis on the seducer as an “aristocratic libertine preying on village maidens” effectively elided the reality that “working-class men accounted for most violence inflicted against working-class women.” By depicting seduction and sexual fall as issues of class exploitation, melodrama ultimately “muted female experience” and prevented working-class women “from publicly articulating antagonism towards men of their own class.”¹⁶

In expert literature, melodrama and numerous other representations, the seduced woman was depicted as a tragic and sympathetic victim who followed a downward path of suffering and eventual death (or usually near death, in melodrama). But while many women faced unfortunate circumstances when they became pregnant and/or were deserted by their partners, this narrative did not necessarily reflect the realities of working-class courtship, premarital sex and illegitimacy. Frost explains that premarital sex was actually “a normal part of courtship” in the upper-working and lower-middle classes, though usually “only in long-term relationships and infrequently even then.” The possibilities of pregnancy and abandonment posed serious risks for

¹⁵ Clark, “The Politics of Seduction,” 58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 49, 89; Clark, “Rape or Seduction?,” 22.

women, but they also viewed intercourse as “a sign of long-term intimacy.” And though there were “occasional desertions,” Frost suggests that “most men also saw sexual intercourse as a sign of commitment and a semi-normal part of courtship.” Premarital sex was not an anomalous tragedy that necessarily resulted in a woman’s ruin, but rather a “complicated interweaving of male-female desire for intimacy and commitment.” The primary stigma for couples that had premarital sex (and for the women, especially) resulted when the woman “became pregnant and the couple did not marry.” In most of the breach-of-promise cases Frost examines, it was not the woman’s ‘yielding’ to sex, but the pregnancy that made men desert their lovers. Many men who deserted their partners did so “as soon as they heard of the pregnancy.”¹⁷ Even so, a large number of English women still got married after becoming pregnant. Historian Michael Mason shows that “between a third and a half of English brides were pregnant” before the 1860s, when contraception first became widely used. He suggests that premarital sex was a widely accepted aspect of working-class courtship that was “expected to lead to marriage.”¹⁸ The trope of seduction and death failed to reflect this reality, instead promoting the belief that women who had sex outside of marriage would necessarily meet a tragic and premature end.

The trope of the seduced and dying woman also created a standard of sympathy which, while benefitting some women, excluded those who did not closely resemble the image of the newly-fallen victim of seduction. Many charitable institutions and societies prioritized aid for women who fit this template. Philanthropies like the Magdalene Institution in Glasgow “had little interest” in prostitutes and instead “focused their attention on the ‘newly fallen’ and ‘victims of seduction.’”¹⁹ The women who were accepted there were typically under twenty-four

¹⁷ Frost, *Promises Broken*, 98-99, 101-102, 105, 116.

¹⁸ Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*, 67.

¹⁹ Barbara Littlewood and Linda Mahood, “Prostitutes, Magdalenes and Wayward Girls: Dangerous Sexualities of Working Class Women in Victorian Scotland,” *Gender & History* 3, no. 2 (June 1991): 165.

years old, “were not drunk, pregnant, or syphilitic at the time of admission,” possessed “reasonable intelligence” and were “willing to submit to discipline.”²⁰ The London Society for the Protection of Young Females stated in 1859 that it did not wait “until woman has graduated deeply in vice” because “comparatively few adults” were capable of recovery.²¹ The kind of woman that these charities sought was the same feminine, passive and suffering victim of seduction that was so popular in melodrama, expert literature and a variety of other representations throughout the nineteenth century.

Some women were able to use the popular narrative of seduction to improve their own circumstances. For such women, the rhetoric of seduction displaced their sexual and even criminal responsibility and granted them greater sympathy from others. For example, women who were accused or convicted of infanticide were often depicted as victims of seduction and were thus treated with “a surprising leniency” by judges and juries.²² According to historian Ruth Ellen Homrighaus, seduction was “a popular explanation for infanticide throughout the nineteenth century” in both literature and public life.²³ Clark notes that seduction was “the only discourse common to working-class and middle-class culture” that could offer “an acceptable explanation” for sexual fall. It was thus taken up by a variety of women to improve their circumstances. Unmarried mothers applying to a London charitable institution “adopted a tone of melodramatic romance” when explaining their situation to interviewers. The language of seduction may have misrepresented their circumstances in some cases, but it also helped them obtain financial aid, as charity officials tended to accept “women who stated they were

²⁰ Littlewood and Mahood, “Prostitutes, Magdalenes and Wayward Girls,” 165.

²¹ “London Society for the Protection of Young Females,” *The Musical World* 37, no. 19 (7 May 1859): 300.

²² Ann R. Higginbotham, “‘Sin of the Age’: Infanticide and Illegitimacy in Victorian London,” *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 323.

²³ Ruth Ellen Homrighaus, “Wolves in Women’s Clothing: Baby-Farming and the *British Medical Journal*, 1860-1872,” *Journal of Family History* 26, no. 3 (July 2001): 354. Homrighaus points to Hetty Sorrel of George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859), who was both “the infanticidal mother” and “one of literature’s most famous victims of seduction.” (354)

seduced.”²⁴ Women also successfully used the narrative of seduction to win damages from their “seducers” in breach of promise suits throughout the nineteenth century.²⁵ In these suits, women “played on the common motif of the seduced maiden” to sue men who broke engagements or promises of marriage.²⁶ When women used the seduction narrative to improve their own circumstances, they used “a negative legacy” for a “positive effect.”²⁷ But for other women, the popular trope of the seduced maiden proved to be an unrealistic and unattainable standard of sympathy.

Women whose situations or behaviours did not align with the trope of the seduced woman—prostitutes, alcoholics, adulteresses, diseased women and unwed mothers—were generally denied the sympathy that this myth inspired. Frost notes that, while the seduction narrative “worked to the advantage” of many female plaintiffs in breach of promise cases, it also “excluded any woman who could not fit herself into the proper passive mold.”²⁸ Since philanthropic institutions prioritized the “newly fallen” and “victims of seduction,” women who did not fit into these categories were less likely to receive their aid.²⁹ Clark explains that unmarried mothers seeking aid from a London charitable institution needed to “present themselves in conformity with middle-class values” and apply the “rhetoric of seduction” to their personal accounts. However, the reality of their circumstances made this task difficult. Many of these women “had not yielded to the allure of sin” but had “followed traditional courtship customs allowing premarital sex.” Other women were victims of rape. For these women, it was

²⁴ Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence*, 76, 79, 81.

²⁵ Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain*, 172-173; Frost, *Promises Broken*, 136. According to Steinbach, breach of promise suits “worked well for women” for the greater part of the nineteenth century. The rate of success for female plaintiffs in these suits was eighty-seven percent between 1780 and 1869. (Steinbach, “The Melodramatic Contract,” 10)

²⁶ Frost, *Promises Broken*, 168.

²⁷ Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain*, 174.

²⁸ Frost, *Promises Broken*, 98.

²⁹ Littlewood and Mahood, “Prostitutes, Magdalenes and Wayward Girls,” 165.

increasingly difficult to fit their own experiences within the romantic narrative of seduction to receive aid.³⁰ The adulterous fallen woman was also excluded from the sympathy generated by the myth of seduction. For example, literary scholar Lorelee MacPike suggests that, although “non-adulterous female sexuality” was at times treated with lenience by writers like Elizabeth Gaskell and Amelia Opie, “[t]he adulterous wife [was] always condemnable.”³¹ While the popular trope of the seduced and dying woman created a standard of sympathy of which many women could take advantage, this standard of sympathy clearly did not apply to all fallen women. The sympathy expressed for the fallen woman in melodrama, expert literature and other genres throughout the nineteenth century did not challenge the notion that women who had sex outside of marriage were irredeemably ruined. Instead, it created an unrealistic and unattainable exception to the social condemnation of fallen women. It was an ultimately exclusive kind of sympathy that could only be applied to women who fit the stereotype of the young, passive, helpless, and feminine victim of seduction.

Death and the Fallen Woman

The theme of death is a significant and under-studied part of the sympathetic narrative of sexual fall. When examining the pervasiveness of this trope and its implications for real women, the theme of death becomes even more important. For while the emphasis on death made seduced women in melodrama and expert literature (and a variety of other genres, surely) more sympathetic, it also reaffirmed several troubling notions about women, sexual fall, and death. First, the trope of the seduced and dying woman encouraged the popular notion that female suicide was caused by romantic disappointment or seduction and abandonment, thus promoting a

³⁰ Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence*, 76, 78.

³¹ Lorelee MacPike, “The Fallen Woman’s Sexuality: Childbirth and Censure,” *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 27 (1984): 67.

simplistic and trivialized understanding of female suicide. In a similar way, this trope also reinforced the notion that women's lives depended on their sexual chastity and that the loss of chastity resulted in a downward path ending in death. Rather than challenging the double standard and the logic that led fallen women to kill themselves, the trope of seduction and death mourned the inevitable loss of such women and blamed their seducers for their deaths. Finally, by depicting death as a beautiful, feminine and redemptive ending to sexual fall, this trope also normalized, idealized and even encouraged suicide for sexually fallen women.

The trope of the seduced and dying woman was part of a broader cultural preoccupation with female suicides, and with fallen female suicides in particular. Nicoletti argues that, after the 1840s, "it was quite uncommon to find images of male suicide in England" which once had been so common in the Georgian period. Instead, Victorians were "inundated with images of self-murdering women."³² Higonnet similarly suggests that female suicide became a "cultural obsession" for British people.³³ Despite the fact that men had a drastically higher suicide rate than women throughout the nineteenth century, the popular image of suicide was indisputably female.³⁴ Inseparable from this image of female suicide was the notion that such women were driven to suicide by sexual fall. According to historian Victor Bailey, the stereotype of female suicide was that of "lovelorn, seduced, and abandoned girls choosing suicide over the shame of falling."³⁵ Historian Olive Anderson explains that this "romantic stereotype of female suicide" was so familiar and recognizable that "any young woman depicted as lingering near deep water

³² L.J. Nicoletti, "Morbid Topographies: Placing Suicide in Victorian London," in *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke: Victorian and Edwardian Representations of London*, ed. Lawrence Phillips (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 7, 8.

³³ Higonnet, "Suicide," 103, 112.

³⁴ Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, 125.

³⁵ Victor Bailey, *"This Rash Act": Suicide Across the Life Cycle in the Victorian City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 184.

was immediately understood to be deserted or ‘fallen’, and contemplating suicide.”³⁶ Indeed, images of drowning fallen women were particularly popular in visual and literary representations.³⁷ Notable examples include Thomas Hood’s 1844 poem *The Bridge of Sighs*, Charles Dickens’ 1850 novel *David Copperfield* (Figure 4), and Augustus Leopold Egg’s 1858 triptych *Past and Present* (Figure 5), where fallen women gravitate towards rivers, or are actually found dead in them.³⁸ Depictions of fallen women drowning were so common that “suicide by drowning was seen as the conventional aftermath of seduction and betrayal” for women.³⁹



Figure 4. Phiz (Hablot K. Browne), *The River*, 1850.

³⁶ Olive Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 197-198.

³⁷ Nicoletti, “Downward Mobility,” 6.

³⁸ In *The Bridge of Sighs*, the fallen woman is pulled from “[t]he rough river.” (Hood, *The Bridge of Sighs*, 66) In *David Copperfield*, the fallen Martha Endell insists that “the dreadful river” is “the only thing in all the world that [she is] fit for.” (Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* ed. Nina Burgis. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981], 581). In *Past and Present*, the fallen woman approaches the water with her illegitimate child. (Figure 5)

³⁹ Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*, 198.



Figure 5. Augustus Leopold Egg, *Past and Present, no. 3*, 1858.

Through the trope of the seduced and dying woman, melodrama and expert literature similarly emphasized the connection between sexual fall and suicide. In so doing, these genres reinforced a simplistic, trivialized understanding of female suicide in which women only killed themselves because of romantic disappointment or seduction and abandonment. Throughout the nineteenth century, male suicide was generally presented as an act of “individual self-determination in response to impersonal adversities,” while female suicide was almost always explained in terms of emotion, romance and “sexual dishonor.”⁴⁰ This gendered understanding of suicide is perfectly illustrated in Thomas Rowlandson’s 1810 drawing, *She Died for Love and He for Glory* (Figure 6). According to historian Howard Kushner, female suicide was often diminished as “an individual emotional act,” while male suicide rates were seen “as a barometer

⁴⁰ Silvia S. Canetto and David Lester, “Gender, Culture, and Suicidal Behavior,” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (June 1998): 173-174, 178; Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*, 196.

of national economic and social well-being.”⁴¹ As psychologists Sylvia Canetto and David Lester show, this gendered dynamic persists today; female suicidal behavior is still generally attributed to “[p]ersonality and relationship issues” while male suicide is attributed to “*impersonal, work- and health-related issues.*”⁴² The popular trope of seduction and suicide found in melodrama, expert literature and a variety of other sources reinforced the notion that women were only driven to suicide by romantic disappointment and sexual shame. This notion not only trivialized female suicide; it also solidified the “familiar assumption” that women lived only for love and for men, while men lived for themselves.⁴³



Figure 6: Thomas Rowlandson, *She Died for Love and He for Glory*, 1810.

Newspaper accounts of female suicide demonstrate how pervasive this narrative of seduction and suicide was throughout the nineteenth century. From 1823 to 1896, at least 240 news articles described at least 121 female suicides (and two “fabricated” suicides) under

⁴¹ Kushner, “Women and Suicide in Historical Perspective,” 541.

⁴² Canetto and Lester, “Gender, Culture, and Suicidal Behavior,” 172. Italics not mine.

⁴³ Higonnet, “Suicide,” 108. According to Gates, the idea that women who lose their men gain “indifference to life” had “the deepest hold on the Victorian imagination” of all ideas about female suicide. Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, 131.

headings like “Seduction and Suicide” and “Desertion and Suicide.”⁴⁴ Despite the varied circumstances, methods and motives of female suicides, these newspaper accounts follow a similar script that focuses primarily on the seduction, abandonment and heartbreak of the woman. In 1827, *The Standard* reported on the suicide “of a fine young woman named Ellen Logan” who was seduced by a man’s promises of marriage (which he “never intended to fulfill”) and who subsequently “threw herself into the Surrey Canal.”⁴⁵ In 1832, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* reported on the suicide of “a fine young woman” named Sarah Sheffield who had been seduced by a man’s “promise of marriage.” When her seducer later refused to marry her, Sheffield attempted to cut her throat with a knife but was prevented from doing so. Having “failed in making the least impression upon the obdurate heart” of her seducer, Sheffield drank oxalic acid and died.⁴⁶ In 1839, Elizabeth Parry “strangled herself with the ribbon from her bonnet” after being “seduced by a gentleman.”⁴⁷ In 1856, an “unfortunate girl” named Miss Snell drowned herself in a bathing machine at Walton-on-the-Naze after being seduced and abandoned by an officer who was “on the eve of marriage with some other lady.”⁴⁸ In 1862, a seventeen-year-old girl named Emma Webster jumped out of a window sixty feet high after being “seduced by a gentleman” and turned out of the house where she worked.⁴⁹ These are just a few of the women who were described under the popular heading “Seduction and Suicide” throughout the nineteenth century. From the early 1820s to the early 1880s, scarcely a year went by without at least one of these cases appearing in a British newspaper. This headline, which was described by

⁴⁴ See Appendix II. Other headlines include “Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide,” “Love, Seduction, and Suicide,” and “Love and Suicide.”

⁴⁵ “Seduction and Suicide,” *The Standard*, 27 July 1827.

⁴⁶ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet & Plymouth Journal*, 11 August 1832.

⁴⁷ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 14 March 1839.

⁴⁸ “Shocking Case of Seduction and Suicide,” *The Era*, 3 August 1856.

⁴⁹ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald*, 6 May 1862; “Seduction and Suicide,” *Bristol Mercury*, 10 May 1862.

one newspaper as “too familiar” to newspaper readers, was such a popular explanation for female suicide that it was often assumed, rather than proven, in newspapers.⁵⁰

Even when no evidence of seduction or sexual fall could be found, newspapers often presented female suicides as victims of seduction. In 1863, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* reported that Emily Neazer, who had drowned herself in the Regent's Canal, had been unemployed “for a long time on account of ill health” and had been “an inmate of St. Bartholomew's hospital” before her suicide. The coroner noted that there were “no marks of violence whatever, nor were there any signs of pregnancy.” Instead, he stated that “there was but little doubt” that Neazer had killed herself “through depression, arising from her destitute and forlorn condition.” Though there was no evidence whatsoever that Neazer had been seduced, the newspaper described her with the headline “Alleged Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide.”⁵¹ Later that year, *Reynolds's Newspaper* published an article titled “Alleged Seduction and Suicide.” The article reported that two men were charged with “stealing a shawl and a bag” from Jane Southwood, who had been “drinking about the town with them” and who later committed suicide.⁵² In both of these articles, the fact of seduction is not proven or even explicitly stated, but rather assumed and used as a headline to quickly explain the event. The use of these headlines reveals both how eagerly readers craved stories of seduction and suicide, and the degree to which all female suicides were assumed to have been victims of seduction.

In other reports of female suicide, though the headline of “Seduction and Suicide” was not used, the narrative of seduction or disappointed love was still anticipated. When Sarah Roberts killed herself in 1866, the *Liverpool Mercury* reported that she had been “desponding in

⁵⁰ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 5 June 1869.

⁵¹ “Alleged Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide,” *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 21 June 1863.

⁵² “Alleged Seduction and Suicide,” *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 27 September 1863.

spirits” and so “[i]t was tried to find out whether she had been crossed in love.”⁵³ When Margaret Moyes threw herself from the Monument to the Great Fire of London in 1839, the coroner, jury and newspapers all eagerly discussed the possibility that she had been a victim of seduction. Reports focused on whether she had a sweetheart, love letters or a ring on her wedding finger, but they could find no evidence of seduction or heartbreak.⁵⁴ In 1842, Jane Cooper similarly threw herself from the Monument, and again, the coroner, jury and newspapers eagerly searched for a story of seduction and abandonment. One witness claimed that Jane “was fond of a man at Vauxhall,” and another thought that “something had been kept in the dark” about Jane’s acquaintance with two men lodging in her house. The coroner looked through her letters for valentines and, after examining her body, believed that, although she was not pregnant, “she had been seduced.”⁵⁵ Each of these cases shows the degree to which female suicide was seen as a product of seduction or disappointed love. Even when no evidence supported this narrative, people depicted these women as lovelorn, abandoned victims because they assumed that this *must* be the case for the average female suicide.

By emphasizing the suicidal behaviour of the seduced woman, both melodrama and expert literature reinforced this simplistic and trivialized understanding of female suicide. They also solidified the notion that a woman’s value (and life) depended on her sexual virtue and that, without it, she would face a downward path, often resulting in death or, more particularly, suicide. As Clark suggests, melodrama’s depiction of sexual fall “accepted the notion that seduction was the worst thing that could happen to women,” though it shifted the blame for “this

⁵³ “Attempted Murder and Suicide in the Vale of Clwyd,” *Liverpool Mercury etc.*, 30 July 1866.

⁵⁴ “Suicide of a Young Woman by Leaping off the Monument!” *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 14 September 1839; “The Extraordinary Suicide at the Monument,” *Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1839; “Suicide of a Young Lady, by Leaping off the Monument,” *Northern Liberator*, 21 September 1839.

⁵⁵ “Inquest on the Body of the Female Who Threw Herself From the Monument,” *The Standard*, 22 August 1842; “Another Suicide Off the Monument,” *The Era*, 28 August 1842; “Suicide of a Young Female by Throwing Herself from the Monument,” *Chelmsford Chronicle, etc.*, 26 August 1842.

phenomenon” onto villainous aristocratic libertines.⁵⁶ While melodrama often saved its fallen heroine from death, it still upheld the notion that a woman who lost her chastity would face a downward path of shame, suffering, and near-death. The seduced heroine actually served as an exaggeration of this downward narrative. From the moment of her fall, the heroine suffers through endless mental, physical and emotional torments, battles with insanity, and moves closer to death with each suicidal monologue. Whether desired, imagined, expected or real, the heroine’s death reinforced the notion of the fallen woman’s downward path. Expert literature similarly solidified the patriarchal notion of the downward path. Whether through suicide, heartbreak, disease or starvation, the fallen woman’s death in expert literature legitimized the notion that a woman’s life depended on her sexual purity and that she would face a downward path of suffering and death once she lost it. Even when experts directly condemned the double standard of sexual morality that punished women (but not men) for sexual fall, they never challenged the belief that a woman’s value and reason to live lay in her chastity.

Instead of challenging the double standard of sexual morality that informed the notion of the downward path and led real women to kill themselves, melodrama and expert literature shifted the blame for their deaths onto men. When real women killed themselves, coroners, juries and newspapers similarly focused on blaming the seducer rather than challenging the logic that led these women to kill themselves. When the seduced Louisa Channen threw herself in the Grand Surrey Canal in 1858, the coroner remarked that “the strongest language he could use could not express his feelings” on the “disgraceful conduct” of her seducer.⁵⁷ One newspaper stated that “this man has been morally guilty of the death of Louisa Channen.”⁵⁸ When the seduced Annie Conroy killed herself with poison in 1878, the coroner told the seducer that “the

⁵⁶ Clark, “The Politics of Seduction,” 63.

⁵⁷ “Seduction and Suicide—Strange Case,” *Liverpool Mercury etc.*, 29 July 1858.

⁵⁸ “Multiple News Items,” *The Standard*, 30 July 1858.

death of this poor young creature morally laid at his door” and it “ought ever to weigh upon his conscience.”⁵⁹ In 1881, when Emma Cummins poisoned herself after being deserted by her seducer, Lieutenant Ponsonby, the jury and coroner agreed that “the death of the deceased had been caused morally” by this man. The coroner urged him to “repent of all he had done in causing the death of this unfortunate girl.” After the inquest, a crowd even gathered around Ponsonby’s cab and attempted to “strike the occupant” with “sticks and umbrellas” and “gave chase for a considerable distance.”⁶⁰ The following day, a newspaper remarked that “it would have fared badly” with the seducer “if he had fallen into the hands of the sturdy, true-hearted Englishmen who waited outside the court.”⁶¹ By demonizing the seducer, British people (and men in particular) positioned themselves as “true-hearted Englishmen” who felt sympathy for victims of seduction and suicide. In melodrama, expert literature and these newspaper accounts, the fallen woman’s death was treated as a tragic outcome of seduction that could be blamed on the seducer, but these genres still upheld the notion that women who lost their chastity faced a downward path that ended in death.

In addition to trivializing female suicide and legitimizing the notion of the downward path, the trope of seduction and death arguably normalized, idealized and thus encouraged suicide as a beautiful, redemptive ending for sexually fallen women. Throughout the nineteenth century, dead women were described in romantic and poetic terms, as objects of beauty, purity and innocence. In 1846, Edgar Allan Poe claimed that “the death of a beautiful woman” was “unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world.”⁶² In melodrama, expert literature and a

⁵⁹ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 3 November 1878.

⁶⁰ “A Sad Story of Seduction and Suicide,” *Cheshire Observer*, 31 December 1881.

⁶¹ “Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 1 January 1882.

⁶² Edgar Allan Poe, “Philosophy of Composition,” *Graham’s Magazine* (April 1846): 163-67. Quoted in Deborah Lutz, *Pleasure Bound: Victorian Sex Rebels and the New Eroticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 45.

variety of other genres, the seduced female suicide was depicted in similarly poetic terms as an ideal of beauty, femininity and innocence. In melodrama and expert literature, the seduced woman's beauty made her a target for seduction, but it also reflected her inner purity. And though the melodramatic heroine rarely died, those who did were depicted as having a lasting beauty in death. Many nineteenth-century descriptions of dead women similarly emphasized the lasting "beautific composure of the corpse."⁶³ Historian Barbara Gates suggests that the obsession with female "loveliness in death" in Victorian culture "amounted to a kind of necrophilia."⁶⁴ According to Olive Anderson, nineteenth-century visual culture similarly demonstrated a "passive, sentimentalized, glamorous, almost salacious view" of female suicide.⁶⁵ Paintings like George Frederic Watts' 'Found Drowned' (1850) (Figure 7) and John Everett Millais' 'Ophelia' (1851-2) (Figure 8) perfectly illustrate this Victorian beautification of female death.



Figure 7. George Frederic Watts, *Found Drowned*, 1850.

⁶³ Nicoletti, "Downward Mobility," 19.

⁶⁴ Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, 138.

⁶⁵ Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*, 200-201.



Figure 8. John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-1852.

When real fallen women killed themselves, coroners, juries and newspapers similarly emphasized their physical beauty. In 1839, one newspaper described a seduced suicide named Lucy Brown as “a remarkably fine looking young woman.” The coroner who examined her body had apparently observed, “that he had scarcely ever before seen so fine a young female.”⁶⁶ In 1848, an article in *The London Journal* described the body of one seduced suicide as having “exquisite proportions”:

The face was very lovely, and wore, even in death, a placid smile, as if the owner had parted with the world in a forgiving mood. Perhaps a sweet prayer quivered on her lips as she left her spirit on the face of the waters. Her eyes were of that dark brown colour which render them so winning and expressive in a woman, and her hair quite black, and very luxuriant in quantity.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ “Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide,” *Freeman’s Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 25 September 1839.

⁶⁷ “All Her Own Fault,” *The London Journal; and Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art* 7 (19 August 1848): 380. Quoted in Nicoletti, “Downward Mobility,” 19.

Other seduced suicides were variously described as “a very beautiful young woman,” “a remarkably beautiful young female,” “a fine-made woman” or “a lovely young lady.”⁶⁸ Women who attempted suicide were also emphasized as being remarkably attractive. When “the beautiful Miss Maria Douglas” attempted to drown herself after her seduction in 1825, newspapers remarked that she was “extremely handsome,” “extremely beautiful” and thus had attracted “a most accomplished seducer of rank.”⁶⁹ As in melodrama and expert literature, these coroners and newspapers repeatedly emphasized the beauty of these seduced suicides and thus helped to solidify suicide as a beautiful and romantic ending for fallen women.

For the seduced woman, death could also be a redemptive ending to her downward path of shame and suffering. In Thomas Hood’s 1844 poem *The Bridge of Sighs*, for example, the drowned fallen woman is redeemed through suicide:

Touch her not scornfully;
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly;
Not of the stains of her
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly
Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful
Past all dishonour,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.⁷⁰

Hood’s poem, illustrated by Gustave Doré (Figure 9), perfectly illustrates the cleansing and redemptive power that suicide was believed to convey upon fallen women. By throwing herself into the river Thames, the woman’s “stains” or sins of her “mutiny” are washed away; she is, as

⁶⁸ “Alleged Seduction and Suicide of a Barmaid,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 18 December 1881; “Seduction and Suicide by Poison,” *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, 10 April 1841; “Supposed Seduction and Suicide,” *Morning Post*, 30 November 1839; “Seduction and Suicide,” *Hereford Journal*, 8 February 1826.

⁶⁹ “Melancholy Effects of Seduction,” *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 September 1825; “Melancholy Effects of Seduction,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 10 September 1825.

⁷⁰ Hood, *The Bridge of Sighs*, 65. Hood’s poem was inspired by the case of Mary Furley, a woman who committed infanticide and attempted suicide. (Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, 135)

Gates suggests, “baptized” through suicide.⁷¹ This woman’s moral redemption and physical beauty go hand in hand. The fallen woman is “punished and bathed into attractiveness by the river,” and her physical beauty in turn symbolizes “her purification.”⁷² In this poem and in other representations of the fallen woman, the action of suicide is particularly redemptive because the woman demonstrates that she would rather die than live with the shame of her fall. By attempting or committing suicide, fallen women proved their morality and their adherence to middle-class standards of femininity and sexuality. English essayist Thomas De Quincey claimed that there was “no man who in his heart would not reverence a woman that chose to die rather than to be dishonoured.”⁷³ This same message was conveyed in melodrama and expert literature when the seduced woman desired, attempted or committed suicide. In melodrama, the heroine’s suicidal behaviour served as proof of her morality; in expert literature, suicide was not only an inevitable ending to sexual fall, but a redemptive and beautiful one as well.

⁷¹ Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, 136.

⁷² Nicoletti, “Downward Mobility,” 14.

⁷³ Quoted in Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, 131.

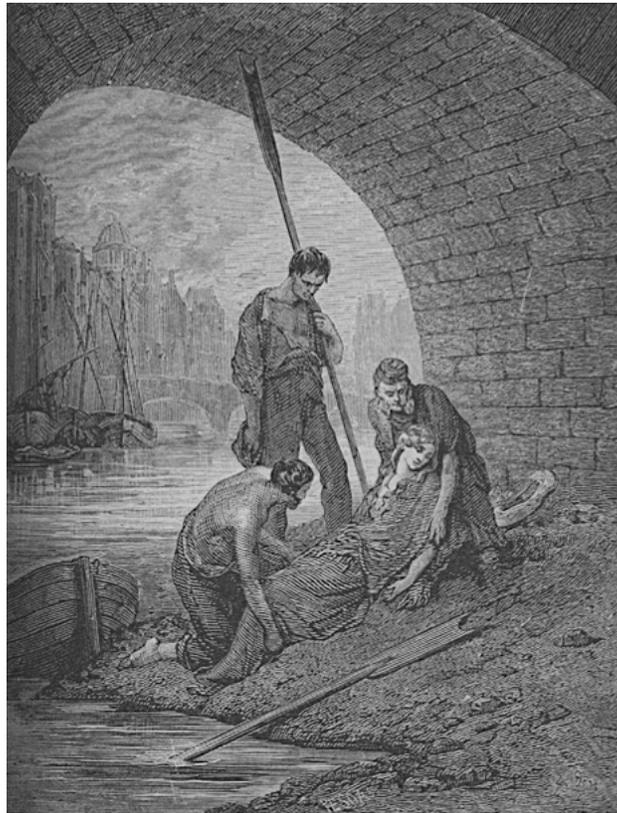


Figure 9: Gustave Doré, *The Bridge of Sighs*, 1844.

In his 1840 study of suicide, Forbes Winslow noted that many women who committed suicide between 1794 and 1823 did so because of “disappointed love” and “from a desire, without the means, of vindicating their characters.”⁷⁴ The long list of “Seduction and Suicide” cases between 1823 and 1896 would similarly suggest that many women did indeed kill themselves because of seduction. While the recurring narrative of seduction and death was ultimately a simplistic and trivialized depiction of female suicidal motives, many women were undoubtedly driven to suicide by the social and economic circumstances resulting from their “seductions.” Many of these women were shunned by their families, turned away by their employers and left to care for children on their own without the means to provide for them. In

⁷⁴ Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide*, 50.

1842, the seduced Emily Churchill hanged herself after giving birth to a child because she “feared that her father and mother would not look at her.”⁷⁵ In 1853, Emma Jane Papson drowned herself and her child in the Thames because “she had not had any support from the child’s father for five weeks.” In two letters, she condemned the father for leaving them “to starve and die” and stated that all she wanted was “a bit of bread” and could “bear it no longer.”⁷⁶ After being seduced in 1858, Fanny Coxon’s pregnancy “overwhelmed her with shame” and “she preferred death to facing her parents.”⁷⁷ In 1861, Jane Roe’s seducer ran away to Germany instead of making a court-ordered payment for the maintenance of their child. Without the money, and faced with “the pressing of her small creditors for payment,” she killed herself.⁷⁸ In 1868, the pregnant Susannah Walker killed herself “through fear of the disgrace which the birth of a child would bring upon her if born before marriage.”⁷⁹ And in 1878, Mary Connor killed herself after being seduced, “saying that her father would kill her” if he found out.⁸⁰ It is not altogether surprising that the shame, social isolation and economic hardship attendant on sexual fall drove women in this period to consider, attempt and commit suicide. But it is also possible that the romantic, idealized depictions of seduction and death in melodrama, expert literature, newspapers, painting, fiction and poetry contributed to the suicidal behaviour of these women.

It is generally impossible to determine the degree to which female suicides were influenced by the cultural normalization and idealization of death that took place in the representations studied in this thesis. However, the depiction of suicide as a beautiful, feminine,

⁷⁵ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Morning Post*, 13 December 1842.

⁷⁶ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 10 July 1853.

⁷⁷ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Berrow’s Worcester Journal*, 24 April 1858.

⁷⁸ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 10 July 1853.

⁷⁹ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 8 November 1868.

⁸⁰ “Seduction and Suicide at Swansea,” *Western Mail*, 27 February 1878.

redemptive and inevitable end to sexual fall and romantic disappointment not only influenced the way that real suicides were perceived – it created a culture that actually normalized, and even encouraged, suicidal behaviour for lovelorn or fallen women. In their studies of gender and suicide, psychologists Silvia S. Canetto, David Lester and Isaac Sakinofsky explain that men and women follow “culture-specific scripts of gender and suicidal behavior.”⁸¹ When certain suicidal behaviours, methods, and motives are coded as either masculine or feminine, men and women “refer to these scripts” of gender “as a model for their suicidal behavior.” Canetto and Sakinofsky explain that “nonfatal suicidal behavior,” like attempted suicide or self-harm, is often associated with femininity, while “fatal suicidal behaviour” is typically coded as masculine behaviour. Since attempted suicide is viewed as a feminine response to “couple problems, particularly breakups and separations,” women are more likely to attempt suicide when faced with such problems.⁸² Throughout the nineteenth century, suicide and attempted suicide were similarly scripted as normal, feminine responses to sexual fall. These “scripts of gender and suicidal behaviour” arguably influenced nineteenth-century women in the same way that Canetto, Lester and Sakinofsky suggest of late-twentieth-century women. When melodrama and expert literature repeatedly depicted suicide or attempted suicide as positive or normal endings for fallen or lovelorn women, they implicitly encouraged suicidal behaviour in real “fallen” women.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, it was suggested that the boundary between representation and reality as it concerns the seduced and dying woman is difficult to grasp. This chapter has

⁸¹ Canetto and Lester, “Gender, Culture, and Suicidal Behavior,” 164.

⁸² Silvia S. Canetto and Isaac Sakinofsky, “The Gender Paradox in Suicide,” *Suicide and Life-threatening Behavior* 28, no. 1 (March 1998): 3-4, 17, 19-20.

attempted to illuminate the elusive relationship between representation and reality. It explores some of the ways in which the trope of the seduced and dying woman, as identified in melodrama and expert literature, contradicted and influenced the experiences of real women. This trope reinforced patriarchal notions about women, distorted the reality of sexual fall and created an exclusive standard of sympathy for fallen women. The narrative of death had particularly problematic implications for real women. This narrative encouraged a simplistic and trivialized understanding of female suicide, reinforced the notion of the fallen woman's inevitable downward path and the logic that led women to kill themselves, and it idealized death as a beautiful, feminine and redemptive escape from sexual fall. Newspaper accounts of putatively real suicides by seduced women reveal the extent to which this trope pervaded the British imagination throughout the nineteenth century. It was a clichéd story, prone to fabrication, but British people were persistent in their desire to hear and read about, and to express their sympathy for, such women – both real and fictional. By examining the negative implications of this narrative trope of the seduced woman, this chapter has attempted to provide a more complete picture of it and to both complicate and clarify our understandings of the function and impact of sympathy.

Conclusion

In 1891, a young woman named Charlotte Langford was brought before a magistrate after attempting suicide. She told the magistrate – Mr. Denman – that a young man “had given her up, after seducing her” and that “the trouble had caused her to make this attempt on her life.” Before remanding her, Mr. Denman told her that “she ought not to give way to such silly notions” and that “[s]he ought to have more pluck.”¹ For the greater part of the nineteenth century, real and fictional women like Charlotte Langford were depicted as suffering victims of male profligacy who deserved sympathy and protection. Their suicidal behaviour was seen as tragic and inevitable. But as Mr. Denman’s response suggests, the trope of seduction and death eventually ceased to make sense or inspire sympathy; it became – to borrow Denman’s phrasing – a silly notion. Today, in an era increasingly concerned with the sexual empowerment of women, the narrative of seduction and death seems both silly and offensive. Seduction is no longer understood as a life-defining – or much less, life-destroying – event for a woman. In fact, the term “seduction” is rarely used at all – except to describe generalized temptations and desires – as it no longer resonates with our understandings of male and female sexual agency. The notion of the inevitable downward path of suffering and death for unchaste women is now largely non-existent as well. Many people still believe that women should not have sex outside of marriage, but this particular narrative of the downward path has been left in the past. But while the trope of seduction and death contradicts and offends our current understandings of gender and sexuality, it resonated with many people in the nineteenth century and reveals a great deal about historical notions of gender, sexuality, class, death and sympathy.

¹ “Seduction and Suicide,” *Evening Telegraph and Star and Sheffield Daily Times*, 14 January 1891.

This thesis has offered a detailed examination of the sympathetic trope of seduction and death and has aimed to show, not only how pervasive this trope was, but how it was constructed and what possible implications it had for ordinary women. It began with a discussion of melodrama, one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the nineteenth century. Through the trope of seduction and death, the fallen heroine was transformed into an ideal object of sympathy and a powerful symbol of working-class discontentment. She was beautiful, virtuous, sexually innocent, self-sacrificing, affectionate, trusting, weak, submissive, obedient, and she placed her entire identity in her relationships with men. Whether she was deceived, threatened, overpowered, abducted or made to faint, she was shown to have no power and thus no responsibility for her fall. The heroine's suffering and possible death emphasized the wickedness of seduction, proved her morality and brought her seducer to repentance and reform. The second chapter explored the middle-class genre of expert literature, which embraced a remarkably similar narrative of seduction and death. In a variety of medical, religious, social and prescriptive texts, experts explained how many women were seduced by false promises from wealthy men, abandoned and then followed a quick downward path to death. Just as in melodrama, this seduced woman was beautiful, affectionate, weak, submissive, dependent and selfless. She was also completely passive; her seducer was made solely responsible for her fall. Her quick death similarly established her innocence and morality, and it ended her downward path before it brought the inevitable physical and moral decay that other fallen women experienced. In this genre, the sympathetic trope of the seduced and dying woman effectively diminished the threat of the fallen woman and emphasized the sensibility, benevolence and reformed masculinity of the ascendant middle classes. Melodrama and expert literature were examined together to show,

not only how pervasive this trope of seduction and death was, but also the ways in which it was shaped by class.

The final goal of this thesis was to suggest the many ways in which the sympathetic construction of the seduced and dying woman may have contradicted and negatively impacted the experiences and understandings of real women. The last chapter described how this trope distorted the reality of sexual fall, reinforced patriarchal understandings of women and sexuality, and created an exclusive and unattainable standard of sympathy. Finally, and perhaps most significantly – drawing on a large body of newspaper accounts that reveal the extent to which this trope ordered people’s understandings of real women and their motives for committing suicide – it emphasized the ways that this trope of seduction and death idealized suicide as a beautiful, feminine and redemptive resolution for sexual fall. Although the trope of seduction and death offered sympathy for fallen women, it ultimately enshrined the very concept of sexual fall. Literary scholar Terry Eagleton suggests that, although the “‘exaltation’ of women” is “a partial advance in itself,” it also “serves to shore up the very system which oppresses them.”² The trope of seduction and death exalted a very specific kind of fallen woman but in doing so, it also reinforced ideologies of gender and sexuality that restricted and oppressed women in their experiences with sex.

Sympathetic constructions are important. They reveal as much—if not more—about the people who are expressing sympathy as they do about the people who are the objects of that sympathy. By exploring the complexities of various sympathetic representations, this thesis has attempted to illuminate the important, if often constraining, role that sympathy played in the construction of the fallen woman in nineteenth-century British culture. It has explored just two of many genres in which the fallen woman was depicted sympathetically. More work can be done

² Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa*, 15.

to uncover the nature and implications of sympathy for the fallen woman in nineteenth-century newspapers, court records, art, poetry and literature. The more we critically examine human expressions of sympathy, the better we will understand how sympathy can operate, not simply as a reflection of hegemonic cultural values and understandings, but also as a vehicle for formulating and imposing them.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Figures

- Figure 1. George Elgar Hicks. Sketch for *Woman's Mission: Guide of Childhood*. 1863. Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand. Photo © Dunedin Public Art Gallery.
- Figure 2. George Elgar Hicks. *Woman's Mission: Companion of Manhood*. 1863. Photo © Tate. CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)
- Figure 3. George Elgar Hicks. *Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age*. 1862. Photo © Tate. CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)
- Figure 4. Phiz (Hablot K. Browne). *The River*. 1850. Illustration for Chapter 47, "Martha" In Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*. Edited by Nina Burgis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981: 580.
- Figure 5. Augustus Leopold Egg. *Past and Present*, no. 3. 1858. Photo © Tate. CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)
- Figure 6. Thomas Rowlandson. *She Died for Love and He for Glory*. Drawing. 1810. Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California. Accessed in Bailey, Victor. "This Rash Act" *Suicide Across the Life Cycle in the Victorian City*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998: 209.
- Figure 7. George Frederic Watts. *Found Drowned*. 1850. Watts Gallery, Compton. Photo © Watts Gallery.
- Figure 8. John Everett Millais. *Ophelia*. 1851-1852. Photo © Tate. CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)
- Figure 9. Gustave Doré. *The Bridge of Sighs*. 1844. Illustration of Thomas Hood's poem 'The Bridge of Sighs.' Accessed in Nicoletti, L. J. "Morbid Topographies: Placing Suicide in Victorian London." In *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke: Victorian and Edwardian Representations of London*, edited by Lawrence Phillips, 7-34. Amsterdam: Rodopi, DQR Studies in Literature, 2007: 22.

Melodramas

- Anonymous. *Maria Martin; or, The Murder in the Red Barn. A Drama in Two Acts*. London: Samuel French, n.d.
- Buckstone, John Baldwin. *Henriette the Forsaken: A Drama in Three Acts*. London: William Strange, 1834.
- Buckstone, John Baldwin. *Luke the Labourer, or, the Lost Son: A Domestic Melo-drama in two acts*. Baltimore: Jos. Robinson, 1838.
- Buckstone, John Baldwin. *Victorine; Or, "I'll Sleep on It," A Drama, In Three Acts*. London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1840. First performed 1831.
- Jerrold, Douglas William. *Black-Eyed Susan; Or, "All in the Downs."* Boston: William V. Spencer, 1856.
- Lewis, Alexis. *Grace Clairville, or, the Crime at the Symon's Yat: A Romantic Drama in Three Acts*. London: John Dicks, 1883. First performed 1843.
- Moncrieff, W. T. *The Lear of Private Life; or, Father and Daughter: A Domestic Drama*. London: G. H. Davidson, 1840. First performed 1820.

- Payne, John Howard. *Clari: or, The Maid of Milan. A Drama, in three acts.* Boston: W. V. Spencer, 1856. First published 1823.
- Pocock, J. *The Miller and His Men. A Melodrama in two acts.* Philadelphia: C. & J. C. Neal, 1831.
- Somerset, C. A. *Crazy Jane: A Romantic Play in Three Acts.* London: John Cumberland, 1828.
- Stafford, John J. *Love's Frailties, or, Passion and Repentance: a Domestic Drama in Two Acts.* London: W. Kidd, 1835. First published 1827.
- Wilks, Thomas Egerton. *Michael Erle, the Maniac Lover, or, the Fayre Lass of Lichfield.* Boston: William V. Spencer, 1856. First published in 1839.

Expert Books, Essays, and Articles

- Acton, William. *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Youth, in Adult Age, and in Advanced Life Considered in their Physiological, Social and Psychological Relations.* Fourth edition. Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1867. First published in 1865.
- Acton, William. *Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects in London and other Large Cities with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of its Attendant Evils.* London: John Churchill, 1857.
- Anonymous. *Our plague spot: in connection with our polity and usages: as regards our women, our soldiery, and the Indian empire.* London: T. Newby, 1859.
- Cobbe, Frances Power. *The Duties of Women: A Course of Lectures.* London: Williams and Northgate, 1881.
- Craik, Dinah Maria Mulock. *A Woman's Thoughts about Women.* Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1861. First published in 1858.
- Ellis, Sarah. *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character & Responsibilities.* London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1842.
- Greg, W. R. "Prostitution." *Westminster Review* 53 (1850) Reprinted in Greg, W. R. *The Great Sin of Great Cities.* London: John Chapman, 1853.
- Greg, W. R. *Why are Women Redundant?* London: N. Trübner & Co., 1869.
- Lewis, Sarah. *Woman's Mission.* London: John W. Parker, 1839.
- Logan, William. *An Exposure, from Personal Observation, of Female Prostitution in London, Leeds, and Rochdale, and Especially in the City of Glasgow; with Remarks on the Cause, Extent, Results, and Remedy of the Evil.* Third Edition. Glasgow: G. Gallie and R. Fleckfield, 1843.
- "London Society for the Protection of Young Females." *The Musical World* 37, no. 19 (7 May 1859)
- M-----y, R. "Sketches from Life." *Inspector and Literary Review* 1, no 1/6 (May 1826): 363-373.
- Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor; Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work.* London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1862. First published in 1851.
- Miller, James. *Prostitution considered in relation to its cause and cure.* Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox, 1859.
- Piggott, Solomon. *Suicide and its Antidotes, a Series of Anecdotes and Actual Narratives with Suggestions on Mental Distress.* London: J. Robins and Co., 1824.
- "Prostitution of Young Females in London." *Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, 26 May 1844.
- Ryan, Michael. *Prostitution in London.* London: H. Bailliere, 1839.

- Sandford, Elizabeth. *Woman, in Her Social and Domestic Character*. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831.
- Tait, William. *Magdalenism: An Inquiry into the Extent, Causes, and Consequences of Prostitution in Edinburgh*. Second Edition. Edinburgh: P. Rickard, 1842. First published in 1840.
- Talbot, James Beard. *The Miseries of Prostitution*. London: James Burns, 1844.
- Tuckniss, William. Introduction to *London Labour and the London Poor; Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work*, by Henry Mayhew. London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1862. First published in 1851.
- Vanderkiste, R. W. *Notes and Narratives of a Six Years' Mission, Principally Among the Dens of London*. London: James Nisbet, 1852.
- Wade, John. *Women, Past and Present: Exhibiting Their Social Vicissitudes, Single and Matrimonial Relations, Right, Privileges, and Wrongs*. London: William Tegg, 1865. First edition 1859.
- Wardlaw, Ralph. *Lectures on Female Prostitution: Its Nature, Extent, Effects, Guilt, Causes, and Remedy*. Third Edition. Glasgow: J. Maclehose, 1843. First published in 1842.
- Winslow, Forbes. *The Anatomy of Suicide*. Boston: Milford House Inc., 1840.

Magazine Articles (Chronological)

- "Clergy Deceased." *The Gentleman's Magazine* 178 (July-December 1845)
- Edgar Allan Poe, "Philosophy of Composition," *Graham's Magazine* (April 1846): 163-67. Quoted in Deborah Lutz, *Pleasure Bound: Victorian Sex Rebels and the New Eroticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 45.
- "All Her Own Fault," *The London Journal; and Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art* 7 (19 August 1848): 380. Quoted in Nicoletti, "Downward Mobility," 19.

Newspaper Articles (Chronological)

- "Melancholy Effects of Seduction." *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 10 September 1825.
- "Melancholy Effects of Seduction." *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 September 1825.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *Hereford Journal*, 8 February 1826.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *Morning Post*, 25 September 1826.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet & Plymouth Journal*, 30 September 1826.
- "Seduction and Suicide: A Fabrication." *Morning Chronicle*, 25 September 1826.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *The Standard*, 27 July 1827.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet & Plymouth Journal*, 11 August 1832.
- "The Fashionable World." *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 28 November 1832.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *The Standard*, 24 September 1834.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *Morning Post*, 25 September 1834.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *Belfast News-Letter*, 26 September 1834.
- "Seduction and Suicide." *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 14 March 1839.
- "The Extraordinary Suicide at the Monument." *Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1839.

- “Suicide of a Young Woman by Leaping off the Monument!” *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 14 September 1839.
- “Suicide of a Young Lady, by Leaping off the Monument.” *Northern Liberator*, 21 September 1839.
- “Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide.” *Freeman’s Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 25 September 1839.
- “Supposed Seduction and Suicide.” *Morning Post*, 30 November 1839.
- “Seduction and Suicide by Poison.” *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, 10 April 1841.
- “Inquest on the Body of the Female Who Threw Herself From the Monument.” *The Standard*, 22 August 1842.
- “Suicide of a Young Female by Throwing Herself from the Monument.” *Chelmsford Chronicle, etc.*, 26 August 1842.
- “Another Suicide Off the Monument.” *The Era*, 28 August 1842.
- “Seduction and Suicide.” *Morning Post*, 13 December 1842.
- “Seduction and Suicide.” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 10 July 1853.
- “Seduction and Suicide.” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 10 July 1853.
- “Shocking Case of Seduction and Suicide.” *The Era*, 3 August 1856.
- “Seduction and Suicide.” *Berrow’s Worcester Journal*, 24 April 1858.
- “Seduction and Suicide—Strange Case.” *Liverpool Mercury etc.*, 29 July 1858.
- “Multiple News Items.” *The Standard*, 30 July 1858.
- “Seduction and Suicide.” *The Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald*, 6 May 1862.
- “Seduction and Suicide,” *The Bristol Mercury*, 10 May 1862.
- “Alleged Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 21 June 1863.
- “Alleged Seduction and Suicide,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 27 September 1863.
- “Seduction and Suicide,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (8 November 1868)
- “Seduction and Suicide,” *Berrow’s Worcester Journal* (5 June 1869)
- “Attempted Murder and Suicide in the Vale of Clwyd” *Liverpool Mercury etc.* (30 July 1866)
- “Seduction and Suicide at Swansea,” *Western Mail* (27 February 1878)
- “Seduction and Suicide,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (3 November 1878)
- “Alleged Seduction and Suicide of a Barmaid,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (18 December 1881);
- “A Sad Story of Seduction and Suicide,” *Cheshire Observer* (31 December 1881)
- “Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (1 January 1882)
- “Seduction and Suicide,” *Evening Telegraph and Star and Sheffield Daily Times* (14 January 1891)

Novels and Poems

- Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield*. Edited by Nina Burgis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.
- Hood, Thomas. *The Bridge of Sighs*. In *The Victorians: An Anthology of Poetry & Poetics*. Edited by Valentine Cunningham. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

Secondary Sources

- Anderson, Amanda. *Tainted Souls, Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Anderson, Olive. “Did Suicide Increase with Industrialization in Victorian England?” *Past & Present* 86 (February 1980): 149-173.
- Anderson, Olive. *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

- Anderson, Scott A. "Sex Under Pressure: Jerks, Boorish Behavior, and Gender Hierarchy." *Res Publica* 11, no. 4 (December 2005): 349-369.
- Andres, Sophia. "Elizabeth Gaskell's Re-Presentations of Pre-Raphaelite Gendered Boundaries." *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 11 (Spring 2002): 39-62.
- Aston, Elaine and Ian Clarke. "The Dangerous Woman of Melvillean Melodrama." *New Theatre Quarterly* 12, no. 45 (February 1996): 30-42.
- Auerbach, Nina. "The Rise of the Fallen Woman." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 35, no. 1 (June 1980): 29-52.
- Auerbach, Nina. *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Auerbach, Nina. *The Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Bailey, Victor. "*This Rash Act*": *Suicide Across the Life Cycle in the Victorian City*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Barclay, Katie. "Emotions, the Law and the Press in Britain: Seduction and Breach of Promise Suits, 1780-1830." *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 2 (June 2016): 267-284.
- Barker-Benfield, G. J. "Sensibility." In *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture, 1776-1832*, edited by Iain McCalman, 102-114. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Barker-Benfield, G. J. *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Baron, Marcia. "Rape, Seduction, Purity, and Shame in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." In *Subversion and Sympathy: Gender, Law, and the British Novel*, edited by Martha C. Nussbaum and Alison L. LaCroix, 126-149. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Bartel, Roland. "Suicide in Eighteenth-Century England: The Myth of a Reputation." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (February 1960): 145-158.
- Bentley, D.M.R. "'Ah, Poor Jenny's Case': Rossetti and the Fallen Woman/Flower." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 177-198.
- Bick, Suzann. "'Take Her Up Tenderly': Elizabeth Gaskell's Treatment of the Fallen Woman." *Essays in Arts and Sciences* 18 (May 1989): 17-27.
- Binhammer, Katherine. *The Seduction Narrative in Britain, 1747-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Bivona, Dan and Roger B. Henkle. *The Imagination of Class: Masculinity and the Victorian Urban Poor*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006.
- Bontatibus, Donna R. *The Seduction Novel of the Early Nation: A Call for Socio-Political Reform*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999.
- Booth, Michael R. *English Melodrama*. London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965.
- Braun, Gretchen. "'Untarnished Purity': Ethics, Agency, and the Victorian Fallen Woman." *Women's Studies* 44, no. 3 (2015): 342-367.
- Brenzel, Barbara. "Domestication as Reform: A Study of the Socialization of Wayward Girls, 1856-1905." *Harvard Educational Review* 50, no. 2 (July 1980): 196-213.
- Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976.
- Bullen, J. B. *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

- Canetto, Silvia S. "Gender Roles, Suicide Attempts, and Substance Abuse." *Journal of Psychology* 125, no. 6 (November 1991): 605-620.
- Canetto, Silvia S. and David Lester. "Gender, Culture, and Suicidal Behavior." *Transcultural Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (June 1998): 163-190.
- Canetto, Silvia S. and Isaac Sakinofsky. "The Gender Paradox in Suicide." *Suicide and Life-threatening Behavior* 28, no. 1 (March 1998): 1-23.
- Casteras, Susan P. *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987.
- Claggett, Shalyn. "Victorian Pros and Poetry." *Prose Studies* 33, no. 1 (April 2011): 19-43.
- Clark, Anna. "The Politics of Seduction in English Popular Culture, 1748-1848." In *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction*, edited by Jean Radford, 47-70. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.
- Clark, Anna K. "Rape or seduction? A controversy over sexual violence in the nineteenth century." In *The Sexual Dynamics of History: Men's Power, Women's Resistance*, edited by The London Feminist History Group, 13-27. Australia: Pluto Press Ltd., 1983.
- Clark, Anna. *Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845*. London: Pandora Press, 1987.
- Cody, Lisa. "The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform: Women, Reproduction, and Political Economy in England's New Poor Law of 1834." *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 131-156.
- Conly, Sarah. "Seduction, Rape, and Coercion." *Ethics* 115, no. 1 (October 2004): 96-121.
- Conway, Jill. "Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution." In *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, edited by Martha Vicinus, 140-154. Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1972.
- Craig, Randall. *Promising Language: Betrothal in Victorian Law and Fiction*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000.
- Crone, Rosalind. *Violent Victorians: Popular entertainment in nineteenth-century London*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992.
- Davis, Owen. *I'd Like To Do It Again*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1931.
- Davis, Tracy C. "Actresses and Prostitutes in Victorian London." *Theatre Research International* 13, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 221-234.
- Daunton, Martin, ed. *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.
- Edelstein, T. J. "Augustus Egg's Triptych: A Narrative of Victorian Adultery." *The Burlington Magazine* 125, no. 961 (April 1983): 202-212.
- Eltis, Sos. *Acts of Desire: Women and Sex on Stage, 1800-1930*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Eltis, Sos. "The fallen woman on stage: maidens, magdalens, and the emancipated female." In *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, edited by Kerry Powell, 222-236. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

- Fraser, Hilary. "The Fallen Woman," (review article). *Victorian Literature and Culture* 45, no. 1 (March 2017): 227-231.
- Frost, Ginger S. *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class, and Gender in Victorian England*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995.
- Gates, Barbara T. "Not Choosing Not To Be: Victorian Literary Responses to Suicide." *Literature and Medicine* 6, no. 1 (January 1987): 77-91.
- Gates, Barbara T. *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Gatrell, V. A. C. *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770-1868*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Gilman, Sander L. "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature." *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 204-242.
- Goldman, Lawrence. "Victorian Social Science: From Singular to Plural." In *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*, edited by Martin Daunton, 87-114. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Gorham, Deborah. *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Hapke, Laura. "He Stoops to Conquer: Redeeming the Fallen Woman in the Fiction of Dickens, Gaskell, and Their Contemporaries." *Victorian Newsletter* 69 (Spring 1986): 16-22.
- Hardwick, Elizabeth. *Seduction and Betrayal: Women and Literature*. New York: Random House, 1970.
- Harrison, Fraser. *The Dark Angel: Aspects of Victorian Sexuality*. London: Sheldon Press, 1977.
- Harry, Joseph. "Parasuicide, gender and gender deviance." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 24, no. 4 (December 1983): 350-361.
- Hart, Lynda. "The Victorian Villainess and the Patriarchal Unconscious." *Literature and Psychology* 40, no. 3 (1994): 1-25.
- Henriques, U. R. Q. "Bastardy and the New Poor Law." *Past & Present* 37, no. 1 (July 1967): 103-129.
- Higginbotham, Ann R. "'Sin of the Age': Infanticide and Illegitimacy in Victorian London." *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 319-337.
- Higonnet, Margaret. "Suicide: Representations of the Feminine in the Nineteenth Century." *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1-2 (1985): 103-118.
- Homrighaus, Ruth Ellen. "Wolves in Women's Clothing: Baby-Farming and the *British Medical Journal*, 1860-1872." *Journal of Family History* 26, no. 3 (July 2001): 350-372.
- Horn, Pierre L. and Mary Beth Pringle. *The Image of the Prostitute in Modern Literature*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984.
- Howell, Philip, "A Private Contagious Diseases Act: Prostitution and Public Space in Victorian Cambridge." *Journal of Historical Geography* 26, no. 3 (July 2000): 376-402.
- Howell, Philip, "Prostitution and Racialised Sexuality: The Regulation of Prostitution in Britain and the British Empire before the Contagious Diseases Acts." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18, no. 3 (June 2000): 321-339.
- Johnson, Kathryn K. "Durkheim Revisited: Why Do Women Kill Themselves?" *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1979): 145-153.
- Kalikoff, Beth. "The Falling Woman in Three Victorian Novels." *Studies in the Novel* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 357-367.

- Kaplan, Ann E. "Melodrama / subjectivity / ideology: Western melodrama theories and their relevance to recent Chinese cinema." In *Melodrama and Asian Cinema*, edited by Wilmal Dissanayake, 9-28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Kaplan, Ann E. "Theories of melodrama: A feminist perspective." *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 1, no. 1 (1983): 40-48.
- Knot, John. *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law*. London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986.
- Krzanich, Alice. "Virtue and Vindication: An Historical Analysis of Sexual Slander and a Woman's Good Name." *Auckland University Law Review* 17 (2011): 33-59.
- Kushner, Howard I. "Women and Suicide in Historical Perspective." *Signs* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 537-552.
- Kushner, Howard I. "Suicide, Gender, and the Fear of Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Medical and Social Thought." *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 461-490.
- Kushner, Howard I. "Suicide, Gender, and the Fear of Modernity." In *Histories of Suicide: International Perspectives on Self-Destruction in the Modern World*, edited by John Weaver and David Wright, 19-52. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Laurent, Béatrice. "Hidden Iconography in *Found* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti." *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 15 (Fall 2006): 14-25.
- Lederer, David. "Suicide Statistics as Moral Statistics: Suicide, Sociology and the State." In *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives*, edited by James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons, 221-248. Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2013.
- Lee, Catherine. "Prostitution and Victorian Society Revisited: The Contagious Diseases Acts in Kent." *Women's History Review* 21, no. 2 (2012): 301-316.
- Leighton, Angela. "'Because Men Made the Laws': The Fallen Woman and the Woman Poet." *Victorian Poetry* 27, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 109-127.
- Lieberman, Lisa J. "Romanticism and the Culture of Suicide in Nineteenth-Century France." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33, no. 3 (July 1991): 73-85.
- Littlewood, Barbara and Linda Mahood. "Prostitutes, Magdalenes and Wayward Girls: Dangerous Sexualities of Working Class Women in Victorian Scotland." *Gender & History* 3, no. 2 (June 1991): 160-175.
- Logan, Deborah Anna. *Fallenness in Victorian Women's Writing: Marry, Stitch, Die, or Do Worse*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998.
- Lutz, Deborah. *Pleasure Bound: Victorian Sex Rebels and the New Eroticism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.
- MacDonald, Michael. "The Secularization of Suicide in England, 1660-1800." *Past and Present* 111 (May 1986): 50-100.
- MacPike, Lorelee. "The Fallen Woman's Sexuality: Childbirth and Censure." *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 27 (1984): 54-71.
- Mahood, Linda. "The Magdalene's Friend: Prostitution and Social Control in Glasgow, 1869-1890." *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, no. 1 (1990): 49-61.
- Mahood, Linda. *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the nineteenth century*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Mansell, Darrel. "William Holman Hunt's 'The Awakening Conscience' and James Joyce's 'The Dead.'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (Summer 1986): 487-491.
- Marcus, Steven. *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England*. New York: Basic Books, 1966.

- Marsh, Jan. *Pre-Raphaelite Women: Images of Femininity in Pre-Raphaelite Art*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.
- Mason, Michael. *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Mayer, David. "Encountering Melodrama." In *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, edited by Kerry Powell, 145-163. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Mayer, David. "Why Girls Leave Home: Victorian and Edwardian 'Bad-Girl' Melodrama Parodied in Early Film." *Theatre Journal* 58, no. 4 (December 2006): 575-593.
- McCalman, Iain, ed. *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- McGregor, O. R. "The Social Position of Women in England, 1850-1914: A Bibliography." *The British Journal of Sociology* 6, no. 1 (March 1955): 48-60.
- Miller, Ian. "Representations of Suicide in Urban North-West England, c.1870-1910: The Formative Role of Respectability, Class, Gender and Morality." *Mortality* 15, no. 3 (August 2010): 191-204.
- Miller, Jane. *Seductions: Studies in Reading and Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Mitchell, Sally. *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading, 1835-1880*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981.
- Mort, Frank. *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-moral politics in England since 1830*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.
- Mumm, Susan. "'Not Worse Than Other Girls': Convent-Based Rehabilitation of Fallen Women in Victorian Britain." *Journal of Social History* 29, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 527-546.
- Nead, Lynda. "Fallen Women and Foundlings: Rethinking Victorian Sexuality." *History Workshop Journal* 82, no. 1 (August 2016): 177-187.
- Nead, Lynn. "The Magdalene in Modern Times: The Mythology of the Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting." In *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*, edited by Rosemary Betterton, 73-92. London: Pandora Press, 1987.
- Nead, Lynda. *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988.
- Nead, Lynda. "Seduction, Prostitution, Suicide: On the Brink by Alfred Elmore." *Art History* 5, no. 3 (September 1982): 310-322.
- Nicoletti, L. J. "Downward Mobility: Victorian Women, Suicide, and London's 'Bridge of Sighs.'" *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 2, no. 1 (March 2004) Online at <http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2004/nicoletti.html>.
- Nicoletti, L.J. "Morbid Topographies: Placing Suicide in Victorian London." In *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke: Victorian and Edwardian Representations of London*, edited by Lawrence Phillips, 7-34. Amsterdam: Rodopi, DQR Studies in Literature, 2007.
- Nochlin, Linda. "Lost and Found: Once More the Fallen Woman." *The Art Bulletin* 60, no. 1 (March 1978): 139-153.
- Nord, Deborah Epstein. *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Nutt, Thomas. "Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report: the myth of the old poor law and the making of the new." *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 2 (May 2010): 335-361.

- O'Connell, Julia Grella. "Of Music, Magdalenes, and Metanoia in *The Awakening Conscience*." *Journal of Musicological Research* 24, no. 2 (2005): 123-143.
- Pearsall, Ronald. *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969.
- Perkin, Harold. *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969.
- Poovey, Mary. *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Poovey, Mary. *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Price, Richard. "Historiography, Narrative, and the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 2, Revisionisms (April 1996): 220-256.
- Rahill, Frank. *The World of Melodrama*. University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967.
- Rebeck, Theresa. "Your Cries Are In Vain: A Theory of the Melodramatic Heroine." PhD Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1989.
- Reed, Toni. *Demon-Lovers and Their Victims in British Fiction*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1988.
- Roberts, Helene E. "Marriage, Redundancy or Sin: The Painter's View of Women in the First Twenty-Five Years of Victoria's Reign." In *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, edited by Martha Vicinus, 45-76. Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1972.
- Rogers, Nicholas. "Carnal Knowledge: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century Westminster." *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 355-375.
- Rosador, Kurt Tetzeli von. "Victorian Theories of Melodrama." *Anglia* 95, no. 1-2 (1977): 87-114.
- Rosenman, Ellen Bayuk. "'Mimic Sorrows': Masochism and the Gendering of Pain in Victorian Melodrama." *Studies in the Novel* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 22-43.
- Roston, Murray. "Disrupted Homes: The Fallen Woman in Victorian Art and Literature." In *Homes and Homelessness in the Victorian Imagination*, edited by Murray Baumgarten and H. M. Daleski, 91-110. New York: AMS Press, 1998.
- Smart, Carol. "Disruptive bodies and unruly sex: The regulation of reproduction and sexuality in the nineteenth century." In *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality*, edited by Carol Smart, 7-32. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Staves, Susan. "British Seduced Maidens." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14, no. 2 (Winter 1980-81): 109-134.
- Steinbach, Susie L. "From Redress to Farce: Breach of Promise Theatre in Cultural Context, 1830-1920." *Journal of Victorian Culture* 13, no. 2 (2008): 247-276.
- Steinbach, Susie L. "The Melodramatic Contract: Breach of Promise and the Performance of Virtue." *Nineteenth Century Studies* 14 (2000): 1-34.
- Stiles, Peter. "Grace, Redemption and the 'Fallen Woman': *Ruth* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." *Gaskell Society Journal* 6 (January 1992): 58-66.
- Thomas, Julia. "The Adulteress's 'Egg': Infidelity and Maternity in *Past and Present*." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 21, no. 3 (1999): 371-394.

- Thomas, Keith. "The Double Standard." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 2 (April 1959): 195-216.
- Thomas, Kyla and David Gunnell. "Suicide in England and Wales 1861-2007: a time-trends analysis." *International Journal of Epidemiology* 39, no. 6 (December 2010): 1464-1475.
- Tönnies (Bochum), Merle. "Good/Bad Girls and Their Fathers: Female Sexuality, Patriarchal Power and the Direction of the Audience's Sympathy in 19th-Century British Melodrama." *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* 9, no. 2 (2002): 185-195.
- Trudgill, Eric. *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*. London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1976.
- Valverde, Mariana. "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse." *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 169-188.
- Versteegh, Adrian. "'Another Night that London Knew': Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Jenny' and the Poetics of Urban Insomnia." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 36, no. 5 (2014): 551-563.
- Vicinus, Martha. "'Helpless and Unfriended': Nineteenth-Century Domestic Melodrama." *New Literary History* 13, no. 1 (Fall 1981): 127-143.
- Vicinus, Martha, ed. *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*. Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1972.
- Wahrman, Dror. "Percy's Prologue: From Gender Play to Gender Panic in Eighteenth-Century England." *Past & Present* 159 (May 1998): 113-160.
- Walkowitz, Judith R. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Walkowitz, Judith R. "The Politics of Prostitution." *Signs* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 123-135.
- Walkowitz, Judith R. *Prostitution and Victorian society: Women, class, and the state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Watt, George. *The Fallen Woman in the 19th-Century English Novel*. Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1984.
- Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151-174.
- Winniffrith, Tom. *Fallen Women in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Wood, Christopher. *Victorian Panorama: Paintings of Victorian Life*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1976.

Appendix I – Melodramas¹

First performed	Last performed	Play	Playwright	Number of Productions
1820	1870	<i>The Lear of Private Life</i>	W. T. Moncrieff	37
1823	1866	<i>Clari; The Maid of Milan</i>	John Howard Payne	35
1827	1882	<i>Love's Frailties</i>	John J. Stafford	34
1828	1884	<i>Crazy Jane</i>	C. A. Somerset	12
1831	1866	<i>Victorine; I'll Sleep On It</i>	J. B. Buckstone	14
1832	1853	<i>Henriette the Forsaken</i>	J. B. Buckstone	8
1839	1897	<i>Michael Erle</i>	Thomas E. Wilks	62
1843	1876	<i>Grace Clairville</i>	Alexis Lewis	3

Play*Lear of Private Life***Performance Locations**

Aberdeen, Belfast, Birmingham, Bradford, Derby, Dublin, Exmouth, Hull, Ipswich, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Redditch, Sheffield, Uttoxeter, Wells, Wigan, Worcester

Clari; Maid of Milan

Belfast, Dublin, Edinburgh, Exeter, Hull, Leicester, London, Newcastle, Norwich, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Southampton, Sunderland

Love's Frailties

Belfast, Birmingham, Dublin, Edinburgh, Gloucester, Gravesend, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Middleborough, Norwich, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Southampton, York

*Crazy Jane*Birmingham, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Newcastle, Nuneaton, Sheerness
Bradford, Leicester, London, Newcastle, Norwich, Reading, Southampton, Worcester*Victorine; I'll Sleep On It*Belfast, Bradford, Brighton, Dublin, London, Newcastle, Reading
Bedlington, Belfast, Birmingham, Bishop Stortford, Bradford, Cardiff, Chester, Colchester, Dublin,*Henriette the Forsaken*

Dundee, Exeter, Glasgow, Gravesend, Huddersfield, Hull, Landport, Lambeth, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Lowestoft, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Scarborough, Seaham Harbour, Sheffield,

*Michael Erle*Southampton, Weymouth
London, St. Helens*Grace Clairville*

¹ This information is drawn from play advertisements and performance reviews published in nineteenth-century newspapers made available through the British Library Newspapers database. The number of productions refers to the times each play was *produced* by a theatre, not the times each play was *performed* at each theatre. Performance locations are also drawn from the British Library Newspapers database. As the database draws on a select 48 newspaper titles, this information provides only a partial picture of the popularity of these plays.

Appendix II – “Seduction and Suicide” Newspaper Accounts

Date	Headline	Newspaper	Woman’s Name
26 August 1823	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Martha Rose
3 September 1823	“Seduction and Suicide” ²	<i>Bury and Norwich Post</i>	Martha Rose
25 August 1824	“Seduction and Suicide” ³	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	n/a
21 December 1824	“Seduction and Suicide” ⁴	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Eliza Bates
27 December 1824	“Seduction and Suicide” ⁵	<i>Salisbury and Winchester Journal</i>	Eliza Bates
28 January 1825	“Seduction and Suicide” ⁶	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Christina Marie Briscole
3 February 1825	“Seduction and Suicide” ⁷	<i>Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette</i>	Christina Marie Briscole
5 February 1825	“Seduction and Suicide” ⁸	<i>Royal Cornwall Gazette</i>	Christina Marie Briscole
5 February 1825	“Seduction and Suicide” ⁹	<i>Westmorland Gazette</i>	Christina Marie Briscole
11 May 1825	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹⁰	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Rebecca Furler
12 May 1825	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹¹	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Rebecca Furler
12 May 1825	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹²	<i>Morning Post</i>	Rebecca Furler
8 February 1826	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹³	<i>Hereford Journal</i>	Rosina Aldridge
11 February 1826	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹⁴	<i>Westmorland Gazette</i>	Rosina Aldridge
25 September 1826	“Seduction and Suicide: A Fabrication” ¹⁵	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Miss Hyde ¹
25 September 1826	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹⁶	<i>Morning Post</i>	Miss Hyde
30 September 1826	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹⁷	<i>Royal Cornwall Gazette</i>	Miss Hyde
27 July 1827	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹⁸	<i>The Standard</i>	Ellen Logan
25 October 1827	“Seduction and Suicide” ¹⁹	<i>Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette</i>	Maria Southcott
3 April 1828	“Seduction and Suicide” ²⁰	<i>The Standard</i>	Elizabeth Bowdler
22 November 1828	“Seduction and Suicide” ²¹	<i>Westmorland Gazette</i>	Louisa Jade
30 September 1829	“Distressing Case of Seduction and Suicide” ²²	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Elizabeth Brockbridge
30 September 1829	“Distressing Case of Seduction and Suicide” ²³	<i>The Standard</i>	Elizabeth Brockbridge
1 October 1829	“Distressing Case of Seduction and Suicide” ²⁴	<i>Morning Post</i>	Elizabeth Brockbridge
2 October 1829	“Another Case of Seduction and Suicide” ²⁵	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Sophia Scott
17 October 1829	“Seduction and Suicide” ²⁶	<i>Western Times</i>	Elizabeth Brockbridge
10 March 1830	“Alleged Seduction and Suicide” ²⁷	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Amelia Dawson
22 November 1830	“Seduction and Suicide” ²⁸	<i>Morning Post</i>	n/a
11 August 1832	“Seduction and Suicide” ²⁹	<i>Royal Cornwall Gazette</i>	Sarah Sheffield
14 August 1832	“Shocking Case of Seduction and Suicide” ³⁰	<i>North Wales Chronicle</i>	Sarah Sheffield
4 November 1832	“Seduction and Suicide” ³¹	<i>The Examiner</i>	Emma Good
22 April 1833	“Alleged Seduction and Suicide” ³²	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Ann Archer
24 September 1834	“Seduction and Suicide” ³³	<i>The Standard</i>	Mary Wilson*
25 September 1834	“Seduction and Suicide” ³⁴	<i>Morning Post</i>	Mary Wilson*

¹ As the headline suggests, this account was fictional.

26 September 1834	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Belfast News-Letter</i>	Mary Wilson*
24 October 1834	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Chelmsford Chronicle</i>	Elizabeth Hatt
25 October 1834	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leeds Times</i>	Elizabeth Hatt
2 October 1836	“Affecting Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Champion and Weekly Herald</i>	Mary Ann Symons
30 October 1837	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Salisbury and Winchester Journal</i>	Caroline Hulford
6 January 1838	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leicester Chronicle</i>	Charlotte Wilford
7 April 1838	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leicestershire Mercury</i>	Jane Rodgers
23 September 1838	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>London Dispatch</i>	Elizabeth Collard
30 September 1838	“The Late Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Examiner</i>	Elizabeth Collard
14 October 1838	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette</i>	Mary Shepherd
14 March 1839	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Chartist</i>	Elizabeth Parry
7 April 1839	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Freeman’s Journal, etc.</i>	Susannah Pencott
25 September 1839	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Northern Star, etc.</i>	Lucy Brown
28 September 1839	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Hampshire Advertiser, etc.</i>	Lucy Brown
28 September 1839	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leeds Times</i>	Lucy Brown
28 September 1839	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reading Mercury, etc.</i>	Lucy Brown
29 September 1839	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Examiner</i>	Lucy Brown
30 November 1839	“Supposed Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	n/a
27 April 1840	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Salisbury and Winchester Journal</i>	n/a
1 May 1840	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Hull Packet</i>	n/a
14 May 1840	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Emma Anther
18 July 1840	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Hampshire Advertiser, etc.</i>	Emma Brown
10 April 1841	“Seduction and Suicide by Poison”	<i>Jackson’s Oxford Journal</i>	Maria Bull
6 May 1841	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>North Devon Journal</i>	Hannah Jones
6 July 1842	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Elizabeth Began
7 July 1842	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Freeman’s Journal, etc.</i>	Elizabeth Began
9 July 1842	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bristol Mercury</i>	Elizabeth Began
9 July 1842	“Caution to Female Servants.—Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reading Mercury, etc.</i>	Elizabeth Began
6 October 1842	“Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Emma Phillips
13 December 1842	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Emily Churchill
15 December 1842	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Freeman’s Journal, etc.</i>	Emily Churchill
16 December 1842	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Chelmsford Chronicle, etc.</i>	Emily Churchill
17 December 1842	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bristol Mercury</i>	Emily Churchill
17 December 1842	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leicester Chronicle, etc.</i>	Emily Churchill
17 December 1842	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leeds Times</i>	Emily Churchill
17 December 1842	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reading Mercury, etc.</i>	Emily Churchill
23 December 1842	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Essex Standard, etc.</i>	Emily Churchill
31 January 1843	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Elizabeth Heath

16 February 1843	“Desertion and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Louisa Elizabeth Chisney
16 February 1843	“Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Louisa Elizabeth Chisney
17 February 1843	“Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Louisa Elizabeth Chisney
18 February 1843	“Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Freeman’s Journal, etc.</i>	Louisa Elizabeth Chisney
19 February 1843	“Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly London Newspaper</i>	Louisa Elizabeth Chisney
26 February 1843	“Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly London Newspaper</i>	Louisa Elizabeth Chisney
20 April 1843	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Harriet Elizabeth Langlands
23 April 1843	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly London Newspaper</i>	Harriet Elizabeth Langlands
19 Mary 1843	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Sarah Wiilshire
23 December 1843	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Martha Low
1 April 1844	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Eliza Luke
6 April 1844	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Hampshire Advertiser, etc.</i>	Mary Griffin
6 April 1844	“Alleged Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reading Mercury, etc.</i>	Mary Griffin
13 April 1844	“Seduction and Suicide—Another Delinquent Clergyman”	<i>Leeds Times</i>	Charlotte Griffin? ²
28 July 1845	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Mary Ann Paine
23 August 1845	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Salisbury and Winchester Journal</i>	Emma Whale
23 August 1845	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leicestershire Mercury, etc.</i>	Emma Whale
8 September 1845	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Emily Ellis
6 February 1846	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Elizabeth Blake
31 August 1846	“Seduction and Suicide—Painful Case”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Sarah Anderson
26 October 1846	“Seduction and Suicide of a Young Female”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Mary Green
21 April 1847	“Love and Suicide”	<i>Manchester Courier, etc.</i>	Ann Fletcher
28 April 1847	“Distressing Case—Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Blackburn Standard</i>	n/a
15 May 1847	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bristol Mercury</i>	Catherine Pugh
15 May 1847	“Seduction and Suicide at Liverpool”	<i>Manchester Courier, etc.</i>	Catherine Pugh
15 May 1847	“Seduction and Suicide—Verdict of Felo De Se”	<i>Westmorland Gazette, etc.</i>	Catherine Pugh
9 November 1848	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bradford Observer</i>	Melicent Balch Maguire
7 April 1849	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reading Mercury, etc.</i>	Elizabeth Williams
29 July 1849	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	Rebecca Harvey
4 August 1849	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Western Times</i>	Rebecca Harvey
7 October 1850	“Coroner’s Inquest—Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Anne Francis
10 July 1853	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Emma Jane Rapson
30 July 1853	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Salisbury and Winchester Journal</i>	Margaret Hill
27 March 1854	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Mary Anne Dench
30 March 1854	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Nottinghamshire Guardian</i>	Mary Anne Dench
1 April 1854	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leeds Times</i>	Mary Anne Dench
1 April 1854	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Westmorland Gazette</i>	Mary Anne Dench

² This article, and the two articles above refer to the same case but report different names (Mary and Charlotte).

15 July 1854	“Seduction and Suicide at Sheffield”	<i>Leeds times</i>	Ann M’Canna
20 August 1854	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Eugenie L----
24 August 1855	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Elizabeth Oxford
26 August 1855	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Era</i>	Matilda Beacham
7 June 1856	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>North Wales Chronicle</i>	Henrietta Hill
1 August 1856	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Henrietta Hill
1 August 1856	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Henrietta Hill
2 August 1856	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>	Henrietta Hill
3 August 1856	“Shocking Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Era</i>	Miss Snell
3 August 1856	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	Henrietta Hill
10 August 1856	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Miss Snell
14 November 1856	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>	Caroline Hobbs
12 October 1857	“Supposed Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Sarah Bennett
12 October 1857	“Supposed Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Sarah Bennett
26 November 1857	“The Late Attempt at Murder, Seduction, and Suicide, at Stepey”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Mary Lewis ³
29 November 1857	“Attempt at Murder, Seduction, and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Mary Lewis
17 April 1858	“A Broken Heart—Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leeds Times</i>	Fanny Coxon
22 April 1858	“A Melancholy Story: Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bradford Observer</i>	Fanny Coxon
24 April 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Berrow’s Worcester Journal</i>	Fanny Coxon
28 July 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Louisa Channen
28 July 1858	“Seduction and Suicide—Disgraceful Affair”	<i>The Standard</i>	Louisa Channen
29 July 1858	“Seduction and Suicide—Strange Case”	<i>Liverpool Mercury</i>	Louisa Channen
31 July 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>North Wales Chronicle</i>	Louisa Channen
31 July 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Westmorland Gazette</i>	Louisa Channen
1 August 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Louisa Channen
1 August 1858	“Seduction and Suicide—Disgraceful Affair”	<i>The Era</i>	Louisa Channen
1 August 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	Louisa Channen
15 September 1858	“Seduction and Suicide at Cork”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	n/a
18 September 1858	“Seduction and Suicide at Cork”	<i>Hampshire Advertiser, etc.</i>	n/a
19 September 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	n/a
12 October 1858	“Seduction and Suicide in the City”	<i>The Standard</i>	Maria Drew
13 October 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Maria Drew
16 October 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>North Wales Chronicle</i>	Maria Drew
16 October 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reading Mercury, etc.</i>	Maria Drew
17 October 1858	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Maria Drew
19 October 1858	“The Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide in the City”	<i>The Standard</i>	Maria Drew

³ This headline describes the case of Mary Lewis, who committed suicide and attempted to kill her child after her seducer abandoned her.

20 October 1858	“Love, Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Cork Examiner</i>	Maria Drew
19 March 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser</i>	Hannah Hadall
16 July 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leeds Times</i>	Jane Bugg
16 August 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Daily News</i>	Caroline Holliday
17 August 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Birmingham Daily Post</i>	Caroline Holliday
20 August 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Examiner</i>	Caroline Holliday
21 August 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Caroline Holliday
21 August 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Era</i>	Caroline Holliday
21 October 1859	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Jemima Ann Harcourt
1 November 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Mary Meagher
3 November 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Mary Meagher
5 November 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Newcastle Guardian, etc.</i>	Mary Meagher
10 November 1859	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>North Devon Journal</i>	Mary Meagher
29 May 1861	“Seduction and Suicide at Leyland”	<i>Preston Guardian</i>	Mary Grime
31 May 1861	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Chronicle</i>	Mary Grimes ⁴
1 June 1861	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Derbyshire Times, etc.</i>	Mary Grime
1 June 1861	“Seduction and Suicide at Leyland”	<i>Westmorland Gazette, etc.</i>	Mary Grime
2 June 1861	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Mary Grimes
3 June 1861	“Distressing Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Caledonian Mercury</i>	Mary Grimes
6 June 1861	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>North Devon Journal</i>	Mary Grimes
8 September 1861	“Case of Seduction, and Suicide of the Seducer”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Margaret Hill ⁵
10 November 1861	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Jane Roe
6 April 1862	“Seduction and Suicide of a Ballet Girl”	<i>The Standard</i>	Ada Emma Williams
25 April 1862	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	n/a
27 April 1862	“Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide”	<i>Chelmsford Chronicle</i>	Margaret Elizabeth Halliday
2 May 1862	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bucks Herald</i>	n/a
3 May 1862	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bury and Norwich Post, etc.</i>	Miss Halliday
6 May 1862	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bristol Mercury</i>	Emma Webster
10 May 1862	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Western Times</i>	Emma Webster
10 May 1862	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Cork Examiner</i>	Emma Webster
13 June 1862	“Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide”	<i>Morpeth Herald</i>	Jane Pettefer
14 June 1862	“Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide”	<i>Aris’s Birmingham Gazette</i>	Jane Pettefer
27 September 1862	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	n/a
12 October 1862	“The Alleged Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	Amelia Castle
21 June 1863	“Alleged Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	Emily Neazer
27 September 1863	“Alleged Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Jane Southwood
22 January 1864	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morning Post</i>	Jane Fowler

⁴ Discrepancy in spelling (Grime/Grimes) is found in the newspapers.

⁵ This headline refers to the seduction of Margaret Hill and the suicide of her seducer, John Barker.

26 January 1864	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Western Times</i>	Jane Fowler
29 January 1864	“Seduction and Suicide of a Servant Girl”	<i>Hull Packet, etc.</i>	Jane Fowler
27 April 1864	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Dundee Courier & Argus</i>	Hannah Hulme
6 September 1864	“Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide”	<i>Bury and Norwich Post</i>	Eliza Hoe
21 September 1864	“Seduction and Suicide in Sheffield”	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>	Emma Twigg
24 September 1864	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>	Emma Twigg
8 October 1864	“Painful Case of Seduction, and Suicide of a Young Lady”	<i>Arts’s Birmingham Gazette</i>	Ann James
27 October 1864	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>The Standard</i>	Hannah Towse
8 June 1865	“Painful Case of Seduction and Suicide at Durham”	<i>Dundee Courier & Argus</i>	Elizabeth Ferguson
10 June 1865	“Painful Case of Seduction and Suicide at Durham”	<i>Newcastle Guardian, etc.</i>	Elizabeth Ferguson
10 June 1865	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Susannah Walker
31 May 1869	“Sad Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Birmingham Daily Post</i>	Clara Morton
31 May 1869	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Liverpool Mercury, etc.</i>	Clara Morton
31 May 1869	“Sad Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Dundee courier & Argus</i>	Clara Morton
31 May 1869	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Sheffield & Rotherham Independent</i>	Clara Morton
1 June 1869	“Painful Story of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Glasgow Herald</i>	Clara Morton
1 June 1869	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bury and Norwich Post, etc.</i>	Clara Morton
5 June 1869	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Illustrated Police News, etc.</i>	Clara Morton
5 June 1869	“Sad Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Leicester Chronicle, etc.</i>	Clara Morton
5 June 1869	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Berrow’s Worcester Journal</i>	Clara Morton
5 June 1869	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>York Herald</i>	Clara Morton
5 June 1869	“Story of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Buck’s Herald</i>	Clara Morton
26 September 1869	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	n/a
2 July 1871	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Harriet Gardner
15 July 1871	“The Sad Case of Seduction and Suicide in London”	<i>Leeds Times</i>	Jane H. Gardner ⁶
18 August 1871	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Evening Gazette</i>	n/a
19 August 1871	“Melancholy Case of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Western Mail</i>	Fanny Goss
27 August 1871	“Seduction and Suicide of a Young Lady”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Charlotte Bond
12 October 1872	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Western Times</i>	Dora Byron
8 July 1873	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Bury and Norwich Post, etc.</i>	Grace Thomas
26 July 1876	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Birmingham Daily Post</i>	Ellen Gissing
26 February 1877	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Liverpool Mercury, etc.</i>	Ellen Gissing
27 February 1877	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Sheffield & Rotherham Independent</i>	Ellen Gissing
28 February 1877	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Derbyshire Times, etc.</i>	Ellen Gissing
3 March 1877	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Morpeth Herald</i>	Ellen Gissing
27 February 1878	“Seduction and Suicide at Swansea”	<i>Western Mail</i>	Mary Connor
3 November 1878	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	Annie Conroy

⁶ This article, and the one above refer to the same woman, but report different names (Harriet/Jane).

13 April 1879	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	Elizabeth Adie
20 October 1879	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Evening News</i>	Ellen Avant
21 October 1879	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Huddersfield Daily Chronicle</i>	Ellen Avant
25 October 1879	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Illustrated Police News</i>	Ellen Avant
25 October 1879	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Huddersfield Daily Chronicle</i>	Ellen Avant
1 August 1880	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper</i>	Minnie Knowlden
14 May 1881	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Illustrated Police News, etc.</i>	Eliza Boyce
17 December 1881	“Heartless Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Birmingham Daily Post</i>	Emma Cummins
18 December 1881	“Alleged Seduction and Suicide of a Barmaid”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Emma Cummins
22 December 1881	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>North Devon Journal</i>	Emma Cummins
23 December 1881	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Royal Cornwall Gazette, etc.</i>	Emma Cummins
31 December 1881	“A Sad Story of Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Cheshire Observer</i>	Emma Cummins
1 January 1882	“Seduction, Desertion, and Suicide”	<i>Reynolds’s Newspaper</i>	Emma Cummins
8 May 1886	“Heartless Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Manchester Courier, etc.</i>	Ada Seibert
13 February 1887	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Birmingham Daily Post</i>	Charlotte Peck
13 May 1890	“Desertion and Suicide”	<i>Evening Telegraph and Star, etc.</i>	Harriet Mary Gibbs
14 January 1891	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Evening Telegraph and Star, etc.</i>	Charlotte Langford ⁷
7 July 1891	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>	Ellen Brown
8 July 1891	“Seduction and Suicide”	<i>Evening Telegraph and Star, etc.</i>	Ellen Brown
18 March 1896	“Seduction and Suicide”		Louisa Amelia Hammond

⁷ Charlotte Langford attempted but did not commit suicide.