

Modernity and ‘Baby-Farming’: The Privatised Commerce of Motherhood and Respectability in Victorian and Edwardian London

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Abstract

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The term 'baby-farming', first conceptualised during the late Victorian period, described informal arrangements of paid 'out-of-house' substitute mothering - either temporary nursing and fosterage or permanent adoption - that were believed to commonly result in the intentional neglect or murder of children. Since this period to the present, understandings of 'baby-farming' have persistently been developed through partial and reductionist narratives of 'women who kill', constructed almost entirely upon a handful of the most 'newsworthy' cases. By extension, late Victorian and Edwardian systems of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering - that dominant narratives have labelled 'baby-farming' - have been routinely misrepresented as wholly deviant and criminal.

This thesis reconceptualises these dominant constructions, and instead locates the practices associated with 'baby-farming' within a modern marketplace of motherhood where women could privately negotiate the stigmas and hardships of problematic parenthood and manage their respectable identities. This thesis provides a narrative social-history 'from below' that gives voice and agency to those directly involved in the practices of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering and who have so far remained largely 'hidden' in history. Unlike any other account, this thesis takes the personal advertisements of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering that brought the key parties to these transactions together as pivotal to making sense of this phenomenon in its entirety as a normative process. A sample of 838 of these adverts is used in conjunction with other archival data to reveal and explore how the Victorian and Edwardian obsession with respectable womanhood was key to the ways this marketplace manifested.

The practices, individuals, and all outcomes associated with 'baby-farming' are revealed as natural and rational products of the same ideologies and technologies of modernising society that made it 'civilised'. Those labelled 'baby-farmers' ultimately provided an essential service, a form of 'dirty work', that was central to the maintenance of 'respectable' society.

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Table of Contents

Chapter I - Introduction	6
1.1. Thesis Elements and Structure	15
 Chapter II - (Mis)Representations of ‘Baby-Farming’ and the ‘Baby-Farmer’	 21
2.1. Introduction	21
2.2. Dominant Conceptualisations, Past and Present	23
2.3. Reconsidering ‘Baby-Farming’	37
 Chapter III - A Framework for Approaching the Archives	 42
3.1. Introduction	42
3.2. Methodological Approach	43
3.3. Source Selection	47
3.4. Method of Data Collection and Analysis	54
i. Adverts for ‘Out-of-House’ Substitute Mothering	55
ii. Data on Criminal Cases	69
iii. Data of Wider Context	70
3.5. Reflexive Account	70
3.6. Conclusion	73
 Chapter IV - The Cult of Respectable Womanhood	 75
4.1. Introduction	75
4.2. The Mythology of Respectable Womanhood	78
i. Women, Femininity, and Maternalism	81
ii. Marriage, Sex, and Motherhood	86

iii. Women's Space, Power, and Work.....	92
4.3. The Commodification, Consumerisation, and Inculcation of Respectable Womanhood.....	99
4.4. Respectability and the Female Domestic Servant.....	103
4.5. Conclusion	106
Chapter V - A Crisis of Respectable Womanhood	110
5.1. Introduction	110
5.2. Representations of Deviant Womanhood.....	113
5.3. Representations of the 'Out-of-House' Substitute Mother	130
5.4. The Respectable Woman's Masquerade	136
5.5. Conclusion	141
Chapter VI - The Marketplace of Motherhood	145
6.1. Introduction	145
6.2. The Mediums of the Marketplace.....	148
6.3. Masquerades of Respectability within the Marketplace	160
6.4. The Carnavalesque Language of the Marketplace.....	171
6.5. Conclusion	190
Chapter VII - Negotiations of Respectability in the Marketplace.....	191
7.1. Introduction	191
7.2. Antithetical Discourses of 'Farming' in the Marketplace.....	196
7.3. Inducements and Satisfactions within the Marketplace.....	213
7.4. Conclusion	233

Chapter VIII - An Industry of Disposal	237
8.1. Introduction	237
8.2. Instrumental Rationality in the Marketplace	241
8.3. The 'Dirty Work' of the Marketplace	254
8.4. Conclusion	260
 Chapter IX - Conclusions and Contributions	 263
9.1. Summary of Aims, Rationale, and Findings	263
9.2. Contributions to the Body of Knowledge	268
i. Contributions to the History and Historiography of 'Baby-Farming' ...	269
ii. Contributions to Understandings of Particular Historical Constructs.	270
iii. Contributions to Gender Studies and Women's History	273
iv. Limitations and Future Research	275
 Appendix	 279
A. Catalogue of Criminal Cases, pre 1868	279
B. Catalogue of Criminal Cases, 1868-1909	281
 Bibliography	 298
Primary Sources	298
Secondary Sources	304

Chapter I: Introduction

What could possibly be easier than for a woman to agree to take a child for a fixed sum, and then destroy it and afterwards dispose of its body clandestinely - either into an area, the river, or on a waste piece of ground, with the darkness of night to cover her deed? (*British Medical Journal*, 18th April 1896^a: 994).

In January 1896, Miss Evalina Marmon, a barmaid from Cheltenham, gave birth to a daughter she named Doris Marmon (t18960518-451, 1986). For Evalina, the birth of her daughter outside of wedlock was a serious problem. In March, Evalina saw an advertisement in a newspaper which read: "Couple with no child, want care of or would adopt one: terms £10. Care of Ship Exchange, Bristol". Addressing herself initially as Mrs Scott, Evalina wrote to the advertiser to have her child adopted. After corresponding by letters with a woman who addressed herself to Evalina as Mrs Harding, the two women agreed to meet on the 31st of March in order to exchange the child and the payment. Evalina prepared the following agreement for Mrs Harding to sign:

I, Ann Harding, of 45, Kensington Road, Oxford Road, Reading, in consideration of £10 paid to me by E. E. Marmon, agree to adopt the child, and to bring it up as my own, without any further compensation over and above the £10 (ibid).

The agreement was also signed by Evalina's landlady, Martha Pockett, who witnessed the transaction. After Mrs Harding left Cheltenham for Reading by train, Evalina received one short letter on the 2nd of April 1896 stating that her baby was fine. On the 7th of April, Evalina was visited by a police constable and subsequently taken to the mortuary at Reading to identify her 10-week-old daughter (*The Illustrated Police News*, 18th April 1896: 3; *The Times*, 20th April 1896: 10; t18960518-451, 1986).

On the 18th May 1896, Evalina was brought before the Old Bailey to give evidence at the trial of Amelia Dyer who was indicted for the wilful murder of her daughter,

Doris Marmon (t18960518-451, 1986). Amelia, who had been found to have used a number of aliases including Harding, Thomas, and Stanfield, was committed for trial at the Old Bailey after the bodies of five infants retrieved from the River Thames around Reading and Caversham were linked to her (*The Times*, 20th April 1896: 10). Found guilty of murder and sentenced to death, Amelia was hanged on the 10th June 1896 as a so-called 'baby-farmer'. Whilst Amelia's story has become the stuff of myth within British crime history, the stories of women like Evalina Marmon, her problem, and the ways such problems were generally managed by women during the Victorian and Edwardian period has remained largely hidden in history.

For that reason, this thesis is focused upon understanding female-centred commercialised 'out-of-house' substitute mothering - privatised forms of temporary or permanent child care, fosterage, or adoption colloquially known as 'baby-farming' - during the late Victorian¹ and Edwardian period. Whilst generally encompassing all forms of privately arranged temporary and permanent 'out-of-house' child care, from its conception 'baby-farming' has principally been associated with child abuse, death, and homicide. A confounding catch-all description for various longstanding maternal services, first conceived by influential medical men and popularised by other voices of authority, the label served as a convenient recrimination for moralists and other social commentators rather than a commonplace description of the services entailed by those who engaged with them (Grey, 2009; Hinks, 2014). To date, understandings of the activities associated with 'baby-farming' have largely developed with regard to the most extreme criminal outcomes such as that described above.

Following a series of exposures from the late 1860s, those investigating systems of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering saw rates of infant mortality through such arrangements as uncommonly high (see for example *British Medical Journal*, 4th April 1868^a: 333). Investigations into high numbers of infant corpses found in public spaces were also commonly linked to systems of so-called 'baby-farming' (see for example MEPO 2/399²). For those who have wielded the term, 'baby-

¹ The late Victorian period is here defined as the latter half of the nineteenth century.

² *Murder - baby farming: Infant Life Protection Act, 1896-1898* details how 225 infant corpses were found by the Metropolitan Police in one year.

farming' has thus historically become synonymous with the systematic destruction of infants by mercenary or predatory women who starved, neglected, or outright murdered the children they had been paid to take care of. Accordingly, the practices have often been regarded, by both contemporary and contemporaneous commentators, as a form of 'infanticide for hire' (see for example *British Medical Journal*, 7th August 1869; *The Graphic*, 27th September 1879; Homrighaus, 2001; Jordan, 2012) or, more recently, as a form of female perpetrated 'serial-killing' (see for example Scott, 2005; Rautelin, 2013).

From the late 1860s, when the term entered popular imagination, to the early part of the twentieth century, images of 'baby-farming' evoked sporadic social panic and moral outrage as particular cases were brought to light within the media (Arnot, 1994; Bentley, 2005: 12). Despite efforts to regulate these practices through the development of Infant Life Protection legislation, these were deemed to have been largely ineffectual (see for example *British Medical Journal*, 21st March 1896^b: 747; Behlmer, 1982; Rose, 1986).

Widely regarded as having coined the term, perhaps the most enduring and influential conceptualisations of 'baby-farming' emerged from a sustained campaign conducted by the *British Medical Journal* from the late 1860s to the first decade of the twentieth century which made evident the gender and class biases of those medical men who defined the phenomenon, as well as their own agenda to establish themselves as the authoritative voice on matters of child-rearing (Homrighaus, 2001). Thus, from the outset, conceptualisations of 'baby-farming' have been imbued with an institutionally hostile and agenda-driven authoritative narrative that sought to wrest control of child-rearing practices from a female-centred framework into the regulation and control of male expertise.

Through a spotlighting of particularly sensational cases - most notably that of Amelia Dyer and Margaret Waters - authoritative commentaries from the late 1860s to the present have propagated an extremely partial and distorted understanding of 'baby-farming' established upon notions of female criminality and deviancy. As with general representations of women's criminality, deviancy, and violence, women labelled 'baby-farmers' have persistently been most commonly portrayed through narratives of pathology and monstrosity (Grey,

2008; Johnston, 2015; Beyer, 2015). By erroneous extension, the whole system of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering - of so-called 'baby-farming' - has also been characterised as generally pathological and monstrous. However, those few cases used to support this overarching monstrous and pathological narrative were ultimately just the 'tip of the iceberg'; the most extreme outcomes of a much larger and generally legitimate marketplace of motherhood. Accordingly, 'baby-farming' has largely only been understood through a lens of the extraordinary and abnormal with little regard for the normative processes, mechanisms, and relationships that underpinned the phenomenon in its entirety.

In their 'legitimate' form, the female-centred practices of substitute mothering connected with the term 'baby-farming' appear to have had an almost universal and long-lived historical tradition (Bradley, 1980; Klapisch-Zuber, 1985; Fildes, 1988; Hrdy, 1992; Lee, 2000; Lindsay, 2009). Examples of such age-old practices included that of 'wet-nursing', 'day-care', and permanent 'adoption' arrangements. Likewise, such practices have historically provided women with a primary source of remunerative employment with systems of 'in-house' substitute mothering - as most popularly embodied by the figure of the British 'nanny' - becoming one of the most prominent and well-respected sources of female labour during the nineteenth century (Gathorne-Hardy, 1985). Although the more 'criminal' practices associated with 'baby-farming' appear to have been particularly frequent during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, archival records reveal that these too were not wholly unique to this era (see Appendix A). What made 'baby-farming' unique to this period was how the practices of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering manifested within a unique constellation of social, cultural, and historical factors.

Particularly, through industrialisation, the long-standing 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services became increasingly organised within the modern marketplace and by discourses of respectability. Rather than functioning by word-of-mouth in close-knit social networks, these services began to operate more openly through modernised technologies in order to cater for mass society. Most evidently, an examination of the personal advertising sections of archived newspapers reveals a proliferation of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services

from the beginning of the nineteenth century through to the beginning of the twentieth century.

By the time Amelia Dyer was executed in 1896, having been found guilty of the wilful murder of Evalina Marmon's daughter, it was widely believed among authoritative commentators that women who occupied themselves in practices associated with 'baby-farming' commonly used such personal advertisements in order to acquire unwanted infants for a payment they would then kill or allow to die (see for example Dickson, 1870; Waugh, 1890; *British Medical Journal*, 21st December 1895: 1584). Like other notable cases before her, during her trial, prosecutors revealed how Amelia had repeatedly paid for advertisements like the following to be published in popular newspapers:

HIGHLY Respectable Married Couple wish to ADOPT CHILD; good country home; premium required, very small. – Home, Times and Mirror Office. 9421m27. (Thames Valley Police Museum, 2018).

As details of Amelia's case emerged, it became a common yet largely speculative belief that she had been engaged in the systematic murder of infants procured through personal advertisements for a number of decades prior to her arrest and may have killed a substantial number during this period (see for example *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 12th April 1896: 11; *Illustrated Police News*, 18th April 1896: 3). This is a belief that has generally persisted to the present day (see for example Abbott, 2003; Gurian, 2011; Perrini, 2012; Wikipedia, 2018). The extent to which such advertisements can be identified in Victorian and Edwardian newspapers has led some recent commentators, such as Williams (2016), to speculate that their profusion throughout this period indicates that the crimes bracketed by the term 'baby-farming' were far more prominent than reflected in the criminal records.

The volume of such adverts during this period, and their association with so-called 'baby-farming' and child homicide, has led many contemporary commentators to believe the period witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of female-perpetrated mass killing, with each advertisement essentially depicting the 'calling card' of a female 'serial-killer'. For instance, Rennell (2007: n.d.) has argued, "it is hard to comprehend a time when there were dead babies by the

thousands, droves of missing Madelines, scores of Myra Hindleys, and hardly anyone battered an eyelid". From the period to the present, many commentators have associated the practices of 'baby-farming' with a largely obscured modern 'holocaust of infanticide' or 'massacre of the innocents' (see for example *British Medical Journal*, 4th April 1868^a: 333; 7th August 1869: 141; Rose, 1986).

Where all other accounts have largely overlooked the importance of these adverts as a pivotal source of primary data, this thesis has been developed through an in-depth analysis of a sample of 838 London-based advertisements between 1800-1919 in order to understand the phenomenon in its entirety. As these adverts are entirely indistinguishable from those written by Amelia Dyer, or any other women found guilty of crimes associated with 'baby-farming', it seems remarkable, if not entirely absurd, that each advert was authored by a woman who intended, and possibly succeeded, in criminally disposing of the child she had offered to adopt.

Therein lies the fundamental flaw in the general understandings of practices labelled 'baby-farming' that have been formed through both contemporary and contemporaneous conceptions. That is, their overwhelming association of the phenomenon of 'baby-farming' with deviant women, criminal intent, and criminal activity. Having emerged in their modernised form by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the idea that such practices were fundamentally deviant and criminal and yet continued to be generally tolerated by Victorian and Edwardian society until the beginning of the twentieth century is entirely incongruous.

Despite their frequent condemnation by authoritative disputants of 'baby-farming' such as the *British Medical Journal*, the continued presence of such advertisements for over a century testifies to their enduring public appeal and normal appearance within general 'non-elite' society. As demonstrated through personal advertising columns of popular newspapers like the *Morning Post*, 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services remained a conventional and fairly mundane feature of everyday life. Despite various concerted efforts by authoritative bodies to disband and defame the practices they termed 'baby-farming', women who engaged themselves as 'out-of-house' substitute mothers did all they could to normalise their activity and distance their public

conceptualisation from the adverse images of child neglect and 'infanticide for hire' that authoritative commentators sought to propagate. As such, the now-dominant conceptualisation of 'baby-farming' advanced by those in hegemonic positions of social commentary was generally at odds with the perception held by the contemporaneous general public.

What has come to be known of the practices subsumed within the term 'baby-farming' has thus generally developed upon the social commentaries of those who morally condemned and interpreted the matter generally, as well as particular cases, from positions of power and influence. Far less attention has been paid to how these practices were understood by those with direct experience and involvement. Central to the premise of this thesis is that the disjunction and privileging of hegemonic conceptualisations of 'baby-farming' from the perceptions of ordinary people who experienced these practices first-hand has produced a distorted representation of this fascinating, yet complex, marketplace. A marketplace that was together normative, deviant, and criminal. A marketplace that in many ways began with the personal advertisements for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering.

The omissions of particular voices and their significance to making sense of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices within late Victorian and Edwardian society, and how the systems underpinning these services at times led to destructive or 'criminal' outcomes, have thus produced simplistic images of convenience that have demonised, criminalised, and pathologised such women. Rather than adequately attending to the complexities and nuances engendered by the wider social, cultural, and historical context, contemporary understandings of the phenomenon popularly termed 'baby-farming' have often been misled by those hegemonic voices and simplistic meanings that ultimately gained authority in the criminal conversation of 'baby-farming'.

This thesis applies the tools and analytical frameworks of the social sciences to empirically develop a revised social history of the phenomenon now understood by the term 'baby-farming', especially how these practices - both in their 'legitimate' and 'criminal' forms - developed within the particular context of late Victorian and Edwardian society. Generated upon a critical approach to existing

conceptualisations of the social activity bracketed by the term ‘baby-farming’, the thesis examines so far underestimated elements of modernising British society - such as the ideologies of respectability, the technologies of industrialism, and the mentality of capitalism - that were central to the organisation and development of ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering practices, as well as their more ‘criminal’ manifestations. By attending to voices that have so far been overlooked in efforts to make sense of the ‘criminal’ aspects of this phenomenon, the thesis presents a narrative history that speaks primarily from the perspectives of those who shared a ‘grass roots’ experience of these practices.

Concerning the statement made within the opening quotation of this section, this thesis demonstrates that, whilst a subsidiary outcome of this marketplace, those who did kill children within this system were able to do so ‘with ease’ due to the structures of society in which they operated. Centrally, it is shown how governing ideologies of respectability and the architecture of the marketplace functioned to subjectively construct certain children as ‘non-children’, as dehumanised problems to be dealt with and objects of trade. This point will be returned to in detail in Chapter Eight when the thesis comes full circle to provide a revised narrative for why *some* children were disposed of through criminal means within this industry and how this was a subsidiary element of an otherwise legitimate marketplace of motherhood and stigma removal.

By fixating solely upon the criminal aspects of this phenomenon, commentaries on ‘baby-farming’ have overwhelmingly focused upon the ‘service provider’ party of this interactive transaction - the so-called ‘baby-farmers’. Whilst there has been a general recognition that ‘service users’ were typically women jeopardised by the shame and social hardship caused by single motherhood and ‘illegitimacy’ (see for example Behlmer, 1982; Rose, 1986; Knelman, 1998; Homrighaus, 2003), these women have nevertheless remained largely unknown and voiceless. Even so, some, such as Sweet (2001: 159), have claimed these women all knew “the payment was made for the nursemaid to starve an unwanted child to death”. Similarly, Homrighaus (2003: 172-3) argued they “willingly believed the lies that the baby farmers told them... They made use of criminal baby farmers’ services and then, when the baby farmers faced imprisonment, claimed that they had been hoodwinked”. However, such definitive and generalising assertions have been

made without any evident detailed analysis of primary data relating to the experience of the practices associated with 'baby-farming' that adequately considers the perspective or voice of the service user.

The thesis thus delineates the interpersonal relationships and functioning of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering in late Victorian and Edwardian London. Established primarily as a private means to economically manage women's stigma and social exclusion, such services are examined in relation to the social rules and processes of Victorian and Edwardian society that bound and separated its members along tenuous lines of respectability. The focus on the mechanisms of stigma and social exclusion relate to the rise and endurance of 'Victorian culture', its sensibilities, technologies, and customs - most particularly, its ideologies and structures of respectable womanhood. The emergence and development of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices in this modern manifestation are therefore charted through their reconstitution for mass 'civilised' society and their potential to culminate in 'criminal' outcomes.

Although boundaries need be placed upon the extent to which this thesis may be extended beyond an explanation of the 'baby-farming' phenomenon within late Victorian and Edwardian London, there is nevertheless far greater relevancy to the arguments presented within the following treatise. Primarily, the ensuing theorisation is applicable to how representations of women's violence more generally should be examined critically and how it may be conceptualised in ways other than 'traditional' narratives that deny women's agency, femininity, or humanity (cf. Seal, 2010). Moreover, it demonstrates the importance of historical archival work and how, especially with the proliferation of digitised sources, this can develop histories of gender and give voice and agency to the 'non-elite' who have so far remained hidden and submissive in history (cf. Bhattacharya, 1983; Walkowitz, 1992; Bland and Rowold, 2015; Groot, 2018). Through detailed excavation of the archives, dominant historical narratives often simply taken as truth may be challenged or rewritten.

To the author's knowledge, this is the only thesis to trace the phenomenon known as 'baby-farming' as a relatively normal event-driven process that was not only relevant to those women found guilty of murder and labelled 'baby-farmers'.

Instead, the process involved a transaction and thus also concerned the interaction between all those who dealt with these women. It therefore involved a number of key parties - centrally, the service provider, the service user, and the 'object' of the transaction. Similarly, this thesis appears to be the first to identify the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering as singularly pivotal to making sense of this marketplace of motherhood as they constituted the starting point that brought these key parties together and reflect the actual words and identities of those involved. Although the adverts have been acknowledged and discussed elsewhere (see for example Homrighaus, 2003; Hinks, 2015; Pearman, 2017), this is the only thesis to use the adverts to conduct a rigorous, empirically-based analysis of the cause and meaning of the marketplace and of why *some* women killed children in the capacity of an 'out-of-house' substitute mother that is not based solely on authoritative, individualistic, and myopic criminal narratives.

By beginning an examination of this process with the adverts, the thesis identifies the core infrastructure and ideologies by which the practices associated with 'baby-farming' operated. Centrally, it analyses how 'respectability' as it concerned women was expressed through the adverts and how it functioned to direct all associated consecutive behaviours. It is only through a comprehensive analysis of these adverts that all the behaviours and practices associated with 'baby-farming' - including the possible killing of children - are revealed as a natural product of the modern commerce of motherhood and respectability and the cultural and economic practices involved in managing stigma through this marketplace.

1.1. Thesis Elements and Structure

The following chapter (Chapter Two) critically reviews the existing literature relating to representations and explanations of 'baby-farming' and the 'baby-farmer' to reveal how this phenomenon has so far been persistently misconstrued. Whilst demonstrating how women labelled 'baby-farmers' have generally been constructed through the same flawed narratives traditionally used

to make sense of women's deviancy, violence, and criminality more generally, the central argument of this chapter is that 'baby-farming' has erroneously been overwhelmingly associated with female deviancy and criminality. Existing representations and explanations have been extremely myopic by focusing only on the criminal aspects of this phenomenon, typically in reference to the same few cases, without sufficiently attending to the vast legitimate marketplace of which instances of child death were but one collateral outcome. By only focusing on the most extreme outcomes of this marketplace, commentators have persistently propagated impressions of 'baby-farming' based on conceptions of abnormality that have either demonised, pathologised, or victimised the women involved. Such conceptions have reproduced the same stereotypical and derogatory narratives of the women associated with 'baby-farming' that have denied them both voice and agency and have established them as either 'non-women' or 'non-criminals'.

Chapter Three then details the unique and innovative approach taken within this thesis in order to better understand the late Victorian and Edwardian marketplace of motherhood, how 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services operated within this modern marketplace, and how the adverts are the pivotal source of primary data to making sense of all the practices and relationships that have become associated with the term 'baby-farming'. The chapter outlines the methodological principles, circumscriptions, and objectives adopted in response to the critique of Chapter Two and specifies the different types of primary data underpinning this thesis, their sources, as well as a justification for their use and their limitations. It then catalogues exactly how a sample of adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering was collected as well as the preliminary method of analysis that was used to identify modernity's 'respectability' as it concerned women as the key theoretical mechanism by which these adverts and the subsequent practices and relationships they entailed may be understood. Lastly, it provides a short reflective account of why this topic had been chosen and how it has been approached.

Having identified Victorian and Edwardian 'respectability' as it concerned women as the central starting point to making sense of this phenomenon, Chapter Four deconstructs the different facets by which this ideological construction operated

in order to develop the theoretical framework through which all other data related to this phenomenon may be analysed in later chapters. In doing so, it details the 'normal' terrain in which Victorian and Edwardian women were ideologically constituted and the social structures of 'respectable' society that guided how they lived, thought, and behaved. Centrally, this chapter reveals how bourgeois hegemony essentially constructed a cult of respectable womanhood that placed respectable motherhood and maternal domesticity at the very centre of utopian visions of 'civilised' society and established narrow margins between the 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. As Victorian and Edwardian consumer society developed, the ideological images and lifestyles of this cult of respectable womanhood became increasingly commodified and greater efforts were made to inculcate women of different social standing, such as female domestic servants, to different degrees of membership. The chapter thus establishes that all women involved in these transactions were ostensibly 'respectable', and thus fundamentally 'normal'.

Mirroring Chapter Four, Chapter Five continues to develop the theoretical framework of women's 'respectability' that will be utilised in all successive chapters by deconstructing its antithesis, that being 'disreputable' womanhood or a woman's crisis of respectability. Here, it is demonstrated how a woman's sexual virtue was central to her inclusion within the cult of respectable womanhood. Similarly, it is revealed how certain forms of labour entirely confounded the ideological dogma of the cult of respectable womanhood, thus severely constraining what a woman could do outside of marital economic security. Importantly, the consequences of being publicly labelled as 'disreputable' are shown to have had potentially devastating implications on a woman's ability to embody the ideal of a respectable wife-mother, thus placing her in a perilous position of social and economic destitution. Centrally, this chapter reveals respectable womanhood to be fundamentally performative and illusory, far removed from the muddy and bloody realities generally experienced by women. Successfully 'passing' as a respectable woman meant knowing how to play by the rules outlined in Chapter Four, knowing what information to disclose or keep secret, and generally how to manage and present a respectable identity when necessary in order to retain membership within respectable society, reap its

benefits, and avoid its castigations. This chapter thus establishes the privatised services of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering as a fundamental mechanism by which women faced with a discreditable, typically 'illegitimate', pregnancy or child could manage the stigma this would accrue and maintain their respectable identity.

Having established in Chapter Five the general need or demand for mechanisms by which women could negotiate their respectable identities in relation to their sexual virtue, legitimate procreation, and paramount prospects as a respectable wife-mother, Chapter Six reveals the forms by which the marketplace catered for a woman's crisis of respectability. Through a detailed examination of the personal advertising space of the *Morning Post*³, it is shown how adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering functioned as a virtual conduit of communication between women engaged in the private management of the crisis of respectability through problematic parenthood. It is demonstrated how masquerades of respectability were a fundamental aspect of the marketplace and how the carnivalesque language of the marketplace functioned to maintain a respectable and legitimate 'front' for all transactions and interactions. By creating an ambiguous space of possibility and opportunity, the marketplace protected its interactants from the fundamentally discrediting nature of their cooperative strategies of problem management.

Chapter Seven then examines the discursive roots of 'farming' children to further explore the strategies employed by 'out-of-house' substitute mothers to legitimate and normalise their services against the antithetically damning images associated with 'baby-farming'. By further decoding the advertisements, it is revealed how they operated upon ideologies and meanings of respectability to co-construct idealised and illusory images of respectable child care and motherhood that served as totemic inducements, satisfactions, and assurances within the marketplace. Importantly, the co-constructed meaning of these adverts is demonstrated to have contained no coded message for 'infanticide for hire' as others have previously suggested. Centrally, this chapter reveals how the adverts facilitated negotiations of respectability and identity work in transactions of

³ As will be discussed in the methodology section, the *Morning Post* was one particularly prominent publisher of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering advertisements.

motherhood within the marketplace. Presenting the entire interaction as a form of identity work, it is shown how transactions were fundamentally founded upon a caricatured form of respectability that was liminal to the transaction. As tenuous as this may have been, it was all the service user had available as a rational foundation for their action. The service users - as with anybody now seeking to understand these transactions - could only infer so far as to the final outcome for the child. It is entirely unreasonable to presume that the majority of children exchanged through these transactions met ends far removed from that which was agreed through the negotiation. It is however *only* those minority of cases that were demonstrably criminal that shed any light on how these transactions could lead to vastly different outcomes. These cannot be used to generalise about the outcomes of the marketplace as a whole, only the processes that underpinned them.

Returning then to what can only be considered as the 'tip of the iceberg', Chapter Eight analyses the criminal outcomes through the contextualised theoretical framework constructed throughout the thesis in order to explain how and why *some* women killed children in their role as an 'out-of-house' substitute mother. Contrary to previous accounts that have made sense of this behaviour through individualistic frameworks of pathology or 'evilness', this chapter reveals how when placed within the wider context, such acts were themselves 'normal' and 'logical' by-product of the same elements of modernising society that made it 'civilised'. It is therefore shown how such practices were a mundane extension of what was fundamentally an industry of disposal, an industry centred around stigma removal that helped women alleviate themselves of a discreditable 'problem'. This industry is revealed as a form of female-centred 'dirty work' that functioned as an essential part of the general maintenance of modern 'respectable' and 'civilised' society.

Finally, Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by providing a summation of the aims, rationale, and key findings as well as its various original contributions to knowledge. Key contributions are discussed in relation to the history and historiography of 'baby-farming', to understandings of particular historical constructs, and to gender studies and women's history. This chapter also

includes a reflection and identification of limitations as well as a discussion of further areas for research.

Chapter II: (Mis)Representations of 'Baby-Farming' and the 'Baby-Farmer'

BABY-FARMING, the opprobrium of Britain, the darkest stain upon our religious character as a nation, continues to flourish. Babies in dozens are sent literally as lambs to the slaughter. The slaughterers are vile old harridans, in whom every spark of womanhood has long been extinguished; wretches... hateful and devilish Canidias, who watch the last agonising convulsions which end the little life with the same coolness as they would watch the struggles of a drowning fly, and who rejoice when all is over that they are now ready for another piece of murder. This frightful race of witches and hags must be exterminated (*Islington Gazette*, Friday 15th July 1870).

2.1. Introduction

When those in hegemonic positions of late Victorian society began to speak of 'baby-farming' from the late 1860s, understandings of these privatised forms of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering were overwhelmingly dictated by narratives of female deviancy and villainous abnormality. Since its initial conceptualisation, women associated with 'baby-farming' have persistently been considered in the same problematic and limiting manner that 'women who kill' are conventionally understood - typically as 'mad', 'bad', or as 'victim' (Appignanesi, 2008; Weare, 2013), and consequently either as 'non-women' or 'non-criminals' (Worrall, 1989). Such narratives locate behavioural explanations primarily within the individual, largely disregard the wider context that may have shaped particular patterns of criminal behaviour, and routinely deny those involved either voice or agency (Seal, 2010; Hodgkinson, Prins and Stuart-Bennett, 2017).

However, in the specific instance of making sense of 'baby-farming', this leads to a fundamental problem which concerns the frequent underlying assumptions of

abnormality, deviancy, and criminality in the marketplace as a whole. Through spotlighting a handful of notable cases, narratives of 'baby-farming' often perpetuate a now often taken-for-granted, yet highly distorted, impression that criminal intent and criminal action was systemic within these systems of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering. As shall be shown, by routinely emphasising and dramatising the possible 'madness' or 'badness' of a very small minority of women most indisputably found guilty of murdering children whilst in the role of 'out-of-house' substitute mother, an extremely hyperbolised impression of 'baby-farming' has led many to view these practices as wholly criminal, monstrous, or pathological.

Although the use of traditional narratives of 'women who kill' to make sense of 'baby-farming' will be shown to be highly problematic, the fundamental flaw that forms the core of this preliminary critique is that they are extremely myopic. By whichever narrative, be it of 'madness', 'badness', or 'victimhood', those accounts centrally constructed upon women found guilty of murder automatically exclude various other pertinent social actors, practices, and outcomes from the lens of investigation. By implicitly associating 'baby-farming' with 'women who kill' and female abnormality more generally, such narratives entirely miss the point that the overwhelming majority of late Victorian and Edwardian 'out-of-house' substitute mothers and the services they provided were not fundamentally murderous, criminal, or deviant⁴. Similarly, by automatically associating 'baby-farming' with child destruction, such narratives completely fail to notice the central function, necessity, and normality of such services.

This chapter continues in the following section by critically reviewing how the phenomenon described as 'baby-farming' has been routinely (mis)understood from its initial conceptualisation to the present in both scholarly and popular accounts. Having established the rationale for why this phenomenon needs to be considered differently, Section Three will then begin to establish how this should be done.

⁴ This point has been better acknowledged in some admirable recent research related to 'baby-farming' (see for example Grey, 2008; Hinks, 2014) that has focused upon the discursive representations of such women, but not, as in this thesis, with also comprehensively explaining and making sense of how and why the practices associated with this term manifested as they did during this period.

2.2. Dominant Conceptualisations, Past and Present

When examining the literature that has sought to explain this phenomenon, there are a number of fairly disparate prominent voices that have constructed understandings of the practices termed 'baby-farming'. These can generally be divided into voices of the present and those of the past, but also by those which may roughly be considered 'scholarly' and those more 'popular'. With these distinctions often blurred, what unites these different strands of discourse is that they all generally speak as voices of authority, rather than relating and analysing the voices and perspectives of those directly involved.

As 'scholarly' and 'popular' accounts and explanations of 'baby-farming' often share similar motifs, the following critical discussion will be structured by the discursive themes rather than by the 'legitimacy' of their authors. Due to this, all notable voices related to 'baby-farming' are considered, even those that may usually be considered invalid in an academic context. The point is to reveal how dominant conceptualisations of 'baby-farming' have been persistently constructed through confined, myopic, and often flawed, perspectives. This is not to discount the invaluable contributions made by many contemporary academics whose works will be clearly signposted throughout this critique and referenced throughout the thesis.

Additionally, although the following section will cover much of the discursive construction of the term 'baby-farming', specifically in relation to its association with criminality and women who kill, an extensive examination of the historical discourse of 'farming' children is included later in Chapter Seven. The present section is solely focused on critically analysing the different narrative tropes that have been persistently used from the past to the present and by a variety of different commentators to make sense of 'baby-farming'.

The dominant, now implicit, and ultimately inaccurate association of the 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices labelled 'baby-farming' with child destruction can be traced to the term's earliest conceptualisation in late Victorian England. During the late 1860s, the *British Medical Journal* published a series of

articles, often with definitive titles like ‘BABY-FARMING AND BABY-MURDER’ (25th January 1868^b: 75; 8th February 1868^c: 127; 22nd February 1868^d: 175; 29th February 1868^e: 197), which set out to investigate and delineate this alleged “system of organised murder” (1st August 1868^f: 121). This early overarching narrative of murderous criminality was quickly adopted by other prominent and influential commentators, such as social reformer Florence Davenport-Hill who claimed ‘baby-farming’ “desires to destroy” (1869: 5), moralist Reverend Benjamin Waugh⁵ who admonished the “deadly trade” of “baby-killing” (1890: 12), and J. Thompson Dickson who explained to London’s Dialectical Society that the profession of the so-called ‘baby-farmer’ “is more properly defined as that of murderer than the nurse” (1870: 3).

This dominating theme of ‘baby killing’ has continued to the present day in both scholarly and popular accounts. Within the academic literature, it has been associated with a form of ‘infanticide for hire’ (see for example Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973; Knelman, 1998; Homrighaus, 2001; Jordan, 2012), ‘serial-killing’ (see for example Rautelin, 2013), systemic and systematic abuse, neglect, and murder (see for example Williams, 2016), and described as a “murderous form of an old institution” (Haller, 1989: 1). Similar conceptualisations have also pervaded within more popular ‘true crime’ accounts (see for example Rattle and Vale, 2011; Perrini, 2012; Eubank, 2015; Buckley, 2016), and amateur crime history websites (see for example History by the Yard, 2015; VL McBeath, 2018) which generally consider ‘baby-farming’ through the lens of female deviancy, ‘serial-killing’, and monstrosity.

Culturally, the idea of women killing children fundamentally disturbs modern conceptualisations and sentiments of female nature, of motherhood, and of basic social and power relations, and remains one of the most powerful ways for women to transgress ideologies of ‘normal’ womanhood (Jenks, 2003; Seal, 2010; O’Neill and Seal, 2012). As with understandings of women who kill more generally, there has been a persistent attributive bias within accounts of ‘baby-farming’ to construct causal explanations based upon inherent characteristics of individual actors, rather than upon the wider context in which they operated.

⁵ A Protestant social reformer and campaigner who established the UK’s charitable organisation of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Consequently, a general overall impression of 'baby-farming' as intrinsically criminal, monstrous, and pathological, has been propagated through routine reference to personal biographies and speculative psycho-analytical profiles of selective cases that support an impression of 'abnormal' womanhood.

Most notable is the case of Amelia Dyer who, since her execution, has been constructed as the archetypal monstrous and pathological 'baby-farmer' and in recent years has acquired an almost mythical status as one of history's most prolific 'serial-killers' (see for example Wikipedia, 2018). The persistent spotlighting of single cases like Amelia's creates an impression that they were in some way of singular importance to making sense of this phenomenon. The erroneous premise to this understanding is that the explanation for the deaths of children by 'out-of-house' substitute mothers can be located in the 'nature' of those few women who were most indubitably found to have killed children.

As Amelia's case provided some of the most 'newsworthy' (Jewkes, 2004) and seemingly incontrovertible evidence of systematic child murder, she has since become a most notable one-dimensional figurehead that many contemporary representations of 'baby-farming' generally invoke. As shall now be shown, where contemporary narratives of the 'madness' and 'badness' of 'baby-farming' have been most sustained with reference to Amelia Dyer, some recent scholarly accounts have also spotlighted the case of Margaret Waters to develop a similarly partial and problematic narrative of this phenomenon that relies exclusively upon themes of women's 'victimhood'.

As modern Western 'norms' of femininity and assumed gender characteristics largely concern notions of nurturance, gentleness, and a predisposition towards maternal care, the abusing, neglecting, harming, or killing of children by women is often, in itself, regarded as an indication of a defective nature and psychiatric issues (Wilczynski, 1997; Schwartz and Isser, 2000). The idea of mental disturbance has invariably remained an implicit theme in accounts of 'baby-farming' generally and 'baby-farmers' specifically. Most problematic has been an enduring association by many commentators - both then and now - of 'baby-farming' as a form of 'infanticide'. For instance, the *British Medical Journal* (7th August 1869: 141) wrote:

But, if we are struck by the destruction of life by criminal abortion, what can we say of the holocausts by infanticide, a crime which there is too much reason to know has reached a fearful height? The various forms in which it is perpetrated: direct violence, drowning, baby farming...

More recently, Homrighaus (2001: 350), from an academic standpoint, represented 'baby-farming' as "a form of infanticide performed on unwanted children by hired nurses in nineteenth century Britain". Similarly, Jordan (2012: 30) described 'baby-farming' as "a form of infanticide with a disarming name". Writing for a popular audience, Perrini (2012: 67) appropriated the term "serial infanticide".

A major complication around the classification of 'infanticide' and its ability to explain the behaviour of women who killed in the capacity of 'out-of-house' substitute mothers lays in its potential a-historical application, the ambiguity of the term's meaning, and its ill-defined usage. Most relevant to its contemporary usage in relation to 'baby-farming' concerns the legal definition within the criminal law of England and Wales where it exists as an offence in its own right and a partial defence to murder that was brought into effect following the 1922 and 1938 Infanticide Acts.

Under the English 1922 and 1938 Infanticide Acts⁶, whether by wilful act or omission, infanticide can apply to a biological mother who causes the death of her child whilst they are aged under 12 months. Rather than being treated as murder, this offence may receive a partial defence and be dealt with as manslaughter on account of the mother's balance of mind being disturbed during the period of the offence due to having not recovered from the effects of childbirth and lactation.

Before the 1922 and 1938 Infanticide Acts, when the Victorians used the term 'infanticide' in a legal context it was typically used to describe an unmarried mother who killed her baby immediately or a few days after birth due, it was most commonly proposed, to social factors rather than biological or mental disturbance (Higginbotham, 1992; Ward, 1999). The legal conceptualisation of infanticide as a crime in its own right as distinct from murder did however begin to obtain

⁶ With amendments by s 57 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

significance in Victorian England (see for example The Royal Commission on Capital Punishment 1866, para. 15) which referred to the infliction of grievous bodily harm to a child within seven days of birth resulting in its death.

It was in fact from the first cases that led to the 'panic' of 'baby-farming' that infanticide came to be considered, largely through newspaper accounts, not only with desperate unwed mothers but as the product of a commercialised system (Behlmer, 1982). This conceptualisation is clearly more attuned to a broader meaning of infanticide, that which simply means the killing of an infant, rather than one that offers a partial explanation and legal defence to a particular category of homicide committed by a mother upon her new-born baby.

Those who have used the term 'infanticide' in relation to 'baby-farming' have done so with no clarification of what meaning they have applied to it, nor to how they believe it functions to explain this particular phenomenon. Clearly through its contemporary legal construction the concept is wholly inappropriate for making sense of women who killed another person's child as such transient disturbances caused by childbirth could not be experienced by proxy by other women operating within the marketplace of motherhood. Similarly, the general legal conceptualisation of the period which saw mothers, especially those unwed, who killed their children shortly after birth due to social stresses, does not easily apply to substitute mothers, especially if engaged by the mother under honest motives.

If those who have used the concept of 'infanticide' to describe or explain 'baby-farming' did so instead in reference to its broader meaning, this would contribute nothing at all to making sense of the behaviour as, by lacking explanatory power, it would only state the obvious: that someone had killed a child. The taken-for-granted use of the term 'infanticide' demonstrates how many commentaries on 'baby-farming' have commonly conflated and confused the issue by the careless use, misuse, or reiterance of erroneous terminology. Moreover, in its contemporary usage it absurdly implies that the whole system was fundamentally driven by a collectively experienced female psychological disturbance of a reproductive origin.

The cultural tendency to pathologise women's reproductive functions has similarly led to the 'bad mother' motif (Jewkes, 2004) to be erroneously utilised in

contemporary accounts of so-called 'baby-farming' women who killed. To illustrate, within one 'true crime' account, Eubank (2015: 8) quoted forensic psychologist Dr David Holmes who claimed that Amelia Dyer's behaviour was an "anti-mothering act". Similarly, in Martina Cole's (2008) 'true crime' documentary on Amelia Dyer, Dr Allan Beveridge declared "she used to look at them [the child victims] and derive some sort of pleasure, some kind of perverted maternal perspective". A fallacious perpetuation of the myths of motherhood, such absurdly speculative post hoc psycho-analytical accounts are premised upon lay-beliefs that women are naturally predisposed to maternal care and, therefore, any female behaviours contrary to the ideals of motherhood are necessarily 'abnormal' (Jewkes, 2004).

The tendency to pathologise and 'get inside' the minds of those who kill and to develop post hoc pseudo-psychological accounts of individual motivations is common within 'traditional' approaches to making sense of those who kill (Grover and Soothill, 1999; Wilson, 2007; Hodgkinson, Prins and Stuart-Bennett, 2017). The cultural readiness to retrospectively (over)pathologise women who kill in particular has been well-documented (Lloyd, 1995; Wilczyski, 1997; Jewkes, 2004). Yet such assessments are commonly based on erroneous causal attributions of supposedly 'abnormal' behaviours to allegedly corresponding 'abnormal' dispositions that are framed around isolated details of the individual actor, which are themselves fundamentally a product of the subjective judgements of the appraiser (Berry and Frederickson, 2015). This point is well illustrated in one pseudo-scientific account provided by an eminent phrenologist of the time - Cornelius Donovan - who published a risible 'personality profile' from a cast of Margaret Water's brain following her execution (*Morning Advertiser*, Friday 14th October 1870: 3):

The organisation of the brain is of the meanest type, both intellectually and morally viewed. All the animal organs are largely developed... "Combativeness," "Destructiveness," "Secretiveness," and "Acquisitiveness" are in predominating force, whilst that part of the intellect - namely, "Individuality," "Size," and "Weight" - which when large tend to give ability and willingness to use the hands in work of industry, are poorly developed. The head preponderates greatly in the posterior organs, whilst the moral region

as a whole is miserably low. But little reliance can be placed on the statements of a person thus organised, hardened in criminal courses and accustomed to deception and trickery... This woman received some education, but her nature was radically evil, and covert practices were her delight.

Such explanations are unavoidably marred by extremely tenuous speculation, unreliable evidence, and lack of wider context, and in no way provide a robust explanation of the criminal outcomes associated with this phenomenon. Problematic at the best of times, notions of 'getting inside the mind of the killer' or developing psychological criminal profiles - especially for those who are now long dead and whose personal biography is obscured by time, selective narrating, and potential agenda-driven embellishment - widely lacks objectivity, reliability, or credibility (Foucault, 1975; Muller, 2000; Snook, Cullen, Bennell, et al., 2008).

Beyond notions of female 'madness', the problematical idea of inherent malevolence, 'monstrosity', or 'evilness' has routinely played out in both contemporary and contemporaneous accounts of 'baby-farming with different degrees of theological or psycho-medico wrappings. For instance, Reverend Benjamin Waugh, described 'baby-farmers' as "creatures" of "dark knowledge" and the "canniness of the devil" (1890: 9-11). In seeking institutional authority over child-rearing practices, editors of the *British Medical Journal* similarly rallied against "the evil ways of baby-farmers" (*British Medical Journal*, 1st January 1898: 42) and their "widespread conspiracy against morality" (*British Medical Journal*, 25th January 1868^b). A popular street ballad written about Amelia Dyer around the time of her execution (Palmer, 1980: 56) expresses a comparable attitude:

The old baby farmer 'as been executed,
It's quite time she was put out of the way.
She was a bad woman, it is not disputed,
Not a word in her favour can anyone say...

The old baby farmer,
The wretched Mrs. Dyer,
At the Old Bailey her wages is paid.
In times long ago, we'd a' made a big fy-er,
And roasted so nicely that wicked old jade.

More recently within popular 'true crime' literature, 'baby-farming' women have been sensationally described as "terrible monsters" and "unscrupulous women" (Drinkall and Drinkall, 2016: 3, 9). Amelia Dyer in particular has been dramatically depicted as "the baby-butcher: one of Victorian Britain's most evil murderers" (*Mail Online*, 2007). In reference to one frequently used caricatured stock-image of Amelia, Rattle and Vale (2011: 113; see Figure 1) absurdly stated that "the dark-eyed image... in which she glares at the photographer is the most sinister ever taken of her". Likewise, Eubank (2015: 1) sensationally claimed that the same image "easily betrays the evil that resided within her heart" and, similarly, 'true crime' documentary presenter Martina Cole (2008) described the "ordinariness of the picture betraying an evil within"⁷.

⁷ However, the picture being referenced by these commentators is clearly an artistic, dramatised representation of Amelia Dyer, not an original, authentic photograph.

Figure 1. A popular stock-image of Amelia Dyer. Artist unknown⁸.



Some other contemporary ‘true crime’ accounts have seemingly utilised the interlinking ‘madness’/‘badness’ psycho-medico conceptions of psychopathy, narcissism, and sadism to attempt to make sense of Amelia Dyer’s behaviour. For instance, Eubank (2015: 8) speculated, upon no apparent evidence, that “once Amelia got a taste for killing she did it more for the power than the money and greed”. Eubank (ibid) also quoted forensic psychologist David Holmes who provided the entirely baseless opinion that Amelia felt “an almost god-like power over these children”. In Martina Cole’s (2008) ‘true crime’ documentary, Allison Vale similarly opined that “this is a woman who grew to love what she used to do to these children”. Attempting to retrospectively diagnose the child killing associated with ‘baby-farming’ through discourses of neuropathology, Doane (2012) likewise claimed that “they [‘baby-farmers’] had no inner voice telling them it was wrong and stopping them. There (*sic*) amygdala was highly underdeveloped and they felt no sympathy”.

⁸ The picture was sourced from Wikimedia Commons and is out of copyright.

Whilst it is not possible to entirely discount the possible presence of some form of bio-psychological 'abnormality' in so-called 'baby-farming' women who killed children, these explanations remain extremely partial, speculative, and only built upon tenuously reliable biographical details of a couple of notable cases and cannot in any way be used to understand this social system as a whole. By applying an extremely narrow, unsubstantiated, and essentialist framework to what was ultimately the 'tip of the iceberg' - those few women who became the spectacles of 'baby-farming', primarily Amelia Dyer and Margaret Waters - most 'true crime' commentators have collectively propagated a general impression that the entire marketplace subsumed by the term 'baby-farming' was inherently malevolent and pathological.

In whichever form, explanations for why *some* of these women killed children that are simply premised on the notion of inner abnormality are inescapably circuitous and a dead-end to any debate (Eagleton, 2010; Prins, 2013). By entirely individuating the responsibility, such accounts isolate the cause - and consequently the response - to a few 'bad apples'. The selective spotlighting of those cases that present as most demonstrably 'abnormal' sustains the distorted impression that the acts were a product of inner and singular aberrancy rather than a natural artefact of the wider social, cultural, and historical context. Ultimately labels of convenience that function to distance and exclude those who disturb social orders, these ideas are essentially products of modern ideologies of 'normality' and 'otherness' (Riggins, 1997; Brons, 2015).

As mentioned, a small number of recent academic commentaries have developed accounts of 'baby-farming' through narratives of female 'victimhood'. Such frameworks function to retain or restore a woman's 'normal femininity' and engender a more sympathetic understanding (Mason and Stubbs, 2011: 32). Whilst female 'victimhood' narratives are often somewhat stereotyped, melodramatic, and disempowering, they have initiated greater consideration to how socio-economic hardships can influence women's involvement in certain criminal practices, such as those associated with 'baby-farming' (Higginbotham, 1989).

However, these recent academic accounts have problematically used a framework of 'victimhood' to make sense of the case of Margaret Waters in isolation, thus exclusively presenting her crimes and criminalisation through a more sympathetic framework. For instance, Arnot (1994: 278) argued "when looked at dispassionately, Waters was simply a poor, struggling widow who had latched onto a way of keeping food in the cupboard". Although such conceptualisations have merit for acknowledging the circumstances in which many of these so-called 'baby-farmers' operated, emphasis upon female victimisation often engenders overly simplistic understandings of female violence and creates false dichotomies between viewing criminal woman as either powerless victims or active agents with little nuance given to the complex reality of women's experiences (Minow, 1993; Schneider, 1995).

As can be seen in the often-contrasting depictions between Amelia Dyer and Margaret Waters, discourses around victimisation often delineate an idealised victim which, as a consequence, allows some individuals to be presented as deserving of sympathy, whilst others are excluded as wholly unworthy of compassion (Mason and Stubbs, 2011: 32). By portraying these women simply as unfortunate innocents, such narratives again ultimately perpetuate stereotyped conceptions of women's lack of agency (Nicolson, 1995).

In their extreme, notions of 'victimhood' have led some recent academic commentators to erroneously conceptualise 'baby-farming' through a misrepresentation of Cohen's (1971) 'moral panic' theory⁹. Although the theory is undoubtedly appropriate to understanding conceptualisations of 'baby-farming', its utilisation in efforts to make sense of Margaret Waters' case in isolation - or the practices associated with 'baby-farming' more generally - is somewhat reductionist and misleading. To illustrate, Homrighaus (2001: 351) described Margaret as "the victim of... a 'moral panic'" who, singled out by the media and groups like the *British Medical Journal*, was unreasonably demonised and discriminated against. Similarly referring to the phenomenon as a 'moral panic'

⁹ A more nuanced consideration of 'moral panic' theory in relation to discourses of 'baby-farming' by Grey (2013) rightly pinpointed how, whilst now widely utilised, the term is often carelessly misemployed to imply that a given social response was based on disproportionate reactions.

and 'drama', Arnot (1994), argued that "Waters became a sort of scapegoat for all infant death... blamed for infanticide as a whole" (p. 277-8).

Overly simplistic and, again, a negation of agency and responsibility, such conceptualisations disacknowledge the substantiality and vindications of the 'panic'. Ultimately, concerned only with societal responses to perceived threats, 'moral panic' theory itself does nothing to explain why *some* women described as 'baby-farmers' may have killed children. Nor can it help adequately analyse or make sense of the wider social system in which such behaviours could manifest.

As already mentioned, several contemporary commentators, both popular and scholarly, have erroneously framed accounts of 'baby-farming' through discourses derived from the multiple-homicide literature. Following the 2005 reconceptualisation of the official Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) definition of 'serial-killing'¹⁰, particular cases of 'baby-farming' women have recently been 'unearthed' as historical examples of female 'serial-killers'. Most notably, Amelia Dyer has been included within a number of recent scholarly analyses and typologies of female 'serial-killers' (Scott, 2005; Vronsky, 2007; Gurian, 2011; Wier, 2011), whilst other academic works have instead simply juxtaposed the child killing activity associated with 'baby-farming' with 'serial-killing' (see for example Rautelin, 2013).

Especially within the popular 'true crime' genre, Amelia Dyer has overwhelmingly been the central focus of a number of descriptive and more sensationally written accounts (see for example Rattle and Vale, 2011; Eubank, 2015; Buckley, 2016), and documentaries (see for example Cole, 2008), which all generally portray her as a prolific 'serial-killer' and, implicitly or explicitly, as some form of pathological or monstrous woman. Wholly biographical, these popular accounts fail to provide sufficient context to Amelia's crimes or critically discuss her actions in relation to other important cases which problematise notions of individual aberrancy as well as the systems of 'out-of-house' mothering more generally. In doing so, Amelia

¹⁰ By removing the requirement of sexual motivation, the reconceptualisation theoretically broadened the definition to fully encompass all forms of female-perpetrated 'serial' homicide (Hickey, 2010).

is presented as entirely aberrant and caricatured as a 'non-woman' or 'non-human' 'super-villain'¹¹.

A 'catch-all' motif, conceptualisations of 'serial-killing' typically imply one or more of the aforementioned narrative tropes, most usually either 'madness' or 'badness'. Dominated by individualistic and essentialist frameworks (Grover and Soothill, 1999; Wilson, 2007; Bartels and Parsons, 2009), conceptualisations of 'serial-killing' and the 'serial-killer' are persistently distorted by myths of madness and monstrosity that are divorced from their social, cultural, and historical context (Haggerty, 2009; Hodgkinson, Prins and Stuart-Bennett, 2017).

Ultimately a 'numbers game', those 'baby-farmers' who supposedly killed systematically and have subsequently been also labelled 'serial-killers' are frequently grouped together for analytical comparison with other women classified as 'serial-killers'. Typically, by the numbers of supposed victims, inferred primary motivation, or some limited demographic detail - most notably, gender - rather than by the specific context of their crimes (see for example Scott, 2005; Vronsky, 2007; Gurian, 2011; Wier, 2011). Such approaches are underpinned by the assumption that, having killed a particular number of victims, these individuals may generally be regarded as a homogenous group, a particular category of being driven by a similar nature. Such a view is illustrated in Buckley's (2016: 12) 'true crime' account where forensic psychologist Dr David Holmes provided the entirely baseless claim that "Amelia committed what many serial killers do... the mistake of accelerating and being over enthusiastic".

Beyond what little relevance FBI definitions and redefinitions of 'serial-killing' have to do with those so-called 'baby-farming women who killed, the concept itself does nothing to make sense of this phenomenon, it merely signifies that an individual killed 'X' number of people. Use of this term again reveals how easily commentators have been carried along and misled by 'official' and popular discourses that ultimately lack explanatory power. Recent associations of 'baby-farming' with 'serial-killing' also convey how little some contemporary commentators using this framework (for example, Scott, 2005; Vronsky, 2007;

¹¹ For instance, in another 'popular' account, Williams (2011) compares Amelia Dyer the "baby killing monster" to 'Jack the Ripper', absurdly giving her the moniker 'Jill the Ripper'.

Gurian, 2011; Weir, 2011) are concerned with actually understanding this phenomenon and are instead just fixated with the numbers of victims killed, as if the numbers speak for themselves. Part of the current mythological fascination with Amelia is undoubtedly linked to this conjecture¹². Especially concerning 'serial-killing' league tables, she apparently stands alone as most worthy of discussion and most important for making sense of this phenomenon.

Decisively, determining a reliable estimation for the pervasiveness of any given historical crime is extremely problematic (Smart, 2013), especially for those potentially 'secret crimes' associated with so-called 'baby-farming' where evidence could easily be concealed and causes of death made to appear natural (Damme, 1978). Not to mention when sensationalised reporting, scare-mongering speculation, or 'panic' surrounds the phenomenon. Compounded by issues related to the investigation, detection, prosecution, and recording (Behlmer, 1982; Rose, 1986; Laster, 1989), the 'dark figure' of possible crimes associated with so-called 'baby-farming' or with any one particular case will forever remain obscured¹³.

By limiting the analysis of this phenomenon to personal biographies and post hoc psycho-analytical profiles of notable cases like Amelia Dyer or others 'like her', explanations of the practices, actors, and outcomes associated with 'baby-farming' are extremely limited and say little of the wider social system that produced such women and their behaviours. By fixating on the most extreme outcomes, most commentaries on 'baby-framing' have collectively propagated a general impression that monstrous and pathological 'serial-killing' or 'infanticide for hire' were the defining qualities of this phenomenon.

Lastly, whilst many contemporary academic contributions (see in particular Arnot, 1994; Homrighaus, 2001, 2003; Grey, 2009, 2013; Hinks, 2014, 2015; Pearman, 2017) have shone bright light upon this otherwise dimly perceived social phenomenon, such works have so far been predominantly focused on the 'elite' discourses surrounding 'baby-farming'. Where Hinks (2015) has argued that this

¹² For instance, in Cole's (2008) sensationalised 'true crime' documentary, Alison Vale calculated, on the highly unreliable assumption, that if Amelia Dyer killed one child a week through a 30-year career as a 'baby-farmer', she totalled approximately 400 victims.

¹³ The ambiguities surrounding the 'crimes' related to the term 'baby-farming' will be explored in more detail throughout this thesis.

phenomenon cannot be studied independently from its media representations, this thesis demonstrates that this claim is only partly true.

2.3. Reconsidering ‘Baby- Farming’

It has been asserted that the business of baby-farming is almost entirely dependent upon the use which the proprietors make of the advertisement columns of certain newspapers, and that it cannot be carried on to advantage under any other system (*British Medical Journal*, 28th March 1896^c: 796).

If ‘baby-farming’ was fundamentally a monstrous or pathological system of mercenary ‘infanticide for hire’ or predatory ‘serial-killing’, then seemingly commonplace adverts for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering obscured an extraordinarily prolific form of female criminality that was able to continue to operate fairly openly throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Consider again an advert written by Amelia Dyer that, along with others of a similar nature, was presented during her trial as evidence of a career built upon the systematic procuring and killing of children:

HIGHLY Respectable Married Couple wish to ADOPT CHILD; good country home; premium required, very small. - Home, Times and Mirror Office. 9421m27. (Thames Valley Police Museum, 2018).

If such an advert is to be regarded as the ‘calling card’ of a ‘serial-killer’ or some form of coded message that a mentally imbalanced mother would interpret as a clandestine offer for ‘infanticide for hire’, and that the social system such adverts related to was fundamentally criminal, then what should be made of all other adverts like Amelia Dyer’s. Consider, for example, a fairly typical extract from the

personal advertising section of a popular London-based newspaper, the *Clerkenwell News* (30th January 1868¹⁴):

ADOPTION.—Married Lady desires to Adopt a Baby at once, having just lost her own; secrecy depended upon. Apply, letter only, Mrs. Oakley, 125, Barnsbury-rd, Islington.

ADOPTION.—Respectable Couple are willing to Adopt a Child, as own; premium required. "Alma," 3, Pelican-place, Cambridge-road, Mile-end.

ADOPTION.—Lady and Gentleman desire to Adopt Child; well born; premium £30. Address letters, Emily, 1, Cobourg-street, Clerkenwell.

ADOPTION.—A Married Couple, having no children, would be pleased to meet with a baby; premium required; secrecy depended upon. L. E., Post-office, St. Peter's-street, Islington.

ADOPTION.—Wanted, by a respectable Married Couple, a Child to Nurse and Adopt; no other children; premium required; good reference. Apply, personally, or by letter, to M. W., 4, Frederick-street, Neckinger-road, Bermondsey.

Similarly, another fairly typical extract from another popular London-based newspaper, the *Morning Post* (3rd March 1883^{a15}), shows more adverts of an almost identical nature:

¹⁴ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

¹⁵ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

PRIMROSE-HILL.—To Parents going Abroad.
A Widow Lady is desirous of RECEIVING YOUNG CHILDREN. Educational facilities, with individual care for their happiness and training. Good references.—B., Stubbs's library, Elizabeth-terrace, Belsize, N.W.

WANTED. by a Lady and Gentleman living in Germany. ENTIRE CHARGE of a CHILD (of gentle birth), with view to adoption. Must possess small means in its own right. No remuneration desired.—Apply B. C., 2,306, 19, Wellington-street, Strand.

A PROFESSIONAL GENTLEMAN and his Wife wish to ADOPT a CHILD of gentle birth to bring up as their own. Good premium expected.—Address B. G., 2,291, 19, Wellington-street, Strand.

Again, even at the turn of the twentieth century, such adverts remained relatively common fixtures of popular London-based newspapers, like, for example, the *London Daily News* (25th December 1902¹⁶):

MARRIED COUPLE, in fair position, would like to ADOPT healthy CHILD. Premium required.—Write Box 229 A, "Daily News," Fleet-street, London. —25

WANTED, to ADOPT lady's BABY from birth. Highest references. Terms moderate.—B., 273, Crystal Palace-road, East Dulwich, S.E.

WELL-TO-DO COUPLE want to ADOPT BABY. Girl preferred. Premium required. Good home.—Write Box 195 A, "Daily News," Fleet-street, E.C.

In fact, an in-depth examination of newspapers throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century reveals how such adverts were published copiously. Being so prolific, and thus ultimately a relatively 'normal' artefact of everyday late Victorian and Edwardian society, the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering seriously call into question all assertions that this social system was fundamentally criminal. The scale of such adverts throughout the Victorian and

¹⁶ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Edwardian period certainly discredits all claims that equate the practices associated with 'baby-farming' with 'serial-killing'. Similarly, it is difficult to see how the communal language used within all adverts - including those written by women found guilty of murder, like Amelia Dyer - could function as some form of semi-coded yet exclusively-decipherable message for 'infanticide for hire'. Instead, the nature and extent of these adverts suggests that any criminal activity associated with so-called 'baby-farming' was merely a subsidiary aspect of a much larger and generally legitimate commercial system of substitute mothering.

To understand how *some* women may have killed children as 'out-of-house' substitute mothers, it is necessary to fully make sense of this system through its 'normative', 'deviant', and 'criminal' manifestations. As the fundamental mainspring of all subsequent interactions, practices, and outcomes associated with 'baby-farming', these adverts suggest something far more complex and thought-provoking had manifested within this period than simply a particular 'type' of feloniously aberrant woman who sought out children to kill through personal advertising columns. From the outset, these adverts elicit the following preliminary curiosities:

- How were these adverts understood by those who read them and who did they speak to?
- What was the nature and function of the language by which these adverts spoke?
- Why were so many people offering to adopt children in this way?
- What does that say about Victorian and Edwardian culture - about, for instance, the status of and relationship between children, women, motherhood, and child-bearing?
- How could these seemingly innocent, legitimate, and promising adverts possibly lead to the death or murder of a child?
- Why have we only ever really heard of the overtly criminal outcomes of these adverts and the practices they entailed?

Taken as windows to the past, these adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering offer a preliminary lens for making sense of how, why, and for whom this social system operated. By immediately bringing the voices of those directly involved to the foreground, they help to begin exploring the everyday lives, subjectivities, and experiences of the key parties to such transactions. By properly attending to the voices and experiences of these historical actors, it is possible to establish them as active subjects rather than passive objects of a historical narrative about them.

This thesis therefore aims to develop a more complex, methodologically adventurous, and theoretically informed approach to making sense of this phenomenon that focuses upon the complexities of the lived experiences of those involved in the interactions, transactions, and practices associated with 'baby-farming'. This thesis aims to substantially broaden and enrich what has elsewhere rightly been described as an extremely "under-researched field" (Hinks, 2014: 563) of women's history.

The following chapter sets out the methodological framework for this thesis that was developed in response to the critique established within this chapter. It will show how the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, as well as many other so far neglected sources of primary data, provide numerous and diverse opportunities to connect with those historical actors implicitly associated with and directly involved in the social system associated with 'baby-farming'. It is demonstrated how, through innovative and multidisciplinary approaches, these fragments of life history can collectively generate new and surprising insights and offer windows into historical spaces that would otherwise remain unknowable.

Chapter III: A Framework for Approaching the Archives

3.1. Introduction

Centred upon making sense of the phenomenon known as ‘baby-farming’ in its entirety, this thesis is concerned with understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of those involved in the social, cultural, and historical system that led to the emergence and manifestation of the normative, deviant, and criminal aspects of this marketplace. Through the merging of historical understanding and contemporary reflection on existing documentation, the thesis aims to provide a narrative social history that explains exactly what these so-called ‘baby-farming’ women were, not just how they have been constructed¹⁷.

Beginning with the premise that the people, ideas, behaviours, and other ‘materials’ that constituted the phenomena associated with ‘baby-farming’ were fundamentally all products of Victorian and Edwardian society, the thesis is methodologically concerned with the ‘historical ontology’ (Hacking, 2002; Foucault, 1984) - or ‘social construction’ (Berger and Luckman, 1991) - of this phenomenon. This concerns how the structures and systems of different times and places facilitate some patterns of thinking, being, and behaving whilst obstructing others (Burr, 2015). This approach considers the social ‘space’ and ‘infrastructure’ that fashioned the phenomena associated with ‘baby-farming’ according to Victorian and Edwardian society’s own image and design. Centrally, it will examine the conditions that existed during this period that facilitated the wholesale commodification of new-born children. Through this approach, it will be demonstrated how those women labelled ‘baby-farmers’ were not categories or types, but historically contingent possibilities.

Rather than simply viewing the social actors associated with ‘baby-farming’ as non-agentic products of their environment, the thesis shares a commitment to rationalising individual agency, action, and experience, especially of marginalised

¹⁷ As mentioned, the latter being the primary focus of most contemporary scholarly studies on ‘baby-farming’ (see for example Arnot, 1994; Homrighaus, 2001, 2003; Hinks, 2014; Grey, 2008, 2013).

women that has so often been denied within history (Walkowitz, 1992). It considers the space of possibility, constraint, and opportunity within which social actors rationally operated. In this sense, it examines how social structure operated through domination and coercion whilst human agency functioned through individual choice and resistance (Foucault, 1976; MacRaild and Taylor, 2004). Whilst different actors experienced different degrees of 'freedom' to operate within different social contexts, none of the actors were entirely powerless or devoid of all volition.

3.2. Methodological Approach

The task of the historian is to reconstruct the reasons for past actions. They do this by reference to surviving evidence of past human thinking, whose meaning they interpret in connection with decisions and action. The human action approach to the study of history emphasizes the freedom of individuals to act, the importance of reconstructing what happened from the actor's point of view, and the role of accident, miscalculation and unintended consequences in shaping historical outcomes (Roberts, 1996: 221-222).

By portraying the phenomena associated with 'baby-farming' from the lived experiences and perspectives of those directly involved, the thesis generates a 'history from below' that gives voice and agency to those who have so far remained largely hidden from history (Bhattacharya, 1983; Lynd, 1993; Smith, 2010). The development of this 'history from below' opens up the study around 'baby-farming' to include an abundance of archived material that has so far remained largely overlooked that reflects the personal thoughts and actions of those directly involved. Through a variety of 'first-hand' perspectives, particularly those given by the key parties to such transactions, the thesis aims to present an echo or possibility of 'truth' concerning the activities associated with 'baby-farming'.

Drawing upon aspects of discourse analysis, the thesis systematically, critically, and deconstructively examines how the language surrounding practices and conversations related to 'baby-farming' operated to produce meaning through different relations of power in order to "dissect, disrupt and render the familiar strange" and examine the "kaleidoscopic nature of language and meaning" (Graham, 2005: 4). Adopting a scepticism to all claims and recognising strangeness in all social arrangements (Kendall and Wickman, 2003), the thesis is concerned with the life narratives that were "constructed out of the language, metaphors and meanings of culture" (Green, 2008: 93). It considers the complexities, ambiguities, and multiplicities of meaning and interpretation; the emergence of particular discourses; the relations, power struggles, and dominance of certain dialogues; and the strategic use of discourse (Fairclough, 2010). In this sense:

Crime and criminality are never simply matters of laws, procedures, courts and penalties; they are the subject of conversations and debates, fears, fantasies and fascination (Davies, Peel and Balderstone, 2015: 98).

Concerned with how Victorian and Edwardian discourses - the ways of speaking, thinking, and doing - gave meaning to the phenomena associated with 'baby-farming', epistemologically speaking, this thesis provides a reconstruction not of 'truth' *per se*, but of what the archives reveal about the possibility of truth (Zemon Davis, 1987). Existing knowledge claims related to 'baby-farming' are thus tested against various data sources and either rejected or enhanced. Where the data sources reveal so far hidden or misinterpreted evidence, a new historical narrative is developed.

Mindful of how history is used, spun, and created, the thesis presents a narrative history "to explain and analyse events and human agency in order to increase understanding" (Tamura, 2011: 150). In this manner, the narrative history "should attempt to enter into the past, should reconstruct its experience in such a way as to lead its readers to participate in it" (Middlekauff, 1991: 5). Thus:

In narrative history the results of research are written up in the form of stories about connected sequences of thought and action. These narratives of action will include various descriptions relevant to the story, may include political

and moral judgements about what happened, and, possibly, generalizations about past actions which ascribe to them meanings and patterns relevant to contemporary concerns. But the explanatory content of the story will be some reason-giving account of why past actors did what they did (Roberts, 1996: 222).

As the central instrument of their research, both historian and qualitative social researcher are responsible for how data is understood, described, and interpreted, as well as how meaning and knowledge-claims are produced (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The validity of the 'echoes of truth' within the narrative historian's creation rests upon their coherence with the available evidence and their reproducibility (Inciardi, Block and Hallowell, 1977; Gaddis, 2002). Accordingly:

The evidence that historians use is available for others to examine... the works of historians cannot be judged by their narrative forms alone. History is, after all, based on historical research (Tamura, 2011: 154).

To enhance the 'historical imagination' and allow the data and analysis to speak for themselves, the thesis provides a wealth of illustration to stimulate an active engagement with the historical evidence and to empathise with the real-life experiences of those involved in the phenomena associated with 'baby-farming' (Fielding, 2005; Stevenson, 2014). Whilst the narrative approach provides a causal account and facilitates the reliving of the events themselves, theoretical analysis further helps to reveal underlying forces that are often hidden beneath appearances (Mazlish, 1992). By incorporating both narrative and theoretical analysis, social histories can provoke fresh, diverse, and invaluable perspectives to understandings of the past (Tamura, 2011) and "produce a theory of action which links rational and individual action to its social dimension and context" (Roberts, 1996: 223). By theory, it is meant:

an interpretive framework that emerges from primary sources and serves as a lens to analyse evidence and experience in order to explain identities, actions, events, realities, rationalities, and other human phenomenon (Tamura, 2011: 156).

The aim, therefore, is to consider primary data related to the phenomena associated with 'baby-farming' that offer a "glimpse of activities which, by their very nature, do not usually leave records for historians; [which] can be 'read against the grain' to provide insights into the lives and identities of individuals defying moral codes or marginalised by society" (Bingham, 2012: 143). Fundamentally concerned with making sense of the social, cultural, and historical context that produced this phenomenon, primary data will be treated as a window into the world in which these women operated. As asserted by Muir and Ruggiero (1994: 226), "the value of criminal records for history is not so much what they uncover about a particular crime as what they reveal about otherwise invisible or opaque realms of human experience". Through this approach, the thesis aims to construct an:

understanding of the past [that] is similar to the collages of photos that make up a larger photo. Using small images, we are able to create a much larger image. We see small pictures - individuals or groups or specific moments in time - and then, stepping back and looking at many small pictures, we can see a larger picture - trends, movements, ideologies (L'Eplattenier, 2009: 75).

By seeking to map the process, experience, and function of the practices associated with 'baby-farming', the analysis of this thesis is generated from the most empirically evident starting point, from the source that brought the key parties to this social interaction together - the adverts. As a window into the discourse, identities, and relationships associated with 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, the personal newspaper advertisements themselves comprise a fundamental 'voice from below'. Exhibiting actual words of those who practiced 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, they constitute an essential 'authentic' voice unsullied by secondary legal or media constructions and are thus a pivotal source of primary data. Taken as the foundation from which all further action, interaction, and interpretation developed, the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering provide the substructure by which all other data should be understood.

3.3. Source Selection

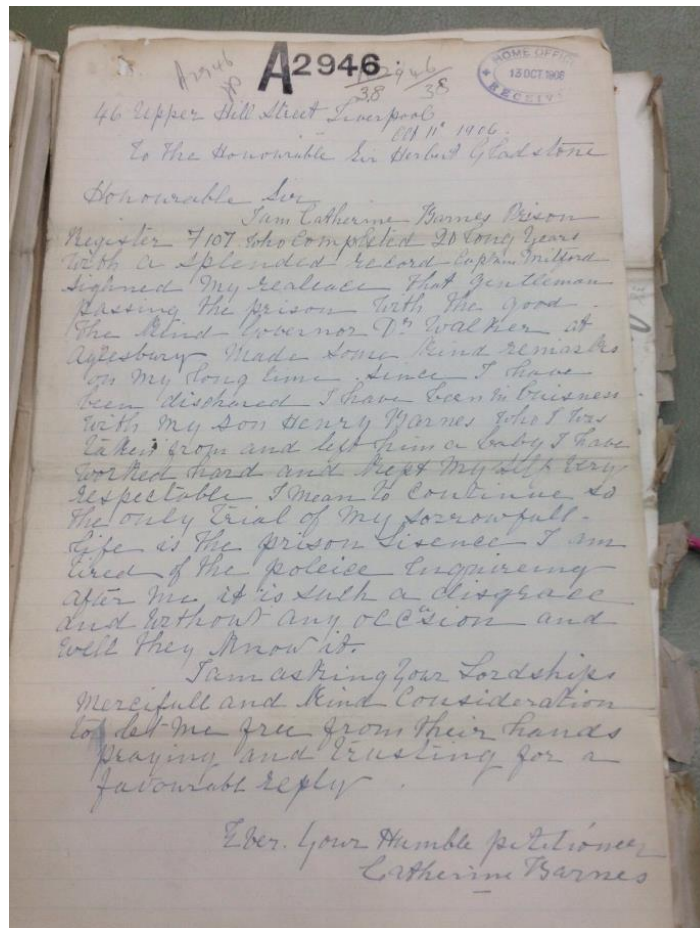
The 'out-of-house' substitute mother is most evident within the archives through her 'top down' constructions as a 'baby-farmer' by those who sat in moral or legal judgement from positions of influence and authority. Her conceptualisation by the general public and those who engaged her services, whilst less obvious, is reflected through various voices 'from below'. Of those that are believed to have engaged in criminal activity in their role as an 'out-of-house' substitute mother, the evidence is limited to those cases that were processed through to the higher courts, thus discounting any cases that were discharged via the lower courts (see Appendix B). Unfortunately, because of the generally secretive and marginalised nature of this profession (which will be discussed in depth throughout the thesis), the majority of detailed evidence relating to 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices is generally enclosed within those criminal cases that were brought to light through the higher courts. Acknowledgement of the limited palette of information available to the historical researcher should foster a cautious approach towards historical narratives and acceptance of their inherent instability and incompleteness (L'Eplattenier, 2009: 75).

It is important to note that the terms 'baby-farming' and 'baby-farmer' were not generally used by 'out-of-house' substitute mothers themselves, nor were they typically included in court narratives of such women found guilty of murdering children. Like the concept of 'witchcraft', 'baby-farming' was "an imposed social category with murky boundaries" (Fudge, 2006: 509). Being so mutable and ambiguous, these terms cannot be defined with any precision and are by themselves insufficient key terms for capturing empirical information surrounding this phenomenon. These were terms of moral judgement typically applied retrospectively by the media or other social commentators after the 'facts' of their behaviour had been exposed and judged in court. In order to disentangle the cause and meaning of this phenomenon, it is necessary that data collection extends beyond these terms and captures the very basics of what these women were and what they were doing prior to any criminal implications.

Principally, the adverts placed for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services constitute a less-obvious but nonetheless voluminous source of data that corresponds to legitimate and everyday conceptualisations of the practices subsequently associated with 'baby-farming' that existed prior to any criminal reconceptualisation. The adverts are therefore taken as the primary 'voices from below' which constructed understandings around their interaction and transaction free of interference from those 'voices from above'. Similarly, existing letters of correspondence between service users and providers - despite those available in the archives only relating to criminal cases - also offer an authentic voice from those engaged in these transactions and shed light onto how the associated practices operated in both their legitimate and criminal manifestations. Although first-hand legal testimonies are somewhat marred through third-party mediated recording practices and the potential for agenda-driven distortion, they are also considered meaningful 'voices from below' that reveal 'first-hand' how these practices operated.

Adopting a pragmatic approach, the research took advantage of the recent proliferation of digitised primary sources; "documents and other things both from and about the times being investigated" (Berkhofer, 2008: 19). This helps the historical researcher to manage "the difficulty of extracting data from the mountains of mind-numbing records that are nearly untouched" (Rousseaux, 1996: 1). The approach significantly reduces the amount of time, cost, and effort required to systematically compile a large and diverse collection of primary source material (Davies, Peel and Balderstone, 2015), as well as to access sources that have been neglected due to the difficulties negotiating vast and often illegible physical archival material (Mussell, 2012; see Figure 2). Nonetheless, materials only available in the physical archives was used to supplement the digitised resources.

Figure 2. An example of how physically archived material related to this phenomenon is often extremely challenging to decipher, thus causing the historical researcher much time and effort to systematically and accurately manage large collections of source material.



Adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering were exclusively identified through the online *British Newspaper Archive* which allows researchers to search through millions of pages from digitised historic newspapers published in the United Kingdom dating back to the 1700s. Using key terms, names, locations, dates, or titles, researchers can relatively quickly collate plentiful primary source material that would otherwise take months, if not years, to collect through the physical archives (Davies, Peel and Balderstone, 2015). By providing the researcher with popular reading material that was aimed at distinct audiences - of different social status, geographical location, and political affiliation - the *British Newspaper*

Archive offers mirrors different social, cultural, and historical contexts that help bring histories to life (*British Newspaper Archive*, 2018).

Criminal cases of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering processed through to the higher courts were identified through the online *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*. Due to the geographical jurisdiction of the Old Bailey courthouse, this London-centric perspective demands that caution be given regarding how far the analysis can be considered as representative of those elsewhere associated with the system known as 'baby-farming'. Similarly, research focused on records from the *Old Bailey* are also limited to those cases that were deemed most serious (Bentley, 1998), as well as those that had generated sufficient evidence or opportunity for prosecution in the higher courts.

Users of this digitised resource may explore proceedings of 197,745 criminal trials held at London's Central Criminal Court between 1674-1913 via a number of search filters including specific offences or offence categories, names of offenders, locations of crimes, reference numbers¹⁸, or by any key terms (Crone, 2009). Trial reports from the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey* vary in length and detail, often on account of the nature of the crime (Stevenson, 2014). The constructed form and content of a trial text is a product of the criminal justice system which determined which cases reached court, who gave evidence, and whose voices would be heard, as well as how the trial would be recorded (*Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, 2018), and thus often vary in their completeness and complexity (Verhoeven, 2009; Stevenson, 2014).

The use of legal files as primary source material is a well-established approach to the social historical researcher and offers great potential for presenting "as near perfect a picture as possible of any given past" (Verhoeven, 2009: 5). The approach is particularly valued for the development of histories 'from below' that detail the lives, actions, and identities of the 'non-elite' (Crone, 2009). The use of court files can offer the historical researcher "full and uninterrupted narratives" of past events that provide direct contact with the voices of those directly involved (Zemon Davis, 1987: vii). Nevertheless, trial reports were commonly edited and

¹⁸ Reference numbers and corresponding dates have been included for all citations of particular cases from the Old Bailey archives (e.g., t18960518-451, 1986) throughout the thesis.

abbreviated for various reasons that changed over time (*Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, 2018)¹⁹. Accordingly:

The beginning and ends of trials offer a relatively unvarnished, but essentially bureaucratic statement of the legal process. These elements probably do not reflect the actual words expressed in court, or if they do, they represent the formulaic elements of the trial process. Witness statements are probably closer to the actual words said in court (ibid).

Court transcripts, especially witness statements, thus often yield a rich source of information regarding the nature of a particular crime, the circumstances in which the crime was committed, as well as commonalities in the characteristics of crimes and of offenders (Crone, 2009). Whilst not necessarily representing the whole ‘truth’ of a crime these are essentially ‘scripts in a theatre of authority’ (Muir and Ruggiero, 1994) whose authors sat in judgement of the accused and may be subject to distortion (Gaskill, 1998). Thus, one persistent challenge for the historical researcher of criminal phenomena is the interpretation and explanation “of blurred spaces and overlaps between history and story; fact and fiction...in many instances there is little distinction between facts and evidence, that is to say between accounts of reality and the legal use made of those accounts” (Fudge, 2006: 505). It is necessary to acknowledge that the present research is based upon primary accounts and other documentation related to what people thought or claimed happened, not necessarily what really happened.

As noted by Verhoeven (2009: 91), “historians must make do with what they have... the content of court files is beyond the historian’s control”. However, as court records may at times lack detail, the historical researcher may also utilise newspaper reportage to provide additional context and detail surrounding particular crimes (Stevenson, 2007) and supplementary resource of authentic and credible reference material (Stevenson, 2014). Due to the condition of many newspapers of the period within the physical archives, this resource has remained relatively neglected in studies of the past prior to digitisation (Mussell, 2012). Newspaper coverage often provides the historical researcher with some

¹⁹ For instance, from 1791, the Old Bailey censored court transcripts of sexual or ‘unnatural’ offences for fear of stimulating immorality or offending public decency (Clark, 1987; Stevenson, 2007).

of the 'best evidence' available regarding the nature, incidence, prosecution, and resolution of past offences (Stevenson, 2007).

Summaries of criminal trials, committals, and hearings which often included verbatim statements made in court remained a popular fixture in most national, provincial, and local newspapers during the nineteenth century (Stevenson, 2014). Newspapers within this period frequently recruited or commissioned lawyer reporters, typically barristers, who possessed the legal expertise to report upon criminal trials in a manner that would provide a legally accurate 'true crime' narrative devoid of personal opinion and commentary (ibid). Yet, despite the efforts of many newspapers to adopt an objective approach to reporting criminal trials, the newspaper content remained filtered and framed by the reporters and editors and inclusion of particular cases remained based on their 'newsworthiness' (Vella, 2009: 11). Supplementary newspaper reporting on particular cases was acquired online through the aforementioned *British Newspaper Archive* as well as *The Times Digital Archive* and the *Nineteenth Century British Library Newspapers*. These three resources were used in conjunction for obtaining material relating to particular cases as each provides a different array of newspaper content.

For this historical researcher interested in matters associated with the topic of 'baby-farming', the *British Medical Journal's* freely-accessible online archive provides another important primary source as the journal supplied regular and detailed reportage on the investigation and wider conversation of 'baby-farming' between 1865-1913. However, as noted by Homrighaus (2001: 350), the journal's coverage of matters related to 'baby-farming' should be treated with caution for it often reflected "medical experts' class and gender biases and their professional status".

Other supplementary resources consisted of miscellaneous periodicals, pamphlets, and parliamentary papers that can be accessed through online databases. These were located via the *Nineteenth Century British Pamphlets Online*, *U.K. Parliamentary Papers*, *The British Library*, *Google Books*, *Internet Archive*, *Victorianvoices.net*, *London School of Economics and Political Science* archive, and the *British Library*. All physically archived materials were accessed

through the *National Archives* in Kew which provided some additional details on particular cases as well as information on cases not processed through to the Old Bailey.

To note, because efforts to regulate the practices associated with ‘baby-farming’ were deemed largely ineffectual (see for example *British Medical Journal* 21st March 1896^b: 747), and, as will be shown, because they generally manifested through the back spaces of a secretive and mercurial marketplace, the thesis is less focused on the legal structures that surrounded this phenomenon but how they could be circumvented. As such, the development of laws surrounding ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering practices has not been a focal source of primary data²⁰. Similarly, because the focus of this thesis is upon those voices ‘from below’, some important official reports such as the *Report from the Select Committee on Protection of Infant Life* (1871) will not be included for analysis.

Although the newly digitised archives provide an invaluable tool and resource for researchers to systematically compile large and diverse collections of primary source material with little time, energy, or cost, these historical cornucopias are not without their limitations. In particular, the state of decay or distortion of original documents or microfilm, the process by which digitised resources are scanned from microfilm or original documents, and the method of searching keywords contained within them creates inaccuracies of digital ‘reading’ (Arlitsch and Herbert, 2004). Using a digital ‘reading’ system known as Optical Character Recognition (OCR), search functions of digitised archive resources like the *British Newspaper Archive* are unable to produce 100-per-cent accurate returns for any given keyword searches, with no easy way for the researcher to judge the precision of their search results (Hitchcock, 2013). The researcher’s returns are thus a product of ‘fuzzy matching’ with different search terms and forms of newspaper content possessing different levels of accurate retrieval (Tanner, Muñoz and Ros, 2009; Hitchcock, 2013). Similarly, sources like the *Old Bailey Online* often suffer from transcription errors, although these may be checked with

²⁰ See Pearman (2017) for a detailed examination of the development and enactment of legislation related to the practices associated with ‘baby-farming’.

reference to digital images of the original papers (Hitchcock and Shoemaker, 2006).

Nevertheless, for historical researchers of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, the digitised revolution has provided a greater wealth of easily-accessible primary source material than any other time or place (Hitchcock, 2013). The breadth of digitised empirical material facilitates a greater understanding of the varieties of social behaviour in a rapidly modernising society from a wider array of perspectives, especially those voices ‘from below’ of the ‘non-elite’. With the use of social theory, this empirical information may be utilised to get under the skin of modernising society to understand the cause and meaning of the phenomenon related to ‘baby-farming’.

3.4. Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The empirical information brought to bear within this thesis can be divided into three separate categories based upon how they were collected, analysed, and used. The first, most central body of primary material derived from personal newspaper adverts for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering. A large sample covering a substantial timespan was collected systematically from the *British Newspaper Archive* and analysed by their overt content and underlying themes to “reveal interesting patterns or occurrences that demand further investigation” (Stevenson, 2007: 418). The analysis of these adverts generated the theoretical framework that forms the backbone of the thesis.

The second body of empirical data derived from primary materials relating to particular cases or practices associated with ‘baby-farming’. Here, court records of particular cases were collected systematically²¹ from the *Old Bailey Online* and, with supplementary contextual information from online newspaper and *British Medical Journal* archives, were analysed thematically and used illustratively. The third body of data consisted of all materials that lent additional context, such as extracts from various newspapers, magazines and periodicals.

²¹ See Appendix B for a full list of cases collected and considered for this thesis.

These were collected through general immersion in nineteenth century literature and were used illustratively.

i. Adverts for ‘Out-of-House’ Substitute Mothering

A sample of 838 London-based newspaper advertisements for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering was gathered from the *British Newspaper Archive* online using a string search of the words ‘adopt nurse child baby’. These key terms were selected following a preliminary survey of advertisements written by women found guilty of murder and labelled ‘baby-farmers’ as well as otherwise ‘innocent’ adverts of ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering identified through the newspaper archives. The terms were considered suitable for capturing a general sample based on the typical communal language used in adverts (including variants such as ‘children’ and ‘adopting’) but would of course exclude any relevant adverts that employed alternative terminology.

The initial search yielded a ‘fuzzy’ return of 568,691 matches between 1750-2017. Due to aforementioned issues related to the digitisation and ‘reading’ system of online archives, this result was not a 100-per-cent accurate return of all relevant adverts containing these terms. In order to reduce the initial number of matching items to a relevant and manageable sample, the results were first filtered by ‘Region’ to ‘London, England’ which returned a total of 80,710 matches and then by ‘Type’ to ‘Advertisement’ which further reduced the total to 24,863 between the years 1750-2017. These 24,346 matches were then searched manually ordered by ‘Date’ (earliest) to identify whether they contained adverts related to ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering services. Adverts were recorded for both those seeking and offering ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering services.

Each match linked to the newspaper in which the advert was contained and could be clicked upon to examine further through a viewer function. Generally, the search function automatically identified the correct page and highlighted (in blue) the matching text to aid the searching process. However, the search function often failed to identify the correct page number or highlight the matching text, thus

requiring a manual scan through the item to find the relevant section. This process was often particularly time consuming, especially in larger newspapers.

It was however possible to use the (approximately 30-word) text-preview provided by the search function to reduce the number of matches opened for detailed examination. The text-preview provided a basic understanding of what the matching text pertained to before entering the viewing function to explore the whole newspaper. Matches that had no relevance to 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services could be quickly distinguished from those that may have. For example, text-previews that concerned adverts of those 'seeking a situation in a respectable family as an Upper Nurse' were instantly disregarded for further examination whilst others that suggested they may have related to any form of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services were examined through the viewer function (see Table 1 for further examples).

Table 1. Examples of typical terms in text preview to indicate relevance of match.

Examples of typical 'in-house' terms	Examples of typical 'out-of-house' terms
'Nurse in gentleman's family'	'Take child to nurse'
'Situation as nurse in respectable family'	'Wishes to adopt'
'Head nurse'	'Take child from birth'
'Upper nurse'	'Take child as own'
'Under nurse'	'Place a child out'

In some instances, it was ambiguous whether the matching advertisement referred to 'in-house' or 'out-of-house' services. This ambiguity could stem from the text-preview found in the search return list (first-level) or from the actual text itself in the viewer function (second-level). Ambiguities at the first-level were typically caused by the text-preview either being too brief to ascertain the text

content or to the text being 'jumbled'. All cases of first-level ambiguities were resolved by opening the match for further examination through the viewer function (see Table 2).

Table 2. Examples of first-level text previews and actions taken.

Text-preview (first-level)	Action taken
... [ALL LETTERS MUST BE POST PAID.T AS Nurse or Nursery Maid, in a Nobleman or Gentleman's family, a respectable Young Woman, aged about 20, who has been in the nursery about 5 years, and has had the charge of a baby from the month, and whose character will ...	Disregarded as 'in-house' services - proceed to next match
... Duties, and Disqualifi- cations ; the Prevention and Cure of Syphilis, Spermatorrhoea, and other Urino-Genital Diseases; as adopted by Deslandes, Lallemaud.and Ricord, Surgeons to the Hospital Venerien, Paris. By J. L. CURTIS, Sun-eon, 15, Albemarle-street ...	Disregarded as alternative use of 'adopted' - proceed to next match
... Mrs. Waldron's, Baker. Hornscyrond, near the Hanley Arms, between the Hour* and o'clock each morning. Wanted, a Girl to Nurse a Baby, ' from two o'clock until every day, and from fen	Ambiguous - match would be opened to examine through viewer function (second-level)

till nine on Saadays. 2«. weekly. Apply personally to day, tomorrow ...	
... Pindico. NURSE CHILDREN. WANTED, ONE or TWO NURSE CHILDREN.— The situation is dry and healthy, within flve minutes' walk of Victoria-park aud Wells- street Com- mon. Terms for board, lodging, washing, attendance, three guineas per quarter each child.— Address ...	Likely match - would be opened to examine through viewer function (second-level)
... come, the ENTIRE CHARGE of a CHILD, to educate and bring up as their own, having none of their own living. A baby from the month would not be objected to. It would be a desirable opportu- ; nity of placing an illegitimate child, where it would be well taken ...	Likely match - would be opened to examine through viewer function (second-level)

Ambiguities at second-level (when opened and examined through the viewer function) existed in instances where there were no clear indicators to specify whether the advertisement offered 'in-house' or 'out-of-house' services. As it is possible this distinction was left purposefully vague by the author of the advert, all adverts that appeared open to 'out-of-house' arrangements were included in the sample (see Table 3).

Table 3. Examples of ambiguous matches at second-level and actions taken.

Example of ambiguous match at second-level	Action taken
WANTED An INFANT to NURSE by a respectable healthy young married woman. First child. Unexceptionable references given and required. Address Mrs. M. John Burnet's office. Camberwell-gate, London.	Included in sample
WANTED By a respectable married woman. A CHILD to WET NURSE. Address F. E. 3 East-street Stockwell, Surrey.	Included in sample

As manually locating matches (especially those that had not been opened on the appropriate page and highlighted in blue by the search function) could be time-consuming, an approximately 3-minute capped search time was employed for examining items at the second-level in order to make the data collection consistent and manageable²². Once a match was successfully located, a brief examination of the surrounding text was conducted (within the 3-minute time cap) in order to locate any other relevant adverts. If particular newspapers contained multiple adverts relevant to the search criteria, or if the recurred on different dates or newspapers, all located items were included.

All relevant adverts were typed chronologically into an excel spreadsheet (one advert per row) with the date, newspaper, and page number listed. The adverts themselves were typed one word per cell, excluding names and hyphenations

²² This approximate time cap was adopted following preliminary examinations of newspapers and deemed a sufficient period to skim through the advertisements sections and identify relevant adverts.

which were entered into a single cell. The total number of adverts identified through this method that were deemed pertinent to 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services between 1800-1919 was 838 (entire text of adverts = 30,781 words).

A rudimentary analysis of the adverts identified through the initial ('adopt nurse child baby') search began by creating a simple visual representation of the frequency of words used via an online word-cloud tool (tagcrowd.com; see Figure 3). The entire text of adverts written into the excel document was pasted into the TagCrowd text box. The settings in the 'Options' section was as follows:

- Language of text - English
- Maximum number of words shown - 100
- Minimum frequency - 1
- Show frequencies - Yes
- Group similar words - Yes
- Convert to lowercase - Lowercase
- Don't show these words - None (all words included)

Figure 3. A word-cloud generated visualisation of the word frequency in sample of adverts for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering.



The generated word cloud showed the frequencies of the top 100 most common words (see Table 4). The top 50 highest-ranking terms were then taken in order to continue refining the data to identify the core elements of the adverts.

Table 4. Top 50 highest-ranking terms (terms with matching frequencies included as single rank).

Rank	Term	Frequency
1	Child	671
2	Adopt	493
3	Nurse	436
4	Address	415
5	Wanted	366
6	Lady	336
7	Respectable	324
8	Care	304
9	References	280

10	Children	239
11	Wishes	212
12	Home	208
13	Married	201
14	Mrs	199
15	Terms	179
16	Years	172
17	Healthy	167
17	Person	167
18	Apply	166
19	Given	159
20	Age	149
21	Birth	147
22	Required	136
23	Charge	129
23	Girl	129
24	Woman	123
24	Baby	123
25	Letter	118
26	Young	114
26	Months	114
27	Office	108
28	Premium	107
29	London	94
30	Desirous	98
31	Paid	93
31	Situation	93
32	Education	84
32	Infant	84
33	Family	83
33	Moderate	83
33	Post	83
34	Entire	82

35	Widow	80
36	Country	76
36	Parents	76
37	Advertising	75
38	Highest	74
39	Gentleman	72
40	Offered	69
40	Orphan	69
41	Comfortable	68
41	Residing	68
42	Attention	66
42	Wet	66
43	Dry	64
44	Boy	63
45	Strand	60
46	Recommended	56
46	Objection	56
47	Direct	54
47	Post-office	54
48	Particulars	50
49	Preferred	49
49	Mother	49
50	Living	47
50	House	47

Initial analysis focused upon identifying the most frequent descriptors of key parties involved in the transaction and the services that were sought/offered. Certain terms were temporarily filtered out of the data set based upon the following reasons (see Table 5). For example:

- *Adopt Nurse Child Baby* were filtered out on the basis they were the original search terms and all adverts are already deemed implicitly connected to these terms based upon the predetermined search and data collection criteria.
- *Years Age Months* were filtered out on the basis that they have little signification on their own without reference to a unit of time.
- *Office Advertising* were filtered out on the basis that the terms were included in the addresses provided within the adverts which were typically not the addresses of the advertisers but a third party largely unconnected to the transaction.

Table 5. Filtered highest-ranking terms.

Rank	Term	Frequency
1	Lady	336
2	Respectable	324
3	References	280
4	Home	208
5	Married	201
6	Terms	179
7	Healthy	167
7	Person	167
8	Apply	166
9	Birth	147
10	Charge	129
10	Girl	129
11	Woman	123
12	Letter	118
13	Young	114
14	Premium	107

15	Education	84
16	Family	83
16	Moderate	83
17	Entire	82
18	Widow	80
19	Country	76
19	Parents	76
20	Highest	74
21	Gentleman	72
22	Offered	69
22	Orphan	69
23	Comfortable	68
24	Attention	66
24	Wet	66
25	Dry	64
26	Boy	63
27	Recommended	56
27	Objection	56
28	Post-office	54
29	Particulars	50
30	Preferred	49
30	Mother	49
31	House	47

The top five highest-ranking terms were then taken to explore other related descriptors within the advert text. Following further analysis of key phrases thematically linked to the most frequently occurring terms, it was deduced that the adverts were all constructed upon Victorian and Edwardian discourses of respectability related to womanhood, motherhood, child care, and work²³. That

²³ Further detailed analysis of the key themes of respectability expressed through the adverts will be included later in the thesis.

is, even when the word ‘respectable’ was not used, other key terms like ‘lady’, ‘references’, ‘home’, ‘married’, etc., all functioned as important signifiers of ‘respectability’. As “the concept of respectability in everyday [Victorian and Edwardian] society is well documented in historical texts” (Stevenson, 2007: 417), and was evidently a fundamental feature in the general discourse of ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering practices, this formed the basis of the theoretical framework through which all other data would be analysed.

Although preliminary reading of documentation concerning ‘baby-farming’ suggested women were the primary parties to the transactions proposed within the adverts, this was further affirmed through an analysis of gendered terminology (see Table 6). Whilst men may in some cases have played a secondary background role, women were evidently the main medium of the transaction. As motherhood, child-bearing, and forms of women’s work were central to the adverts, respectable womanhood within these domains was deemed intrinsic to a theoretical analysis of the lives, identities, and options of those associated with ‘baby-farming’. Finally, as the adverts, their mediums, and all who were connected to practices associated with ‘baby-farming’ were products of Victorian and Edwardian culture, modernity was also considered as a central lens of analysis.

Table 6. Key gendered terms.

Term	Frequency
Nurse	436
Lady	336
Woman	123
Widow	80
Gentleman	72
Mother	49
Wife	39
Motherly	15

Daughter	14
Nobleman	10
Doctor	10
Physician	9
Gentlewoman	9
Widower	8
Barrister	7
Officer	6
Husband	4
Needle-woman	1
Male total	126
Female total	1,102

Of those London-based newspapers captured through the search criteria, the *Morning Post* was revealed as a particularly notable publisher of adverts for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering (see Table 7). In order to develop depth of analysis and narrative, the *Morning Post* was selected as the primary source for illustrative discussion and examples both for its high frequency and general legibility. As the advert sample captured the emergence, variability, and diminishment of the adverts over a substantial timeframe (see Table 8), the discourses and practices of ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering related to ‘baby-farming’ were considered prior to the term’s conceptualisation during the late Victorian period.

Table 7. Frequency of newspaper advertisements between 1800-1919.

Newspaper	Frequency
Morning Post	430
London Evening Standard	155
Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper	109
Morning Chronicle	33
South London Chronicle	27

Shoreditch Observer	20
The Stage	19
Islington Gazette	14
London Daily News	13
The Era	9
West Middlesex Advertiser	3
London City Press	3
Reynold's Newspaper	2
Hackney and Kingsland Gazette	1
Total	838

Table 8. Frequency of advertisement sample for every 10-year period between 1800-1919.

Years	Frequency
1800-1809	7
1810-1819	30
1820-1829	40
1830-1839	25
1840-1849	27
1850-1859	70
1860-1869	185
1870-1879	86
1880-1889	176
1890-1899	161
1900-1909	14
1910-1919	17
Total	838

ii. Data on Criminal Cases

With the adverts taken as the central starting point of this thesis, all other data was considered in reference to the theoretical framework formulated from them. All other data was treated as inquisitive and illustrative of the larger narrative and therefore did not require the same level of extensive analysis. Respectability and gender were thus inferred, not substantiated, through these case studies. The data included here generally consisted of legal records, personal correspondences, media reports, and investigative reports that primarily related to cases that involved the death or murder of children.

Details of particular criminal cases associated with 'out-of-house' substitute mothering and other practices connected to 'baby-farming' were primarily compiled through the online *Proceedings of the Old Bailey* by using the 'killing' and 'miscellaneous' categories with the terms 'child' and 'baby'²⁴. The matching returns were then systematically examined in more detail by date (earliest) to identify whether the details of the trial record corresponded to practices associated with 'baby-farming'. Details of cases considered a match were compiled in an excel spreadsheet and copies of the court records themselves were collected and analysed for recurring themes. The search identified 30 London-based cases between 1868-1909 that generally corresponded to contemporaneous classifications of 'baby-farming', and another 10 that occurred prior to 1868 (see Appendices A and B).

Information from the online *British Medical Journal* archive concerning practices and cases associated with 'baby-farming' was collected through a systematic search using the term 'baby-farm' between 1867-1909. A total of 170 matches were collected and analysed for recurring themes related to experiences, behaviours, and identities. Similarly, the various online newspaper archives were searched using the term 'baby-farm' as well as the names of particular cases. Due to the enormity of matching returns for these searches, particular articles

²⁴ By limiting the focus to those London-based cases brought before the Old Bailey, the thesis does not include other fairly notable cases such as Jessie King, Caroline Jagger, Catherine and John Barnes, Annie Tooke, Ann Spinks, and Rhoda Willis. One case not brought before the Old Bailey that is discussed in this thesis is that of Charlotte Winsor (see Chapter Seven).

were selected based on their usefulness for filling contextual gaps. Where possible, those newspapers deemed more reliably informed and informative, such as *The Times* or *Pall Mall Gazette*, were selected (Stevenson, 2014). Further supplementary information was collected through searches for ‘baby-farm’ and names of particular cases through the other various online archives.

Some additional detail of practices associated with ‘baby-farming’ was collected from the *National Archives*. This data was recorded by taking photographs of the original documents and making notes during a series of visits.

iii. Data of Wider Context

Finally, data of the wider context was collected through general immersion in all the archived material made available online. This primarily concerned the wider conversation around the concepts associated with ‘baby-farming’, as well as the world of respectability, especially as it concerned women. Such data was collated and analysed where it was deemed to fill contextual gaps and illustrate certain elements of the narrative.

3.5. Reflexive Account

Clearly identifying the precise ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ that lay at the heart of any research endeavour, if ever entirely possible, requires a formidable degree of introspection on the part of the researcher (Seale, 1999) and must therefore be considered both complex and tenuous (Bishop and Shephard, 2011; Gough, McFadden and McDonald, 2013). The self-reflexivity of the researcher is nevertheless fundamental to illuminating the impositions they place on the knowledge and narrative they construct. The following account aims to provide a general consideration of what led me to choose ‘baby-farming’ as the topic of this thesis and the factors that shaped the particular way I came to investigate and interpret this curious phenomenon.

My own foray into the study of 'baby-farming' began with the literary discovery of Amelia Dyer, her crimes, and particularly the fact that she had once lived so close to my home town of Henley-on-Thames prior to her arrest and execution in 1896. I was surprised to have only heard about Amelia Dyer through my academic studies in adulthood after I had long since moved away. More than anything, I was fascinated that the story of a woman who had allegedly killed innumerable children and disposed of their bodies in the river that ran through my home town was seemingly so absent in local history.

My decision to take the case of Amelia Dyer as the starting point of my PhD was largely built upon research that I conducted during my MSc at the University of Leicester which critically explored traditional representations of women who kill. Additionally, through a growing desire to explore more contextually informed explanations of women who kill which were not limited to stereotypical narratives of madness, badness, sadness, or victimhood. The initial idea, therefore, was to understand Amelia Dyer's crimes, and those like hers, within their context and, as much as possible, through their own perspective. Over time, this endeavour shifted from a focus on making sense of the killing associated with 'baby-farming' to understanding the fuller complexity of the period's marketplace of motherhood in both its 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' forms²⁵. To do this required a sensibility of social, cultural, and historical conditions quite different from my (our) own.

It is difficult to study any historical phenomenon, especially one concerning the maltreatment of children, without being affected by contemporary and personal ideologies, practices, and viewpoints. I believe that many of the flawed understandings of 'baby-farming' have arisen out of ideological objections to believing that women, especially mothers, who are now so psychically constructed to love and protect children, could sanely treat a child as if it were less than human, as a commercialised object of trade or a problem to be 'disposed' of. Although it is clear that much of our contemporary ideologies of womanhood, motherhood, and childhood are discursively rooted in the modernisation of Victorian and Edwardian society, they are not the same. We

²⁵ This thesis is however only a window into part of the story of this modern marketplace. Whilst I believe it provides an appropriate framework for making sense of this phenomenon, there still remains a considerable amount of research to build upon this social history.

must always be mindful and cautious of how we view the past through the eyes of the present.

The study of past sociological phenomenon with unmindful reference to the present, from hegemonic perspectives and the implicit celebration and legitimisation of contemporary society - often characterised as 'whiggish history' - is disposed to value and moral judgements, distortions, and misrepresentations rather than equitable accuracy and understanding (Wilson and Ashplant, 1988; Mayr, 1990). Of course, it is not possible for the historical researcher to be entirely detached from their anachronistic or otherwise subjective perspective. As pointed out by Munslow (1997), historical narratives can never be free from the researcher's own social, cultural, and historical perception and preferences.

Related to this is perhaps a concern regarding the appropriateness for an aspect of women's history, especially one related to motherhood and social class, to be written by a middle-class male. This, I have always recognised, is a valid challenge to my thesis. In defence, it must be appreciated that all standpoints come with their own advantages and limitations to making sense of any given social phenomenon. In addition, it must be recognised that regardless of issues of gender and class, no researcher's standpoint in itself would ever be sufficiently neutral to speak objectively and reflect any more accurately the experiences of, say, a late Victorian domestic servant pregnant with an 'illegitimate' child. Each will impose their own experience, viewpoints, and frames of analysis to construct their own idiosyncratic, although not necessarily incompatible, narrative of the past.

The point then is that the researcher must reflexively adopt and describe an appropriate methodological framework which takes account of such subjectivities and challenges, that guides their own approach through such pitfalls and can be used as a reference by others who wish to scrutinise or imitate their approach. That is, they should systematically scrutinise their data through the same 'lens' and constantly test and evaluate their theoretical framework. The thesis should therefore be judged by the use of evidence and the accuracy and veracity of how the narrative constructed relates to what actually, reportedly, and conceivably happened.

Epistemologically speaking, the methodological approach framing this thesis is of a hermeneutical tradition where understanding of this phenomenon can only be possible within its context, within the worldview in which it existed, and from the perspectives of those directly involved (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2014). It therefore requires the researcher and reader to immerse themselves within the past, to devote themselves to empathising with other social, cultural, and historical sensibilities and, as far as possible, to see the world through the eyes of those whose experiences we wish to understand.

To conclude, it is therefore an issue of one's insight, rather than one's standpoint, that is most central to how this phenomenon is understood. However, as with all histories and research generally, this thesis is a fragmented perspective. It is my own account, or story, of what happened and why. It fills in many gaps and significantly expands understanding around this area yet there is still so much more of the story left to be explored through the consideration of other perspectives and voices, both past and present.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the wealth of resources available to the study of the historical actors, discourses, and practices associated with 'baby-farming' and how key sources of primary data may be used to gain important insights into this phenomenon. Through an analysis of the content and themes contained within a substantial sample of adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, it has been shown how 'respectability' was the central element of these communications and was pivotal in bringing the key parties together and providing a foundation for their interactive transaction.

It is therefore essential to begin the analysis of this phenomenon by considering the wider context of respectable womanhood during the Victorian and Edwardian periods, especially as it related to matters of motherhood, child-rearing, and women's work. Only once a theoretical framework of respectable womanhood and its antithesis (see Chapters Four and Five) has been established will it be

possible to understand how these ideological constructions were reproduced in a mechanised way through the adverts as well as how these 'out-of-house' substitute mothering arrangements and their advertising were required and how they functioned.

The following chapter will establish a theoretical framework of respectable womanhood that outlines the different ideological lenses that will be required when the adverts and all other data are revisited later in the thesis. Centrally, it will highlight how a woman's respectability was central to ideologies of civilised culture and had to be maintained at all costs. Together with Chapter Five, which will detail the crisis of respectable womanhood through non-marital sex and 'illegitimate' procreation, the following chapter highlights the core social infrastructure and ideologies within which all women of the period, the marketplace of motherhood, and all practices and outcomes associated with 'baby-farming' manifested and operated. The theoretical framework of Victorian and Edwardian respectability and respectable womanhood developed in Chapter Four and Five will be essential when it comes to examining the adverts and all other data in later chapters.

Chapter IV: The Cult of Respectable Womanhood

Historians now identify respectability as a highly specific value system of considerable normative power... Indeed it was considered a principal prerequisite for true citizenship... Though its possession was a badge of conformity, its attainment was a matter of independent individual achievement through an ongoing process of self-discipline and self-improvement (Bailey, 1979: 336-338).

4.1. Introduction

As so far established, understandings of 'baby-farming' have persistently overlooked the general normalcy of the practices and key parties associated with this phenomenon. Attempts to explain and make sense of practices associated with 'baby-farming' have largely overlooked the central importance of 'respectability' to this phenomenon - a well-documented ideological lens to understanding typical Victorian and Edwardian relationships, behaviours, and social appearances (Bailey, 1979; Nead, 1988; Hunt, 1999; Stevenson, 2014). They have also generally overlooked how, whatever the outcome, this unique social interaction constituted a relatively legitimate process that primarily involved three key parties - the service user, the service provider, and the child - all of whom were powerfully governed by discourses of respectability.

The exposé of the crimes of 'baby-farming' that followed discoveries of dead or dying infants affirms the general 'normalness' of those 'out-of-house' substitute mothers involved, and their actions, prior to their association with deviancy and criminality. Preceding such revelations, eyewitnesses and onlookers of all description had either failed to detect an 'inner deviance' or had disregarded any attributes that confounded the otherwise unexceptional and legitimate nature of their encounters. The immense disparities between the apparent appearances and understandings of these women that had existed prior to their 'unmasking'

and subsequent reinterpretations of these women in light of their crimes clearly perplexed many seeking to make any sense of this phenomenon.

Commentators since the late 1860s have frequently developed understandings along a conventional process of 'othering' (Jackson and Hogg, 2010; Jensen, 2011) that placed these women beyond the realms of 'normal' and 'respectable' society (see Chapter Two for a review of how these women have persistently been constructed through narratives of otherness). Disparities between the outward appearances of those women that prevailed prior to arrest, trial, and subsequent labelling as 'baby-farmers' and their subsequent criminal representations that followed the exposure of their social transgressions dismantled the traditional frameworks by which their behaviours had formerly been understood. Their actions and identities no longer sat within normative frames of reference.

The mothers of the children exchanged were equally imperilled by the same processes of 'othering' and social exclusion from respectable society for failing to adhere to normative social codes of womanhood. Both parties to such transactions were thus bound by the same frameworks of normative, respectable womanhood and were each, to different extents, compromised by deviating from those social norms. Understandings of either key parties involved in the transactions associated with 'baby-farming' in terms of aberrancy are thus wholly amiss as such narratives are merely built upon ideological constructions of Victorian and Edwardian otherness and say nothing about the women themselves.

The present chapter therefore considers 'these women' as they existed outside of any legal processes and media representations through the lens of normative, respectable womanhood. Before their actions and identities became distorted by inferences and speculations attuned to legal and media representations, these 'ordinary' women were subject to the same general experiences, options, and restrictions of all other women of the period.

The following section (4.2) of this chapter presents a theoretical foundation for normative, respectable womanhood within Victorian and Edwardian culture. Utilising a broadly Althusian (1970) conception of ideology, it will be shown how

middle-class discourses established the infrastructure for seemingly 'natural' social relations, identities, roles, attitudes, and behaviours. Relevant to the 'civilising offensive' of modernity (Elias, 1939), discourses of respectability are identified as fundamental to middle-class governance and a central artefact of their 'civilising mission'. The remainder of this section outlines a theoretical framework of 'normality' in relation to key dimensions of the bourgeois idealised construction of respectable womanhood.

Drawing upon Giddens' (1991) and Bauman's (2000) theories of identity as both a consumable product of the times and a fluid, reflexive social project, the third section locates respectable womanhood within Victorian and Edwardian consumer culture and reveals 'respectable women' as natural products, co-producers, and inculcators of middle-class visions of 'civilised', 'respectable' society. As available evidence also reveals that service users were commonly domestic servants, this social group will be particularly examined in Section Four in order to construct a theoretical framework of how middle-class ideologies of respectable womanhood governed their identities, experiences, and behaviours.

By showing what women during this period were constructed to represent, this chapter provides part of the necessary contextual framework of normative respectability through which the adverts, and all activity they initiated, may be understood in later chapters. By establishing what 'normality' resembled in an ideological sense, the chapter will establish the key criterion by which all women's social identity was determined; namely, their femininity, their marital, maternalistic, and reproductive status, their use of social space, and their forms of legitimate labour.

4.2. The Mythology of Respectable Womanhood

The heart of England beats in this class, and the greatness of England has been and is largely due to the admirable qualities possessed by her middle-class population (Hart, 1888: 682).

The 'normal', lived experiences of Victorian and Edwardian women may be partly inferred through the dominant discursive systems of meaning that informed conventional social behaviour and a general sense-of-self. These meanings, imparted through various channels, gave substance to everyday experiences, identities, and social relations. Most centrally, women's expressions, behaviours, and interactions were directed, facilitated, and limited by socially constructed discourses of female respectability. Cultural representations of respectable womanhood were built upon a body of narratives and traditions that mediated social 'reality', giving 'natural' shape and orientation to social action and interaction. These social constructed systems of meaning were however fundamentally imaginary, their ideological and utopian components were purposeful, self-governing, and productive, yet essentially illusory (Ricouer, 1976; 1991).

Permeating all aspects of women's social experience, discourses of respectable womanhood produced a 'soft', 'omnipresent', and 'co-produced' power that was exerted upon minds and bodies (Gramsci, 1975; Foucault, 1976, 1980, 1991). Functioning to sustain social formations, discourses of respectable womanhood accommodated and validated conditions and relations of labour and production between men and women of different social status (Althusser, 1970). Primarily produced by the middle-classes, the prescriptive discourses of respectable womanhood were a significant element of the all-pervasive 'civilising mission' of modernity (Elias, 1939). Respectable womanhood was thus a form of social and moral governance that rapidly spread from the 'middle' of the social strata throughout the nineteenth century (Foucault, 1982; Mosse, 1985; Hunt, 1999) and which became particularly significant for women who sought access,

inclusion, and opportunity within the 'normal' world of 'respectable' society (Crow, 1971; Weeks, 1989; Gleadle, 2001).

According to Elias (1939), the 'civilising mission' established divisions of labour within modern societies creating chains of mutual dependence and the acculturation of particular responsibilities and objectives among different social groups. Driven by the belief that the production of a 'civilised' society was dependent upon the inculcation of 'civilised' habits throughout society from birth, the largely female-orientated concepts of 'family', 'home', and 'child-rearing' became targeted by the bourgeoisie as pivotal civilising apparatus (Tange, 2004: 13).

Held as a key instrument of the cultural reproduction of 'civilised' society, the ideological and utopian constructions of the 'respectable woman' and her position, roles, labour, and responsibilities became stringent and unyielding (Zedner, 1991). With domesticity, marriage, motherhood, and child-rearing defined as their most natural objectives and responsibilities (Thompson, 1988), women who failed to adhere to these idealised images of womanhood were deemed antithetical and antagonistic to visions of the 'civilising mission' and thus an 'abnormal' encumbrance to the reproduction of 'respectable', middle-class culture and ultimately a threat to national strength, production, and virtue.

Possessing a pervasive material existence in social systems and practices, discourses of respectable womanhood existed concretely in apparatuses and practices that structured society and were supported by multiple cultural institutions - such as religion, law, mass media, education, and the family - thus manifesting in different customs, being propagated and practiced in many forms (Althusser, 1970; Foucault, 1991; Nead, 1998). From birth to death, all women were individually constituted as particular social 'subjects'; their subjectivities - their identities, thoughts, and behaviours - were discursively conditioned through numerous cultural systems. As in all societies, they were socially constituted products of their period's cultural imagination in both its visionary and material manifestations. Yet, these ideological conceptualisations of social subjects, social interrelations, and social 'reality' more generally were not merely static systems of meaning foisted upon socially subordinate women by dominant

groups. They were instead cooperatively and continuously produced and reconstituted through dynamic and interactive processes generating a general sense of collective normativity (Althusser, 1970; Berger and Luckman, 1991).

As a system of meaning, discourses of respectable womanhood were composed of images, oft-told stories, myths, and other beliefs that were given an historical and functional existence (Althusser, 1969). Whilst lived experience should not be inferred from institutional representations, cultural understandings and lived-expressions of female respectability nevertheless derived primarily from popular art and literature (Lewis, 1986). In effect, 'respectability' was fundamentally ideological (Fiske, 1987) and the discourses of respectable womanhood were primarily the substance of the middle-class imagination. An analysis of female respectability during this period is therefore fundamentally concerned with discourse, for this is the principal medium of meaning through which subjective positions were sustained (Thompson, 1984).

Whilst given historical existence, the discourses of respectable womanhood were nevertheless portrayed as having no historical construction (Althusser, 1970), and were instead rendered as largely eternal, universal, and innate. Dominant discourses of respectable womanhood thus relegated all women to particular 'common sense' conditions, generating both material and imaginary structures to their existence, their roles, opportunities, and responsibilities. Through bodies of discourse, each woman was assigned, and assigned herself, with particular identities and discursive positions producing a 'free-willed' cooperation and sense of 'natural order' to what was essentially an institutionally imposed 'reality'. Assembled upon sets of normative beliefs, conceptions of respectable womanhood were together passively accepted, fervently advocated, and frequently resisted.

These ideologically constituted imaginings of respectable womanhood thus provide an important initial point of insight into the meaning systems that shaped and directed the everyday lives and subjectivities of the women involved in the practices associated with the concept of 'baby-farming'. An extremely potent and all-encompassing framework for the lives of Victorian and Edwardian women, the architecture of respectable womanhood in effect constituted a cult-like

disseverance between those who were and those who were not respectable. This ideological division between respectable womanhood and disreputable womanhood, as shall be shown in later chapters, was central to practices that became known as ‘baby-farming’.

The remainder of this chapter shall examine how respectable womanhood became disciplined, commodified, and inculcated during the Victorian and Edwardian period and how middle-class discourses of female respectability couched ‘hidden’ structures of power and labour that defined and directed women’s lives. Centrally, the chapter highlights how woman’s supposed emotional sensitivity and appropriateness for caring roles was a fundamental component of respectable femininity. Also, how female sexuality and ‘legitimate’ forms of reproduction and labour lay at the heart of bourgeois respectable identity and utopian visions of their ‘civilising mission’, as well as of the ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering practices associated with ‘baby-farming’.

***i.* Women, Femininity, and Maternalism**

Life is made up of the masculine and feminine elements. We cannot imagine a complete society lacking either. It is an insult to common sense to declare that a woman’s brain and heart are facsimiles of those of man. It is an insult to God’s wisdom to suppose that He would have done better to repeat Himself and create Eve in the exact likeness of Adam. The two natures are two halves forming a perfect whole (Payne, 1888: 830).

Central to the practices associated with ‘baby-farming’ was the ideology of maternal femininity. Discourses of female respectability constituted women as not only biologically predisposed to reproductive motherhood but also to social motherhood. Part of the normalcy of ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering lay in the ‘natural’ distribution of maternal responsibilities among women presumed to be inherently predisposed to child-rearing. This, above all else, was considered

women's most natural capacity and functioned as a vital element of the bourgeois 'civilising mission'.

Victorian and Edwardian women were essentially understood and positioned within society in relation to their psychic construction. As reflected in the quotation above, men and women were purported to have been attributed contrasting psychic and behavioural configurations. Where man was designed to be strong and agentic, woman was constituted to be passive, tender, and supportive (Mosse, 1985; Nead, 1988).

Ultimately envisioned by man, these myths of womanhood were fabricated through fallacies of woman's 'essential being' that confined female existence to man's benefit (Auerbach, 1982). Whilst discursively presented as having no history, the emergence of these myths of femininity can be traced to significant shifts in gender politics that arose towards the end of the eighteenth century (Griffin, 2009). A 'gender panic' during this period provoked endeavours to strengthen Britain's stature through the prescription of particular moral codes that structured everyday life (Innes, 2009). From growing fears of social deterioration and insurgency that were believed to be rooted in the instability of family and home, coordinated efforts sought to reaffirm pronounced distinctions between the sexes and to ground such differences in essentialist terms that centred women in socially nurturing and civilising roles (Crow, 1971; Wahrman, 2007).

Critical to the remodelling of modern gender politics was the revival of Evangelicalism towards the end of the eighteenth century which advanced a particular set of religiously ordained domestic practices under the premise that such social arrangements underpinned the stability, morality, and virtue of the nation (Griffin, 2011). Religious ideas were regularly invoked to support discussions of the innate contrasts between man and woman. Patriarchal authority was commonly sustained by an image of man as a microcosm of heavenly authority, anointed by God himself (Houghton, 1957; Lemmer, 2007).

Emergent 'scientific' discourses further affirmed sex-based differences and relations. Woman's 'natural position' was regularly defined and prescribed through narratives of eternal 'feminine essence' and 'maternal instinct' (Auerbach, 1982; Nead, 1988). Compared to man, woman was said to possess

an ineffectual form of emotionality - a consequence of her reproductive physiology - and intellectual inferiority (Shields, 2007). It was thus expressed that “the difference between men and women is no outcome of tyranny of the stronger over the weaker sex, or of false education, but is a law of nature. The character of mind... is essentially different” (Schofield, 1895: 123).

Towards the second half of the nineteenth century, theories of social evolution were also invoked to affirm women’s essential status and role within society (Duffin, 1978: 3). Such theories further emphasised ‘civilising’ conceptualisations of womanhood based upon ideas of social progress and decay (Auerbach, 1982). Social Darwinists urged that socio-racial advancement was largely reliant upon women who were suitably adapted for reproduction and maternalism, that the quality of each generation would shape the next, and that women should accept their subjugation for the scientifically and morally ‘greater’ good of fulfilling their duty to helping nurture and ‘civilise’ modern society (Duffin, 1978; Weeks, 1989; Gleadle, 2001). Seen as powerful figures in the cultivation of ‘civilised’ society, women’s influence was considered central to the respectable heritage of the bourgeoisie (Auerbach, 1982). Visions of respectable womanhood thus perpetually directed women to focus their energies in accordance with their ‘natural’ maternal qualities and own central role in the ‘civilising mission’, that being primarily to raise children with love and affection (Nead, 1988; see Figure 4).

Figure 4. *Woman's Mission: Guide to Childhood* by George Elgar Hicks (1863^a).



Reconstituted through revived religious discourses and modern 'scientific' conceptions of human physiology and evolution, the respectable woman was generally reduced to occupy the domestic and maternal sphere where her power was contained and romanticised (Trudgill, 1976). Here, in her 'natural' position, the respectable woman was considered entirely virtuous and immaculate and likened to the Virgin Mary or Madonna, angelically and beautifully feminine (Engelhardt, 1998: 11; see Figure 5). However, the only women worthy of such adulation were those who conformed to the middle-class ideals of respectable femininity through their roles as daughters, wives, mothers as well, to a lesser degree, as domestic and maternal assistants (Gorham, 1982; Langland, 1995).

Figure 5. *The Angel in the House* photographed by Julia Margaret Cameron (1873).



Women who contravened bourgeois ideals of respectable womanhood, those at variance with this virtuous and angelic figure of maternal femininity, were polarised into antithetical unfeminine extremes. Unless clearly identifiable through conventional expressions of respectable womanhood, the Victorian and Edwardian imagination easily perceived more vulgar and demonic forms of womanhood (Auerbach, 1982; Nead, 1988; Shuttleworth, 1992: 3). It was thus necessary for the respectable woman to express and demonstrate without doubt her virtuous maternal femininity and commitment to her 'natural' roles and responsibilities to avoid the disastrous consequences of being deemed inherently 'abnormal', 'disreputable' and 'unwomanly' and therefore unfit for 'civilised' and 'respectable' society.

In summary, for a woman to be considered respectable she had to embody the idealised psychic constructions of feminine passivity, selflessness, and maternal

nurturance. She had to demonstrate her willing subjugation for the betterment of 'civilised' society and focus her energies of her 'natural' disposition to lovingly raise children and the general care and support of others.

ii. Marriage, Sex, and Motherhood

Motherhood is woman's highest, fullest royalty, her season of most splendid prerogative, of her widest rule; when her influence, her broad dominion, her sovereign power, stretches far on into rising generations, sways the men and women who are to be, moulds and colours the minds, and manners and deeds of the distant future (King, 1882: 649).

Whilst most women were considered naturally predisposed to mother a child, only particular women could be considered 'respectable' biological mothers within 'civilised' bourgeois culture. As the 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices associated with 'baby-farming' pertained directly to concessions of motherhood, ideologically 'normal' conditions of motherhood must be understood in order to fully appreciate the circumstances in which less conventional forms operated. As female sexuality and procreation was powerfully regulated in 'respectable' society, and because respectable maternal child-rearing was considered pivotal to the intergenerational transmission of 'civilised' bourgeois culture, the wrong type of procreation and wrong type of mother were entirely antagonistic to the visions of 'respectable' society and the middle-class 'civilising mission'.

Ideologically placed at the very centre of the bourgeois dream and 'civilising mission', the idealisation of femininity was primarily geared towards maternal reproduction and women's 'natural' position as a nurturing mother (Shuttleworth, 1992: 3). Woman's biological function was thus presumed to naturally extend to the care and socialisation of children (Delamont and Duffin, 1978). With the modern concept of family becoming central to Victorian and Edwardian life - a symbol of social order, stability, and progress - marriage was held integral to its formation (Houghton, 1957; Lemmer, 2007). Marriage was thus placed as the

primary objective for women to attain the ultimately respectable status of virtuous motherhood. Only through marriage could a woman's status as a respectable mother be legitimised (Thompson, 1988).

Marriage followed by motherhood were the central elements by which the middle-classes sought to secure a 'civilised' society: "the ideal which the wife and mother makes for herself, the manner in which she understands duty and life, contain the fate of the community" (Rogers Rees, 1890^a: 565). However, as the female population in England far exceeded that of the male throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, an increasing proportion of women were unable to marry, thus making the search for husbands a competitive and precarious process (Jalland, 1986; Anderson, 1995; Gleadle, 2001). With marriage and motherhood positioned as the most appropriate course of events for the 'respectable' woman, those who failed to marry were often consequently considered 'redundant', to have 'failed in business' (Trudgill, 1976; Gorham, 1982).

Envisioned as the heart of family life and the mainstay of 'civilised' society, a proliferation of discourse emerged through art and literature that informed the 'respectable' woman's sense-of-self as a wife-mother. These semiotic resources established appropriate female models for women to emulate in order to become 'respectable' wife-mothers (Richards, 1990). Not merely creations of artistic imagination, the sentimentality of these cultural effigies possessed a substantiality and potency that could only be obtained through a shared acceptance of these domestic values (Roberts, 1973). In this sense, the 'realism' of these idealised representations of 'respectable womanhood' was a product of both the composer's artistic conception and the audience's expectations (Ellis, 2002). A most notably utopian and efficacious vision of the respectable wife-mother was epitomised through discourses of the *Angel in the House*.

As the perfect embodiment of middle-class respectable womanhood, 'the Angel' symbolised the paragon of maternal domesticity. The idealised image of 'the Angel' thus became the pillar of marriage and the linchpin of the family household as it was imagined within bourgeois culture (Hoffman, 2007). Dispersed through multiple discursive forms during the period, middle-class ideologies of femininity

and domesticity - as reflected through the figure of the angelic wife-mother - substantiated a framework of 'harmonious' social agreement between the sexes that centralised 'respectable women' as key agents in the 'civilising mission' whilst remaining congenial to patriarchal authority.

Whilst the grandiose images of 'the Angel' typically pertained to bourgeois visions of the respectable wife-mother, single women - particularly unmarried daughters - could also represent this quintessential figure and contribute in their own way to the 'civilising mission' (Gorham, 1982). The application of wifely and maternal ideals onto younger, unmarried women served to prepare all women for these highest positions of respectable womanhood for, according to the fantasy, the ideal woman would later become a respectable wife-mother (Anderson, 1995). In order to enhance their marriageability and embody their highest and most appropriate roles in life, women had to learn to embody ideals of femininity and domesticity from an early age (Gorham, 1982). Despite marriage being pressed as a single woman's primary objective, it was nevertheless also cautioned that being overly zealous was itself vulgar and disreputable. Unmarried women seeking 'respectability' were thus caught in a double-bind between pressures to be married and avoid 'redundancy' and not demeaning themselves by appearing either desperate or covetous.

Marriage and the respectable domestic lifestyle that was expected to accompany it came at an increasingly high cost (Jalland, 1986; Weeks, 1989). Men accordingly tended to seek marriage and family living later in life once they had established themselves and acquired financial security (Thompson, 1988) meaning economic concerns could often cause delays and interruptions to marriage plans (Delamont and Duffin, 1978; Gillis, 1979). Failed marriage plans could also cause substantial problems for a woman's respectability, especially for those who had already become intimate with their prospective spouse (see for example Gillis, 1979).

Of all a wife's duties towards her husband, her integral role in reproduction and the socialisation of his progeny were defined as both social and medical norms (Nead, 1988). So important was the married woman's maternal function that the celibate 'spinster' and childless woman were often mocked and scorned for

contradicting the feminine ideal and defying woman's 'essential function' - legitimate reproductive maternity (Trudgill, 1976; Auerbach, 1982; Brookes, 1986). The powerful association advanced through prescriptive discourse between a mother and her children established a new category of being, conceptualised as 'woman-and-child', in which the child was perceived as an extension of the mother's own body and soul (Puechguirbal, 2004; Morgan, 2007; see Figure 6). The glorification of the mother-child relationship reflected middle-class idealisations that placed these figures at the centre of the 'civilising mission'.

Figure 6. *Mother and Child* by Charles West Cope (1852).



Despite ideologies of respectable womanhood being largely centred around the production of children, the ideal woman was - paradoxically - largely portrayed as asexual (Hoffman, 2007). Prominent discourses of normative female sexuality

typically supported idealisations of 'passionless' women, passive reproductive receptacles for whom sex was only functional (Cott, 1978; Langland, 1995; Yeo, 2007: 2). However, most knowledgeable women were undoubtedly aware of their sexuality and its power over men (Anderson, 1995) and, although discretion was extremely important to their respectability, many women enjoyed a reasonable degree of sexual freedom (Gleadle, 2001). Still, in polite society 'respectable' women were represented, and presented, as ignorant of their sexuality, their supposed unknowingness and inexperience considered the main preserve of their purity and virtuous identity (Gorham, 1982).

Whilst being portrayed as virtuous and largely 'passionless', sex appeal was simultaneously and paradoxically held an important qualification for 'the Angel's' marital prospects (Anderson, 1995). Women's bodies were sexualised and expected to be an object and satisfaction of male desire (Walkowitz, 1992; Anderson, 1995). Women were again perpetually placed in a double-bind between attracting a husband, adhering to the sexual purity of 'the Angel', satisfying his desire and keeping him interested, whilst simultaneously not appearing a 'whore' (Delamont and Duffin, 1978).

Confusedly, the female sexual moral code varied greatly from celibacy being regarded the most respectable state, to female copulation only being justified within marriage as a necessary aspect of reproduction, to female sexuality being a positive duty that permitted the fulfilment of conjugal rights (Weeks, 1989). Similarly, whilst Christian doctrine generally stipulated that women should remain entirely chaste until they married (Ross and Rapp, 1981), premarital intimacy was somewhat socially admissible - although nevertheless discreet - among those who considered themselves 'respectable' during this period (Reay, 1990; Mason, 1995). Acceptance of premarital intimacy was typically based upon understandings that such private affection foreshadowed marriage and could therefore occur once a marital promise had been made (Gillis, 1979; Robin, 1986; Anderson, 1995). This confused sexual moral code nevertheless made intimacy outside of wedlock both practically and ideologically perilous where a woman's respectability was concerned.

Central to the practices associated with 'baby-farming', children born within wedlock became symbols of their parents' respectability, just as those born to unmarried mothers became the visible manifestation of their disreputability (Mosse, 1985; Taylor, 1996: 7). Importantly, reproductive 'legitimacy' was fundamental to middle-class patriarchal power, through the paramountcy of the father's name and genealogy and the transmission of his property and power (Taylor, 1996). The reproduction of social status within bourgeois families entailed that the cultural and economic capital of children was cultivated and safeguarded by parents (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

The familial reproduction of middle-class capital was thus both material and symbolic yet, bereft of the levels of wealth accumulated by the upper-classes, the bourgeois focused more upon the inheritance of 'respectable identity' rather than economic capital (Hunt, 1999). Having children was thus part of the authenticity and stability of bourgeois 'civilised' culture whilst raising children was central to a woman's respectability. However, children had to be 'legitimate' to ensure middle-class social identity and a mother's respectability.

Children born to married parents were themselves, from birth, discursively constituted as 'respectable'. The 'child-angel' received comparable adulation to the angelic wife-mother and was equally positioned of central importance to the 'civilising mission' (Trudgill, 1976; Mosse, 1985). As future citizens and products of the 'civilised' empire, the moral character of children was inextricably linked within bourgeois ideologies of respectability to that of the women - particularly mothers - of Britain (Morgan, 2007). Correspondingly, with the development of discourses around race and eugenics, the 'stock' of 'respectable' society was increasingly given primacy and dominance over those considered 'subaltern' (Walvin, 1982). Hereditarianists and moralists thus concertedly pronounced the importance of biological and social responsibility in regards to sex and breeding, the onus of which fell principally upon women (Mahood, 1990). Wherever women failed in their far-reaching responsibilities of respectable social and biological motherhood, the 'civilising mission' was jeopardised.

As the hegemony of marriage and motherhood became the social, moral, and spiritual centre of 'respectable' society, wives and mothers became powerful

points of rupture (Taylor, 1996: 7). Woman's importance in the 'civilising mission' easily elicited fears of female empowerment, corruption, and misapplication of power (Auerbach, 1982; Shuttleworth, 1992: 3). With their influence so profound, women were at once sanctified and sheltered. Their potency seen as a potential force for the strength or deterioration of all society and its successive generations, women needed to be controlled and, beyond all else, remain 'respectable'.

In summary, for a woman to be respectable she had to successfully navigate matters of sex, marriage, and motherhood in order to attain the highest ideological status of respectable womanhood as possible - ideally that of 'the Angel' wife-mother. Above all, her personal responsibility for her sexual virtue and legitimate reproduction was central to her inclusion within 'respectable' society. Similarly, her child's 'legitimacy' was central to its inclusion within the ideological confines of 'respectable' society.

iii. Women's Space, Power, and Work

If we keep these homes of ours pure, refined, and virtuous, we wage war against decay, and occupy the proud place of building up the country, and strengthen the hands of the state. Loving, moral, and religious must be the character of the women and girls of a country if the homes over which they preside are to be pure, restful, attractive, and refined. Wherever the homes of the land fall below this standard, statistics prove that the strength, life, and progress of the country is sapped, notwithstanding its armies, its laws, and its institutions (Brewer, 1886^b: 198).

Part of the mystery and vexation that historically surrounded understandings of the practices associated with 'baby-farming' has undoubtedly related to their manifestation within female spaces where women's power and forms of work became ambiguously threatening to regulators of 'respectable' society. Despite efforts to contain women within patriarchal structures of supervision and control in order to keep them pure and ensure the reproduction of 'civilised' culture,

Victorian and Edwardian society increasingly experienced tensions and renegotiations relating to women's use of space, their exercise of power, and forms of legitimate work.

In effect, bourgeois utopian visions of respectable womanhood embodied the ideology of 'separate spheres': that man and woman were, 'by nature', predisposed to prevail in distinct, yet complimentary, social and cultural domains (Langland, 1995; Tange, 2004). Yet, the ideology of 'separate spheres' did not provide clear distinctions between masculine 'public' spaces and feminine 'private' spaces; women did increasingly occupy the public sphere but 'respectable' access had to be carefully negotiated (Davidoff and Hall, 2002). The social arrangements of women were thus often uncertain, ambiguous, and contested (Morgan, 2007). As with all visions of respectable womanhood, the ideology of the 'separate spheres' was a prescriptive middle-class discourse and did not necessarily reflect the actual experiences of women (Gleadle, 2001).

Positioned as the "guardian angel of the citadel of respectability" within the private sphere of the home, the 'respectable' woman was expected to cultivate a domestic environment that served as a refuge from worldly malfeasance in which the 'civilised family' could safely flourish (Crow, 1971: 52; Davidoff and Hall, 2002). Gender arrangements were constituted on the premise that men were inherently more disposed for negotiating the noxious ordeals of the 'public' sphere (Davidoff and Hall, 2002). Whilst woman's emotional sensitivity was often praised for its suitability in the moral, nurturing, and supporting roles in the 'private' sphere, it was regarded that her biological makeup inhibited her ability to work beyond these roles (Lemmer, 2007; Dickerson, 2016). Women were thus relegated to the 'private', domestic sphere in order to remain untainted by contact with the worldly dangers man was forced to endure (Hoffman, 2007).

For the bourgeoisie, women were fragile beings in perpetual risk of degeneration. Somewhere between an angel and idiot, if a woman thought too much, operated outside of the domestic sphere, or came into contact with sexual themes then she would risk 'wild disturbances of the mind' (Crow, 1971; Trudgill, 1976). Through appeals to pseudoscientific discourses, it was argued that "the removal of woman from her natural sphere of domesticity to that of mental labour not only renders

her less fit to maintain the virility of the race, but it renders her prone to degenerate" (Hyslop, 1905: 942). Deemed incapable and in constant need of protection, women were guarded from the 'public' sphere to protect them from the weakness of their own sex and ensure they could continue to exercise a purified influence on the world (Morgan, 2007).

As "woman was [ideologically] created to be the companion and helpmate of man" (King, 1882: 124), the respectable woman became a 'relative' construction whose function was determined through her various relationships to men, primarily within the home as wife, mother, daughter, or servant (Nead, 1988, Hall, 1998). In whichever position, women were expected to be responsible for nurturing the family, securing the sanctity of the idyllic home, supporting the head of the household, and being a positive social influence (Gorham, 1982; Gleadle, 2001; see Figure 7).

Figure 7. *Woman's Mission: Companion of Manhood* by George Elgar Hicks (1863^b).



Images of the respectable domestic woman became the linchpin of modern gender ideologies and a symbol of status (Hoffman, 2007). The idyllic home, its female inhabitants, and their prescribed domestic practices were key signifiers of 'respectable', 'civilised' society and primary indicators of a virtuous social character (Langland, 1995). Consequently, 'responsibility' was fundamental to a 'respectable' woman's roles within the family home and in society more generally (Morgan, 2007). If she could not be entrusted to cultivate respectability through her appointed social duties then she was not fit to advance the 'civilising mission' and was not truly 'respectable'.

The appointed duties of 'respectable' women varied accordingly to their socio-economic position. Conventions of respectability that sought to confine middle-class wife-mothers, or prospective wife-mothers, to either domestic management,

idle activity within the drawing-room, or a 'career of sociability' were less suited to those for whom economic necessity was too strong (Crow, 1971; Curtin, 1987). In contrast to the 'respectable' wife-mother, single women were often dependent on their own ability to earn and typically faced extreme social and economic hardship (Lewis, 1986; Anderson, 1995; Hill, 2001). Ideologically, if a woman was engaged in remunerative employment, she could not achieve the highest accolades of a 'respectable lady' (Gleadle, 2001). Yet, for those women without the economic security of a financially comfortable family or husband, work was an unavoidable reality (Vicus, 1977).

Pursuing a career that accorded with women's 'divine and providential calling' - work that was orientated to the good of human lives rather than geared to personal wealth - could nevertheless secure a degree of respectability (Langland, 1995; Morgan, 2007). Although women's economic employment was generally discreditable, some 'feminine' forms of work involving the care of children and other vulnerable members of society were relatively commendable. To illustrate:

Little children, the sick, and the aged are among God's best gifts to us women and girls who are well and strong. They give us an object in life, someone to work for; they call out whatever is noble and self-forgetting in our natures; and in tending and nursing the young, the aged, and infirm girl-nature shows itself to be gentle, protecting, enduring, patient, and loving (Brewer, 1886^b: 94).

Whilst paid labour for women continued to be a cause of middle-class concern, a gradual expansion of female employment occurred throughout the nineteenth-century (Vicus, 1977). By the mid nineteenth century, debates about population, nation, social surplus, and empire frequently identified single women who were not reproducing as one of the nation's many unproductive groups and it was recognised that some forms of 'women's work' was an important way to ensure their social utility (Jalland, 1986; Levitan, 2008). Finding a place and occupation for 'surplus woman' was largely directed by the beliefs that a woman's respectability required male protection to avoid the potential dangers of poverty, as well as of sexual impropriety and sexual wasting, and that women's labour

should thus be allowed or even encouraged if it adhered to their 'nature' (Anderson, 1984; Gordon and Nair, 2002).

In order to address the unattainability of marriage due to the disproportionate populations of men and women in England, single women were frequently directed into domestic and nurturing occupations, particularly forms of household service and childcare that granted them some degree of financial independence whilst remaining firmly within the domestic sphere (Anderson, 1984). Such endeavours channelled women towards assisting others in nurturing children, securing homely sanctuary, supporting the heads of the households, and generally advancing the 'civilising mission' (Gorham, 1982; Gleadle, 2001). To illustrate:

To the share of the single woman falls all the woman's work in the world which the duties and position of the wife and mother must and ought prevent their taking in hand... The single woman... must never be without the modest grace which makes the wife's fairest ornament, or the tender dignity which floats around motherhood. Motherhood is, indeed, a part of every woman's nature, whether she is married or single, and this is what makes the noble, thoughtful, working Christian single woman's heart a refuge for all the weary and lonely; this is what makes her gentle hands so strong to raise the fallen (Anon, 1882: 783).

The increase of woman engaging in forms of work outside of the home from the second half of the nineteenth century illustrates tensions between the ideals and realities of womanhood. Anxieties were mostly centred around women's engagement with economic activities ideologically demarcated as being 'masculine', such as occupations deemed entrepreneurial or somehow 'unclean'²⁶ (Langland, 1995; Morgan, 2007). However, industrialisation increasingly afforded women opportunities to apply their 'natural' domestic and maternal positions outside of the home within a betwixt 'social' sphere, thus complicating the public-private and feminine-masculine work/space distinction (Riley, 1988; Poovey, 1995; Morgan, 2007). This complication made working in

²⁶ The concept of 'dirty work' - occupations that are in some way physically, morally, or socially 'dirty' (Hughes, 1958; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) - will be discussed in relation to the practices associated with 'baby-farming' in Chapter Eight.

or otherwise occupying the 'public sphere' both practically and ideologically jeopardous for women where their respectability was concerned.

As in the case of the practices associated with 'baby-farming', women were increasingly granted legitimate entry into the 'public' sphere through performing functions of 'social mothering' (Taylor, 1996: 7). Increasingly contested and reconstituted, the ideology of the 'separate spheres' bore formidable challenges as women sought greater emancipation from social and legal constraints (Langland, 1995; Davidoff and Hall, 2002; Griffin, 2011). The 'respectable' woman's activities progressively extended from her own home and family into the public or 'social' sphere where she was nevertheless continually expected to direct herself towards her 'natural' social roles (Riley, 1988; Poovey, 1995). Importantly, the forms of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering associated with 'baby-farming' could be considered entirely legitimate - or at least to appear so - if framed in a certain way.

In summary, for a woman to be respectable she had to carefully negotiate her use of space, power, and paid occupation in order that they each remained suitably 'feminine'. This meant her generally being centred within the home where her power was directed towards domestic and maternal duties that accorded with her 'civilising mission'. If women were to work then this was best contained within homely or otherwise domestic spheres, especially in occupations that involved the care and nurturance of children or other vulnerable social groups.

4.3. The Commodification, Consumerisation, and Inculcation of Respectable Womanhood

The most precious possession of a country is its population, and it has no capital so valuable as the individuals who form that population (Brewer, 1886^b: 78).

Part of the bourgeois 'civilising mission' entailed the cultivation of 'respectable' behaviours and customs throughout all of society (Elias, 1939). As shall be shown, some social groups like domestic servants were particularly targeted for their unique positions within middle-class structures of regulation and control as well as for being important ancillary symbols of a family's respectable status. Yet, for all social groups, the growth of consumer culture offered an ever-expanding market from which respectable identities could be bought, serviced, and fashioned.

Whilst many of the ideas underpinning the aforementioned constructions of respectable womanhood were by no means new to Victorian and Edwardian society, the period heralded a proliferation of discourse around respectable female archetypes and a sense of urgency by which they were pressed on the population, as well as the potential consequences of transgressing these normative stipulations (Griffin, 2011). Imputed with superior moral virtue, 'respectable' women were entrusted with special responsibilities as exemplars of middle-class values and representatives of the 'civilising mission' (Morgan, 2007). Through different forms of representation, standards of normative female respectability were simplified, popularised, and made accessible and consumable for the public at large (Loeb, 1994). The constitution and increased production of gendered artefacts throughout this period - and their corresponding markets of consumption - attests to the power of these middle-class discourses on the Victorian and Edwardian imagination.

Active consumption of these cultural ideals by women thus became fundamental to middle-class respectable identity and their 'civilising mission' (Morgan, 2007).

As women became the apparatus through which the moral strength of society could be stabilised (Delamont and Duffin, 1978), the rise of consumerism heralded an increasingly material expression of female respectability (Loeb, 1994). 'Respectable' women were accordingly targeted by consumer industries and advertisers who recognised their buying power and advertising potential of the middle-class lifestyle (Branca, 1975; Weeks, 1989).

The fulfilment of identity fantasy was thus sustained by consumer culture - such as the world of fashion - and women could therefore 'shop around' amid "a warehouse overflowing with consumer commodities" in order to develop, manage, or alter their 'respectable' identities (Bauman, 2000: 89). Women thus became enthusiastic consumers, accessing a profusion of products, services, and activities (Richards, 1990; Loeb, 1994; Vickery, 1993). With the growth of the department stores, shopping centres, and mass advertising, the period hailed the exultation of the commodity as the material essence of identity and everyday life in modern culture (Richards, 1990). Goods and services provided concrete expressions of phantasmatic ideals and beguiling impressions of respectability (Loeb, 1994). As shall be addressed later in this thesis, within the marketplace of motherhood, the 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services associated with 'baby-farming' offered one particularly important form of identity management for women who experienced a crisis of respectability due to the stigma of 'illegitimate' procreation.

Bourgeois fantasies of female respectability were thus progressively absorbed, imitated, acquired, materialised, and owned by women. Idealised and responsabilising discourses of respectable womanhood were not simply imposed upon women through their relations with more dominant men. Being generally accepted as 'natural' and 'common sense', women actively and assiduously reproduced and sustained these social ideals (Crow, 1971). Having influence over the reproduction and reconstitution of idealised representations, they were thus industrious participants of gendered politics (Langland, 1995). With increasing access to modern consumer culture, women were given greater opportunity and responsibility to independently and informally manage their own identities.

Women's 'respectable' identities were accordingly produced through individual and collective 'reflexive projects' open to continuous revision, commodification, fetishisation, and consumption (Giddens, 1991). Whilst modern consumerist culture provided the women with greater opportunity to manage their identities, both bodily and psychically, they were not entirely 'free' to do as they pleased but were both bound and empowered by universal social structures of, for example, gender and social class, as well as the pressure to conform to normative identities. With identity as 'work' - something that is done and acquired, rather than a pre-existing corporeality - the 'respectable' woman was forced to continuously reflect upon her self-image in regard to all aspects of life (Langland, 1995; Giddens, 1991). The proliferation of women's responsibilising advice literature guided the activity of self-improvement and the cultivation of a 'respectable' identity. To illustrate:

For self-modelling these things at least are needed. First, we must thoroughly understand the materials with which we have to work, and in short, ourselves. Secondly, we must be equipped with all the tools needed for self-modelling, and understand their uses, and what they can do and what they cannot; and lastly, we must have clearly before us the model or object that we are to copy (Schofield, 1895: 123).

'Respectable' women were thus necessarily concerned with composing biographical narratives that provided coherence to their lives, thus helping affirm to themselves and others the stability of their respectable identity (Giddens, 1991). The apparel and facilities of certain lifestyles could be adopted, imitated, or bought, thus giving material form to biographical narratives of the self. The 'respectable' woman accordingly became increasingly regarded as responsible for the management of her own identity, the fundamental objective being the fashioning of a more beneficial and pleasing self-image (Giddens, 1991; Loeb, 1994). The self-fashioning and personal management of the body and its expressions in accordance to the ideologies of respectability was thus imperative for all women wishing to participate and be included within 'normal', 'respectable' society. As will be shown later in this thesis, both key parties to the transactions associated with 'baby-farming' were, throughout the entire process of their

interaction, actively preoccupied with the management of their respectable identities.

Despite all discussion of women's 'essential qualities' and 'natural position', women were thus increasingly conceptualised along terms of positive social mobility and as self-actualising products of their culture. That is, the 'respectable woman' became a newly envisioned category, a fetishised commodity to be embodied. To illustrate, it was expressed that "the wife and mother are the highest products of the universe up to now, and the higher the civilisation the more devoted is the woman to home and maternity" (Anon, 1895: 172). As a consequence, women were antithetically reduced to national symbols of either social virtue or degeneration (Mosse, 1985). As highlighted below, the social manufacturing of 'respectable women' was central to the 'civilising mission':

They are better daughters, better wives, and better citizens; their pleasures and recreations of a higher class; they are more careful to preserve the dignity of woman... Even in the poorest homes you may see the effect of a better education, in the struggle to keep up appearances (Brewer, 1886^b: 199).

Through promotion, education, and advertisement, images of respectable womanhood became a commodity spectacle. As a result of discourses of respectability, women became a material property that exemplified middle-class status, particularly for male figures (Crow, 1971). Especially in respect to marriage and progeniture, 'respectable' women were largely considered as commodities or 'stock' in a marital-sexual marketplace. Consequently, a woman's respectable identity had to be maintained at all costs if she was to meet the ideological standards of 'normal', 'respectable' society and stand any chance of embodying the highest ideals of womanhood as a wife-mother. As will be revealed later in this thesis, this need to manage women's respectable appearances led to the emergence of some rather strange marketplaces within Victorian and Edwardian society.

4.4. Respectability and the Female Domestic Servant

Bourgeois models of respectable womanhood were also utilised to inculcate a small but significant fragment of the working-class population into their social consensus (Bailey, 1979; see Figure 8). Those of the 'respectable working-class' were expected to emulate all aspects of bourgeois propriety within their means. In particular, female domestic servants of middle-class households were considered important symbols of their employer's respectable status and, because of their assistive position within the family household, were also believed to share a respectable woman's responsibilities and influence in the 'civilising mission'. It was so expressed that "the happiness and welfare of our country lie very much in the hands of our servants, and I wish I could impress upon them their great responsibility, which is quite equal to that of the mistress" (Brewer, 1893: 535).

Figure 8. *The Sinews of Old England* by George Elgar Hicks (1857).



As the female domestic servant was such an important element and symbol of the 'respectable' household and bourgeois 'civilising mission', it was imperative that they also adhered to the standards of respectable womanhood. Immersed within bourgeois lifestyle, albeit largely as a spectator, domestic servants had first-hand experience of how the middle-classes lived. They therefore had their employers and their employers' friends and associates as 'role models' and conduits to middle-class discourses of respectability. Employed in what was supposedly a "pure moral atmosphere, surrounded by kindness and homelike treatment" (Brewer, 1893: 275), the female domestic servant was considered well positioned to cultivate a respectable character. Told "*you also are of the family*" (Lamb, 1883: 150), she was thus often paid special care and attention by her employers, particularly by her mistress (Dawes, 1973; Horn, 1975).

The female domestic servant was a particularly important social grouping of working women well positioned in regards to the acquirement of bourgeois values and practices, as well as for prospects of upward social mobility. Expressed that "You can elevate your position and gain the respect of your employers as well as your fellows by your propriety of conduct, manners, and dress" (Caulfield, 1881: 646), from her intensive schooling in etiquette, she herself further served as a model of middle-class values and practices to all those she associated with through her own social network (Dyhouse, 1989).

Female domestic servants in particular were perpetually caught in a double-bind between being regarded as part of the family and embodying the values and practices of 'respectable' society whilst simultaneously having to observe their socio-economic position of subordination and inferiority (Gleadle, 2001). Such women were simultaneously coached "let us have lofty ideals and be ever occupied with them, and our character is then changed" (Schofield, 1895: 124) whilst warned about "the silly vanity which induces ignorant young girls to ape a position they can never attain" (Caulfield, 1881: 646). Whilst they embodied many of the ideals of domestic femininity and practiced the etiquette of bourgeois respectability, their need to work typically prevented them from fully attaining the status of 'respectable lady' (Crow, 1971).

Although women entered domestic service with the desire to emulate middle-class ideals and behaviours with marriage as their ultimate objective, they were frequently obstructed from realising their aspirations (Gillis, 1979). For instance, they were often frustrated by household rules that demanded they remain single, not have any 'followers', and rarely leave their place of employment for social activities (Dawes, 1973; Horn, 1975). Such conditions evidently placed them at a disadvantage in the marital marketplace meaning courting was typically covert, perilous, and unstable (Davidoff, 1974). With marital prospects or pregnancy the usual factors that ended a woman's career in domestic service (Gleadle, 2001), the position of the female domestic servant was often one of liminality based upon her success or failure at securing a husband. Failed attempts at securing a husband, especially those that resulted in an 'illegitimate' pregnancy often resulted in an indelible blemish upon their character and instant dismissal without a reference (Rogers, 2011).

It is important to note that domestic service provided a popular source of employment for teenage girls and young women who migrated from rural areas into the city, seeing it as an opportunity for bed, board, and enforced savings before they were able to marry (Davidoff, 1974). Whilst forced to approach courting in ways dictated by their restrictive circumstances, female domestic servants were motivated by conventional values of respectable marriage and sought to carefully navigate the marital-sexual marketplace (Gillis, 1979). However, because of the conditions of their employment, this social group was particularly vulnerable to experiencing the breakdown of marital plans, abandonment by husbands-to-be, and 'illegitimate' pregnancies conceived upon promises of betrothal (ibid).

It is clear then how women like Fanny Tear (t18980328-288, 1898) or Ada Charlotte Galley (t19030112-174, 1903), both unwed domestic servants who engaged the services of 'out-of-house' substitute mothers after becoming pregnant with an 'illegitimate' child, had already been responsabilised in the personal management of their respectable identities. Immersed within the respectable world of the middle-classes and seeking to aspire to their ideals of respectable womanhood, these women had naturally sought to secure a husband in order to gain the status of a respectable wife-mother. Despite their best

intentions, the promises given to women like Fanny and Ada for respectable marriage often collapsed due to social, economic, or geographic impediments (Gillis, 1979). For women like Fanny and Ada to have been sexually intimate and become pregnant within plans to marry, only for those plans to then fail, was entirely disastrous.

Women in domestic service thus occupied a particularly difficult position in 'respectable' society. Not of the class that defined how they should behave, they were expected to live by those standards whilst sharing none of the benefits of middle-class stability. It was therefore much harder for them to manage aspects of their respectability than, say, for a middle-class married woman who had access to a wider range of options and resources. However, as will be shown later in the thesis, either by their own savings or the pragmatic or compassionate support of their partner, employers, family, or friends, women like Fanny and Ada had some opportunity to manage their respectable identities and matters of problematic parenthood through the modern marketplace of motherhood.

4.5. Conclusion

The cult of respectable womanhood emanated from the normative 'centre' of society, from the governing middle-class. The discourses of female respectability functioned to regulate women's lives by informing their identities and everyday experiences. The construction of a very particular type of woman operated ideologically to maintain middle-class hegemonic relationships and prevent social degeneration of women and, by extension, the rest of society. Normative identities of 'respectable' womanhood were informed by widely-dispersed discourses concerning femininity, marriage, motherhood, and reproduction, the centrality of female space within the home, and the forms of legitimate female labour. Fundamental to a woman's respectability was her sexual virtue as her chastity was essential to the bourgeois system of inheritance and cultural reproduction. These elements of respectable womanhood were absolutely essential to a woman's reputation and inclusion within respectable society.

Constructed upon the middle-class's peculiar and erratic sense of identity, female respectability was riddled with paradoxes. Whilst expected to have children, sex dirtied and corrupted them. Whilst they were to remain pure and innocent, they also had to attract and satisfy potential husbands. Whilst considered the linchpin of civilised society, they were kept subjugated and confined. They were considered responsible for the domestic maintenance of the home, but if they strived too far then they became unfeminine and disreputable. They were expected to educate and better themselves, but if they aimed too high or thought too much they were regarded as 'unfeminine' and prone to degenerate. They could earn a little money through 'natural' forms of female labour but they had to ensure their forms of work remained suitably modest and 'feminine'. As a consequence, discourses of normative, respectable womanhood functioned to keep women protected from the weakness of their sex. To keep them protected, they were discursively relegated and contained within the home and their attention was focused onto the things their sex was deemed most suited for, which primarily centred around raising children in a maternal and loving way. Wherever she failed or refused to do this, the ideological fabric or 'respectable', 'civilised' society began to collapse.

Although the realism and material manifestation of these discourses was fundamentally a collective reification of co-produced middle-class ideologies and utopian visions, they maintained cultural significance, influence, and an objectively experienced rigidity throughout this period. Yet, despite the power of these cultural representations of respectable womanhood, they did not reflect the complexities and conflicting demands of women's everyday experiences. For all women, regardless of their social position, this was the substance of 'normal' society. Irrespective of whether they were able to live up to these standards, whether they even cared, or whether they lived outside of the 'norm' for whatever reason, all women generally possessed a fair approximation of what being 'normal' and 'respectable' meant. They knew the rules of 'normality' and 'respectability' as well as how to use or apply them. Similarly, they knew when they were not being 'normal' and the general consequences to this.

The chapter has functioned to highlight how once we desist understanding so-called 'baby-farmers' through ideological constructions of otherness - as aberrant

monsters or deranged 'serial-killers' - we have to recognise that they operated rationally in the space available to them. Once women like Amelia Dyer stop being a 'folk devil' (Cohen, 1971), they have to be considered like all other women who operated within a conventional system, as 'normal' products of society bound together by the same codes of respectable womanhood. Similarly, this chapter has shown how potential service users such as single women and domestic servants - who, as mentioned previously, have been identified as one notably common social group that used the services of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering associated with 'baby-farming' - were also particularly bound by the ideals of respectable womanhood. A key symbol of middle-class 'respectable' society, domestic servants were especially required to adhere to the socio-sexual responsibilities of female respectability. Constantly aspiring to the ideals of 'respectable' society, such women would have been primarily governed by the stipulations of respectable employment, sex, marriage, and motherhood. These are the key elements of respectable womanhood that pertained directly to those who engaged the services of 'out-of-house' substitute mothers.

The chapter has begun to develop 'respectability' as an analytical tool that will be used throughout the remaining chapters to make sense of all the data that relates to the people, practices, and process associated with 'baby-farming'. As will later be shown, the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering which became a pivotal element in the practices associated with 'baby-farming' were all formulated in accordance to the chimerical notion of female respectability summarised thus far. Through their medium, all those involved in these practices were quintessentially 'respectable'. The proposed arrangements were founded upon an idealised welfare paradise that envisioned the availability of respectable women ready to provide and nurture where a biological mother could not.

With the ideological construction of respectable womanhood as the central analytical lens, the following chapter will examine the primary causes and consequences of a woman's crisis of respectability through disreputable parenthood. Whilst access to commodities and services facilitated the fashioning of respectable appearances, it will be established how it was only through a noticeably committed public adherence - in other words, a satisfactory 'front' - to

the conventional rules of respectable womanhood outlined thus far that a woman's creditable image through the eyes of others could be assured.

Chapter V: A Crisis of Respectable Womanhood

Having an illegitimate baby was highly stigmatized and women concealed the fact as desperately as people did a criminal record (Cook, 2004: 282).

5.1. Introduction

On February 10th 1899, Esther Amelia Hodson gave birth to a daughter she named Evelyn Constance Hodson (t18990912-624, 1899). Being unmarried, Esther's child was 'illegitimate'. Shortly after Evelyn was born, Esther saw an advertisement in *Dalton's Advertiser* to which she wrote a letter to the address provided explaining that she wished to put her child out for adoption. Esther shortly received a reply which stated that the advertiser - a woman named Amy McNeil Douglas - wished to take the child for life, that she only required £6 and a start in clothes for it. Esther was told the child would have a good home and be no further trouble to anyone. Amy Douglas, describing herself as a widow with children of her own and a small yet sufficient income, urged Esther to decide as soon as possible as she had plans to relocate shortly and wished to take the child with her. She also mentioned she had letters from several other women wishing to have their babies adopted which needed to be replied to one way or the other. Having resolved to give up her child altogether, Esther was told that if she paid the money within a month, she would see it once, and only once. Almost three months old, Esther handed Evelyn to Amy with four pounds, some clothes, and the promise to pay the remaining two pounds by the end of the month.

As established in Chapter Four, both Esther and Amy - and also Evelyn - were bound by the same conventional systems of respectable society. Casually recognised by many commentators on the subject of 'baby-farming', both groups of women involved in these 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices were 'discreditable' for transgressing bourgeois codes of respectable womanhood (see for example Rose, 1986; Arnot, 1994; Homrighaus, 2003). The mothers giving up their children for adoption had fundamentally failed to adhere to the bourgeois

creed of marriage and legitimate procreation. Those offering their services as 'out-of-house' substitute mothers were treading a precarious line through legitimate forms of women's remunerative employment, economic independence, and gendered spaces.

Normative respectability was fundamentally subjective. Almost nobody in Victorian or Edwardian society saw themselves as 'not respectable' (Davin, 1995), they were only considered so by others who judged their behaviours. 'Respectability' was the product of adhering to prescriptive ideologies, behaviours, and lifestyles. Unless an individual had been openly discredited for failing to conform to the conventional systems of 'respectable' society, they remained relatively indistinguishable from everyone else. Respectability was, in effect, a kind of performance or masquerade. Nobody was innately respectable. Respectability was something that was *done*, not an essential aspect of an individual's being. Objectively, these women can only really be considered 'abnormal' in an ideological sense.

That many of those involved in the practices associated with 'baby-farming' - particularly those who offered 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services - 'staged' respectability has been recognised by many prominent commentators on the subject²⁷. Pantomimic performances of respectability in relation to 'baby-farming' has only ever been considered as an indication of inner deviancy and of malicious criminal intent. Tacit distinctions have been made between those regarded as intrinsically 'respectable ladies', and those who merely acted as though they were such. The 'deceptive' features of identity that were central to the key parties and practices associated with 'baby-farming' have so far never been formalistically examined or considered as natural, rational, and necessary under the oppressive conditions of 'respectable' society.

The present chapter continues by exploring possible consequences of the middle-class construction of respectable womanhood. This section draws upon Becker's (1963) theory of 'outsiders' and Taguieff's (1988) theory of heterophobic

²⁷ For example, Waugh (1890) described the 'baby-farmer' as "foul and poisonous deceiver" with "nurse-like neatness of deportment and dress", "of clean, genteel, respectable clothing and manners" - "all procurers obtain their children under false pretences. The statements of their advertisements, their correspondences, their conversations, are mere tissues of lies". Knelman (1998: 157-158) argued "On the surface, these women were kindly, cheerful nurses..."

hostility to explore how those women associated with the practices of 'baby-farming' could experience social discrimination and exclusion from respectable society. It will be established how the world of respectable society, including vital opportunities to work, marry, and become a 'respectable' wife-mother, could become closed off to those women found to have broken the 'rules' of respectable femininity through sexual transgressions and 'illegitimate' pregnancy.

The third section of this chapter will consider how those who provided 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services were in their own way potentially discreditable by the nature of their occupation. Whilst substitute mothering has been established as a reasonably respectable and legitimate form of work for women, the 'out-of-house' form of this practice and the use of advertising conceivable eroded the 'respectable' aspects of this profession creating tensions in social, economic, and spatial gender politics.

Section Four will then examine how women embodied middle-class ideologies of femininity and domesticity, and the obstacles to this, in order to remain within the ideological confines of 'normal' and 'respectable' society outlined in Chapter Four. This section builds on Goffman's (1959) and Butler's (2007) theories of identity and gender as performatively constituted. It will be revealed that a sufficient understanding of the ideologies of female respectability and the concomitant codes of conduct enabled them to behave as 'normal' and 'respectable' - appearing 'in character' - as demanded by any given social context. In effect, the bourgeois ideal of female respectability and its masquerade were one and the same thing.

This chapter functions to highlight how 'traditional' ways of understanding the individuals and practices associated with 'baby-farming' are erroneous because they are built upon ideological constructions of middle-class otherness. The conception of narratives of otherness exposes how bourgeois respectability and idealised visions of womanhood were an incredibly precious and policed category. As a result, the consequences of failing to adhere to the codes of respectable womanhood outlined in Chapter Four were conceivable so dire that women were impelled to negotiate clandestine systems of identity management

in order to avoid social exclusion and the discrediting of those who associated with her, such as her family or employers.

5.2. Representations of Deviant Womanhood

Once I was pure as the snow, but I fell -
Fell like the snow-flakes, from heaven to hell:
Fell, to be trampled as filth in the street -
Fell, to be scoffed, to be spit on and beat,

Pleading, cursing, dreading to die,
Selling my soul to whoever would buy;
Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread,
Hating the living, and fearing the dead;

Merciful God, have I fallen so low,
And yet I was once like the beautiful snow!
...Once I was loved for my innocent grace -
Flattered and sought for the charms on my face;

Father, mother, sister, and all,
God and myself I have lost by my fall;
The veriest wretch that goes shivering by
Will make a wide swoop lest I wander too nigh;

For all that is on or above me I know

There is nothing so pure as the beautiful snow.²⁸

The preceding stanzas from the poem *Beautiful Snow* tragedised the plight of women who 'fell from grace' - whose identities and reputations as respectable women became ruined and who were shunned as outcasts from 'respectable' society. Broadly speaking, for a woman to 'fall' meant 'falling short' of middle-class ideologies of respectable womanhood (Leighton, 1989). More often than not, a woman's 'fall' was the consequence of transgressive sexual activity, most usually by sex outside marriage and 'illegitimate' procreation (Nochlin, 1978; Nead, 1988; Mumm, 1996)²⁹.

To 'fall' in the feminine was largely class specific as it entailed that she had been 'respectable' but had since become dissociated from middle-class 'respectable' society (Nead, 1988) and was thus generally regarded by ideologues in absolute terms - rather than a social or ethical issue that could be managed by means of human effort or action (Nochlin, 1978). As 'the Angel' was largely defined in terms of her innocence and sexual virtue, once this was considered tarnished it could never be reclaimed.

Symbolically, the figure of 'the fallen woman' both mirrored and inverted that of 'the Angel'³⁰³¹ (see Chapter Four). If the sanctified woman, home, and child were central to bourgeois ideologies and the bourgeois 'civilising offensive', the street-walking 'fallen woman' represented a complete distortion and devastation of

²⁸ *Beautiful Snow* in *Western Times* (28th December, 1869: 7). Written by the American poet John Whitaker Watson, the poem was published and received nationwide circulation in assorted newspapers and other media in England from 1869.

²⁹ Brookes (1986: 151) highlighted how, for the 'respectable' Victorians, "marriage, sexuality and reproduction were inextricably entwined for those who aspired to middle-class 'respectability'... if intercourse took place outside of marriage then the sacredness of sex was profaned... women who were sexually active outside marriage were branded as 'fallen'".

³⁰ Nead (1988) showed how representations of Victorian women were continuously polarised into two forms: the virtuous and the fallen.

³¹ Nochlin (1978: 141) stated that "Lurking behind most of the fallen-woman imagery of the nineteenth century is the sometimes explicit but more often unspoken assumption that the only honourable position for a young woman in her role within the family: the role of daughter, wife, and mother. Speaking figuratively, one might say that behind every crouched figure of a fallen woman there stands the eminently upright one of the angel in the house".

those dreams³². Each image was antithetical to and yet contained within the other so that in every 'Angel' existed an ever-present potential for instant ruination. It was so expressed that, "when an angel loses its nature it goes down to the utmost depths, and when a woman loses her womanhood she is utterly degraded" (Brewer, 1889: 805). As an ideological polarity of 'the Angel', representations of a woman's 'fall' essentially functioned as the nadir of a cautionary narrative of how women's sexual virtue and 'legitimate' procreation should be maintained at all costs.

Connecting the key parties of practices associated with 'baby-farming' were stigma-prone children whose existence contravened bourgeois ideologies of respectability. In particular, mothers of ideologically 'illegitimate' children have widely been recognised as the most common users of the privately arranged 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services associated with 'baby-farming' (see for example Behlmer, 1982; Rose, 1986; Homrighaus, 2003; Grey, 2009)³³. As such, both the supply and demand of such services should be considered as an economic response to the social, sexual, and economic insecurity of all women trying to operate within 'respectable' society. In effect, the services associated with 'baby-farming' manifested around a woman's crisis of respectable womanhood, or 'fall', caused by transgressive sexuality and stigma-prone procreation.

The consequential stigma and poverty associated with having an 'illegitimate' child can be observed throughout those personal histories made visible in archival sources that shed light upon the 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices associated with 'baby-farming'. Women like Janet Tassie Cowen whose father sought adoption for her 'illegitimate' child born after she had been 'outraged'³⁴ whilst on a trip away from home aged 16 (t18700919-769, 1870) or Florence Jones, an unmarried woman who needed someone to help raise her

³² Trudgill (1976: 105) highlighted how the 'respectable' Victorian's "revulsion at fallen women was in proportion to their adoration of female purity".

³³ Moreover, mothers of 'illegitimate' children - particularly domestic servants - have been identified as key users of government, charitable, and ecclesiastical poor relief systems, such as parish workhouses, maternity charities, the Magdalen Hospital, and the London Foundling Hospital (Gillis, 1979; Rogers, 2011).

³⁴ Such terms signify the 'respectable' encrypting of acts of rape or sexual assault in the press or legal proceedings during the period (see Stevenson, 2005: 14).

child after the child's father ceased to contribute to its maintenance and left her to care for it alone (t19000212-185, 1900). Whether it was partly by their own making or imposed upon them, the consequences of sexual transgressions that led from a problematic pregnancy to an unviable, discrediting child placed the mother outside the ideological framework of respectable womanhood and social aegis and opportunities of 'respectable' society.

The stigma of illicit sex and 'illegitimacy' embodied both discredited and discreditable states (Goffman, 1963). By having sex outside of marriage - whether freely or by force - a woman contravened bourgeois ideologies and utopian visions of female purity and chastity (Maxwell, 2016). In losing their sexual virtue, women like Janet Tassie Cowen and Florence Jones ideologically embodied middle-class vision of 'the fallen woman' and were thus discreditable. Only when made public would her respectability be entirely sullied, her social worth as a 'respectable woman' devalued and her identity openly discredited³⁵. For a single woman, signs of pregnancy and the birth of her child became the evidence of her transgression therefore making any illicit, discreditable sexual activity increasingly difficult to conceal, especially from those close to her. Until openly discredited, her stigma remained within her power to manage privately.

Implicit in the poem *Beautiful Snow*, the significance of a woman's 'fall' did not concern her alone but could also affect those associated with her - such as her family, her friends, lover, or employers - all of whom, upon becoming aware of her problem, may have sought distance from her in order to avoid stigma contamination from her ideological 'taint' (Logan, 1998). As the existence of an ideologically 'illegitimate' child stigmatised the mother and closed doors to her within 'respectable' society - particularly her ability to work in 'respectable' occupations, marry, and become a respectable wife-mother - so too could it have tarnished the reputations of those close to her. Without such acceptance and support 'the fallen woman' faced becoming a pariah, her access to 'respectable' society entirely renounced.

³⁵ As highlighted by Cook (2004: 2) "sexual intercourse outside marriage, if discovered, and particularly if pregnancy occurred, often earned girls and women the treatment of social outcasts or even institutionalisation".

However accurate in their depiction, or a creation of the author or artist's own subjective distortion, ideological visions of 'the fallen woman' haunted the Victorian and Edwardian imagination (Trudgill, 1976; Nead, 1988). The intended meaning in artistic representations of 'the fallen woman' like *Beautiful Snow* is thus indeterminate: they may have been designed as warnings or to arouse sympathy for young women abandoned by their families and ostracised from 'respectable' society. Regardless of how certain the consequences or experiences of 'falling' were, the fearful impressions of such discourses would nevertheless have remained potent enough to induce those affected into taking substantial measures to avoid the potentially ruinous effects of a woman's 'fall'. As noted by Auerbach (1982: 3, 34, 62), through the period's representations of 'respectable' and 'disreputable' women:

we can discern a myth that functioned above all as a shaping principle, not only of fictions, but of lives as well... like all citizens, women were fortified by the dreams of their culture as much as their lives were mutilated by its fears... In a century whose women's lives were exalted to the status of fictions, fiction bestowed in return motive power to many lives.

In effect, images of the othered 'outsider' "fulfilled a crucial function as the anti-type - a warning of what the future might hold if society relaxed its controls and abandoned its quest for respectability" (Mosse, 1985: 150-151). In light of Victorian and Edwardian ideologies of femininity and the centrality of respectable womanhood and 'legitimate' reproduction within the 'civilising mission' (as discussed in Chapter Four), transgressive sex and the bearing of 'illegitimate' children were the most discrediting things a woman could do. This theme came to darken much of the melodramatic literary and artistic output and other commentary of the period. Undoubtedly perceived as a real and serious threat, 'the fallen woman' thus epitomised a primary group of othered 'outsiders' in Victorian and Edwardian culture (Mahood, 1990; Walkowitz, 1998). Her marginalised position was in relation to middle-class, patriarchal ideologies and social codes - her exclusion was from the dreams and opportunities of their genteel society.

The defining, labelling, and exclusion of female misconduct proceeded in accordance with Becker's (1963) theory of the social construction of deviance. That is, authoritative "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them outsiders" (ibid: 9). Female deviance - rather than an intrinsic characteristic - was thus a product of social responses to certain acts and the labelling of particular actors as 'deviant'. For a woman to 'fall', her 'improper' behaviour had to be observed and then judged to be deviant by ideologues who sought to regulate and affirm standards of 'normality' and 'respectability'. When such standards were enforced, the individual found to have transgressed was regarded as in some way aberrant and cast as an 'outsider' (ibid). The 'outsiders' of Victorian and Edwardian society were typically regarded as threatening strangers to 'civilised' society and thus potent sources for the construction of middle-class 'folk devils' and 'moral panics' (Cohen, 1971; Rowbotham and Stevenson, 2005; Connor, 2015).

Bourgeois fears of 'the other' and the correlative anxieties of social contamination and decay may be understood as a heterophobic response. Heterophobia in this usage concerns a common fear or resentment of 'the other'; "a negative evaluation of all difference, implying an ideal (explicit or not) of homogeneity" (Taguieff, 1988: 20). Although developed by Taguieff in relation to racial prejudice, heterophobia remains pertinent to understanding broader systems of social discrimination and exclusion, the forms and complexities of which are framed by the particular social, cultural, and historical context³⁶. As a persistent, irrational, and fearful response, heterophobia invokes excessive or unreasonable feelings of threat, loss of control, and panic. Anxiety triggered by heterophobia may be managed and mitigated through various techniques that distinguish, distance, and degrade 'the other'. To whatever it is targeted towards, this system of social discrimination and exclusion is characterised by "coherent, closed, and "explanatory" representations at the same time as an incoherent bunch of chimeras, errors, and lies... a paranoid image of the world" (ibid: 66).

³⁶ For instance, Connor (2015) adroitly applied the concept of bourgeois heterophobic hostility to examine conceptualisations of the 'othered' Victorian cross-dresser.

On a primary level, an unknown 'other' may initially elicit primitive emotions of anxiety, fear, and a lack of security and control which are then typically met antagonistically. More 'sophisticated' versions of heterophobia are rationalised with reference to supposedly distinguishing characteristics associated, for instance, with ideologies of legitimacy, heredity, biology, or culture (Taguieff, 1988). Such philosophies of social variance, by their understandings of 'essences' and concomitant values, underpin justifications for devaluing, stigmatising, and excluding members of society (Bauman, 1989). Whether or not the heterophobic response is elaborated via theoretical justifications or remains on a primary level, the offensive 'other' is constructed as being odious, 'objectively' harmful, and often inferior - in whichever case they are understood as being threatening and potentially damaging to the condemning 'in-group' (ibid).

Through the image of 'the fallen woman', unmarried mothers - women like Janet Tassie Cowen and Florence Jones - as well as their 'illegitimate' infants³⁷ became maligned targets of heterophobic otherness. Their haunting figures elicited both primitive and more complex forms of heterophobia which, expressed and explained through varied discursive systems of different levels of 'sophistication', placed them beneath, outside, and threatening to those of 'respectable' society. Their representations were built upon an inconsistent array of dehumanising and disempowering myths that fundamentally reflected bourgeois fears and paranoia, rather than any factual attributes of their character.

Heterophobic conceptions of deviance were nowhere more expressly identified with women than through bourgeois ideologies of the respectable wife-mother (Logan, 1998). For the middle-classes, female respectability was primarily associated with her sexuality because their entire social and familial system depended upon the purity of the daughter, wife, and mother (Brittain, 1953). A woman's appearance as either sexually virtuous or sinful thus determined her image of respectability and her qualification as a responsible and accepted member of genteel society (Nead, 1988). Female sexuality held a fundamental symbolic role in the bourgeois ideology of respectability, she represented "a perishable good, the misuse of which diminishe[d] the value. The "moral law"

³⁷ The dehumanised treatment of these children will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

[was] not only feminized, but economized, and thus very close to the law of commodity" (Leighton, 1989: 111). Thus, women who were found to have contravened ideologies of respectable womanhood through transgressive sex and 'illegitimate' reproduction were fundamentally deemed spoiled and worthless.

The contraposition of female to male sexual morality was epitomised through the period's 'double-standard' which regularly excused male sexual behaviour as an expression of their masculinity, whilst anathematising most of women's sexuality as a manifestation of deviancy or pathology - a primary strategy of regulating 'respectable' women's sexuality (Nead, 1988). As discussed in Chapter Four, the 'respectable' woman was desexualised, female sexual agency was generally treated as a disturbing abnormality (Crow, 1971). Forms of premarital or extramarital sex were generally considered excusable for men, but could be potentially disastrous for women if known publicly (Mahood, 1990). The general consequence was that large portions of female society were reviled and repudiated when exposed for pre-marital transgressions of sexual purity, whilst the same behaviours were accepted as 'natural' and thus excusable for men (Jeffreys, 1995: 8).

Where women like Janet Tassie Cowen and Florence Jones faced heterophobic condemnation and ostracism for having had sex and becoming pregnant outside of marriage, the fathers of their children received no such enmity and alienation. With their all-determining sexual identity organised around a rigid ideological 'virgin'/'whore' dichotomy, women who bore 'illegitimate' children were clearly deemed unfit for 'respectable' society. Generally considered responsible for their sexual transgression, unmarried mothers were correspondingly punished by being made primarily responsible for their infant's care and maintenance (Ward, 2015).

The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 repealed provisions of out-relief for unmarried women and reduced the powers of legal recourse to obligate putative fathers to pay maintenance for their 'illegitimate' children (Higginbotham, 1989). In particular, the Bastardy Clauses of the of the New Poor Law required that liability for an 'illegitimate' child fell primarily upon its mother and her family until the child reached 16 (Henriques, 1967). This change in law was intended to

prevent single women and their 'illegitimate' offspring becoming a burden on local parishes, for if the mother or her family could not support the child then she and her baby would likely be sent to a parish workhouse to obtain relief (Cook, 2004). Assignment to the workhouse was devised to shame and humiliate such women to prevent repercussions and deter others from 'falling' into similar situations (Henriques, 1967; Thane, 1978).

However, the Bastardy Clauses of the Poor Law 1834 were quickly criticised and amended for they were deemed just as likely to encourage promiscuous men as to deter women from having sex outside of marriage (Ward, 2015). The severity of the New Poor Law induced sympathy for unmarried mothers who were consequently perceived as victims of seduction and brutal penalties (Rose, 1986). The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1844 granted unmarried mothers to apply for maintenance orders against putative fathers providing there was sufficient evidence of paternal identity (Ward, 2015). The amendment left women entirely responsible to initiate proceedings against putative fathers and, when successful, maintenance payments were capped at a meagre two shillings and six pence a week (Rose, 1986). Payments were scheduled until the child was 13 but, if the father defaulted, he could only be forced to bestow a maximum of 13 weeks' claim (ibid).

The Bastardy Laws Amendment Act 1872 which governed the maintenance of 'illegitimate' children until 1957 sought to strengthen a mother's claim for financial support from the child's father by providing greater assistance in recovering maintenance costs and increasing the duration of payments till the child was 16 (Behlmer, 1982; Walvin, 1982). However, the shame, stigma, and heterophobic 'othering' of unmarried motherhood and 'illegitimacy' continued throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods (Higginbotham, 1989; Frost, 2003; Smart, 2009). It is therefore quite understandable how undesirable it would have been for a woman to manage her problems of having an 'illegitimate' child through the various 'public' channels made available through this period that necessitated her being openly discredited, hence the need or desire for more clandestine means of dealing with such problems.

In the period's literary and artistic representations of familial disintegration caused by female sexuality, the social chasm created by 'falling' "not only alienates the protagonist but denies her the social role of wife and (legitimate) mother, which, in Victorian fiction, signifies a woman's mature community participation" (Braun, 2015: 343). In effect, female sexual propriety was central to the preservation of respectability and family welfare (Gleadle, 2001). As female chastity was fundamental to middle-class ideologies of home and marriage, its loss or forfeiture was seen to tarnish the symbolic value of these institutions. Heterophobic narratives of deviant female sexuality thus all concluded that such behaviour threatened and destabilised the home, family, and society whilst accordance to the feminine ideal served the production and perpetuation of the family unit and the culture of respectability (Nead, 1988).

As expressed in Richard Redgrave's melodramatic depiction of a father expelling his daughter and her 'illegitimate' child from the family home in *The Outcast* (see Figure 9), the consequences of a woman's 'fall' were relative to her familial position. For young, unmarried women this could mean abandonment or ostracisation by her parents and siblings and an expulsion from the 'private' to the potentially perilous 'public' sphere where they became amorphously associated with the spectres of prostitution.

Figure 9. *The Outcast* by Richard Redgrave (1851)³⁸.



Unmarried sexual activity and ‘illegitimate’ pregnancy could also severely damage a working woman’s ability to find or retain employment within certain occupations, and thus to support herself financially. Although the heads of middle-class households were often envisaged as substitute parents for young girls in their service (Davidoff, 1974), such transgressions were nevertheless generally considered inadmissible (Dawes, 1973). Whilst some employers may have been sympathetic to her predicament, many would have considered it an affront to their authority, a taint to their own respectable image, and a vexation best discharged (Dawes, 1973; Horn, 1975). With a constant surplus of women seeking work, employers could dismiss their servants for minor infractions without worry of finding replacements (Rogers, 2011). Serious infractions could lead to

³⁸ As described by Vicinus (1972: 63) “*The Outcast*, a very melodramatic work, shows the stern and unforgiving father pointing to the open door as the daughter, hugging her illegitimate child to her breast, prepares to go out into the cold and snow outside. Her brother hides his head in his hands, one sister pleads with the father for mercy, another in despair clenches her fists against the wall. The letter on the floor doubtless has played its part in exposing the daughter’s sin and determining her ruin”.

an instant termination of employment without a character reference - an essential commodity for gaining future work in domestic service (Gillis, 1979).

Whether regarded as 'deviant' or a 'victim', the 'fallen' woman's reintegration into 'respectable' society was stymied by having been positioned as irresponsible and incapable of realising her role in bourgeois social designs. Moreover, having 'fallen', her identity would have forevermore been shadowed by the spectres of prostitution as this was often deemed the only option left available for a 'fallen' woman to survive (Zedner, 1991; Rogers, 2011). The 'prostitute', emblematic of the worst of all deviant women, was commonly depicted as some sort of moral monster (Trudgill, 1976)³⁹⁴⁰, an image that would have haunted those women - like Janet Tassie Cowen and Florence Jones - who found themselves facing the public disgrace of mothering an 'illegitimate' child⁴¹. As heterophobic labels of deviancy and statuses as 'other' are often obdurate (Becker, 1963), those who publicly 'fell' through exposures of sexual misconduct would likely have been perpetually tarnished by this impression.

Viewed as omnipresent conduits of disease, 'the prostitute' threatened to contaminate and despoil all of respectable society (Nead, 1984). Influential heterophobic writings on prostitution such as the work of Dr William Acton (1870) frequently provided plague-based and dehumanised portrayals of female sex workers as "a medium of communicating disease" (p. x-xi) "full of inner rottenness" (p. 30), as "a heap of rubbish will ferment, so surely will a number of unvirtuous women thus collected deteriorate" (p. 11-12). Symbolically, 'the prostitute' - envisioned as the general fate of all 'fallen' women - became the social lepers and unparalleled outcast of 'respectable' society (Walkowitz, 1982). This was the enduring image of utmost disgrace and debasement potentially

³⁹ An article in the *Westminster Review*, regarding how prostitutes were treated, stated "No language is too savage for these wretched women. They are outcasts, Pariahs, lepers. Their touch, even in the extremity of suffering, is shaken off as if it were pollution and disease" (cited in Trudgill, 1976: 101).

⁴⁰ Acton (1870: 166) wrote that the prostitute is "a woman with half the woman gone, and that half containing all that elevates her nature, leaving her a mere instrument of impurity; degraded and fallen she extracts from the sin of others the means of living, corrupt and dependent on corruption, and therefore interested directly in the increase of immorality - a social pest, carrying contamination and foulness to every quarter to which she has access".

⁴¹ As written by Mayhew (1863: 34) "Literally every woman who yields to her passions and loses her virtue is a prostitute".

faced by women like Janet Tassie Cowen and Florence Jones if their sexual infraction became public knowledge.

Whilst female sex workers were generally regarded as inhabitants of a largely unknown and immoral 'underworld' of society, its threshold with the respectable classes was feared by the bourgeoisie to be too easily breached (Zedner, 1991; see Figures 10 and 11). The reality that 'the prostitute' would not always have been easily distinguishable from the rest of society, and that this level of ruination lay ever-present in all women, contributed to the paranoid suspicions of the ideologues of 'respectable' society and their fears of potentially fathomless infestation and contagion. The central concern around these 'unhealthy' elements of society was that "the great mass of prostitutes in this country are in the course of time absorbed into the so-called respectable classes... they will assume the characters of wives and mothers with a greater or less degree of unsoundness in their bodies and pollution in their minds" (Acton, 1870: xi). Recognition of the lives and identities of the actual people behind this heterophobic response became a complex and confusing matter for those who sought to regulate, police, and control prostitution (Rogers, 2011). To illustrate, Acton (1870: viii), in describing the issue of prostitution as "a fear that starts at the shadows", asked:

Who are those fair creatures, neither chaperons or chaperone, "those somebodies that nobody knows," who elbow our wives and daughters in the parks and promenade and rendezvous of fashion? Who are those painted, dressy women, flaunting along the streets and boldly accosting the passers-by? Who [are] those miserable creatures, ill-fed, ill-clothed, uncared for, from whose misery the eye recoils, cowering under dark arches and among by-lanes?⁴²

⁴² Of course, these women who perplexed the likes of Acton could so easily have been women like Janet Tassie Cowen or Florence Jones who, if cast as 'outsiders' to 'respectable' society, would have been forced to find some way to survive their situation.

Figure 10. *The Times of Day. 3. Night – Haymarket* by William Powell Firth (1862).



Figure 11. *A Harlot's Progress* by William Hogarth (originally published in 1733 and later included as illustrations in Joseph Gay's 1848 *Lure of Venus. Plate 1. Moll Hackabout arrives in London at the Bell Inn, Cheapside*⁴³



⁴³ *A Harlot's Progress* consisted of six pictures that constructed a narrative of a young woman - Moll Hackabout - who, upon arriving alone in London, soon becomes embroiled in the world of prostitution and eventually dies of venereal disease.

To be publicly cast as anything close to resembling a prostitute would have been entirely devastating to a respectable woman's status, especially perhaps if her downfall was perceived as having been no fault but her own. Promises or allusions to marriage undoubtedly emboldened many women - such as domestic servants - into pre-marital sexual activity, only then for marriage plans to fail leaving the woman to endure the consequences of the sexual 'misdeed' alone (Gillis, 1979). Genuine intentions for a respectable marriage may easily have disintegrated due to unforeseen obstacles - such as work, finances, conscription, or death - that compulsorily parted lovers (ibid)⁴⁴.

A 'fallen' woman, faced with the prospect and shame of rearing an 'illegitimate' child without sympathy or support from its father, her family, or other benevolent acquaintances, and ill-equipped to support herself and her child, would have experienced a crisis of respectable womanhood which threatened her with levels of shame, hardship, and despair that impelled her towards drastic measures to resolving her predicament. The image of a 'fallen' woman's ultimate destruction was a common dramatic theme within the period's art and literature. Her downfall was regularly presented to culminate in her own inevitable early death, often by suicide, as a consequence of the shame and hardship she experienced through exposures of her sexual transgression and 'illegitimate' pregnancy (Rogers, 2011; Braun, 2015). Such sentiment is expressed in William Goldsmith's poem *When Lovely Woman Stoops to Folly*:

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy,
What art can wash her guilt away?...

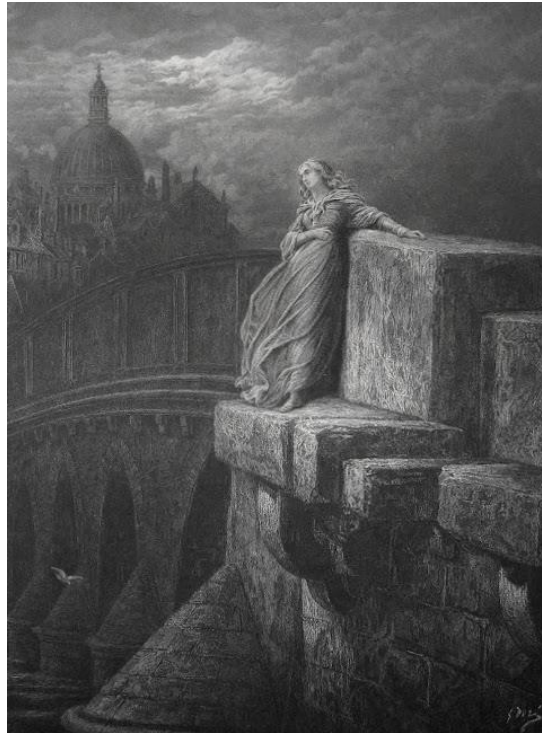
⁴⁴ To illustrate, Gittins (1986) highlights how the dissolution of woolcombing in the middle of the century induced many men to move away from the area in search for work elsewhere. Many pregnant women were left behind and a substantial increase in rates of 'illegitimacy' is recorded at this time.

The only art her guilt to cover,
To hide her shame from every eye,
To give repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom - is, *to die*.

(*When Lovely Woman Stoops to Folly* by William Goldsmith in *The Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, 26th March, 1889: 9).

The same fateful theme is repeated within a number of prominent art works during this era (see Figure 12). Although the myth of the suicidal 'fallen woman' undeniably shaped the experiences of some women, for the majority of women, suicide caused by 'falling' remained a mere literary and artistic stereotype (Anderson, 1987; Gates, 1988). The 'fallen' woman's 'death' was thus more palpably a metaphor for the dissolution of her respectable identity and her departure from 'respectable' circles.

Figure 12. Illustration by Gustave Doré to Thomas Hood's poem (1872) *The Bridge of Sighs*⁴⁵.



The image of 'the fallen woman' was thus central to bourgeois ideologies of respectability and endured an iconic status within Victorian and Edwardian culture. As female purity and fidelity was fundamental to the cultural reproduction of the middle-classes, images of female sexuality became polarised between a 'virgin'/'whore' duality (Nead, 1988). The image of 'the fallen woman' and her shadow, 'the prostitute', thus served as an explicit warning for women - like Janet Tassie Cowen and Florence Jones - providing them with a sharp delineation between the respectable womanhood and the social ostracisation caused by the contravention of these ideals (Hellerstein, Hume and Offen, 1981). Various artistic and literary representations thus all played upon a general narrative: "the steady downward progress, the guilt and desperation, poverty and

⁴⁵ Nead (1988) explores how Hood's poem *The Bridge of Sighs* - especially through a number of editions including Doré's illustrations - became an important referent for the visual representation of the prostitute and the seduction to suicide 'downfall' mythology. The poem and accompanying art work describe the discovery of the body of an unknown 'fallen' woman, without home or family, driven to despair having been abandoned pregnant with an 'illegitimate' child.

homelessness, and the inevitable final scene - the suicide itself" (Nead, 1984: 32). Such fictional works ultimately functioned to illustrate the disintegration of a woman's existence in respectable society.

The rigid ideals of womanhood discussed in Chapter Four thus placed women who had sex outside of wedlock in an extremely perilous position. As respectable womanhood was considered pivotal to the reproduction of bourgeois culture and the nucleus of national salubrity, a respectable woman's 'fall' was understood in terms of total dissolution and social exclusion. With the nation's durability so dependent upon the respectability of its female population, the figures of 'the fallen woman' - and particularly her shadow, 'the prostitute' - were symbolic of anarchic social degeneration. Both figures were thus seen to pose threats of social disintegration on an individual, familial, and national scale.

By devastating the 'respectable' world, these figures were objects of extreme heterophobic fear, anxiety, and revulsion for middle-class, 'respectable' culture. Sex outside marriage entirely devalued women. Women who deviated from middle-class ideals of respectable sexuality and feminine 'norms' of mother, wife, and daughter were perceived as unnatural, dangerous, and wholly 'other'. However their sexual transgression was perceived, they were excluded from 'respectable' society and bourgeois social designs for their 'impurity' and 'irresponsibility'.

5.3. Representations of the 'Out-of-House' Substitute Mother

Next to the mother, probably no human being has so great an influence over the little ones for good or evil as the nurse. Take care that yours shall be for good (Lamb, 1883: 259).

Whilst pre- or extra-marital sexual activity were perilously transgressive of respectable womanhood, women working in 'disreputable' and 'unfeminine' occupations also risked being 'othered' and excluded from 'respectable' society.

The 'out-of-house' substitute mother - or so-called 'baby-farmer' - evidently navigated a narrow line between 'respectable' and 'disreputable' forms of womanhood. Her success in being able to operate within 'respectable' society and attracting custom fundamentally depended on her normative appearances of respectability. Any hint that she was not 'normal' or 'respectable' meant she too would have been polarised into antithetical unfeminine extremes and prevented from operating within 'respectable' society. The 'out-of-house' substitute mother's ability to pass within 'respectable' society therefore also hinged upon her embodiment or pantomimic display of the ideologies of respectable womanhood outlined in Chapter Four.

As reflected in the quotation above, a woman's psychic and social construction as maternally feminine (see Chapter Four) was essential to the role of substitute mother. This demanded that she be loving, caring, tender, and nurturing to children, true to her 'feminine essence' and 'maternal instinct'. She was to offer unselfish love to all those who required her protection for the wellbeing of all society depended on her positive influence. Her love for and interest in babies was central to her 'mission' and a reflection of her 'natural' roles and responsibilities. As expressed below, a respectable substitute mother was generally expected to embody the same idealised characteristics of respectable womanhood like that of the angelic wife, daughter or domestic servant:

The individual qualifications for a nurse should be carefully considered. These may be classed as *mental*, *moral*, and *physical*... Under the *mental* and *moral* she must possess good temper, self-control, patience, punctuality, cheerfulness, and a willingness to obedience to those in authority over her. Under the *physical*, good health, good sight, a delicate touch, quickness of hearing, dexterous fingers, cleanliness, and suitability of age. A chronic cough, a heavy tread, a tendency to taint, or attacks of hysterics, any description of deformity, or repulsiveness in appearance and expression, would disqualify a candidate for permanent employment as a nurse (Caulfield, 1880: 454-455).

As discussed in Chapter Four, there were of course many suitable models from which 'out-of-house' substitute mothers could fashion themselves upon to ensure

they appeared both 'respectable' and in accordance with the ideal nurse and substitute mother figure. Such an image is how any 'out-of-house' substitute mother would approximately need to appear within 'respectable' society in order to be considered a legitimate, responsible, and appropriate carer of children.

Considering, for example, Amelia Dyer who is believed to have presented herself as an 'out-of-house' substitute mother for a number of decades (see Figure 14), her relatively normal appearance as a 'respectable woman' illustrates how she was able to operate legitimately as an 'out-of-house' substitute mother for so long without arousing suspicion from those she interacted with superficially.

Figure 14. Amelia Dyer, 1836-1897.



As revealed in the following statement given at her trial, there was nothing that gave those who dealt with her reason to suspect any criminal intent or 'inner deviance':

I noticed nothing strange in her conduct or behaviour... she told me about her husband and her circumstances... she appeared to be an affectionate woman, from her appearance and her conversation I parted with my baby; I was satisfied with her looks (t18960518-451, 1896).

The 'out-of-house' substitute mother's adherence to the 'respectable' woman's 'primary objectives' and 'essential function' - marriage and reproductive maternity - also influenced how she was perceived in her role. As discussed by Arnot (1994), the marital and parental circumstances of 'out-of-house' substitute mothers were often consequential in the ways such women were judged and 'othered' as deviant or accepted as a legitimate child carer. Accordingly, 'out-of-house' substitute mothers frequently emphasised their respectable marital and familial status. To illustrate, Amelia Dyer, who often had others refer to her as 'mother' wrote:

In reference to your letter of adoption of a child, I beg to say I shall be glad to have a little baby girl, one that I can bring up and call my own. First, I must tell you, we are plain, homely people, in fairly good circumstances. We live in our own house, and have a comfortable home. We are out in the country, and sometimes I am alone a great deal. I don't want the child for money's sake, but for company and home comfort. Myself and my husband are dearly fond of children... A child with me would have a good home and a mother's love and care. We belong to the Church of England (t18960518-451, 1896).

As expressed here, an 'out-of-house' substitute mother's insurance of respectability was also emphasised by her centrality within a decent home. As discussed in Chapter Four, the concept of 'home' was vital to the respectable maternal figure as it was only within this bastion of morality and safeguard from extraneous corruptions that strong, healthy, and virtuous children could be raised. As noted by Homrighaus (2001), those 'out-of-house' substitute mothers found to be dwelling in 'dirty' or otherwise unwholesome conditions were indubitably associated with the vice, brutality, and deviance of the lower classes. Those providing 'out-of-house' substitute mothering service thus took great care to convey their provision of an idyllic family home. As illustrated through written

correspondence between Amelia Dyer and the biological mother of a child to be adopted:

I will be a mother as far as possible in my power... if you like to come and stay a few days or a week earlier I shall be pleased to make you welcome. It's just lovely here. In the summer there is an orchard opposite our front door. You will see it is lovely and pleasant (Crim 1/44/10).

Thoroughly integral to the 'out-of-house' substitute mother's ability to evade conceptions of deviancy and repudiation from 'respectable' society was the manner by which she negotiated the nature of her service. Crucially, it was vital that what she was offering did not present as an entrepreneurial endeavour as this would have entirely violated conventions of respectable womanhood and the idea that only men were suitable to operate within the realms of capitalist enterprise. Whatever money she received for her service could not be centred around her own profit making and financial independence but around her provisions for the child. Her venture had to be a labour of love, motivated by selfless generosity and affection. Those whose motives were deemed solely financial were consequently considered and condemned as unfeminine and disreputable 'professionals' (Arnot, 1994).

As highlighted in Chapter Four, by performing a necessary and highly valued 'natural' role, the 'out-of-house' substitute mother could easily position herself in accordance with the codes of respectable womanhood. Almost philanthropic, her service was in line with many popular middle-class women's charitable occupations (Taylor, 1996: 7). By adhering to 'woman's mission' and assisting in what other mothers could not do themselves, the 'out-of-house' substitute mother could easily embody or even exceed the highest ideals of a respectable working woman. After all, if she was taking a child for love rather than money then her labour was hardly 'work' in an economic sense. If she presented as being driven wholly by familial concerns then she could even appear to embody the highest ideals of respectable womanhood as a wife-mother or 'lady'.

As also discussed in Chapter Four, women's influence and paid employment was considered most respectable when centred within feminine spaces, particularly the home (Davidoff, 1995). Whilst the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute

mothering implicitly conveyed a more enterprising approach to this 'naturally' feminine occupation, the fact that those engaged in the 'in-house' forms of substitute mothering activities within domestic service positions also communicated through newspaper advertisements indicates there was nothing inherently abnormal about this (Dawes, 1973; Horn, 1975). That the adverts could be written and posted from home meant that such women did not necessarily even have to engage with the 'public' sphere and realm of commerce.

Yet, if successful, such adverts would have led to some carefully negotiated entry into the 'public' sphere. Whilst a woman seen occupying the masculine space of the public sphere without suitable reason or chaperonage risked being considered somehow disreputable and perhaps mistaken for something like a prostitute (Walkowitz, 1992), two or more women meeting with a baby at a more 'betwixt' social space, such as a train station, would more reasonably have been considered a legitimate and acceptable use of the 'public' sphere.

The practice of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering thus provided women with a relatively legitimate and even respectable line of 'work' that they were, theoretically, already 'predisposed' for. This allowed women like Jessie Byers to easily begin advertising her services as an 'out-of-house' substitute mother to help support her family when her husband was out of work (t19070128-33, 1907). It also meant that women like Margaret Waters, a childless widow in her mid-thirties seeking ways to support herself, had a 'natural' way to survive in a society that offered her few options to be financially independent (Arnot, 1994; Homrighaus, 2001).

By essentially offering unmarried mothers a means of escaping their wholly disreputable situation, the 'out-of-house' substitute mother was herself imperilled by potentially colluding in an immorality of sexual vice and improper motherhood. Both the service user and provider were together required to carefully negotiate potentially discreditable issues of gender, sexuality, and commerce. Any further contravention of the elements of respectable womanhood discussed thus far only served to magnify their perilous position. To different degrees, both sets of women were thus - only in an ideological sense - relatively 'abnormal' because they were each aware that their situations were deeply problematic by infringing

implicit rules of respectable womanhood. As such, this unique social interaction consisted of two groups of women who were both negotiating their different precarious positions of respectable womanhood, yet both of their problems were in many ways fundamentally the same.

5.4. The Respectable Woman's Masquerade

A LADYLIKE woman, named Sophia Martha Todd, aged about 35, has been charged before the Liverpool stipendiary magistrate on suspicion of having caused the death of a child... Her mode of operation was that which we long since exposed, to insert an advertisement in the newspapers in this form: - "Wanted by a respectable married couple, a baby to adopt; a premium expected" (*British Medical Journal*, 31st March, 1877: 397).

As reflected in the above quotation from a report on 'baby-farming', those women regarded as 'baby-farmers' have commonly been portrayed - both by contemporaneous and contemporary commentators - as having cunningly mimicked forms of respectable womanhood in order to lure desperate mothers to 'buy out' their offspring. That is, those advertising for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services spoke the language of respectability and framed themselves and their services in accordance with the idealised visions of respectable womanhood outlined in Chapter Four.

As implicated above by the phrasing 'a ladylike woman', tacit distinctions have been made between women who were regarded as intrinsically and authentically 'respectable ladies', and those who merely acted as though they were so. The matter of performing respectable womanhood has often been inferred but not fully explored in accounts of 'baby-farming'. As yet unconsidered in both contemporaneous and contemporary accounts of this phenomenon, this section shall consider the performative, fluid, and reflexive nature of individual identity (Goffman, 1959; Giddens 1991; Bauman 2000; Butler 2007) and how this

conception of selfhood is necessary to further making sense of the primary parties to these transactions.

The ability to embody or 'pass' as a respectable woman may be understood as a natural effect of social presentation. Considering social interaction as theatrical performance (Goffman, 1959), 'respectable women' may be regarded as normal social actors who were required to play different roles for audiences who would observe, judge, and react to their presentation of 'self'. When 'on stage', social actors are typically mindful of their audience and their expectations of their behaviour and so try their best to present a particular 'front', whilst being 'back stage' allows them to relax, rehearse, or manage 'on stage' roles or identities (ibid).

Within the public eye, Victorian and Edwardian women were in most cases obligated by imperious social demarcations of respectable womanhood to 'act' in certain ways. Failure to adhere to the complex implicit and explicit codes of conduct outlined in Chapter Four would typically have elicited unfavourable reactions from their 'audiences'. Being 'back stage' permitted them to fashion and amend their 'on stage' personas and granted them more freedom from public expectations to 'be themselves'. Distinctions may therefore be made between 'actual' and 'virtual' identities, the former reflecting a more 'real' self, whilst the latter may obscure the performer's true thoughts, identities, and intentions (Goffman, 1959). Women operating in 'respectable' society were thus continuously engaged in constructing a 'front stage', 'virtual' image of themselves in order to influence their audience's impressions in a manner deemed most favourable to them.

Rather than based upon intrinsic and immutable attributes, respectable womanhood was thus performatively constituted through flexible expressions of 'self' (Butler, 2007). Theatrically speaking, respectable womanhood was effectuated through appropriate behaviours, scripts, gestures, articulations, and dress codes, as well as an ability to read their audience, adapt to changing contextual circumstances, and successfully navigate society's taboos. Identities of respectable womanhood were thus fundamentally the product of what was *done* within different interactional social settings and how that was read and

reacted to by others (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 2007). Constituted largely through imitative strategies, the everyday Victorian and Edwardian 'phantasmatic ideal' of respectable womanhood was, in effect, a masquerade (Butler, 2007; Tauchert, 2000; Tseëlon, 2001).

Women's identities were therefore a relatively fluid, rather than static, variable that could vacillate and adapt between different social contexts (Bauman, 2000; Butler, 2007). However, by "the adhesive of fantasy" coherent identities could be held together through consistent 'front stage' performances, thus solidifying the fluid and giving form to the formless (Goffman, 1959; Bauman, 2000: 83). Passing as 'respectable' and avoiding being discredited was largely a matter of information control (Goffman, 1963).

The basic art of impression management thus concerned understanding the key signifiers and rituals of respectability, as well as of what personal details not to disclose or which to emphasise (Goffman, 1959). Much of the success of women's development and maintenance of their respectable identities was dependent upon their 'knowingness' of the stipulations, 'scripts', nuances, changes, risks, and opportunities of bourgeois female respectability⁴⁶. Being 'knowing', the 'respectable woman' was necessarily apt at affecting, implying, or purposively communicating cultural wisdoms - such as subtle and unspoken codes of conduct or matters of secret information - as well as masking or concealing discreditable information, such as moments of crisis or deviancy.

Stigma-prone individuals who risk being discredited may seek to manipulate the 'reality' of their identity by presenting a different, more idealised interpretation of their persona (Goffman, 1963). Particular to the practices associated with 'baby-farming', there existed a fundamental inversion or mirroring of 'actual' and 'virtual' identities between the key parties. As the biological mother's position as 'respectable mother' was entirely stigma-prone and largely untenable, she was compelled to conceal her position of motherhood in order to retain her identity as a 'respectable woman' in order to be able to remain within 'respectable' society. That is, she did not want to be seen publicly as a mother at all so had to uphold

⁴⁶ 'Knowingness' as a theoretical concept (see Cardiff, 1988; Bailey, 1994) has elsewhere been applied by Connor (2015) in relation to in-group understandings of performatively constituted respectable gender identity during the Victorian period and will be developed further throughout the thesis.

or rewrite her biographical identity exclusively as a 'respectable woman' so that she could continue to have the opportunity for upward mobility to the status of respectable wife-mother.

On the other hand, in order to pass successfully as 'respectable', the 'out-of-house' substitute mother - whether or not herself actually a biological or 'respectable' mother - had to essentially present and perform as a 'respectable mother', not as a working or business woman or old 'spinster' struggling to make ends-meet⁴⁷. To fully adopt the role of 'respectable mother', the service provider would thus also have had to adhere to the respectable marital stipulations for motherhood - primarily as a wife-mother, a widow, or a wife to be. In effect, by advertising themselves as 'respectable mothers' the service providers 'borrowed' the identity from the mothers who could not be 'respectable mothers' but could, if the situation was managed successfully, continue or return to being a 'respectable women'.

'Normality' for Victorian and Edwardian women therefore meant the ability to successfully perform appropriate roles of female respectability - their 'respectability' was signified by her public, 'on stage' appearances or 'front'. Only by being able to 'pass' bourgeois standards and rituals of respectability were women entitled access within 'normal', 'respectable' society. In the public space of performance and appearance, the expectations and demands of adherence to common conventions and codes of conduct meant that social transgressions - significant deviations from 'normal' or 'respectable' conduct - elicited unfavourable responses and could result in exclusionary actions. Women were required to be adept at reflexively managing their social performances in order to maintain, develop, or salvage their respectable identities. Rather than being static and intrinsic attributes, the identities of 'respectable women' were fluid, a changeable product of context and circumstance.

It was thus possible to mimic, adopt, or 'shop around' within various marketplaces that manifested in the modern world of commodities for certain signifiers or services that functioned to manage and facilitate personal biographies and

⁴⁷ As shall be discussed further in Chapter Seven, many women, like Amelia Dyer, explicitly used monikers such as 'mother', 'mater', or 'mère' when advertising their services as an 'out-of-house' substitute mother or simply made the image of 'mother' implicit in their communications.

images of the self. Women thus required a knowingness of spoken and unspoken codes, fads, rituals, and opportunities for identity management in order to successfully perform respectable womanhood. This knowingness would have created social 'pockets' of special communities who possessed privileged access to particular knowledges and practices. Moreover, it would have facilitated women in surreptitiously mediating issues that could openly invite shame and stigma. The 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services associated with so-called 'baby-farming' were one such service that allowed women to manage their respectable identities within private, special communities of women who shared a knowingness of women's crises of respectable womanhood and how they could be surreptitiously resolved.

Identity management and masquerading of respectability were thus a general and entirely 'normal' feature of Victorian and Edwardian society. All women wishing to operate within 'respectable' society, regardless of their social position, options, and resources, were thus all dancing upon the same tightrope of 'respectability' to varying degrees of success or failure. Cut from the same ideological cloth, 'normal' and 'deviant' women were fundamentally the same, all 'respectable' women were continuously vulnerable to being discredited and generally knew by what social violations this would occur. The strategic control of self-image was thus central to anyone operating in 'respectable' society and cannot be considered intrinsically abnormal. As shall be shown in the following chapter, there was a level of tacit co-operation among social networks of women, particularly among those who were 'knowledgeable' about others' potentially discreditable attributes and crises of respectable womanhood that can only be considered as a normal response to the ideologies of respectable womanhood and their polarities.

In most cases, stigma-prone individuals who risk being discredited will find others sympathetic to their situation who can either personally relate to their stigma or are 'wise' to their discrediting situation or crisis of identity (Goffman, 1963). Often young girls like Janet Tassie Cowen, whose father sought to shelter her from the stigma of her sexual violation and 'illegitimate' child by concealing its existence (t18700919-769, 1870), had others involved in managing their respectable identity, perhaps protecting their own identity by association. Perhaps, being

young and naïve, those like Janet did not yet fully appreciate the potential consequences of their loss of respectability - how this could damage or entirely destroy her future 'career' as a respectable woman and wife-mother. Perhaps they were even willing to give their respectability up in order to remain a mother to the child, even if that meant doing so alone and in disgrace. Yet, regardless of what women like Janet wanted, those close to her would likely do everything possible to dissuade her from keeping her discrediting child, perhaps taking the trouble out of her hands if necessary, knowing - or at least believing - that her respectable identity would be entirely spoiled if the child was kept.

As in the cases of Esther Amelia Hodson (t18990912-624, 1899) and Florence Jones (t19000212-185, 1900), women who took action on their own behalf without difficulty found for themselves through newspaper advertising columns women who were percipient of their dilemma and willing to privately collaborate in their identity management and resolution of their crisis of respectability. Women like Jessie Byers, Margaret Waters, or Amelia Dyer, who well understood the troublesome and stigma-prone position they were in, made themselves readily available as 'out-of-house' substitute mothers and were shrewd and subtle enough to know how to assist and manage the situation without drawing attention to social regulators who would expose their 'deviancy'. Both imperilled for contravening norms of respectable womanhood, the 'out-of-house' substitute mother and her potential client generally knew exactly what aspects of their identities were discreditable. However, until openly discredited, they both could continue to perform and pass as 'respectable women' and remain operating within 'respectable' society.

5.5. Conclusion

The bourgeois discourses of female deviance were, like those of female respectability, both ideological and illusory. They were perspectives, not people. Yet the two were complimentary and composed the substance of middle-class culture. In a Janusian fashion, the 'respectable' and 'deviant' woman could only

be understood through their opposite and only a fine line of fortuity separated the two. Middle-class 'respectability' was about that thread, it was the threshold between the two worlds of Victorian and Edwardian society. Nevertheless, these ideas and images gave shape and substance, not merely to fictional narratives, but also to the actual lived experiences of those of the period.

Although it is possible that a woman's divergence from the ideals of respectable womanhood did not necessitate her social downfall in the manner envisioned by middle-class ideologues, the framework of female respectability and its objectively experienced material manifestations nevertheless imposed substantial constraints and pressures on women's actions and self-presentations. Constructions of 'fallen women' and 'prostitutes' were the dominant narratives of deviant female sexuality and, if attributed, could secure a master-status upon women like Janet Tassie Cowen or Florence Jones - an obdurate principal definition by which they would perpetually be viewed by 'respectable' society.

For those who adhered to middle-class standards of female respectability, a woman's sexual propriety was crucial for the preservation of individual, familial, and national welfare. Female infidelity was so feared because it disrupted the inheritance and heritage of the bourgeois upon which everything was believed to be depended. A woman's respectability was thus overwhelmingly dictated by her sexual behaviour. However, women could still engage in sexual activity if they were discreet, especially if it occurred within plans for marriage. Nevertheless, becoming pregnant outside of marriage - unless promptly made 'legitimate' through marriage - was disastrous because it was near impossible to conceal. Women could only move from being a 'respectable woman' to a 'respectable wife-mother' in the right circumstances. Being a mother in the wrong circumstances was to potentially lose everything.

For the family home to function as the nucleus of the state - a site for the cultivation of civic virtues - it was imperative that all impurities were removed and excluded as far as possible in order to avoid any forms of contamination. The 'fallen woman' - she who *had been* 'respectable' and since been entirely devalued through illicit sex and 'illegitimate' procreation - was to be cast out from the glorious designs of 'respectable' society for fear that she pollute and corrupt

others by example or temptation. Ideologically, this meant that she would be excluded from the opportunities only available to a 'respectable' woman; namely to become a respectable wife-mother, but also to secure respectable forms of paid work. To ensure their obstruction to the passage of respectable womanhood towards the grand functions of wifehood and motherhood, the 'fallen' woman bore the stigma of public obloquy, often by being associated with the figure of the 'whore'. However, within every respectable woman lay ever-present implications of illegitimate forms of femininity. Her identity was thus perpetually fragile and in flux.

Bourgeois fears and anxieties concerning matters of sexual propriety and the envisioned disastrous consequences of respectable women's 'fall' stimulated paranoid and severe efforts to regulate 'deviant' forms of female sexuality. However, stigmatising and exclusionary measures based upon middle-class double standards forced forms of women's deviancy into 'nether spaces', creating a 'hidden' underbelly of female respectable culture and subcultures of 'deviants'. Such spaces, as shall be explored in the following chapter, facilitated women in managing the public shame and stigma of illicit sexuality and finding paths back to their 'normal', 'respectable' status.

Particular to the identities of those associated with the concept of 'baby-farming', there was a fundamental contradiction of the normal assumptions of respectable motherhood. Whilst being a biological mother, the service user's identity could not incorporate any of the idyllic qualities of motherhood outlined in Chapter Four and she could not therefore embody the identity of a 'respectable mother'. In order to restore or retain her identity as a 'respectable woman', the biological mother had to manage or rewrite her identity by obscuring her 'actual' identity in order to maintain her 'virtual' image of respectability. Her objective then was to get back on track with the respectable identity that prefigured respectable motherhood to which various doors in respectable society remained open. On the other side of this social interaction, in order to successfully operate in 'respectable' society the 'out-of-house' substitute mother was promoting an identity that centred around the image of a 'respectable mother', regardless of whether or not she was one. Her 'virtual' identity was motivated by her need to avoid being perceived as a business woman who made a living from the buying,

selling, and ultimately the removal of stigma through facilitating the 'disposal' of discrediting children from ideologically 'immoral', 'deviant', and 'disreputable' mothers.

Having now established the theoretical framework of respectable womanhood (and its antithesis), the following chapter will begin examining the marketplace of motherhood that manifested as a response to women's crises of respectability through stigma-prone parenthood.

Chapter VI: The Marketplace of Motherhood

The birth of what is called an illegitimate child is held to be a disgrace, especially to the mother. The responsibility of the maintenance of such a child is imperfectly defined; for the most part, if reared at all, it is reared in poverty, without participation in the ties and safeguards of home or family (Dickson, 1870: 6).

6.1. Introduction

As recognised in the above statement by Dickson (1870), the child-rearing in such circumstances was wholly at odds with the bourgeois fundamental arrangements of family and home. Unless 'legitimated' through marriage, the single mother and her discrediting 'illegitimate' child could never properly belong within the ideological structures of the bourgeoisie. The advertised 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services associated with 'baby-farming' provided those imperilled by an unviable - typically 'illegitimate' - child with a means of managing the stigma that their publicly-known existence could produce. In doing so, service users could be entirely liberated from the child as an object of stigma and economic burden in order to be able to retain or restore their 'normal', 'respectable' identities and continue belonging and operating within 'respectable' society. Such services could also be used to purchase temporary relief, allowing the biological mother time and space to manage her situation and perhaps find a way to 'legitimise' her position as a 'respectable wife-mother'.

The services were therefore fundamentally concerned with the privatised commerce of motherhood and respectability. This was ultimately achieved through a system of problem management centred upon stigma removal through forms of 'disposing' of the child and the responsibility for its care. Although these services were, in spite of appearances, in violation of the conventions of respectability, they were not by default criminal. The different forms of 'disposal', whilst always presented as entirely legitimate, in reality existed along a spectrum

of legitimacy and criminality. However, from the outset, arrangements for 'disposal' were implicitly structured around legitimate forms of stigma removal through economic transactions of motherhood and respectability.

The 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices identified with the concept of 'baby-farming' existed along a continuum of different services that emerged, or were 'exposed', within the Victorian and Edwardian period. Collectively, these services supplied a veritable marketplace of motherhood wherein the stigma and other social hardships associated with problematic aspects of parenting and the crisis of female respectability could be surreptitiously managed in different ways and at different stages of the crisis. This marketplace accommodated a wide variety of practices that could be relatively and often ambiguously 'normal', 'deviant', or 'criminal'.

As established in Chapter Five, those who used and provided such services were, in different ways, compromised - although not necessarily 'exposed' - for transgressing the ideological arrangements of respectable society. Whilst the services available often breached codes of normative or acceptable conduct, they were openly communicated in ways that adhered to the bourgeois discourses of respectability and respectable womanhood. Of the many services available within this marketplace of motherhood, the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering associated with the concept of 'baby-farming' represented one of the most commonly commercialised forms of dealing with a stigma-prone child. Of all the options available within this marketplace, they ostensibly appeared to be one of the most legitimate, safest, and 'respectable' of many different alternatives - and undoubtedly most appealing.

The practices connected to 'baby-farming' were thus a considerable resource for individuals - particularly unwed mothers - whose respectable identities were threatened and, in consequence, faced extreme social hardships and social exclusion. Adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering offered key parties the privacy and anonymity they required in order to manage their acts of 'deviancy' and crises of respectability. Whilst service providers advertised openly using the language of bourgeois respectability, any potentially discrediting and stigmatising aspects of the interaction were enclosed and managed in private back spaces.

The following section of this chapter considers the source of adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering as the origin of interaction between the key parties. Focused predominately upon the *Morning Post* - one of the most common London-based newspapers to publish such adverts - the readership, usership, and 'architecture' of this personal advertising space is examined through the theoretical framework of respectable womanhood established in Chapter Four and Five. It will be shown how printed media like the *Morning Post* provided a unique conduit of communication between complete strangers from different socio-economic backgrounds. It is revealed how such papers spoke particularly to a female audience, especially through their advertising channels, frequently in relation to matters of a domestic, maternal, and charitable nature. As conveyors of domestic information, those in domestic service are considered in regards to having been a primary target audience, as well as having unique forms of access, to newspapers like the *Morning Post*. In the general absence of information about the biological mothers and other service users, the adverts help us reconstruct the ideological system within which these women operated and their engagement with these services provides a window into their motivations and concerns.

The Third Section of this chapter builds further upon Goffman's (1959) principles of self-presentation to examine the advertising columns of newspapers like the *Morning Post* as a performative space in which individuals exhibited themselves and their services through frameworks of respectability for others to observe asynchronously. As a 'virtual' spectacle of the self, the advertising space provided unique opportunities for presenting one's self in a controlled and idealised manner. This section also considers the role of newspaper administrators as ancillary third-party intermediaries of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering communications and how artificiality in the advert was a necessary measure to ensure publication for a 'respectable', public audience.

Section Four will then establish the key features of this modern marketplace. Through the perspectives of service users, it will be revealed how the services associated with 'baby-farming' functioned to privately manage the social consequences of having a discreditable child. Drawing further upon Goffman's (1959, 1963) theories of self-presentation and stigma management, it is demonstrated how 'back stage' identity management lay at the heart of these

practices. Utilising Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia, Bakhtin's (1968) notion of the carnivalesque, and the idea of 'knowingness' (Cardiff, 1988; Bailey, 1994; Connor, 2015) introduced in Chapter Five, it will be shown how the marketplace of motherhood produced a liminal space of possibility which simultaneously and ambiguously referenced and inverted normative conventions of 'respectable' society where issues of deviancy and crisis could be managed. Through a mirroring of middle-class idealised respectability, an elusive and mercurial relativity permeated these interactions, communications, and transactions. Meanings, identities, and 'truths' were thus often mediated through a complex and chaotic discursive system of illusion, inversion, parody, and absurdity. Through a semi-communal 'conspiracy of meaning' (Bailey, 1994), key parties negotiated a clandestine and occulted commerce of respectability and motherhood.

This chapter reveals how an industrialised, readily accessible marketplace of motherhood was directly available to anyone who found themselves imperilled by the crises of respectability through forms of problematic parenthood. From start to finish, this process was fundamentally identity work and stigma management. This chapter is therefore about the operational responses to the ideological constructions of respectability and, centrally, the crisis of respectable womanhood.

6.2. The Mediums of the Marketplace

It is the filthy advertisement columns which lie on every breakfast table that form the first link in the chain (*British Medical Journal*, 1895: 1584).

Newspapers have always been "in the business of producing *audiences*" (Owen and Wildman, 1992: 3) and a newspaper audience may be identified by a number of varying social factors - such as gender or political orientation - but are always connected to buying power, to social class (Richardson, 2007). Nevertheless, a variety of means became increasingly available throughout the Victorian and

Edwardian period that allowed those of lower classes to gain access to the contents of outwardly middle-class newspapers which circumvented financial barriers. Such methods could include attending communal readings of newspapers in public houses, joining a newspaper club that shared costs, buying outdated papers at a discounted price, or visiting reading rooms and libraries (Jones, 2004: 22). With the proliferation of educational projects and rapidly improving national literacy levels, more people - including women - than ever before were able to access flourishing fields of information and conversation through printed media (Gleadle, 2001; Jones, 2004: 22; Fernandez, 2010; Vuuren, 2010).

The growth of popular print, literacy ability, and access to reading material established a new order of information sharing that transformed traditional boundaries of social knowledge and communication (Jones, 2004: 22). For those of poorer classes who found their way to becoming audience members and consumers of newspapers like the *Morning Post*, many would have recognised ways they could actively use the paper for their own means. Greater access by poorer classes to the newspapers of the wealthier classes facilitated a particularly unique dialogue that could circumvent traditional class barriers. Via placement of personal advertisements, practically anyone able to pay the advertising costs could purchase a platform from which to communicate with the newspaper's entire audience. That is, the newspaper's audience, or the machinery to access them, could be bought by private advertisers (Owen and Wildman, 1992). With the availability of this machinery, voices were transmitted easily and widely across class boundaries.

As by far the most common newspaper identified in the advert sample, the *Morning Post* (Est. 1772, Disc. 1937) was a daily paper understood to have had a predominantly middle to upper-class readership (Ellegård, 1957). However, it was only in its opinions that the *Morning Post* belonged to these leisured classes. Whilst the paper did primarily speak the language of 'middle' and 'higher' society, there were situations - particularly the personal advertising columns - where it could speak to or speak for other social classes so that "the society its pages reflected was the whole of society" (Hindle, 1937: 5).

The *Morning Post* established itself as a media heavyweight by the beginning of the nineteenth century under the management of Daniel Stuart from 1795-1803 (Hindle, 1937; Hobbs, 2013). As editor, Stuart sought to broaden the newspaper's coverage to include political pieces and reports on fashionable society, whilst also ensuring that plenty of space was provided for private advertising (The British Newspaper Archive, 2017). In particular, Stuart favoured placing personal advertisements on the front page on the basis that "numerous and various advertisements interest numerous and various readers...advertisements act and react. They attract readers, promote circulation, and circulation attracts advertisements" (Stuart, cited by Hindle, 1937: 83).

As already highlighted, domestic servants comprised one particular social group who employed 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services through newspaper advertisements. The fact that the advertising pages of newspapers like the *Morning Post* were utilised by both employers and potential employees to advertise and apply for situations and services indicates that many of those women seeking domestic occupations were suitably literate and knowledgeable in accessing such material (Dawes, 1973). For those already employed within a household, there were undoubtedly a variety of different ways to access the content of such newspapers. For instance, the position of a domestic servant often provided a number of unique 'perks' that included the conferment of gifts or second-hand goods from their employers (Gillis, 1979; Stobart and Van Damme, 2010). The following extract from *The Girls Own Paper* exhibits how women's reading material could be passed from employer to employee and how publishers actually anticipated and encouraged this secondary interchange:

I am going to address myself especially to those amongst you who fill the *honourable* and *responsible* position of domestic servants... I should like to establish confidential relations between you and myself... The pages of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER make a capital meeting-place for us, because it is a friend whose face is seen everywhere. I know some mistresses - not young ones either - who read it in the drawing room, and then send it down into the kitchen; daughters of the household who take it, and then pass it on to their waiting maidens (Lamb, 1883: 150).

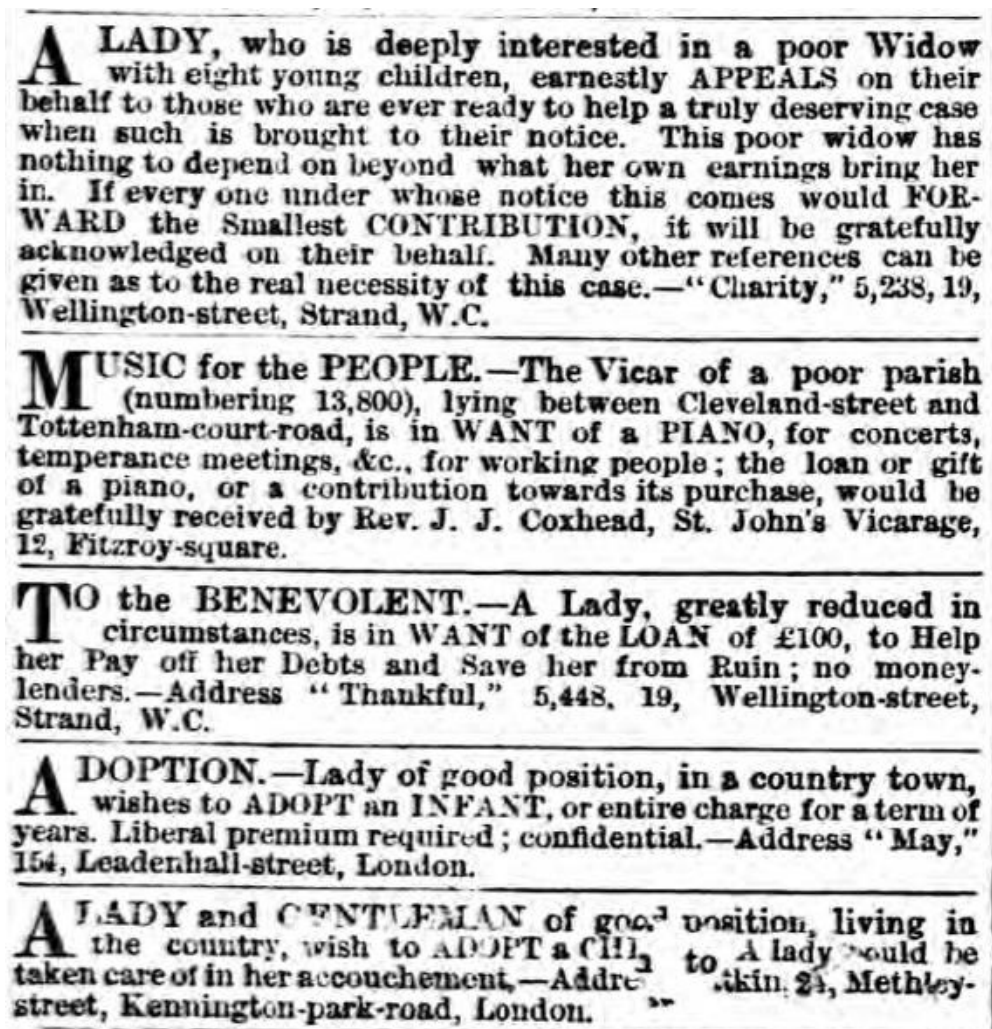
The positioning of personal advertisements on the outside pages remained a general trend for the *Morning Post* until it was discontinued and acquired by the *Daily Telegraph* in 1937 (The British Newspaper Archive, 2017). The collected advert sample confirms that adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services were placed in the front page 'classifieds' sections from 1800-1919 (see Figure 15 and 16). The positioning of personal advertisements on the front page was undoubtedly a strategic editorial decision that ensured such communications could be quickly and easily glanced over without any need to physically open or search through the paper. Considering those in domestic service, this positioning meant that information could be read and recorded casually whilst, for example, passing a newspaper vendor in the street, taking the morning paper to their employers during breakfast, or when disposing of them once they had been read.

Figure 15. An extract from a front page 'classifieds' advertisement section of the *Morning Post* (2nd of March 1885⁴⁸).



⁴⁸ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Figure 16. An enlarged section of Figure 15 showing two adverts of substitute mothering services and how they sat aside other miscellaneous 'classified' adverts⁴⁹.



Throughout the nineteenth century, the advertising arm of the newspaper industry increasingly directed itself towards a female audience (Richards, 1990). As women of ‘respectable’ society came to be regarded as primary agents of material acquisition, newspapers organisations increasingly recognised that advertising columns were gendered in their appeal and so began designing them largely for a female audience (Loeb, 1994). The *Morning Post* developed a

⁴⁹ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

particular rapport with women (Hindle, 1937), and gained a predominantly female readership (Political and Economic Planning, 1938). One contemporary critic reportedly said of the *Morning Post*:

In all matters interesting to the female world of fashion this paper has always the best information, which it employs in a discreet manner, imparting just as much of private affairs as the public ought to know, and no more (Anon, cited in Hindle, 1937: 165).

Adverts found within the *Morning Post* thus commonly reflected the fashionable, domestic, maternal, and charitable worlds of Victorian and Edwardian women. As emulated in the collection of adverts shown above (see Figure 16), advertisers frequently requested or offered some form of service that related directly to a female domain. Of the five consecutive adverts presented above (Figure 16), only one - that relating to 'music for the people' - does not explicitly present itself as in some way 'female' in nature. A similar pattern can be observed in other newspapers found to be common sources of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering adverts (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. An extract from the back page 'wanted' section of the *Clerkenwell News* showing 11 adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering (29th October 1867⁵⁰).

W A N T E D.

ADOPTION.—A Lady, without children, wishes to Adopt one entirely as own; small premium required. Address, sent by letter only, A. D. A., Myddelton House, Myddelton-street, E.C.

ADOPTION.—A Lady is desirous of Adopting a Female Child, age no object; an orphan preferred. Address A. B. C., Post-office, Kingsland-green.

ADOPTION.—A Child taken from birth or any age, and brought up as own; premium wanted. Apply first by letter, 10, Mill-row, Kingsland-road, Doll Maker's.

BAG Makers (Paper) wanted; constant work. Inquire at 7, Orchard-street, Ironmonger-row, St. Luke's.

BEAD Hands wanted immediately for Making Drops, &c. Apply to Mrs. Williamson, 112, London-wall.

BEAD Sewettes. New Collection, Taught, three lessons, 2s. 6d.; work home. First lesson; constant employment. 25, Spencer-street, Goswell-road.

BEAD Trimmings, Belts, and Chadille Nets.—Good Hands wanted; Taught, 1s., work immediately, home or workshop. 171, Watney-road.

BEADED Belt and Bonnet Hands (Best) wanted immediately. Apply, with pattern, 24, Westworth-road, Bow-road.

BOOKFOLDERS and Sewers wanted. At Thorburn's, Fyfe-street, Bourville-street, Fleet-street.

BOOT and Shoe Trade.—Wanted a first-class Machinist, for Fancy Work; to a competent Person wages no object; also good Paste Fitters. Apply G. Shears, 1 and 2, Murray-street, Hoxton.

BOOT Workers.—Women wanted, buffing and scraping soles of Infants' Boot Work. 47, Wilmington-square, Clerkenwell.

BOOT Work.—Learners wanted for Thomas's Machine; also Learners for the Fitting. 3, Blossom-street, White Lion-street, Bishopsgate.

BOOT Work.—Wanted good Ridespring Fitters. At 9, Queen Margaret's-grove, Kingsland. N.B.—Constant work.

BOOT Trade.—Wanted a first-class Machinist for Vamping. 2, Parker-street, Peckham-street, Kingsland-road.

BOX Hands (Good Plain and Fancy) wanted, indoors and outdoors. At G. E. Johns and Son's, 25, Newgate-street, E.C.

BRUSH Drawing Hands.—Good Fancy Hair wanted. At 62, Wyndham-street, Goswell-road.

BRUSH Makers.—Tooth Brush Drawers, Wire and Trepas, good, wanted. 26, Goswell-street, Clerkenwell.

BUGLE Lace Hands (Good) wanted immediately. Apply, with pattern, Higgins, Eagle, & Co., 6, Cannon-street; work entrance, Duffell-lane.

BUGLE Lace Hands (Good) wanted; also Improvers. Apply at 7, Hale-street, East India-road, Poplar, E.

BUSINESS.—Wanted by Two respectable Young Ladies to Learn a Light Fancy Business. Address N. F., 5, Frederick-street, Caledonian-road.

BUSINESS (Light) Taught in few hours; terms 1s.; employment indoors afterwards. 5, Pierpoint terrace, opposite Agricultural Hall, High-street, Islington.

CHILD to Nurse wanted by a respectable Married Woman. N. B., 5, Laycock's Lane, Liverpool-road, Islington.

CHILD (Nurse) wanted by a respectable Person; good garden; good references. Apply to Mrs. Garthwaite, Southampton-street, Clerkenwell.

CHILD (Care of Nurse) wanted by a Person; take one from birth. 7, Regent-street, City-road; knock twice.

CHILD to Adopt or Nurse; home good, premium low. R., 28, Cleveland-street, Fitzroy-square, opposite London-street; top bell.

CHILDREN (Care of One or Two) wanted, out of arms preferred, by a respectable, experienced Person. M. W., 20, Baby's-row, West Ham, Essex; five minutes' walk from Stratford-bridge Station.

CHILDREN (One or Two) wanted by a respectable Person, age no object. Mrs. M., 37, Park-street, Camden Town.

CHILDREN (Two Nurses), age from two to four years, wanted by a respectable Married Woman, no family; house pleasantly situated. E. F. Welch, Nurseryman, Chase-side, Bedford.

CHILDREN (One or Two) wanted to Nurse by an experienced Person; terms 5s. per week. A. B., 9, John-street, West Ham.

CUTTER (Mantle) wanted, accustomed to the business; also Hands. Address A., Mrs. King's, 43, Broadwall, Stamford-street, Blackfriars.

DRESS Making.—Apprentices and Improvers wanted to the above, outdoors. At Miss Capron's, 11, Triangle,

⁵⁰ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Many of the personal adverts found in newspapers like the *Morning Post* pertained directly to domestic service (see Figure 18). Because of their moneyed readership, such newspapers were particularly favoured by those wishing to advertise for domestic work (Dawes, 1973). Although men did work in domestic service, typically in positions such as butler or groundskeeper, the industry largely provided labour for women (Horn, 1975). Moreover, the ideologies of the separate spheres and female domesticity positioned the lady of the house as overseer of domestic duties (Langland, 1995). Consequently, such adverts were commonly written by women and for women.

Figure 18. An example of advertisements directed towards the domestic sphere (*Morning Post*, 16th October 1877⁵¹).

WANTED, a SITUATION as LADY'S MAID,
in a Nobleman's Family, by a Person, aged 22, who speaks French and German, and is a good dressmaker, hairdresser, and packer; good reference. Would like to travel. Address E. H., Smith's, bookseller, Marlow.

WANTED, a SITUATION as LADY'S MAID,
by a Person, aged 29, who is thoroughly experienced, and is a good hairdresser, milliner, dressmaker, and packer. Would not object to travel.—Address A. C., Stenson's library, Southwick-street, W.

WANTED, a SITUATION as LADY'S MAID,
by a Person who is a first rate dressmaker, milliner, and hairdresser, and accustomed to travel: good personal character. Just disengaged. Please state terms.—Address G. M., 29, Elizabeth-street, Eaton-square.

WANTED, a SITUATION as LADY'S MAID,
by a respectable Person, who thoroughly understands her duties, and has a good personal character.—Address E. R., Carter's, 16, South Audley-street, W.

WANTED, a SITUATION as LADY'S MAID,
by a German Person (Protestant), who is a good hairdresser and needlewoman, and accustomed to travel: good references.—Address H. B., 7, Adam-street East, Manchester-square.

WANTED, a SITUATION as MAID, by a Person who is a dressmaker, milliner, and machinist; 12 months' character, four years' previous.—Address A. B., 17, Norland-road North, Notting-hill.

WANTED, a SITUATION as MAID to One
Lady, by a Person, aged 30, who thoroughly understands her duties, and is a good dressmaker and hairdresser; good personal character.—Address B. C., Roberts's library, 1-9, Brompton-road, S.W.

WANTED, a SITUATION as UNDER
LADY'S MAID, by a Person, aged 22, with 2½ years' good character. Wages £16 or £18, and all found.—Address L. B., post-office, Liss, near Petersfield, Hants.

WANTED, a SITUATION as UNDER
LADY'S MAID, by a North German Person who is a plain dressmaker and sewer; good character.—Address M. K., 1, Cottage-place, Brompton-square, Brompton-road, S.W.

WANTED, a SITUATION to WAIT on a
Lady and to do light housework.—Address F. E., 13, High-street, Tonbridge.

As mentioned, the *Morning Post* also published adverts that pertained specifically to maternal concerns. Many of such adverts related to forms of domestic service that provided 'in-house' substitute mothering, such as situations as head nurse or nursery maid (see Figure 19 and 20) Such adverts demonstrate a two-way correspondence with adverts placed reflecting both supply and demand.

⁵¹ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Figure 19. An example of an advert illustrating the supply of 'in-house' substitute mothering services (*Morning Post*, 8th August 1859^{a52}).

WANTED, a SITUATION as HEAD NURSE, in a Nobleman or Gentleman's Family, by a very experienced Person, who can take an infant from the month or birth. No objection to the country.—Address A. D., 4, Lower Ranelagh-street, Pimlico.

Figure 20. An example of an advert illustrating the demand of 'in-house' substitute mothering services (*Morning Post*, 2nd February 1883^{b53}).

WANTED, a NURSERY MAID ; must be steady, respectable, and well recommended ; age 18 to 20 ; good needlewoman ; one who has been out before under a good nurse preferred.- Apply, personally or by letter, to Hon. Mrs. Gye, 16, Westbourne-street, Hyde-park, W.

Occasionally, adverts could be found that offered accommodation for 'accouchement'⁵⁴ (see Figure 21 and 22). Such adverts were also deemed by some to have been connected to the criminal activities associated with 'baby-farming' (see *British Medical Journal*, 25th January 1868^b, 8th February 1868^c) and will be discussed further in Section Four of this chapter. However, it was quite normal for women to 'go into retirement' during their pregnancy where in a position of 'confinement' they could give birth privately (Rose, 1986; Wertz and Wertz, 1989). As with the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services,

⁵² Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁵³ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

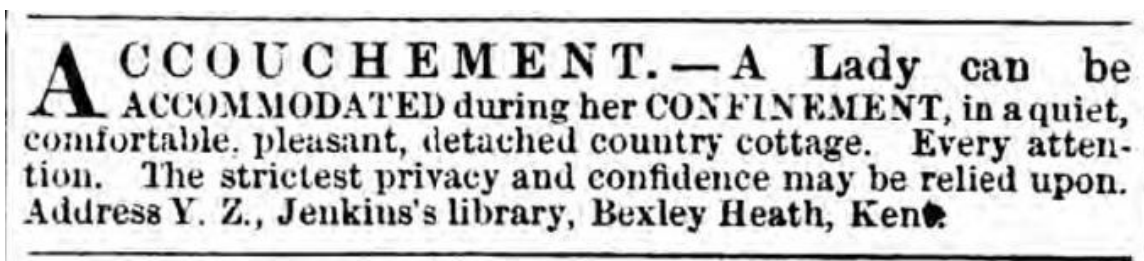
⁵⁴ Borrowed from the French words *acochement* and *accoucher*, the term referred to the time and act of giving birth and to being aided in the delivery of a child.

such adverts should not be viewed as in any way inherently criminal. They were, like all other adverts, providing a legitimate and needed social service.

Figure 21. An example of adverts relating specifically to matters of childbirth (*Morning Post*, 19th May 1859^{b55}).



Figure 22. An example of adverts relating specifically to matters of childbirth (*Morning Post*, 30th October 1863^{a56}).



Lastly, adverts could be found that, whilst typically requiring some form of payment, could be considered 'charitable' in that they sought to provide help for women in trouble or requiring assistance (see Figure 23 and 24). Again, such adverts frequently reflected a two-way communication of both offers and requests. Adverts of this nature indicate a sense of 'sisterhood' existed among

⁵⁵ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁵⁶ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

the advertising columns of newspapers like the *Morning Post* where women were able to communicate with other women to request or offer forms of assistance in times of need or crisis.

Figure 23. An example of adverts of a 'charitable' nature (*Morning Post*, 2nd July 1870^{a57}).

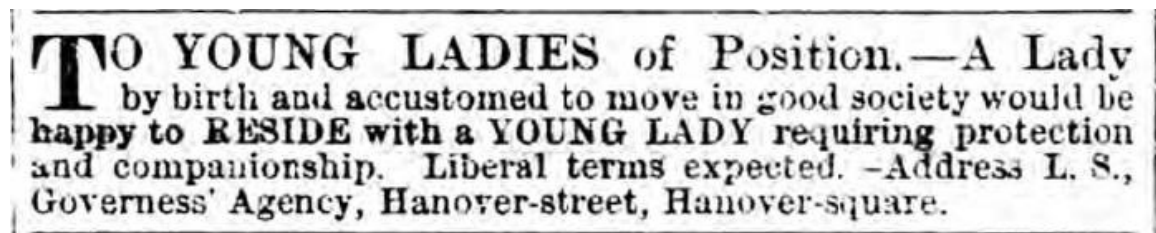
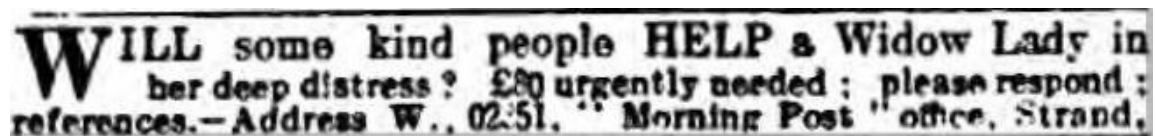


Figure 24. An example of adverts of a 'charitable' nature (*Morning Post*, 12th October 1906⁵⁸).



The adverts presented among the personal advertising columns of newspapers like the *Morning Post* during this period thus exhibited an eclectic array of services offered and required. Numerous disembodied voices spoke from many of the covers of London's most popular and influential newspapers, creating a spectacle that was in many ways specifically designed for a female audience. This remarkable exhibition reflected fashionable, domestic, maternal, and charitable concerns which pertained largely to the world of women. Framed by

⁵⁷ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁵⁸ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

the same language of respectability, advertisements for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering sat naturally among those for other services or goods.

Whilst newspapers like the *Morning Post* generally spoke to those of wealth and leisure, their advertising space established a unique conduit of communication between the higher and lower classes. The uniqueness lay in it paradoxically being both a material and open manner of conversation, as well as a discarnate 'voice' attached to an indeterminate identity. Conversation between strangers of different classes could thus transpire, but various social and spatial boundaries between the two parties remained. These boundaries could, to some degree, be negotiated and decreased through further communications for personal services whereupon forms of more direct contact would typically be required. However, in order for the advertiser to succeed in capturing the interest of their target audience, to convince their reader to respond, initiate further arrangements and to place trust in their authenticity, they had to give a recognisably 'respectable' and credible 'performance' within their advert.

6.3. Masquerades of Respectability Within the Marketplace

Marvellous as the fact is, we live on in a sort of apathy, and though revolting dramas may be playing under our very eyes, we heed not the performance until some enormous catastrophe startles us out of our reverie. Even then too often we again relapse speedily into indifferentism, resume our enervate habit of seeing and not observing, and perhaps continue for ever afterwards in a sort of happy somnolence, forgetful altogether that the scene has been acted at all, still less acted upon the stage of daily life (Dickson, 1870: 1).

Adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering were thus a natural and commonplace continuation of the sorts of advertisements directed primarily at a female audience in newspapers like the *Morning Post*. Whilst having been consistently associated by 'elite' voices of authority, such as the *British Medical*

Journal, with criminal conceptions of 'baby-farming' from the late 1860s, they remained a generally legitimate social artefact and ordinary part of daily life, appearing regularly in newspapers across the country. Their acceptance within respectable society was undoubtedly built upon a general assent that the overwhelming majority of those offering such services did so upon legitimate premises.

As seemingly recognised by Dickson (1870) in the above statement, adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering were fundamentally performative. Upon the 'virtual stage' of daily newspapers like the *Morning Post*, women constructed idealised impressions of respectable womanhood and utopian forms of substitute mothering. These essentially phantasmagorical representations were exhibited publicly for all to see and were thus necessarily and legitimately 'normal'. What was not fully appreciated by Dickson (ibid) and many others who have spoken of these adverts in relation to the practices associated with 'baby-farming' is that, regardless of the intent that lay behind these adverts, they were all necessarily a performance of respectable ideals.

Despite having frequently been associated with the abusive and murderous connotations of 'baby-farming', the suggestion that the 'out-of-house' substitute mothering adverts found in newspapers like the *Morning Post* were commonly associated with, or framed as, 'infanticide for hire' is patently absurd. Instead, it is evident that these adverts continued to be regarded as legitimate because they could only be assessed at face-value and, both individually and collectively, their appearance was entirely in accord with the strictures of 'respectable' society. Judged upon their performative quality, they served to provide the 'first impressions' in a unique and complex form of social interaction. Any information or behaviour that confounded these first impressions emerged at much later stages along the process of this social interaction. At this initial stage, advertisers presented themselves and their services in a manner that appeared both favourable and authentic whilst being mindful of self-disclosure, deception, and of future face-to-face encounters.

Whether face-to-face or via a remote medium like an advertisement, stages and audiences are created and some form of spectacle of the self is given (Goffman,

1959). The nature of self-presentation can be distinguished by face-to-face performances, which develop in synchronous spaces of activity, and artefacts, which exist in asynchronous 'exhibitions' (Hogan, 2010). As established, relationships of key parties involved in the 'out-of-house' substitute mothering practices associated with 'baby-farming' often began in the asynchronous virtual space of the 'classifieds' columns of newspapers like the *Morning Post* where advertisers exhibited themselves and the services they offered.

These exhibited presentations of self and service were fundamentally 'front stage' for all to see (Goffman, 1959). Once two-way communications were activated by the potential service user, the social interaction between the two parties moved, to varying degrees, 'back stage'. To illustrate, Florence Jones found the following advert in the *Woolwich Herald* shortly after her 'illegitimate' child's father had ceased to contribute to the child's maintenance and she had struggled to find a more permanent solution to her 'problem' through her own social network (t19000212-185, 1900):

Adoption. – A young married couple would adopt healthy baby; every care and comfort; good references given; very small premium. Write first to Mrs Heweston, 4, Bradmore Lane, Hammersmith (ibid: originally printed in the *Woolwich Herald*).

Florence subsequently wrote to the address explaining that she had a child and inquired as to how much it would cost her to have it adopted. In reply, she was told that the young married couple wanted to take the child as their own but would require £5 for it. After negotiating the price at £3, Florence arranged to privately meet the woman named Mrs Heweston to make further arrangements. The general process experienced by Florence Jones is that most commonly associated with 'baby-farming'.

These mixed-mode relationships that developed from mediated forms of communication to face-to-face interchange were necessarily established upon anticipations of future interaction. Those who communicated services for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering through personal advertisements, rather than simply by word-of-mouth, were thus faced with new constraints and opportunities in regards to their 'virtual' self-presentation and self-disclosure behaviours (Gibbs,

Ellison and Heino, 2006)⁵⁹. For their 'virtual' self-presentations to be received favourably, advertisers sought to manage the impression they produced through controlled and positive self-disclosure - a reflexive construction of the self that was packaged and edited to initiate a favourable first impression upon their audience and attract custom. The advertiser's favourable first impression was of course constructed upon the ideologies of respectable womanhood discussed in Chapter Four. The advertisers would thus have been faced with self-presentational decisions concerning what information to include or omit, how to frame the information they chose to disclose, and whether or not to exploit the virtual space of the advertising medium through use of deception (Gibbs, Ellison and Heino, 2006; Toma, Hancock, and Ellison, 2008).

The advertising stage provided advertisers with a unique space of possibility in which to better manipulate the impressions given to the audience via the expressive qualities of their performance. As with face-to-face interactions, but with more opportunity for controlled self-disclosure, a distinction may thus be made regarding the possibility for advertisers to have expressed 'actual' or 'virtual' realities in their performances (Goffman, 1959). That is, the adverts may have reflected a genuine meaning or identity or, conversely, they may in some way have obscured their 'real life' identity, circumstances, or motive in order to portray a more appealing or acceptable, artificially constructed 'reality'.

Some may have been motivated to misrepresent the reality behind their performance by the potential for personal gain. Others may have embellished their performance somewhat, even just to provide it with a suitable aura of legitimacy or additional flair. They may have been motivated by what they believed to be best for others, or a need for artificiality might have been forced upon their performance by an audience who would not allow them to be entirely 'sincere' (Goffman, 1959). As highlighted in Chapter Five, stigma-prone individuals who risk being discredited often break with the 'reality' of their identity and present themselves in a manner that escapes stigmatisation (Goffman,

⁵⁹ The advertisements for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering can be considered as similar to the forms of self-presentation found in modern-day online dating profiles where individuals are able to more easily engage in 'selective self-presentation' with better opportunity to present themselves positively and deliberately, often with some favourable manipulation of their 'real life' identity (see Gibbs, Ellison and Heino, 2006; Hancock, Toma and Ellison, 2007; Toma, Hancock and Ellison, 2008).

1963). Because of the fundamentally discrediting nature of these practices, all advertisers had to perform to the creditable standards of respectable womanhood discussed in Chapter Four - primarily in relation to maternal child care, acceptable forms of woman's labour, and her centrality within the home.

It is not possible to concretely infer 'truths' merely from the words of any particular advertiser, if at all. This includes advertisers who were later found guilty of criminal activity as their motivations were likely - as shall be discussed further in Chapter Eight - complex and fluid, intentions shifting with time and circumstance. It is also not logical to presume that the opportunity to perform a 'virtual', rather than an 'actual', identity meant that advertisers were necessarily scheming and deceitful con-artists who fabricated a purely illusionary impression of themselves (Brissett and Edgley, 2006). The fact that those who met face-to-face with advertisers of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering in those cases revealed through the archives did not feel these women fundamentally contradicted the persona which had been presented through the advert suggests that deceptions were subtle and their identities 'passable'.

The practise of advertising, as with social performance more generally, naturally lends itself to the manipulation of 'truth' in order that the audience 'buys' the advertiser's pitch (Bullmore, 1998). Deception in the advert would likely only have occurred to a 'natural' degree that would help construct a favourable first impression to their general audience and potential clientele, whilst not being entirely confounded upon further personal and face-to-face interaction (Gibbs, Ellison and Heino, 2006).

Circumscribed by short, text-based descriptions and bound by the likelihood of a future face-to-face encounter, advertisers' choices of self-presentation were thus influenced by two underlying tensions: their desire for self-enhancement in order to create favourable impressions and attract interest, and a need to appear honest, authentic, and 'respectable' in their self-presentations (Hancock and Toma, 2009). When presenting 'front stage' through newspapers like the *Morning Post*, advertisers would have been conscious of being observed by a generally non-exclusive, public audience and would have consequently presented according to the rules and conventions of respectable society as discussed in

Chapter Four. As interactions between key parties moved increasingly 'back stage' through private letters and face-to-face encounters, the key parties became increasingly more liberated to present a more genuine 'actual' self where idealised performance became less necessary as the norms of respectable society could be suspended for a more private audience (Goffman, 1959).

Whilst in the initial stage of communication within newspapers like the *Morning Post*, advertisers were compelled to wear their masks of respectability, regardless of how commensurable their exhibitive self was to the 'actual' persona that lay behind the advert. This demand was largely imposed by the general need for propriety in order to be successful whilst advertising in public spaces like the front page of the *Morning Post*. But also, because personal advertisements were managed and redistributed by third-party administrating staff at the newspaper office who moderated the newspaper content and determined whether it was fit for publication.

The initial communications between key parties were thus coordinated by the newspapers themselves - or, specifically, those working in the advertising departments. These 'curators' mediated the presentation of social information, evaluating and filtering advertisements on behalf of their audience ensuring they were suitable for public consumption (Hogan, 2010). Prior to publication, advertisements would be presented to men like Charles Allen Hopper, manager for the *Woolwich Herald*, who reviewed advertisement content before it went to press (t19000212-185, 1900). Such individuals often met advertisers face-to-face on a fairly frequent basis as they delivered copies of their communications to the advertising offices with payments for their publication. For instance, Thomas Bassett, a clerk in the advertising office of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* collected payments of five shillings per advertisement and regularly received adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services (t18700919-769, 1870). Describing the normality and regularity of women placing adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, Thomas recalled:

We have had advertisements of the same sort spread over a number of years, from persons professing to undertake the care of children - I can't give

any notion of the number of different persona that I have received such advertisements from; a great many - I could not take to identify them all (ibid).

Some commentators on 'baby-farming', like Sweet (2001: 50), have claimed that those working in the advertising departments of newspapers like the *Morning Post* "charged them [so-called 'baby-farmers'] premium rates, in full knowledge of their illegal activities". This ungrounded assertion suggests that individuals like Charles Hopper and Thomas Bassett were willing collaborators of systematic child murder who knowingly aided and abetted women they knew to be prolific murderers to sequentially procure victims. It is important to note that there is no evidence of such conscious complicity on the part of these intermediaries, nor was any evidence or suspicion apparently raised during any criminal cases⁶⁰.

As reflected by Thomas Bassett's statement, the sheer volume of advertisers for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services and the generality of their communications generally made authors of adverts indeterminate and anonymous. There was also little about their communications that distinguished one from the next and fundamentally nothing by which the reader could reliably determine the genuineness of what was communicated. That is, any 'reality' expressed by the advertisers generally lay beyond the time and place of the advert itself and could only be ascertained indirectly through the advertiser's avowals⁶¹.

Being solely reliant upon the language used as their medium of measurement for 'truth' in regards to identity, character, and quality of the advertiser and their services, the readers of these adverts were required to make a leap of faith by taking the words on the page at face-value. Whilst adverts typically contained various forms of explicit or implicit reassurances as to their authenticity, the general nature of the communications nevertheless obscured any precise means of establishing the 'reality' beyond the avowals from the advert alone. Any assessment of the material conditions existing outside of the advert would thus necessitate some form of 'personal', face-to-face interaction or observation.

⁶⁰ It should also be noted that five shillings, as reportedly collected by Thomas Bassett for adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services, was the approximate 'going-rate' of personal advertising for popular London-based newspapers during the period (*Marylebone Mercury*, 5th December 1868).

⁶¹ This point will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

Anonymity and deception were accordingly central to adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, regardless of their inherent 'legitimacy' or 'criminality'. The opportunity for identity manipulation and the potential for obscurity would by reason have led advertisers to engage in more positive self-disclosure and to have been less inclined to disclose information, such as their real name and address, that could lead to unwanted exposure (Gibbs, Ellison and Heino, 2006). It made sense, especially in these initial stages of interaction between all key parties whilst 'front stage' in the public eye, that advertisers would be somewhat deceptive and controlling in their self-disclosure in an effort to carefully design an advert persona that was desirably 'respectable' and 'utopian'.

Yet as stated, this initial, indirect, and fundamentally public form of social interaction was designed to precipitate a subsequent, more personal, form of interaction that would occur exclusively between the service provider and the service user. That is, the meanings and identities constructed by advertisers for the context of the advert mediated communication were, if successful, subsequently required to interact and collaborate with their clientele in staging more 'real', physical and synchronous performances. The presentation of self would then become an interactive process between two or more interactants, thus leading to further negotiations or renegotiations of meanings, identities, and behaviours.

This second order of 'personal' and 'back stage' interaction nonetheless still may have demanded that the advertiser maintain some form of 'front' (Goffman, 1959). Whilst this might not have been as demanding as that required in the very public setting of the advertising space of newspapers like the *Morning Post*, the advertiser would still most likely have been required to 'pass' and not entirely confound the original self-presentation and image of respectability given in the advert. That is, advertisers would have been compelled to 'keep face' by upholding the initial impression they gave to their audience (ibid) or risk the entire negotiation collapsing and the possibility of being reported to the police or other authorities. The purpose of anonymity in the adverts was thus a strategy to maintain social detachment and to ensure that further revelations of identity and service remained in the advertiser's power to share selectively when, how, and to whom, they chose.

As revealed through the advert sample, it was common practice for advertisers to include a third-party address, rather than their own, in order to maintain distance and anonymity from potential customers as well as the wider 'public' audience. This was fairly common practice among all who advertised in the personal columns of newspapers like the *Morning Post* and should not itself be considered as an indication of deviancy or criminality. The advert sample for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services revealed that advertisers typically included the address of a local post office or other popular commercial establishment. For instance:

TO PARENTS and OTHERS.—A highly-respectable Widow (whose house is most beautifully situate) is desirous of **TAKING CHARGE** of a **CHILD**, whom she would much like to adopt, having lost several of her own. The highest references can be given.—Address Z. A., post-office, Upper Baker-street, N.W.

62

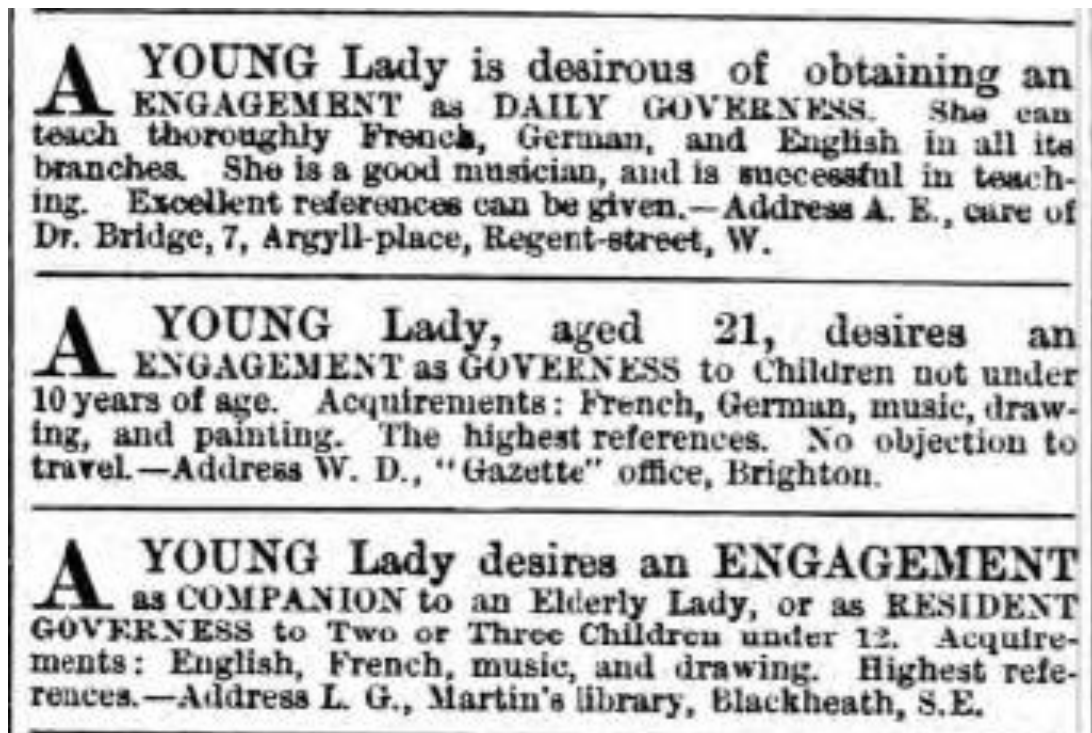
A LADY wishes to **ADOPT** (as her own) the **INFANT CHILD** of a Lady or Gentleman. Affectionate care and good prospects assured. A reasonable douceur would be expected. —Address, in first instance, Mrs. G. Harrison, post-office, 45, Upper Baker-street, Portman-square, W. (to be called for).

63

⁶² *Morning Post* (12th October 1859^c). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁶³ *Morning Post* (13th January 1870^b). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

As shown in the examples below, the anonymity in adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services by use of third-party addresses was a relatively common practice by all personal advertisers in newspapers like the *Morning Post*.



A YOUNG Lady is desirous of obtaining an ENGAGEMENT as DAILY GOVERNESS. She can teach thoroughly French, German, and English in all its branches. She is a good musician, and is successful in teaching. Excellent references can be given.—Address A. E., care of Dr. Bridge, 7, Argyll-place, Regent-street, W.

A YOUNG Lady, aged 21, desires an ENGAGEMENT as GOVERNESS to Children not under 10 years of age. Acquirements: French, German, music, drawing, and painting. The highest references. No objection to travel.—Address W. D., "Gazette" office, Brighton.

A YOUNG Lady desires an ENGAGEMENT as COMPANION to an Elderly Lady, or as RESIDENT GOVERNESS to Two or Three Children under 12. Acquirements: English, French, music, and drawing. Highest references.—Address L. G., Martin's library, Blackheath, S.E.

64

Individuals like William Thomas Canning, owner of a newsagents in Hammersmith, would often agree to receive other peoples' letters for one penny a piece and recalled at times taking in dozens of letters for people advertising 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services (t19000212-185, 1900). Together with the address, advertisers thus provided some form of personal identifier. The advert sample revealed that the most common practice was for advertisers to adopt a series of initials - such as 'X. Y. Z.' or 'E. F.' - that would have served to ensure that communications processed through a third-party were collected by the correct advertiser. Some advertisers instead opted to use a 'real' name, as illustrated in the last 'out-of-house' substitute mothering advert example from the *Morning Post*, such as 'Mrs. G. Harrison'. Many advertisers adopted pseudonyms

⁶⁴ *Morning Post* (25th August 1888). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

and used false personas to create a disposable straw-man identity whilst conducting their businesses in order to manage the potentially discrediting nature of their profession.

For instance, when contacted by Lizzie Turnbull and the father of Lizzie's 'illegitimate' child through her advertisements in the *Tottenham Herald* and the *Islington Gazette*, Jessie Byers gave her name as 'Mrs Mathers' and contrived that she wished to adopt the child on behalf of 'Mrs Mathers' married daughter, 'Mrs Ferguson' (t19070128-33, 1907; t19091207-23, 1909). Alice Sibley, who kept a newspaper shop in Green Lanes and took in peoples' letters for a small charge, reported that she had also known Jessie by the name of 'Mrs Mathers' when she had come to collect her post. It was also made known that Jessie had elsewhere communicated with a Mrs Cochrane under the name of her fictitious daughter, 'Mrs Ferguson'.

The archives also reveal that it was not only the service providers who sought to obscure and disguise their identity. One single mother who rented an apartment from Sarah Baker, who advertised herself as an 'accoucheuse' under various names, wished to remain entirely anonymous as she gave birth and sought a home for her 'illegitimate' child (t18930306-316, 1893). Having given birth, the woman advertised to procure a home for her 'illegitimate' baby under the name of 'Mrs Weston' and provided an address for letters to be directed to a local stationer's shop. From the replies she received to her advert, the woman going by the name 'Mrs Weston' replied to a letter signed 'Mrs Carter'. The woman, 'Mrs Weston', then asked Sarah Baker to assist her further by taking her child for her to hand over to 'Mrs Carter' at Victoria Train Station about a week after the child was born. Sarah subsequently met 'Mrs Carter' and another woman about eight or nine in the evening in the waiting room of Victoria Station, paid the agreed two pounds, and handed over the child with a parcel of clothes. The other woman, Lydia Robertson, who had joined 'Mrs Carter' at Victoria Station to provide a testament of her character claimed that Sarah Baker had led them to believe that she was 'Mrs Weston' and that the baby was her eldest daughter's child. The meeting of the three women apparently lasted only a few minutes and Sarah Baker, or 'Mrs Weston', reportedly left saying "remember, you are the adopted mother, and you have no further claim upon me; it is your baby" (ibid). Lydia

Robertson reported that she had known 'Mrs Carter', real name Ellen Barnabd, as 'Mrs Cox'.

Adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering were therefore absolute representations of idealised norms or respectability and respectable womanhood in Victorian and Edwardian society and exhibited a fully performative 'virtual' identity or 'front'. As with all presentations of the self in respectable society, it was always necessary for advertisers to masquerade in accordance to the most creditable images of respectable womanhood not only to pass as 'normal' but also to be able to operate successfully through their channels of interaction. Any deception through the adverts was not so much a cunning or malicious lie, it was imposed upon them. The adverts functioned as a gateway between 'respectable' society and a 'deviant' underbelly that clandestinely managed women's crisis of respectability. Whilst exhibited entirely 'front stage', they served and led to the 'back stages' of 'respectable' society where stigmas of problematic parenthood could be manged in private.

6.4. The Carnavalesque Language of the Marketplace

In our own country it is sought almost exclusively by parents who, to save themselves from disgrace, desire secrecy respecting their offspring (Davenport-Hill, 1869: 3-4).

For 'respectable' women, secrecy was fundamental to sexual activity and child-bearing outside of marriage. Stigma produced by a problematic pregnancy or the existence of a discreditable child was something that could be privately managed and 'disposed of' through the marketplace of motherhood. It was thus something that could be corrected: the child was itself an object of intervention, a 'problem' to be resolved. At this point of the process, many commentators have erroneously proposed or implied that the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering generally functioned as a mechanism by which a cluster of mercenary women codedly offered 'infanticide for hire'. Alternatively, the adverts have often been

regarded as 'bait' by predatory 'serial-killers' to lure vulnerable women to handing over their children. Such notions led some early commentators to sensationally describe the marketplace as a "baby-hunting ground" (Waugh, 1890: 11) where children became "the prey of worse than vampires" (Dickson, 1870: 2).

Instead, examination of this marketplace reveals a vast and complex network of services and an array of possible optional routes that were not generally predetermined but which unfolded gradually as 'natural' and 'logical' responses to the circumstances and the initial objective to 'dispose' of the stigma. The outcomes were the product of the negotiations between the key parties, their relationship to one another, and the socio-economic conditions that surrounded the transaction (as shall be discussed further in Chapter Eight). Even in the criminal cases revealed through the archives, it does not appear to ever have been the case that "vast numbers of unmarried mothers were paying baby-farmers to take their children on the pretence of having them adopted, but in the knowledge that they would be strangled, placed in card-boxes and dumped in a nearby river" (Ward, 2015: 108). Essentially, the discourses that surrounded the negotiations between key parties were not those of homicide, they were those of respectability and, implicitly, of stigma removal.

By providing access to 'back stages' through newspaper advertisements, the marketplace catered for all those imperilled by the stigma of problematic sex, pregnancy, and parenthood and who faced a crisis of respectability. The marketplace was fundamentally organised upon the management of respectable identities. Because of the stigma-prone nature of this marketplace, discretion between key parties was paramount. Access to back spaces was primarily mediated by the service provider who, as discussed in the previous section, controlled what information they disclosed, who they interacted with, as well as how much of the 'back stage' and their 'actual' identity customers were made privy to.

Because service providers advertised 'front stage' in newspapers like the *Morning Post*, the marketplace had to reflect an image of respectability and legitimacy in order to operate within 'normal', 'respectable' society. Accordingly, a sub-cultural and semi-communal 'knowingness' - or 'conspiracy of meaning'

(Cardiff, 1988; Bailey, 1994) - allowed those seeking to trade within this informal economy to do so ambiguously to avoid being vilified or incriminated. With this, the marketplace provided a liminal space of possibility that traded in obscure options of identity management.

The services within the marketplace of motherhood thus afforded service users a means of agentic negotiation of stigmatising circumstances. Social hardships and exclusion could be reduced or entirely alleviated through spaces that allowed people to deal with their particular 'problem' as they saw best with what they could afford. Faced with a variety of potential options, outcomes would have been determined by a number of intersecting factors including time, cost, health risks, incrimination, and further damage to respectable identities. Chronologically, options were determined by the stage of pregnancy or parenthood and decisions were driven as the discreditable came ever closer to being discredited. Although decisions and arrangements would ideally have been made before the pregnancy became publicly evident, efforts would still be made to limit the extent to which the child's existence was known after its birth in order to retain as much respectable identity as possible. The identity management exercise would thus have begun at some point during the mother's pregnancy or shortly after childbirth depending upon her circumstances.

As the respectable identity of the unmarried mother was entirely untenable, it was necessary to find a way to rewrite her identity as if the matter of her problematic parenthood had never occurred as that stigma would otherwise haunt her for life. The maintenance of her 'virtual' identity thus became fundamental to her survival and progressive 'career' in 'respectable' society. As she could not move 'forwards' to becoming a 'respectable mother', she had to instead move 'backwards' to retaining her state as a 'respectable woman'. The marketplace of motherhood accordingly catered for those who had found themselves outside the ideological norms of 'respectable' society. By needing to avoid the 'normals' of respectable society, the marketplace provided an enclosed back space of 'normality' - a 'normal' outside the ideological 'norm' - for the discreditable to collaborate in managing their identities (Goffman, 1963).

The marketplace of motherhood was a hermetically sealed space that connected to and mirrored 'respectable' society but within which nothing was the same. These spaces of 'otherness' that were produced and sustained by a collaborative knowingness of women's crises of respectability through non-marital sex and stigma-prone parenthood were akin to what Foucault (1986) described as 'heterotopias'. Such spaces are set apart as counter-sites of 'normal' society, simultaneously mirroring, contesting, and inverting other regular spaces, customs, and conventions (ibid). Heterotopias are liminal spaces that offer a temporary suspension from 'normality' (De Cauter and Dehaene, 2008), whilst simultaneously sustaining 'normalcy' (Heynen, 2008; Boyer, 2008). Such spaces often allow for issues of deviancy and crisis to be managed (Foucault, 1986).

The adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering were themselves heterotopic. By mirroring the idealised images of womanhood and motherhood they were clothed in the normalcy of respectable society yet facilitated and concealed practices that were fundamentally disreputable. They referenced language and practices of respectable society but used them to confer respectability and legitimacy upon interactions and transactions that were discreditable.

Through this misalliance of 'respectable' and 'deviant' society, there was something of the carnivalesque about adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering and the marketplace of motherhood more generally. That is, the marketplace and its adverts existed through inversion, illusion, parody, and absurdity (Bakhtin, 1968). In doing so, the marketplace provided an ambiguous space for diverse and free interaction, a suspension of the behavioural codes of 'normal' society that sanctions 'indecent' activity and a mingling of what was 'sacred' within respectable society with that which was considered profane (ibid). In effect, the marketplace constituted a 'world upside down', a pantomimic formation that enabled the safe negotiation of matters of deviancy and crisis (Stallybrass and White, 1986).

Access within the marketplace thus relied upon a complicit 'conspiracy of meaning' between service providers and service users that functioned to discriminate between unwelcome 'outsiders' and those privileged by admission through the 'fourth wall' and made more privy to the 'actual' meanings and

identities that lay behind the 'front stage', 'virtual' performance (Bailey, 1994). What everybody knew, but some knew better than others, the conspiracies of meaning through which the marketplace of motherhood operated established occult-like margins of initiation, insight, and understanding (Cardiff, 1988; Bailey, 1994). The discourse of the marketplace functioned to draw a particular customer base within a closed yet allusive and volatile frame of reference that controverted precise explanation (Bailey, 1994). The communication system of the marketplace thus reflects a recognition and deflection of the structures of power that dictated normative, acceptable behaviour and how official surveillance could be circumvented by those deviating from the 'norm' (Cardiff, 1988; Bailey, 1994). Importantly, this conspiracy of meaning was centrally structured around the nature of the marketplace as a space of stigma management and the disposal of 'problems', not as a secret language system for 'infanticide for hire'.

This conspiracy of meaning was again a fairly normal aspect of the period in regards to how matters of deviancy and crisis were dealt with within 'respectable' society. For instance, because Victorian and Edwardian prudery insisted that matters of sex and pregnancy were not dealt with openly within 'respectable' society, a commonplace rhetoric of allusion and metaphor provided discretion on all matters that were deemed indelicate (Crow, 1971; Foucault, 1976). For example, it was, as previously discussed, very normal for 'respectable' women to 'go into retirement' to some form of private space at a point when their pregnancy became evident in order to give birth behind the scenes of respectable life.

Unmarried women faced with an 'illegitimate' pregnancy often sought refuge in private spaces - often in the homes of friends or relatives, in charitable institutions or in workhouses (Higginbotham, 1989). The homes of friends or family were likely the most favoured option but may not have been viable either because the expecting mother felt the need to keep the pregnancy secret from those close to her, or they because they already knew and had abandoned her, or simply because they could not support her for whatever reason.

Evidently wise to this predicament, the archives reveal that many women set up private establishments for women to 'retire' to, what were termed 'laying-in' and 'confinement' homes for 'accouchement'. Ventures of this sort often drew

clientele through newspaper advertisements and business cards. Ostensibly, such enterprises satisfied a fairly normal and legitimate demand within the marketplace. Whilst clothed in normalcy, they provided a secretive 'back space' in which women could further manage matters of deviancy and crisis. Upon discovering they were pregnant with an 'illegitimate' child, Ada Charlotte Galley, Rosina Pardoe, and a Miss Harris all responded to adverts in local papers (t19030112-174, 1903). The advertisements they answered to generally read as followed:

Accouchement, before and during. Skilled nursing. Home comforts. Baby can remain. Nurse 4, Stanley Road, East Finchley (ibid: originally printed in *Dalton's Newspaper*).

Such adverts referenced the language of 'respectable' society and reflected an image of legitimacy, expertise, and reliability. The use of the French term 'accouchement' signifies sophistication whilst discreetly alluding to matters unsuitable for 'respectable' minds, especially when read in a popular morning newspaper over breakfast. At a glance, the advert innocently offers women a place to reside with care and assistance from a supposedly trained nurse for an indeterminate length of time. No mention of child birth or payment sweetens the appearance of propriety. The only hint of anything 'atypical' about this service is the ambiguous phrase buried in the centre of the advert, 'baby can remain'.

Having replied to the adverts, Ada Charlotte Galley, Rosina Pardoe, and Miss Harris were each invited to Claymore House in East Finchley, London, where they met the proprietor, midwife and nurse, a lady named Mrs Sach - who also sometimes went by the name of 'Nurse Thorne' - to discuss the terms of their stay. Each woman was required to pay one pound and one shilling a week for their basic stay and then three pounds and three shillings a week during the labour, delivery, and postnatal period. Claymore House was able to accommodate several clients at a time and women could arrange to stay for as long as they wished or could afford. Shortly after they began their stay, all three women were privately asked by Mrs Sach what they planned to do with their baby once it was born, a matter that had apparently not been fully thought through by

each of the women at this stage, and were informed that arrangements could be made for adoption if required (t19030112-174, 1903).

A similar business was run by a woman named Sarah Baker who let furnished apartments for pregnant women (t18930306-316, 1893). Mrs Baker also advertised her services in newspapers, either using the moniker 'Beta', her maiden name, or her Christian name. When women came to make arrangements to stay in her apartments, there was no correspondence regarding the details of the client's situation. Mrs Baker never made inquiries as to their identity and allowed them to use whatever name they liked. It was policy that once the child was born it was not to be kept at the house. If required, Mrs Baker would assist the mother in making private arrangements to have the child adopted. The normalcy of these practices was such that Maria Edwards Castle ran an establishment on Camberwell Road with a sign out front that read "Mrs. Barton, Accoucheuse" - 'Mrs Barton' being the *nom de guerreshe* used as a midwife (t18700919-769, 1870). Having ran her business for five years, Maria reported:

During that period I have received a great many; I am in the habit of advertising - and those advertisements bring me ladies - some stay with me five, six, or seven months - I have 2 or 3 in the house at the same time - I don't know what becomes of the babies, they are taken away sometimes... I know nothing about them after they leave (ibid).

Some establishments of this sort were suspected of offering more than just accommodation and assistance in giving birth. In 1869, an anonymous person reported to the police that a woman named Mrs Martin, residing at 33 Dean Street, Soho, advertised herself as an 'accoucheuse', but was also privately practicing abortion and had claimed to have aborted over 500 infants during 18 months (MEPO 3/92). The notification came just prior to the release of a newspaper story about a domestic servant named Elizabeth Smith who had become pregnant with an 'illegitimate' child following a sexual assault by a John Curtis who, upon hearing of her pregnancy, had directed her to visit Mrs Martin (*East London Observer*, Saturday 31st July 1869: 3). Prior to encouraging Elizabeth to visit Mrs Martin, John had urged her to take some powder he had

obtained that was supposed to induce an abortion, which she refused. Upon visiting the establishment in Soho, Mrs Martin reportedly said to Elizabeth:

As you have nowhere to go, you can come here to be confined. I do not give any drugs. You can come as soon as you like, but if you are confined here you will never see the child. I place them in the Foundling; but most likely it will die (ibid: 3).

Upon this information, the Metropolitan Police began an investigation into the nature of Mrs Martin's business and observed that the establishment in Soho was regularly frequented by 'well dressed' women (MEPO 3/92). Through the investigation, it was understood that Mrs Martin charged between 10 and 50 pounds for her services depending on the social position of the client. It was soon made evident that obtaining proof for the claims made against Mrs Martin would be extremely difficult considering that the penalties faced by all those seeking Mrs Martin's services would discourage any woman coming forward to give evidence. One woman who had apparently admitted to having procured an abortion by Mrs Martin reportedly refused to give evidence and testify in court even if she were paid 1,000 pounds. Presenting her business as a legitimate provision of temporary accommodation and attendance for pregnant women, Mrs Martin advertised herself widely. One circular reportedly read:

Mrs. C. Martin, certified accoucheuse, 33a, Dean-street, Soho, Oxford-street, London, W. (holding her diploma from the City of London Lying-in Hospital), calls the attention of ladies requiring accommodation during their accouchement to her establishment, where they will meet with skilful medical treatment, attention, kindness, and every home comfort, on moderate terms... Ladies are kindly requested to preserve the above address (ibid).

Other advertisements found within the newspaper archives show that Mrs Martin broadcasted her services regularly in newspapers across the country. Her notices were typically discrete and somewhat ambiguous in regards to what services were available. For instance:

**Mrs. MARTIN, Accoucheuse, 83a, Dean-street,
Oxford-street, London.**

LADIES wishing to leave home during their Accouchement will meet with every kindness and attention on moderate terms. Mrs. M. can be consulted daily on all female maladies.

65

THE GOLDEN CASKET, by Mrs. L. MARTIN,
Certified Accoucheuse. — This valuable little work justifies its title, and will amply repay perusal. Sent post free to any part of the United Kingdom on receipt of 13 stamps. — Address, Mrs. L. MARTIN, 33A, Dean Street, Oxford Street, London, W.C. 431

66

Mrs Martin's advertisements epitomise the heterotopic nature of the marketplace. Whilst fundamentally selling herself as a resolver of discreditable problems and crises of respectable womanhood, she broadcasted herself and service 'front stage' through a parody of professionalism and medicalism, enigmatic allusion to unbounded and immodest possibility, and even absurd and fantastic references to, for example, 'diplomas from the City of London Lying-in Hospital' and whimsical novels about 'golden caskets'. Through a relativity of rhetoric, meanings and 'truths' could thus endlessly vacillate with each inviting proportionate dialogic status.

It was understood following police investigation that Mrs Martin delivered her patients over a vessel of water in order to ensure the child appeared still born (MEPO 3/92). However, if abortion by this method was truly something Mrs Martin practiced, then the arrangements for this were made only through private

⁶⁵ *North Devon Gazette* (2nd September 1862: 1). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁶⁶ *Newcastle Chronicle* (6th January 1866: 7). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

correspondence between her and her clients in the 'back space' safety of her establishment. No substantial evidence of this was ever obtained by the police and Mrs Martin died shortly after the investigation began making any attempt at prosecution impossible. Prior to Mrs Martin's death, she had attempted to move her business on account of the attention that the newspaper exposures had brought to her establishment in Soho making her clients uncomfortable about visiting the premises for fear of being identified (ibid).

The *British Medical Journal* also reported upon a number of establishments of a similar nature (*British Medical Journal*, 8th February, 1868^c). One investigator described how, upon following-up advertisements found in a local newspaper, they visited two establishments in close proximity. The first took in pregnant women to be confined for long or short periods with a medical man in attendance. The proprietor stated that she never had, nor ever would, condone procuring an abortion and instead helped the mothers make arrangements to have the child adopted "by respectable people who wanted children" if required (ibid: 127). The 'accoucheuse' reportedly remarked that "it was hard that people could not have a little enjoyment without being put to such inconvenience afterwards... It was a great pity that people could not have fun for nothing" (ibid: 127, 128). It was further reported that the female clientele often arrived in carriages and were carried into the establishment and later carried back out to their awaiting carriage once the doctor had visited them. The proprietor also claimed that she frequently arranged mock confinements for women who wanted a child where pregnancy and labour were feigned and the child of another woman wishing for hers to be adopted was passed off as their own (ibid).

The second establishment visited by the investigator for the *British Medical Journal* was deemed the less respectable of the two (*British Medical Journal*, 8th February, 1868^c). Here, like in Mrs Martin's establishment, the accoucheuse reportedly offered expecting mothers the option of procuring an abortion. It was recorded that the "lady's face need not be seen, as she could keep it veiled if she liked, and had only to lie on her side... she need not stop longer than a quarter of an hour... It is easily done; no more than kissing your hand" (ibid: 127). The proprietor reportedly claimed that there was no problem in disposing of the fetuses as she would register them as premature, giving it any name, and then

take it to the undertaker. If the expecting mother did go full term then she could also help arrange to have it adopted. As with many other women running such establishments, the proprietor did not inquire about or want to know details of her clientele (ibid: 128).

Despite its illegality, not only could pregnant women pay for 'specialists' to induce an abortion for them in private establishments, but the period witnessed a proliferation of products being surreptitiously sold through the marketplace that promised to cure women of 'obstructions and irregularities' (McLaren, 1978; D'Cruze, 1995: 3). Some prudently marketed abortifacients, such as quinine, could even be purchased at a local chemist's shop (Knight, 1977). Powders and other elixirs such as that acquired by John Curtis and pressed upon Elizabeth Smith, as well as certain instruments, could be purchased from street vendors, medical men, or 'quacks' (McLaren, 1978; Behlmer, 1982; Williams, 2016). However, such products may have been ineffectual, harmed the mother, and put her at risk of prosecution (Weeks, 1989; Brookes, 1986: 6). Those selling ineffectual or even harmful abortifacients would have remained almost entirely immune from legal repercussion as any woman purchasing such items with the intent to procure abortion would, by complaining to authorities, be implicating themselves in a criminal act.

The criminalisation of abortion thus further increased the stigma-prone unmarried mother's chance of victimisation (Goffman, 1963). Like the other services so far discussed, many products were ambiguously advertised through classified sections of newspapers. Their communications also operated through a system of allusion to discreditable matters, a mirroring of respectable discourse and a parodying of professionalism and legitimacy. For instance, one advertisement in the *Illustrated Police News* (1st May, 1897: 8⁶⁷) read:

⁶⁷ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

LADIES ONLY,
MARRIED OR SINGLE.
THE LADY MONTROSE'S MIRACULOUS
FEMALE MEDICINAL TABULES.

Will positively cure the most OBSTINATE OBSTRUCTIONS, Irregularities, &c., from any cause, in eight hours. Being SPECIALLY prepared, they are guaranteed stronger in action than the strongest LIQUID mixture on earth. Failure is absolutely impossible. Post free, under cover, with full directions and advice, **4s. 6d.**, with a written guarantee to cure. One case amply sufficient. A special and valuable OUTWARD remedy sent free.

Mrs. N., Warrington, writes:—"Am overwhelmed with delight to say that your miraculous (for miraculous they are) Tabules *painlessly restored regularity*, before taking one quarter of a box."

"After taking the last dose late Saturday night, I was quite well early Sunday morning."—Mrs. C., Dartford.

"I heard from my sister, Mrs. Weentell, to say they had *proved successful*. She is exceedingly grateful."—Mrs. H., Northern Hospital, London.

"After taking the second dose of Tabules I was all right. . . . Wishing you every prosperity."—Mrs. M. E.

"After taking the third Tabule all was *as I desired*."—Mrs. L., Elm Grove, B'head.

"Received Tabules safely, and followed your directions. Extremely pleased at *result*, without any unpleasantness whatever."—G. L. B., Malvern.

The above Testimonials (and Thousands of others) are sworn under oath before one of Her Majesty's Commissioners for Oaths to be true and genuine.

Don't delay. Send to-day for full particulars and conclusive proofs. Be cured without trouble and expense with one case of these startling Tabules.

Address—**H. P. N. MONTROSE,**
 64, Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, London.
 (Highest Professional advice, by letter only,
 always free.)

I never have a single disappointment, and we have a Medical Certificate GUARANTEEING these Tabules.

Advertisements for 'Lady Montrose's Tubules' appeared regularly in newspapers across the country towards the end of the century and their ambiguity and superficial appearance of offering a general female medication afforded them a sense of normalcy. The marketing of the 'Lady Montrose' product was revealed to be a fraudulent enterprise organised by the Crimes brothers who, having sold thousands of women ineffectual abortifacients, then sought to blackmail their female customers into paying a fee to avoid exposure and prosecution for procuring abortifacients (*St. James's Gazette*, 29th November 1898: 10). Most interesting in the trial of the Crimes brothers was the revelation that thousands of women had apparently been seeking private means to terminate their pregnancies (Weeks, 1989).

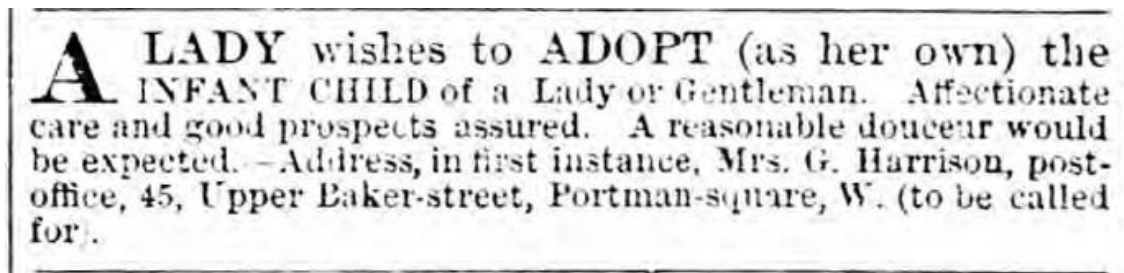
Much of the available evidence on the use of abortion as a recourse to having unviable and discrediting pregnancies suggests that women often sought help from other women. Whilst held both illegal and immoral, abortion gave women control over their fertility and allowed decision making to be postponed until the expecting mother had assessed her material circumstances and the possibility of 'legitimizing' the birth through marriage (Weeks, 1989). Female networks operating in most rural neighbourhoods provided women with various means of secretive birth control that did not require consultation with, for example, spouses, family members, medical or religious men (Brooks, 1995: 6; Harrison, 1995: 7; Gleadle, 2001).

By the mid-century, there was a general perception that women from all socio-economic backgrounds were knowledgeable of and utilised abortion as a form of birth control (Weeks, 1989; D'Cruze, 1998). However, women's use of abortion and the networks within which it was practiced can only really be inferred through derivative documentation - such as hospital and criminal records - because, enclosed 'back stage', abortion services existed through allusion and was predominantly disclosed through spoken, rather than written, custom (Mason, 1995; Brooks, 1995).

Abortion services available in the marketplace also posed extreme risk to the mother's health. The archives are replete with examples of mothers dying through unsafe abortions administered either by themselves, with assistance, or by a 'specialist'. The aforementioned *British Medical Journal* investigation into abortion establishments reported that one woman they spoke to claimed an abortionist she knew had "lost all the ladies she took" (*British Medical Journal*, 8th February 1868^c: 127). Many may also have avoided recourses to abortion on the basis of their illegality and risk of incurring prosecution. Some services would have been deemed unfavourable for not appearing 'normal' or 'respectable' and eschewed for fear that, if associated with such practices, they could incur damage to their public identity. As previously discussed in regards to Mrs Martin's establishment in Soho (MEPO 3/92), if privacy and confidence could not be assured then it is likely that those seeking to protect their 'respectability' would have sought alternative options.

For those mothers for whom decisive intervention was only established after the child was born, or for whom attempts at procuring an abortion had been unsuccessful, the 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services thus remained one of the most common and attractive options available in the marketplace. Adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering also often couched their communications in uncommon and exotic language that supposedly mirrored respectable society. Mentions of a 'premium', 'liberal terms' or 'douceur' tactfully alluded to some form of payment to be discussed 'back stage' (see Figure 25).

Figure 25. *Morning Post* (13th January 1870⁶⁸).



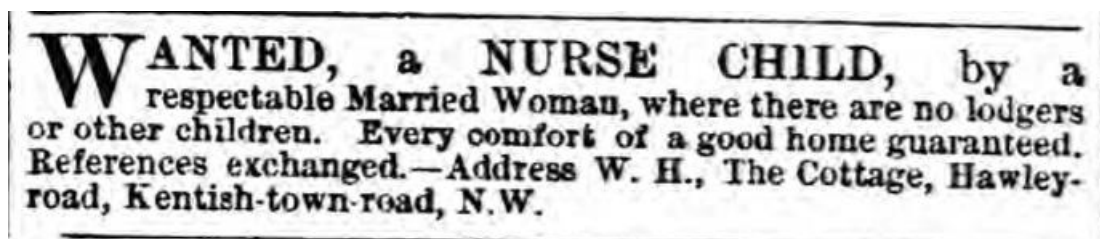
The archives reveal that mothers of 'illegitimate' children would often employ the 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services associated with 'baby-farming' on temporary arrangements so that they were able to maintain some line of employment. Single mothers like Emma Langridge and Sarah Emmerson were able to make weekly payments to leave their child in the care of another during the day whilst they went to work, collect them in the evening and return them again the following morning (t18770917-736, 1877; t18800426-376, 1880). Similarly, women like Sarah Jane Blackburn and Matilda Brown, both unmarried domestic servants, arranged for their 'illegitimate' children to be cared for whilst they continued working, they paid weekly and visited their children approximately once every fortnight (t18830129-286, 1883; t18840421-483, 1884).

⁶⁸ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

For other women, such as Frances Owen, formerly Frances Verch, such services temporarily provided them the space to manage their situation until they could viably be a respectable mother to their child (t18790805-737, 1879). Frances had left her 'illegitimate' daughter in the care of a woman named Laura Julia Addiscott whilst she returned to work. Then upon later marrying, Frances had told her husband about her daughter and they subsequently reclaimed her as a 'legitimate' daughter.

The ambiguity of the adverts often provided a broad possibility of interpretation meaning that the actual nature of the service - for instance, in regards to the length or permanency of care - could be negotiated during further private 'back stage' correspondence (see Figure 26).

Figure 26. *Morning Post* (11th March 1874^{a69}).



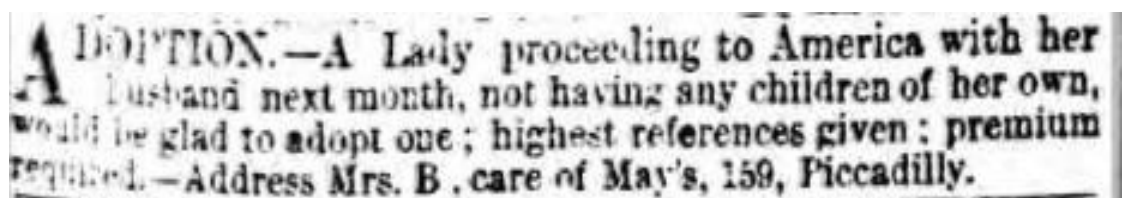
For others, 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services offered a more permanent means of returning to or maintaining a lifestyle that would have been unfeasible whilst caring for a child. Some, like Rosina Pardoe, a single domestic servant, had made up their minds prior to giving birth that it would be necessary to find a home for the child as it could not have been kept whilst in service (t19030112-174, 1903). More permanent forms of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering could also have been utilised for those who wished, or required, to be more mobile. For instance, Emily Simmons, a widow, arranged for her child to be adopted so that she could travel abroad with another lady (t18910309-319, 1891).

⁶⁹ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

The archives reveal that, for some women, permanent arrangements were perhaps more desirous than necessary. Lizzie Turnbull, on having arranged for her 'illegitimate' child to be adopted by another woman was asked if she would come and visit the child, an offer which she refused (t19091207-23, 1909). Fanny Tear, also an unmarried domestic servant, expressed that upon arranging for her child to be adopted with no further contact she felt "I thought I had got rid of it altogether, I thought I was free" (t18980328-288, 1898).

Many advertisers communicated a greater sense of permanency by including terms like 'adopt', 'entire charge', or 'bring up as own'. Such offers would undoubtedly have appealed to those desperate to be entirely liberated and disassociated from the child. Occasionally, adverts and further communications would stress that those wishing to adopt would also shortly be moving to a different location and planned to take the child with them (see Figure 27). For many wishing to distance themselves from the discreditable existence of an 'illegitimate' child, such offers would have meant an entirely clean break.

Figure 27. *Morning Post* (31st May 1884^{a70}).

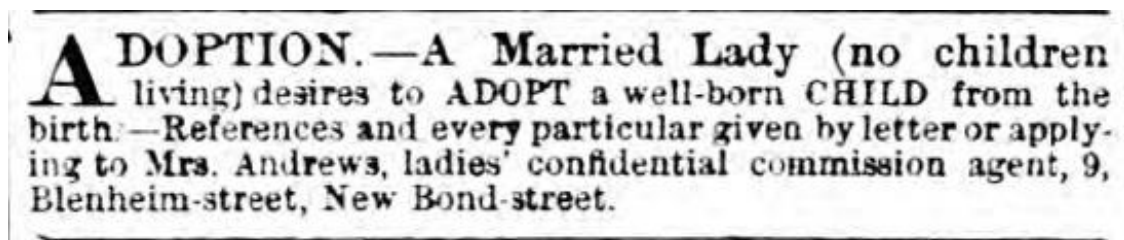


For those seeking more permanent forms of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, service providers were typically willing to 'adopt' the child 'from birth' (see Figure 28). This meant that the physical evidence - the object of stigma - of a woman's sexual misconduct could, with use of 'laying-in' back spaces of 'confinement', be entirely 'disposed' of before its existence became public knowledge. As such, those like Janet Tassie Cowen, whose father arranged for her to stay at a house

⁷⁰ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

on Camberwell road to be confined after she had been 'outraged', had her child placed out for adoption just three days after it was born (t18700919-769, 1870). In a similar manner, Ada Charlotte Galley, Rosina Pardoe, and Miss Harris all had their children removed immediately after birth on the understanding that they would be directly sent out for adoption (t19030112-174, 1903).


Figure 28. *Morning Post* (18th August 1869⁷¹).



The marketplace also functioned to allow those with a discreditable child to advertise for someone to take it for them (see Figure 29). Such was the case for a woman known by Lizzie Turnbull who had given birth to an 'illegitimate' child around the same time as her at a maternity home in Pemberton Gardens (t19091207-23, 1909). Whilst less common, such adverts reflect the two-way flow of supply and demand and how those seeking to be free of an ideologically and practically unviable child did not need to wait until they had found a suitable advertiser.

⁷¹ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Figure 29. *Morning Post* (20th April 1883^{c72}).



WILL any Lady ADOPT a Beautiful BABY GIRL, five months old, or state very low terms for a Home?—Address H., care of Messrs. Wade and Co., Ludgate-arcade.

Finally, whilst the personal histories revealed through the archives suggest that the marketplace catered particularly for those imperilled by the possession of an ‘illegitimate’ child, adverts for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering also offered assistance for ‘disposing’ of other kinds of stigma-prone children (see Figure 30). Children with disabilities or physical disfigurements also did not correspond to the bourgeois idealised images of children and family in respectable society and were often linked to ideas of social degeneration and national decline (Barnes, 1992). Those with disabled or disfigured children thus often sought to cope with the issue privately (Jordan, 1987). Without sufficient support, such children would have created an additional financial strain on parents, especially unmarried, single mothers. Such was the case for Hannah Lipman who had to place her disabled son out in care whilst she sought employment (t18700815-645, 1870).

Figure 30. *Morning Post* (27th October 1893^{a73}).



ADOPTION.—WANTED, CARE of CHILD by Hospital Nurse; would Adopt; or mild mental or troublesome invalid taken; country; highest references.—Hope, Westley's library, Cheltenham.

⁷² Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁷³ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

The services offered within the marketplace so far discussed each provided those faced with a problematic pregnancy or discreditable child with an array of implicit opportunities for the alleviation of stigma and financial hardship. Each type of service offered forms of intervention at different stages throughout pregnancy and child-rearing. Each functioned covertly within the back spaces of female networks. Although the practices introduced thus far provided those stigmatised and impoverished by having an unviable and discrediting child with ways of returning to the prospects of 'respectable' society that were available without the child, each option could also have been unavailable or unfavourable by potential clientele. Service costs undoubtedly created one significant barrier to what options were available.

Personal histories relating to 'out-of-house' substitute mothering indicate that many of the mothers were provided financial support dealing with their 'problem'. For instance, whilst 'laying-in' at Claymore House during their confinement, Ada Charlotte Galley, Rosina Pardoe, and Miss Harris all wrote to the fathers of their 'illegitimate' children requesting the full payment they required - from £25 to £30 in each case - for the arrangements they had made with Amelia Sach to have their babies adopted by 'respectable' women from birth, which they each received (t19030112-174, 1903). Janet Tassie Cowen's father similarly managed all the payments for her confinement and the adoption of her child (t18700919-769, 1870). Likewise, a woman named Amelia Hannah Sargeant paid half of the £10 required to have the baby of a friend in domestic service adopted (t18960518-451, 1896). In other instances, women like Esther Amelia Hodson and Florence Jones were allowed to pay the adoption costs in instalments (t18990912-624, 1899; t19000212-185; 1900).

The services for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering offered in newspaper advertisements thus existed along a continuum of possible options that functioned to help people manage the social consequences of having a stigma-prone child. In their totality, they contributed to a veritable marketplace of motherhood that offered varied solutions to those who could not be 'respectable' mothers at different periods of intervention with differing degrees of permanency. The forms of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering that functioned through newspaper advertisements were just one of the more 'advanced' methods that

utilised the technologies and machinery of modern society to appeal to a wider audience.

The cases discussed thus far reveal how those who utilised services within this marketplace did not, as has elsewhere been suggested, do so on the understanding that they were being offered 'infanticide for hire'. Neither, as has typically been believed, did those offering the services in any way frame their business in those terms. Those seeking assistance within the marketplace typically did so without any predetermined clear objective of what they required other than to privately manage their 'respectable' identity through the 'disposal' of their 'object of stigma'. Those supplying the services generally provided possible options that could be negotiated in the safety of female back spaces.

Within the public eye, the informal economy of the marketplace of motherhood thus operated through a communal cultural language of 'respectability' that constructed an overarching 'virtual', 'front stage' identity of legitimacy and propriety. Everyone within the marketplace and all the services it offered thus mirrored the utopian visions of bourgeois society. Yet, as a heterotopic space of possibility, the nature and function of the marketplace vacillated through different interpretations and negotiated meanings. Reliant upon the privacy of back spaces, the carnivalesque language of the marketplace functioned through a conspiracy of meaning in order to draw its intended audience inside an exclusive yet perpetually allusive system of meaning.

6.5. Conclusion

The 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services constituted a form of identity work that primarily functioned to manage crises of respectable womanhood caused by problematic parenthood. These services existed along a continuum of other possible options offered within an informal marketplace that advertised openly yet allusively to a non-exclusive audience. As the demand and supply in the commerce of motherhood and respectability was fundamentally discreditable for all key parties, transactions within the marketplace occurred through carefully

managed systems of interaction. The discourse of the marketplace mirrored that of respectable society whilst simultaneously alluding ambiguous inversions of signification. Through a conspiracy of meaning, women privately negotiated matters of crisis and deviancy related to problematic parenthood through the safety of enclosed back spaces.

The adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering provided a unique conduit of communication that spoke to a non-exclusive audience and facilitated familiar and free interaction between a rich diversity of people. As idealised constructions of bourgeois respectability, the adverts were fundamentally illusory, yet this was a natural effect of controlled expression and disclosure in social performance as well as advertising culture more generally. Anonymity in the adverts was thus a rational and natural measure by which the advertiser could further control any interactions initiated by the advert and was a normal aspect of personal advertising as well as the marketplace of motherhood more generally. The adverts provided an initial 'doorway' through the 'fourth wall' that existed between the advertiser's idealised 'virtual' performance and their non-exclusive audience to private back spaces where meanings and 'actual' identities could further be negotiated in more personal forms of interaction.

This chapter has established the key features of the marketplace of motherhood from within which erroneous conceptions of 'baby-farming' have derived. It has shown how a particular form of discourse framed the interactions and transactions, one which functioned to simultaneously provide an image of respectability and a range of tacit, and potentially discreditable, possibility. Commercial transactions within the marketplace could thus be made through an unstable and illusive spectrum of thorough understanding, complete misunderstanding, and a willing suspension of disbelief. As initial impressions and significations had all been made through a respectable frame of reference, it was to this that all further interaction could guilefully be framed against.

The next chapter shall further deconstruct the language of these adverts to examine its cultural and historical signification and how it functioned to establish a rational foundation for 'disposing' of stigma in the marketplace.

TO PARENTS and GUARDIANS.—The Wife of a Professional Man desires to undertake the ENTIRE CHARGE of a little GIRL (under 10) to EDUCATE with her own; good country house, surrounded by orchards; one hour from London; excellent resident governess; would accept an orphan, or child whose parents are abroad.—Address Mother, care of Messrs. Sedgwick and Sharman, solicitors, 55, Lincoln's-inn-fields, London.

74

7.1. Introduction

Advertisers of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services marketed themselves as would-be 'respectable mothers' for those who could not embody this ideal, thus mirroring and inverting the roles of the key parties. Their advertisements were wholly idealised and utopian constructions of middle-class 'respectable' society that began an unspoken conversation between the parties concerning the management of respectable identity through the 'disposal' of their object of stigma. In preference of stating in the simplest of terms what was essentially being offered, that is, the general 'disposal' of a 'problem', the adverts outwardly and overtly referenced a complex sign system composed of a rich mosaic of potent cultural imagery of respectability. Remarkably creative and insightful, the adverts served to conjure up a host of potentialities, feelings, fantasies, and identities that spoke to the most respectable and favourable ways of 'taking care' of a stigma-prone and unviable child.

Consider, for example, the advert provided above from the perspective of an unmarried mother or expecting mother, such as a domestic servant like Ada Galley or Rosina Pardoe, whose respectable status would have been seriously compromised by the birth of her 'illegitimate' child. Although the advert mentions nothing about accepting an 'illegitimate' child or one just recently born, the

⁷⁴ *Morning Post* (5th August 1893^b). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

advertiser does not appear to have been overly particular about the sort of child they would be willing to take. Besides, the mother could possibly have passed the child off as 'legitimate', perhaps claiming that she and 'her husband' needed to move abroad. Whilst the advertiser specified wanting a girl, perhaps they could have been persuaded to take a boy. From the advert, the mother would obviously have had no idea if what was being offered was genuine. Yet, willing and perhaps needing to believe, it would have seemed an ideal opportunity for her to manage her situation as 'respectably' as possible.

The good home in the country surrounded by orchards sounds a wonderfully bucolic and salubrious environment for a child to be raised and to receive a decent education would give the child an excellent start in life. Being situated an hour from London meant the child would be removed from the noxious atmosphere of the metropolis, not to mention being placed at a comfortable distance from the mother so she could visit it if she wished whilst also maintaining her appearance as a 'respectable women' without any risk of discreditable association. By all accounts, the child would receive the love and care of a child in a 'normal', idyllic middle-class family home with 'respectable' married parents and siblings to grow up with. Knowing that the typical service user was unable to be a 'respectable' biological mother to the child herself, the advertiser is shown already requesting to be addressed as 'mother' on her behalf. With her respectable status on the line, the mother would likely have considered such an opportunity the best and most respectable thing she could do for her child under the circumstances.

By putting the child out for adoption through these adverts, the service users would likely have thought they were helping provide them with the respectability they could not. Even if they were reluctant to let the child go, they could have made sense of it all by believing that they would have a good life, that they would not be an outcast, and would not be burdened by the stigmatising labels of 'illegitimacy'. In terms of managing and reassuring one's individual and collective identity (Goffman, 1959), by doing what seemed best for the child may even have helped biological mothers regain some of their respectability in their own eyes, as well perhaps of anybody who may have helped them negotiate arrangements with the advertiser.

Although each advert indicates a degree of individuality in regards to particular selling points, calculation, or flair, the sample of 838 London-based adverts between 1800-1919 revealed a high level of homogeneity of advert content and style across this time period, amongst different advertisers, and amongst different newspapers. This congruity even existed between the adverts of those who were subsequently found guilty of criminal abuses of the children in their care, thus reinforcing the fact that they were, in the first instance, 'selling' themselves and their services in accordance with all other supposedly legitimate 'out-of-house' substitute mothers. It may therefore be deduced that all those offering 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services in the marketplace were predicating themselves and their services upon a pre-existing conventional blueprint regarding the respectable care of discreditable and unviable children.

Through implicit and explicit means of conveying their legitimacy and respectability, the adverts all invoked an overarching superstructure of respectable meaning and identity that served to distinguish them from all the negative connotations associated with 'baby-farming'. Accordingly, 'out-of-house' substitute mothering transactions in the marketplace were not framed through the morbid, criminal, or murderous discourses of 'baby-farming' but were instead all tacitly suggestive of an entirely antithetical notion of 'farming' children.

The following section of this chapter begins by drawing upon Foucault's (see for example 1972, 1973, 1991) archaeological and genealogical method in order to partially narrate the prehistory of the concept of 'baby-farming' by examining the emergence of modern discursive practice concerning 'out-of-house' substitute mothering. It will thus highlight significant points of rupture that came to distinguish the antithetical representations of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering and reveal how specific discursive formations created well-established and legitimised positions for those providing 'out-of-house' substitute mothering to occupy, granting them a pre-established 'respectable' performative character to be embodied. It will show how particular rules, identities, and scripts came to govern the category of 'out-of-house' substitute mother that were reflected through the adverts and came to define the authenticity and legitimacy of their activity. Through a critical analysis of discourse, this section develops a counter-history of discourses related to so-called 'baby-farming' that exposes

configurations of disciplinary power that constructed the individuals, practices, and relationships involved in 'out-of-house' substitute mothering as matters of concern, debate, and objection.

To understand how advertisers of these services were able to persuade readers to make contact and engage in business in the shadow of the morbid institutional discourses associated with conceptions of 'baby-farming', it is necessary to deconstruct how they acquired and transmitted a 'respectable' meaning and how that meaning related to and was accepted by their target audience. The third section of this chapter draws upon Williamson's (1978) 'tools' for decoding the advertisements as texts to further reveal how they worked through a currency of ideological signs of 'normality' and 'respectability', how these signs were used to address 'respectable' audience members, and how in turn these signs were understood by those who used these services. This section reveals how the adverts became an interactive apparatus within this process, rather than just one other optional route that could be pursued.

This chapter functions to provide a history of the systems of thought that surrounded the practices of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering. It reveals that those offering such services within the marketplace were governed by this discourse and, by performatively situating themselves within particular discursive formations, were provided positions of legitimacy and authenticity. Whilst the co-constructed 'respectable' meanings and identities provided the foundation upon which the transactions were made, they were nevertheless fundamentally illusory. Once the transaction was made, without regular and rigorous 'checks' - something most service users, such as domestic servants, were not in a position to do - there was little way to know the 'truth' of what was promised for the child. Service users, as well as ourselves, could only ever infer so far as to the actual fate of the child. Only through a handful of cases do we know that some children did not receive the welfare paradise that had been promised through the adverts. It is not possible to generalise from these very few cases that the vast majority of 'out-of-house' substitute mothers in the marketplace of motherhood did not make good, or at least as best they could, on their promises.

7.2. Antithetical Discourses of 'Farming' in the Marketplace

[Baby-farming] crowds many infants under the care of a single nurse... Baby-farming rarely cares to save - often it actually desires to destroy... Baby-farming assembles many infants under one roof - in itself a prolific source of disease... Baby-farming is undertaken for the sake of profit alone... Baby-farming strives for all possible secrecy... baby-farming is in the hands of those whose character is rarely even doubtful - often abominable... Baby-farming withdraws itself from inspection (Davenport-Hill, 1869: 5).

As rightly identified by Arnot (1994: 271) and reflected in the above extract, the pejorative, top-down discursive construction of 'baby-farming' evokes capitalistic and industrial imagery of 'farming'; of "babies in stock lot-feeding enclosures" and "infants being herded in stock-yards and systematically slaughtered as cattle are for human consumption". Not limited to the modern reader, such morbidly factory-like agricultural imagery coloured late Victorian and Edwardian authoritative representations of 'baby-farming'. The most prominent contemporaneous source of commentary on the topic, the *British Medical Journal* generally collated 'baby-farming' with 'baby-slaughter' (15th October 1870^a: 415), 'systematic manslaughter' (13th January 1883: 69), an 'unnatural system' (25th September 1886: 610), and images of the 'wholesale murderess' (9th March 1889: 542). Likewise, reports from the *Islington Gazette* claimed that "Babies in dozens are sent literally as lambs to the slaughter. The slaughterers are vile old harridans, in whom every spark of womanhood has long been extinguished" (15th July 1870: 2) and elsewhere described 'baby-farming' as a "death-harvest" (22nd August 1871: 3). Reverend Benjamin Waugh (1890: 12) similarly declared:

It was a true instinct which called these institutions "farms." They are comparable with sheep farms, whose motive is fleece and flesh which can be turned into money on which the farmer keeps his family and "gets along."

How long his sheep shall live is wholly a question of money-profit... The mother gives her life for her sheep; the farmer gives his sheep for his life.

This industrialised farming imagery thus reflects a wholly destructive, consumptive, and masculinised image of farming that is embodied by economics, immorality, and 'dirt'. As further noted by Arnot (1994), through this voraciously consumptive imagery there is even a subtext of cannibalism. Greenwood (1869: 25) described 'baby-farmers' as "monsters in woman's clothing who go about seeking for babies to devour". Waugh (1890: 3) similarly argued that where "cannibal mothers, when an unwanted child is born, are said "to put it back again" in a meal, English mothers put their unwanted children back by a process of which the cannibal mother would be ashamed".

Metaphorical use of 'planting' also imbued 'elite' representations of 'baby-farming' with perverse agricultural undertones. For instance, an article in the *Huddersfield Chronicle* (11th April 1868: 5) analogised 'baby-farming' with 'baby-burying', stating "the system afforded a too-ready means of "disposing" of the offspring of illicit passions... little creatures have been buried in fields and gardens". Similarly, Waugh (1890: 16) stated that "women stricken with shame are able to bury it, and so save their whole life from absolute ruin". Likewise, an article in the *British Medical Journal* talked of "ten little specimens of the farming process... the poor little blighted buds" (18th June 1870^b: 633). In this sense, the metaphorical use of 'planting' conjures up images of the covert concealing of evidence, typically of an infant corpse, rather than 'planting' to help something grow.

Within the archives, the term 'baby-farming' appears to have first unobtrusively appeared in the *British Medical Journal* on the 19th October 1867^{a75} as the title of a short article concerning a married mother who had reportedly 'put out' to nurse all four of her infants, each of whom had subsequently died (ibid: 343). On the previous page sat an article titled 'Infanticide and Illegitimacy' whose author (Anon) argued that "while infanticide has most undoubtedly been on the increase", nevertheless contested those who alleged that the usual victims of infanticide were 'illegitimate' children (ibid: 342). The journal's second use of the term appeared in an article published shortly after on the 21st December 1867^b,

⁷⁵ It is generally understood that this was the first official use of the term (Homrighaus, 2001).

again headed 'Baby-Farming', which more sensationally and contradictorily asserted that "Few people perhaps fully realise how enormous is the mass of human life which is dealt with after such a fashion of which baby-farming is only one of the many special varieties. The children so dealt with are especially illegitimate" (ibid: 570).

As further reflected in the December 1867^b article, the *British Medical Journal's* interest and involvement in 'baby-farming' arose largely from the case of Charlotte Winsor in Torquay⁷⁶, which was described in one sensationalistic report elsewhere as a "fearful revelation of infanticide in England" (*Illustrated Police News*, 1866, n.d.). The case of Charlotte Winsor is generally understood to have been the harbinger of the 'panic' and 'folk devilling' for foundational conceptualisations of 'baby-farming' (Arnot, 1994; Homrighaus, 2001).

It was understood that Charlotte Winsor had suffocated the 'illegitimate' child of Mary Harris after the latter had sought her services as an 'out-of-house' substitute mother. Most concerning for those who reported on the matter was the suspicion of collusion between the two women, that the case potentially exposed a "private trade driven by a class of woman who, for a given sum, are ready to relieve any mother of the burden of her illegitimate child" (*Illustrated Police News*, 1866, n.d.; *British Medical Journal*, 21st December 1867: 570). Mary Harris' baby had been found wrapped in newspaper on the side of a road and the revelations from this case led officials to believe that the frequency of other dead babies found in similar circumstances indicated the existence of a hidden network of 'infanticide for hire' that needed to be immediately investigated and discontinued (*Illustrated Police News*, 1866, n.d.).

It was primarily in response to this dramatic 'revelation' that the editorial team of the *British Medical Journal* began a concerted campaign of investigative journalism, spearheaded by Ernest Hart and Alfred Wiltshire, into the subject they subsequently conceived as 'baby-farming' and shortly after began reporting frequently upon aspects of the marketplace of motherhood that lay beyond official knowledge or control (Homrighaus, 2001; Donovan and Rubery, 2012). A

⁷⁶ Charlotte Winsor was only included retrospectively in discussions of 'baby-farming' as the term was popularised following her arrest and trial.

subsequent article revealed how “searching into the abominable system” led them to distinguish between a “comparatively legitimate part” of ‘baby-nursing’ and ‘baby-farming’ “where infants were put out for the sole purpose of being got rid of altogether, or of never being heard of again by the parents” (*British Medical Journal*, 1st August 1868^f: 121).

Despite this initial distinction between ‘legitimate’ and ‘criminal’ forms of ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering, from 1870, after the first official ‘baby-farming’ *cause célèbre* involving Margaret Waters and her sister Sarah Ellis, the term increasingly became firmly associated with child murder, predatory or mercenary women, and systematic and commercialised ‘infanticide’. Being the first woman to hang for crimes of ‘baby-farming’ following police investigation into the discovery of several bodies of infants disposed around the streets of Brixton (*The Times* 24th September 1870: 11), Margaret Waters’ case helped galvanise public and official concern over ‘baby-farming’, and her trial and execution became symbolic for its incitation and framing of the first Infant Life Protection Act 1872 (Arnot, 1994; Homrighaus, 2001)⁷⁷. Prior to their arrest, Margaret Waters and her sister Sarah Ellis had advertised themselves as ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothers in conformance to the aforementioned archetypal design. To illustrate:

Adoption. - A respectable couple desire the entire charge of a child to bring up as their own. They are in a position to offer every comfort. Premium required, 4/.

Letter only. Mrs. Willis, P.O., Southampton Street, Camberwell (t18700919-769, 1870).

Adoption. A good home, with a mother's love and care, is offered to any respectable person wishing his child to be entirely adopted; premium 5/., which sum includes everything. Apply by letter only, to Mrs. Oliver, P.O., Gore Place, Brixton (ibid).

Seeing such adverts as openly public offers for ‘infanticide for hire’, the *British Medical Journal* and other commentators began referring to many of the practices available in the marketplace of motherhood they bracketed under ‘baby-farming’

⁷⁷⁷ As previously mentioned, this legislation was later regarded as largely ineffectual in regulating the practices associated with ‘baby-farming’ (see for example the *British Medical Journal* 21st March 1896^b: 747).

as 'legalised infanticide' (see for example *British Medical Journal*, 9th July 1870^c: 44; *The Graphic*, 27th September 1879: 2), asserting that an organised industry of child disposal was flourishing on account of legal loopholes, insufficient regulation and control, and the continued allowance of such advertisements.

The representation of 'baby-farming' as 'infanticide by proxy' typically functioned to depict the biological mothers who employed such services in accordance to conventional non-agentic 'victim' narratives of female vulnerability, seduction, strain, and loss of control. Conversely, it served to render the service provider as wholly aberrant and altogether culpable, a perversion of 'normal' and 'respectable' womanhood, and an incarnation of everything most formidable in the volatile depths of female nature. To illustrate:

I, for one, have no stone to throw at this torn, wits-driven class of woman. I have tears for her. The victim of a trust, maybe, for which there was no foundation, she has become an unhappy mother. In the name of God and humanity, let us relieve her of the chance of being also an unwitting murderer. The creatures who exist to obtain her child are known to her only by advertisement (Waugh, 1890: 8-9).

A popular ballad written about Amelia Dyer (Palmer, 1980: 56), further expresses the polarisation between heteromorphic and demonic figures like herself and the idealised 'respectable' woman, as well as the vulnerable victim-mothers who were supposedly preyed upon:

It seems rather hard to run down a woman,
But this one was hardly a woman at all;
To get a fine living in a way is so inhuman,
Crossin' in luxury on poor girls' downfall.

An adverse characterisation of the service provider, or 'baby-farmer', as a monstrous predator who masqueraded as a 'normal' and 'respectable' woman in order to lure and snare hapless mothers into handing over their children,

essentially as 'wolves in women's clothing', came to dominate official 'top-down' narratives of 'baby-farming' (Homrighaus, 2001). Use of terms like "she-wolf" (Waugh, 1890: 5) revealed the institutional anxiety and hostility targeted towards these women whose unbridled feminine power within unregulated domains of sexuality, reproduction, and commerce deeply troubled bourgeois patriarchal culture.

As demonstrated by Castor (2011), the term 'she-wolf' has a long tradition in English history for rendering powerful women as abominations against God and nature, their influence upon others as wholly grotesque and immoral. Of course, the term also mirrors the inhuman substitute mother of Roman mythology, an untamed and savage creature impelled by instinct. This conception of 'baby-farmers' thus also epitomises their liminality and the fear they elicited for their hybridity, their shape-shifting, transformative nature and their ungovernable, anarchic conduct. Devoid of nuance or flexibility, this rigid category reflects the values and fears of bourgeois culture in Victorian and Edwardian society as well as the domains it believed could cause social disorder and thus wished to better regulate and control (Gold, 2006).

Essentially, the use of such terms and conceptualisations reflected the institutional hostility of authoritative bodies such as the *British Medical Journal* who felt threatened by what had essentially become a perfect storm of female control over matters of sexuality and reproduction and of women's mobility and commerce within the still hugely constrained environment of Victorian and Edwardian culture. What had basically become a commercial and fairly mercurial system of female-centred transaction and automation of respectability and motherhood could only be viewed as wholly disastrous to the visions of 'civilised' culture and the centrality of respectable womanhood and maternalism to the bourgeois dream. The panic elicited by a few extreme cases was enough to tarnish the entire system as representative of 'abnormal', 'deviant', and 'criminal' femininity. The common conceptualisation of the practices associated with 'baby-farming' as fundamentally abnormal, deviant, and criminal should therefore be regarded as the after effect of this storm. A reflection of how many commentators have misunderstood the social paranoia of the period and have too easily taken contemporaneous constructions of this phenomenon at face-value.

From the 1870s until approximately the first decade of the twentieth century, several other criminal charges related to ‘baby-farming’ were brought to light through the courts and media. Six women, including Margaret Waters, were found guilty of the deaths of children placed in their care and were hanged in England during this period, many others received lesser sentences⁷⁸. The ‘horrors’ of ‘baby-farming’ largely climaxed with the trial and execution of Amelia Dyer in 1896 who, as previously discussed, has since come to embody all notions of female aberrancy and has become the case around which most contemporary discussion of the topic has generally centred around.

After several infant bodies found in the River Thames with tape tied around their necks were traced back to Amelia Dyer, many commentators feared the *modus operandi* of criminal ‘baby-farmers’ had adapted in response to the first Infant Life Protection Act 1872 to become more efficient and evasive of the law (*British Medical Journal* 22nd February 1896^d). Amelia Dyer’s trial and execution subsequently helped galvanise support for the Infant Life Protection Act 1897 (Rose, 1986). A sample of Amelia Dyer’s advertisements (Thames Valley Police Museum, 2018) reveals that her communications were also consistent with all other adverts for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering. See for example:

MARRIED couple with no family would adopt healthy child, nice country home, £10. – Harding, care of Ship’s Letter Exchange, Stokes Croft, Bristol.

HIGHLY Respectable Married Couple wish to ADOPT CHILD; good country home; premium required, very small. – Home, Times and Mirror Office. 9421m27.

As revealed through the incessant and sensationalistic reporting during the period, Amelia Dyer’s trial and execution was especially ‘newsworthy’ and exposed the public’s vitriolic yet alluring appetite for such aberrant figures and objects of fear who served as social markers in the cultural imagination of absolute deviancy and defiance of idealised and utopian visions of society and of respectable womanhood. Nicknamed the ‘Ogress of Reading’ (Rose, 1986), Amelia Dyer almost instantly acquired an essentially mythic status as the most

⁷⁸ As previously mentioned, a review of the Old Bailey archives for potentially criminal cases related to ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering revealed a total of 30 cases between 1868-1909 (see Appendix B).

notorious 'baby-farmer' attracting incessant ungrounded speculation regarding the cause and extent of her crimes. The particular 'newsworthiness' of this case was perhaps reflected and amplified by the fact that, within weeks after her execution, Madame Tussaud's began advertising a rather macabre exhibition of Amelia Dyer, admission for adults, one shilling, children under 12, six pence (*Hampstead & Highgate Express*, 27th June 1896: 4).

Yet, despite all the cases of criminal 'baby-farming' that were brought to light from the 1870s through to the early part of the twentieth century, the adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute - which officials continued to castigate as being the infrastructure through which these purportedly predatory, wholesale 'child killers' were able to operate - maintained a relatively constant existence until the end of the nineteenth century, at which point they appear to have gradually abated. Such adverts had in fact begun appearing within English newspapers in from around 1900 and peaking in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Whilst generally regarded by opponents of 'baby-farming' as sinisterly criminal in design, such adverts and the services they entailed evidently had a well-established history that was evidently not commonly framed by the general public through the noxious images of industrial 'farming' - of wholesale, systematic child slaughter so far discussed. As illustrated by the following letter to the editor of the *Morning Post*, the disjunction between understandings of the adverts 'from above' and 'from below', between those in positions of power who condemned the adverts and those who actually utilised them, is reflected in the alarm felt by those who feared a sub-culture of imposturous child-killing miscreations:

Sir, - Everyone who has read the case of Mrs. Dyer must have been horrified at the easy way in which such women can get hold of an unlimited number of helpless babies by means of plausible-looking advertisements and kindly worded letters promising affection and motherly care (*Morning Post* 26th May 1896: 6).

If the general public, particularly those who responded to such advertisements and utilised the services, understood these practices in such negative terms there could have been no such services within the marketplace of motherhood, nor would such advertisements have ever been deemed acceptable by third-party

newspaper ‘curators’ who publicised such material. It seems apparent that advertisers were conscious of the sinister image of ‘baby-farming’ that shadowed their trade as their communications centred around establishing that that was precisely what they were not.

Noted elsewhere as a pejorative ‘top-down’ label of condemnation, ‘baby-farming’ was not how any ‘out-of-house’ substitute mother would wish to be perceived or described - “it was an accusation, not a profession” (Homrighaus, 2003: 3; Hinks, 2014). Instead, advertisers of ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering since the beginning of the nineteenth century spoke through far more benign discourses of ‘farming’ children that long-preceded and were entirely antithetical to those of ‘baby-farming’ discussed thus far.

This alternative discourse of ‘farming’ children that fundamentally framed the practices of ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothers is clearly exhibited in the writings of the prominent late eighteenth century philanthropist and social reformer, Jonas Hanway. An active promoter of the social welfare of infant poor, Hanway’s career was largely defined by his exposure of the often deficient and mortiferous parish care of London’s foundlings and the subsequent parliamentary bills which promoted his cause and which informally bore his name⁷⁹ (Taylor, 1979). By raising concern around the treatment and mortality of London’s infant poor, Hanway was functional in transforming ideologies, policies, and practices concerning systems of ‘out-of-house’ child welfare (Taylor, 1979; Horsburgh, 1983). The seminal discourse that emerged through Hanway’s reforms led to a specific reframing of conceptions of pauper ‘farming’ that advanced a specialised rhetoric of social parenting for poor and destitute children designed to nurture a better breed of useful citizens.

In its traditional sense, ‘farming’ the poor meant the sub-contracting by parishes of their poor relief administration to third-parties via a competitive tendering process, an early form of privatisation (Horsburgh, 1983; Higginbotham, 2012), a practice believed to date back at least to the sixteenth century (Murphey, 2002).

⁷⁹ Hanway’s efforts towards improving the care of destitute children ultimately helped push the Poor Law Acts of 1762 (the Act for the Keeping Regular, Uniform and Annual Registers of all Parish Poor Infants) and 1767 (the Act for the Better Protection of Parish Poor Children) which both sought to remove infants from workhouse relief (Crompton, 1997).

Part of the drive behind Hanway's reform related to the apparent failings and general revulsion of this long-established 'farming' welfare system, especially as it concerned children (Çoats, 1976; Horsburgh, 1983). Of particular concern was that the traditional scheme had encouraged the 'farming-out' of too many children to a single contractor; that being the most economical approach (Horsburgh, 1983). This system, Hanway argued, resulted in overcrowding, unhealthy conditions, insufficient care, and inordinately high rates of child mortality (1766, 1767).

Driven by Utilitarian and Puritanical principles, Hanway reframed the discourse of 'farming' poor and destitute children in a manner that was imbued with ideologies of philanthropy, mercantilism, and nationalism (Taylor, 1979). For Hanway, the general treatment of pauper children and their high rates of mortality was both shameful for the Nation, as well as a waste of potentially productive citizens (Hanway, 1766). In order to address both shame and waste, Hanway proposed that more humane and effective forms of 'out-of-house' child care was not only a moral imperative of a civilised society but was also in the Nation's best economic and political interest by producing a better character in the infant poor and, crucially, making them better workers in later life (Taylor, 1979).

Children of all backgrounds were presented as the Nation's future and it was deemed as much dependent upon them for its welfare, strength, and survival as they were to it (Hanway, 1766). Proposals were thus directed towards the general nurturance of Britain's population by raising London's destitute children to be "pious, useful, and good subjects" (ibid: i). Hanway's writings did not explicitly refer to his own method of dealing with London's poor and destitute children in relation to the pre-existing conception of 'farming', yet his proposals were built upon the aforementioned traditional sub-contractual system whilst also reflecting particular imagery, ideas, and sentiments related to agricultural farming.

Hanway's (1766) publication *An Earnest Appeal for Mercy to the Children of the Poor* declared that the high rates of death and general ill-health of London's foundlings was a result of congregating large numbers inside inadequately designed institutions, such as parish poor-houses and workhouses, within the polluting confines of the metropolis. By his account, "where numbers are

congregated, it is impossible to preserve the air pure... they poison each other; and they perish by this means" (ibid: 93, 27). These conditions, Hanway claimed, "renders such places inevitable death to infants; and it is confessed, without reserve, to be a rare thing for a child to be taken out alive, except it be in the hands of the mother" (ibid: 43).

Referring to such establishments as "slaughter-houses" (Hanway, 1766: 20) and to the children as "stock" (p. 24), like "a calf, a lamb, or a colt" (p. 72), Hanway frequently presented a conception of 'farming' children that, whilst maintaining its commercial origins, was also imbued with agricultural metaphor and imagery. He even specifically invited the reader to compute, as a farmer would, the cost-benefit value of a child's life in regards to its expense of rearing in relation to its potential future use value, pointing out that animals alone have a value after death for their flesh and skin (ibid: 72-73). He continued that "indeed attention should be had to the *breed of men* in a nation, as to the breed of *horses, sheep, or cows*" (ibid: 89). The need to 'breed them up' to be fit for purpose thus gave the concept of 'farming' children a renewed ideological signification that was considered both economically and morally sound.

Hanway's discourse thus produced a conceptual distinction between two types of 'farming' children. On the one hand was the system he sought to reform against. This was 'farming' children on an industrious scale akin to the later conception of 'baby-farming', where children were seen to be herded *en masse* to be congregated together in unwholesome 'slaughter-houses' and valued only as far as the profit made by their containment or death. The function of this system was seen not to be advantageously directed towards their growth and nurture but to their destruction (Hanway, 1766). Antithetically, Hanway's revised notion of 'farming' children was instead framed by a more traditional, modest, and idyllic conception of 'farming' that could be practiced by individuals or families. Here, the object was to provide the best conditions possible for a child to grow, to 'cultivate' the child for its proper benefit to society. As "the flower of the nation", society was obliged to do justice for its own offspring, 'in a pecuniary way', in order "to promote welfare and the glory of the country" (ibid: 73, 142).

One of Hanway's more influential proposals concerned providing the most ideal conditions for a child's growth and nurturance. Most notable was his insistence that children receiving 'out-of-house' care should be removed as soon as possible from the poisonous atmosphere of the metropolis that polluted both body and soul and nursed instead in a 'fine airy situation' in the country. For Hanway, "sweet air is the balm of life", "whatever tends to promote health in the pure air of a village, is much better for the animal as well as the rational part; than the more impure air and vicious customs of great cities, and large towns" (Hanway, 1766: 67, 89). Similarly, Hanway discussed the appropriate distance children should be placed from the metropolis (1766, 1767). His proposals on the matter were implemented in the Better Protection of Parish Poor Children Act 1767 which stipulated that children under six should be nursed in the countryside at least three miles, and children under two no less than five miles, from the cities of London and Westminster (Taylor, 1979).

Hanway's policy regarding the treatment of poor and destitute children was partly driven by what he saw as the need to breed such children to be 'strong, virtuous and useful' as, from a political viewpoint, "the number of the working people (who must be *poor*, or they would not work) constitute the strength, opulence, and capacity of defence in a nation" (Hanway, 1766: 72). His revised discourse on 'farming' children placed emphasis on the need to educate, discipline, and train such children, so far as it positioned them to best serve others. The importance of Christian discipline in helping breed a better society was also frequently reflected in Hanway's writings, as was the proposal that children be trained from as young as possible, especially in areas of manual work such as domestic service (*ibid*).

Hanway also stressed the need to provide some reasonable form of financial incentive and remuneration in order to get a decent quality of service from substitute mothers. He argued that when "the allowance of these women being scanty, they are tempted to take part of the bread and milk intended for the poor infants" (Hanway, 1766: 42). Hanway thus proposed that a similar method as that established by the Foundling Hospital be instigated whereby nurses would be paid a wage plus a lump-sum 'premium' that would only be received if the child was still alive and well after 12 months (*ibid*). The promotion of decent pay for

those willing to take on poor and destitute infants was driven by a belief that such incentives would encourage more 'respectable' persons to offer their services, with Hanway even suggesting that less good may be intended by those who asked for no payment at all (ibid).

Regarding the type and quality of care, Hanway argued that, as with any other child, a foundling required exclusive parental affection. Asserting that the "order of nature is the breast", Hanway (1766: 67) particularly emphasised the importance of a maternal figure, arguing that the more an infant is able to suckle and receive motherly affection the better off it would be. Hanway's system of 'farming' foundlings thus aligned with the increasing middle-class valorisation of maternal affection and the family unit as central to 'civilised' and 'respectable' culture. He thus remarked:

There are some general rules by which we must mark out the road to virtue and happiness, both to individuals and a state; and the great land-mark from which we must take our departure, is parental love and filial duty (ibid: 82).

Stressing the economic and political importance of rearing foundlings in the same general manner as any other child of the nation, Hanway argued that foundlings should be loved and cared for as sons and daughters by protectors of "respectable ranks and characters", particularly by "proper women" with a "natural impulse" (Hanway, 1767: 89, 94) and, stressing the need for exclusive care, proposed that no more than three children should be taken by any one person alone (Hanway, 1766). Similarly, in acknowledgement of the protective and nurturing attributes of a family home, Hanway suggested that a modest "comfortable cottage" in a country village would provide an ideal environment for a foundling to be raised (Hanway, 1767: 90).

Hanway also discussed the optimum age a child should be placed out into care if they were not able to be kept by their own biological mother. Taking the position that an infant was most vulnerable in their first year of life and that maternal affection was most effective during the first few years, Hanway thus advocated that children should be placed out to a substitute mother as early as possible (Hanway, 1766, 1767). He even argued that foundlings could not be placed out

too early stating “the sooner we begin to instruct children, in temporal as in moral concerns, the better” (Hanway, 1766: 96).

It is evident that Hanway’s discourse of ‘farming’ children was diametrically opposed to the industrious, factory-like conception that tainted the traditional system of sub-contracting poor relief, as well as the later similar representations of ‘baby-farming’. Where one signified systematic stock-slaughter, the other essentially conveyed an extensive ethnological breeding programme designed to propagate the most favourable attributes of a population. Rather than the industrialised consumption of the factory system, Hanway’s notion of ‘farming’ children denoted the organic production of rural agronomy. Instead of being buried, dead or alive, in the noxious ‘soil’ of the metropolis, children were to be skilfully ‘planted’ and cultivated like seeds in the fertile and airy ‘fields’ of the country. Unlike the hard, masculinised system of ‘farming’ that was sullied by economics, feculence, and immorality, Hanway’s alternative conception of ‘farming’ children was centred around the delicate nurturance of rural femininity.

Hanway’s concerns for the management of children placed in ‘out-of-house’ care not only pertained to the practice, but also the practitioner. Hanway warned about children, rather than being nourished with motherly care, were being placed “into the hands of indigent, filthy, or decrepit women” and insisted that only ‘good women’ should be selected as nurses and that they be paid properly in order to encourage only ‘reputable persons’ to avail themselves for this responsibility (Hanway, 1766: 42). To save such children from ‘the jaws of death’, Hanway admonished ‘vicious, ignorant, and careless’ women, particularly those of poverty, as being inadequate ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothers (Hanway, 1767). It was intended that caring for such children would be made more “*fashionable*” in order to appeal to those of “respectable ranks and characters” (ibid: 89). He surmised that the “fault is not in giving the money, but in giving the child to such persons whose characters are not sufficiently known, or such as are of doubtful reputation (1766: 103).

In 1782, through the Relief of the Poor Act, informally known as Gilbert’s Act, regard for the social character of ‘out-of-house’ child carers became implemented in poor relief legislation. Thomas Gilbert, the Act’s sponsor, also saw poor and

destitute children as a particularly vulnerable social grouping in need of a well-regulated system of relief (Nixon, 2011). Echoing Hanway's discourse, Gilbert sought to develop a system whereby such children could be suitably accommodated and cared for in order that a better breed of working poor could be cultivated for the economic and political benefit of the British nation, whilst also reducing the social burdens and disturbances of poverty (Shave, 2008). In his 1781 publication, *Plan for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor*, Gilbert instructed that:

all Infant Children of tender Years, whose Parents are dead, or unable to maintain them, shall be placed... *with some reputable Person or Persons* in or near the Parish, Town-ship or Place to which they belong, at such Weekly Allowance as shall be agreed upon between the Parish Officers and such Person or Persons... until such Child or Children shall be of sufficient Age to be put into Service (Gilbert, 1781: 48-50, italics added).

Subsequently, it was stipulated that London's pauper children under six-years-old would be nursed in the countryside in privately run establishments, often known as 'infant poorhouses', subject to regular inspection where carers would receive an attractive and regular wage with an additional premium for successfully nursing a child past its first year (Levene, 2012; White, 2013). However, inspection and regulation of this system proved to be inconsistent (Levene and Siena, 2013).

The concept of 'farming' children through such forms of 'out-of-house' child care can be seen to have been part of public discourse by the beginning of the nineteenth century (see for example t18130407-23, 1813⁸⁰). However, this system allowed the large-scale sub-contracting of poor relief for foundling children that Hanway condemned to continue. Yet, despite the continuance of larger-scale forms of 'out-of-house' child care, advertisements for forms of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering consistent with Hanway's specifications began to proliferate from the beginning of the nineteenth century. To illustrate:

⁸⁰ Within the proceedings of this trial, it was stated by one witness named Sarah Turner "The child was to be farmed, and from there to be nursed in Brompton".

TO PEOPLE OF DISTINCTION, where confidence is wanted.—A Person, of respectability, will undertake the charge of a CHILD from its BIRTH, whose parents, from prudential motives, may wish to adopt such an arrangement; and the Lady may be accommodated during her accouchement. Every attention will be given to the education of a child so entrusted, and the most affectionate treatment may be depended on. For further particulars, a line addressed to W. W. W. at the Office of this Paper, will be immediately attended to.

81

A Decent Widow Woman, in a healthy situation, wishes to take a few CHILDREN to NURSE, where their morals, and the early part of their education will be strictly attended to. the terms moderate, and the most respectable and satisfactory references can be given, by application to M. T. at No. 20, Hertford-street, Fitzroy-square; or at No. 10, Wilsed-street, Somers Town.

82

A LADY of the greatest respectability, resident in a healthy village in Hampshire (convenient for sea-bathing), wishes to TAKE the CHARGE of ONE, TWO, or THREE CHILDREN, from the age of one year to seven. The most respectable reference can be given. Any child or children who may have felt the sad loss of one or both parents, will meet the most affectionate care and attention. A letter addressed to M. M., No. 2, Queen-street, Golden-square, London, will be personally attended to.

83

The 'farming' of large groups of children to infant poorhouses in the country served as a popular method of dealing with destitute infants until around mid-nineteenth century with some systems, such as Mr Aubin's school in Norwood, becoming substantial institutions that catered for a number of London's parishes

⁸¹ *Morning Post* (12th April 1802). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁸² *Morning Post* (13th January 1806). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁸³ *Morning Post* (18th June 1818). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

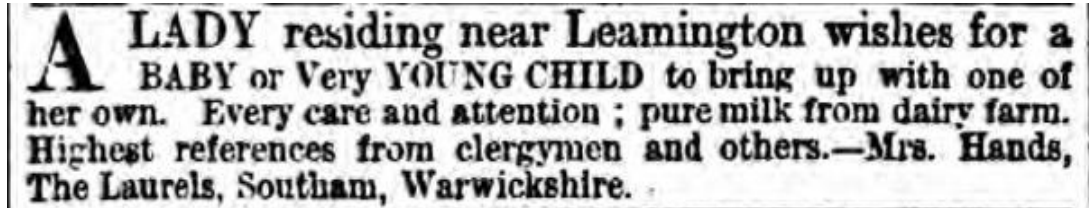
(Higginbotham, 2012). However, the practice of large-scale sub-contracting fell wholly into disrepute when it became firmly associated with the already-conceived negative form of factory-like 'farming' following the case of Bartholomew Drouet (Homrighaus, 2003).

The proceedings of Drouet's trial (t18490409-919, 1849) reported that Drouet's establishment 'farmed' somewhere around 850 children. The deaths of between 150 to 200 children were attributed to an outbreak of cholera between December 1848 and January 1849. Drouet, was tried on a charge of manslaughter for having neglected to provide sufficient food, care, and living conditions for the children in his charge. Although Drouet was found not guilty, evidence given at the trial indicated that he had either sought to maximise his own profits by economising the care and provisions as far as possible or that, because of the scale of his establishment, sufficient care had simply not been possible. Consequently, a report in *The Times* (1st February 1849: 8) stated that the jury at Drouet's trial had "urgently recommended the abolition of the system of farming parochial children".

Although Hanway's 1767 Better Protection of Parish Poor Children Act was abolished in 1844, practices generally consistent with 'farming' children according to Hanway's discourse continued throughout the nineteenth century⁸⁴ (Taylor, 1979; Higginbotham, 2012). Whilst advertisers of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering did not explicitly refer to their services as 'farming' children, the discourse that framed their language and practice was that expressed by both Hanway and Gilbert. It was this discourse that served to clearly distinguish their services from the more adverse, impersonal, and industrial forms of 'farming' practiced by the likes of Bartholomew Drouet and later from those labelled 'baby-farming'. The conception of 'farming' implicit in the communications of 'out-of-house' substitute mothers was thus wholly antithetical to any notion of child destruction.

⁸⁴ For instance, the practice of 'boarding-out' destitute children that grew in popularity around the 1870s (see Davenport-Hill, 1869; Betham-Edwards, 1870; Tallack, 1877), was one variant of Hanway's 'farming' system under a different name (Higginbotham, 2012).

7.3. Inducements and Satisfactions of Respectability within the Marketplace



A LADY residing near Leamington wishes for a BABY or Very YOUNG CHILD to bring up with one of her own. Every care and attention ; pure milk from dairy farm. Highest references from clergymen and others.—Mrs. Hands, The Laurels, Southam, Warwickshire.

85

Adverts for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering accordingly adhered to an archetypal discourse that tacitly referenced the conception of ‘farming’ children developed primarily by Jonas Hanway. Content and thematic analysis of the advert sample from 1800-1919 revealed a common usage of particular expressions that homogenously constructed such idealised and utopian visions of child welfare that conformed to bourgeois notions of respectability. The common language used in the adverts may be regarded, in a dramaturgical sense (Goffman, 1959), as derived from a basic stock-script, a multi-layered sign system, which could be ‘tweaked’ by the advertiser whilst conveying the same basic message.

The composition of these adverts may therefore be considered as a form of ‘bricolage’ whereby, in a patchwork fashion, they were formulated by advertisers from a range of available imagery, ideas, and sentiments (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Williamson, 1978). That is, they referenced debris of pre-existing social discourse, strands of myth, ideology, metaphor, and analogous practices related to the proper rearing of unviable or destitute children. This composite discourse provided a well-established, primary referent system that endowed the adverts with a status of authenticity, legitimacy, and ‘truth’.

As so far discussed, the exhibited presentations of self and service in adverts for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering reveal that representations of meaning and

⁸⁵ *Morning Post* (4th January 1883^d). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

identity through this medium became a 'reflexive project': an active endeavour of identity work and reflection (Giddens, 1991). Rather than being a direct projection of the advertiser's 'true self', the presentations were instead 'fluid' in the ways they could be constituted by advertisers with regard to contextually appropriate and favourable cultural ideals (Bauman 2000).

Vying for custom, service providers naturally employed competitive advertising strategies that tacitly conferred a most utopian and ideologically sound 'front' (Goffman, 1959). The adverts invoked cultural constructions of respectable womanhood and the concomitant ideologies of domesticity, motherhood, women's work, and female spaces. Whilst those offering 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services may not have been mothers *per se*, they exhibited themselves as being the closest thing to a 'proper' and 'respectable' mother that could be bought through a public domain. They thus presented themselves as 'mothers in waiting': women who could pick up the role of 'respectable mother' from those unable to play that part.

The adverts thus provoked an implicit connection between the primary, manifest service, that of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, and the secondary unstated service of private identity and stigma management. It could be inferred by the customer that whilst money alone may not have been able to manage a respectable status, these services could and money could buy these services. As such, they functioned to replace the customer by doing things they could not, or did not wish, to do for themselves (Williamson, 1978). The 'out-of-house' substitute mother therefore represented what the biological mother could not, *respectably*, do or be.

As the performative qualities of these personal advertisements were fundamentally subjective in regards to how meaning was conveyed to their audience, successful communication through such a dialogically sparse and unstable format was naturally precarious. The milieu of potential uncertainty and turmoil surrounding such interaction necessitated a shared reliance on a communal external system of meaning to facilitate successful communication (Williamson, 1978). By marrying aspects of the service offered with wider cultural ideologies and practices, the adverts did much more than impart information

relating to the service offered, they communicated what the services signified and what they meant (Frith, 1998).

It is therefore the signifiatory form of the adverts, rather than the more obvious content of their 'sales talk', that is the focus of the following analysis. Drawing upon Saussure's distinction between the signifier (sound-image) and the signified (concepts) (Saussure, 1983), the pre-existing and extrinsic systems of meaning, the ideological 'referent systems', that provided definition to the adverts are revealed (Williamson, 1978).

This deeper meaning required a transference of significance that did not exist completed in the advert itself but required the audience to make the ideological connections (Williamson, 1978). This transference of latent meaning thus depended upon the particular word-image already possessing a significance to be transferred. That is, ideological systems of meaning, or 'referent systems', must have pre-existed outside of the advert to which the advert content referred to. By further deconstructing the adverts as texts, it is evident that the primary referent system related to Hanway's discourse on 'out-of-house' child care, not 'infanticide for hire'.

Through a process of transference, advertisers sought to evoke particular imagery, ideas, and sentiments in order to attach specific meanings to what they offered and the type of people they were. The intended meaning could only be created *through* audience members already primed with the significant external ideological thought (Williamson, 1978). The intended meaning of the adverts was the product of historical contingencies and could only be understood with reference to pertinent ideological sign systems of the period. Without knowledge of this framework of meaning, these adverts could easily be misunderstood, as has undoubtedly been demonstrated by those who have interpreted them as coded messages for 'infanticide for hire'.

The potency of the meaning system referred to by adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering provided the communications with a sense of universality, authenticity, and reputability. The signifiers of overt meaning in these advertisements - the words on the page - functioned to generate another, less obvious meaning. Unlike the adverts' open 'manifest' message, the latent

meaning was not conveyed simply by the words themselves, to be read as a finished statement (Williamson, 1978). Instead, the more significant, deeper meaning could only be conveyed through a process of transference that was contingent upon the reader's subjective knowingness of relevant ideologies, meanings, and practices. To convey this latent meaning the communications contained a correlation of two things: the ideological and mythical connotations of one 'sound-image' - signs like 'home', 'airy', or 'mother' - were transferred to the meaning of another: the service offered and the service provider (ibid). This transference of signification could not therefore occur independently within the advert but was instead dependent upon the reader to initiate the connection and complete the circuit of meaning.

For those socialised into the culture that surrounded advertisements for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services, significant ideology and myth helped construct a logical and meaningful framework for taken-for-granted assumptions and rational action. As "pre-existing, value-laden sets of ideas derived from a culture and transmitted through various forms of communication" (Frith, 1998: 11), the resonance of ideology and myth in the adverts stemmed from their petition to universality which correspondingly bestowed legitimacy upon their affiliated practices and those associated with them (Patai, 1972; Str  th, 2008: 32).

Irrespective of the 'truth' of their foundation, these myths and ideologies were productive of the social and cultural meanings that surrounded the adverts and their narratives were thus informative of the subsequent interactions and transactions (Berger, 2013). Meanings used to organise past activities and events into a logical framework were thus harnessed within the adverts to facilitate a stable sense of meaning and rational action in the midst of what would otherwise have been uncertainty and confusion (Boje, Fedor and Rowland, 1982).

Advert communications were therefore not simple reflections of the words on the page. Instead, 'factual' descriptive statements and other tacit intimations - such as 'lady', 'home', 'family', or 'motherly care' - were endowed with symbolic exchange value to be converted by the reader as possessing human qualities

(Williamson, 1978). Such structural elements tacitly conveyed that the child would receive a form of care that was in accordance with London's preeminent discourse on the 'proper' methods of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering. The advertiser, in making the appropriate avowals, evoked through the reader a sense of assurance and decency. To illustrate:

HOME for a CHILD.—A Widow Lady, well connected, and moving in good society, being very fond of children, and having none of her own, wishes to take the ENTIRE and PERMANENT CHARGE of a CHILD deprived by circumstances of a parent's care, to educate and bring up as her own, and to whom she can offer a truly happy home, a mother's care, and first-class educational advantages, position, &c., being herself highly accomplished. The first references and every satisfactory explanation can be given. Terms, inclusive of every extra, £100 a year.—Address Meta H., 12, King-street, Portland-place, W.

86

As such, an advert's meaning and qualification was partly established through an abstract and unspoken dualistic distinction from that which it was not. Adverts possessed totemic qualities whereby particular signifiers served to provide the distinctive insignia for all those offering the authorised 'genuine' article. This form of totemism helped advertisers design their communications to be easily recognised as thoroughly respectable through the economised use of potent word-images.

The adverts may be likened to 'magic' wherein particular elements became transformed into seductive signifiers that produced an illusory effect upon the audience (Williams, 2000). Subjective consumption of the advert content was akin to a form of incantation as their symbolic, totemic, and mythological form invoked an eidolon of signification. With an antithetical spectre casting shadowy visions of noxious factory farming, child slaughter, and vicious, decrepit women,

⁸⁶ *Morning Post* (26th March 1868). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

advertisers were forced to ensure their formulation would only conjure up desirable, persuasive, and reassuring phantasmagoria.

Advertisers presented themselves in accordance with stylised representations of the 'respectable substitute mother'. This identity was diametrical to those that had come to be regarded as unsuitable or incapable of providing 'out-of-house' child care, those who came to be labelled 'baby-farmers'. They differentiated themselves by their 'natural capacities' from the men who had designed lucrative, large-scale systems of institutional care and further distinguished themselves by their 'respectability' from those 'other' women who were regarded as degenerate mercenaries who entirely contradicted cultural ideals of respectable womanhood. Both figures - the biologically ill-equipped male and the degenerate, disreputable female - evoked haunting abstractions of wholesale 'factory farming', capitalist indifference to the child, and of 'stock slaughter'.

As the basis of all advertising is grounded in people's willingness to believe (Wilmschurst and Mackay, 2011; Rodgers and Thorson, 2012), any semblance of solidity and 'truth' was conjured up between the advertiser and their audience through the co-constructed signficatory form of the advert. Whilst the advertiser performatively exhibited their self and service openly in the public eye, they nevertheless obscured the materiality that lay beyond the written word. Their 'reality' was entirely hidden, existing beyond the advert. As such, readers were required to make a leap of credibility and the known-correlative word-images - terms like 'family', 'mother's love', 'happy home' - functioned as their primary medium of measurement for 'truth' in regards to identity, character, and quality (Williamson, 1978).

For the reader to fully make sense of the adverts and to be able to fill in any conceptual gaps required them to possess a shared knowingness of what to fill in. Together, the advertiser and their audience drew upon the same ideology and myth to advance a general over-all definition of the situation which involved an agreement based upon the avowals made in the advertisement being temporarily honoured, rather than upon what 'factually' existed beyond the advert. The use of such terms thus automatically placed the parameters of the advert content within entirely conventional frames of meaning construction. That is, the adverts

echoed and affirmed culturally constructed norms of gender display wherein matters of child-rearing were regarded as naturally feminine. Stereotyped ideals of respectable womanhood concerning the relationship between mother and child, or women and children, and of the feminine with home and family were thus central to the meaning of these adverts.

As previously mentioned, advertisers for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering almost exclusively identified themselves as women. The adverts sample showed that of the explicit gendered identifiers provided, terms like 'lady' (40.1 %), 'woman' (14.7 %), 'widow' (9.5 %), 'mother' (5.8 %), 'wife' (4.7 %) appearing most frequently. The implicitly feminine term 'nurse' also appeared in approximately half (52 %) of the advert sample. By overwhelmingly identifying themselves as female, advertisers further legitimised the content of their message and directed readers' interpretations into a well-established framework of meaning whereby normative expectations of 'respectable' child caring could channel further impression management and action.

Through contextually appropriate displays of gender, advertisers alluded to stereotyped iconography of respectable womanhood in order to signal their 'natural' capacity and appropriateness for the role of substitute mother. That is, by emphasising their femininity, stereotyped conventions concerning a naturally caring, gentle, and nurturing disposition could be easily inferred. The adverts thus mirrored contemporaneous cultural constructions of what it meant, essentially, to be a respectable woman. As femininity is, semiotically, inexorably and antithetically coupled with masculinity, the gendered displays within adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering also functioned to further distinguish the services and the space in which they operated as distinctly feminine.

As the discourses of Jonas Hanway and Thomas Gilbert attest, being a woman was not in itself seen as a sufficient qualification for those who wished to provide 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services. By a variety of explicit and implicit means, advertisers thus further emphasised their social character - centrally, their 'respectability' - in order to categorically distinguish themselves from those diametrically othered 'indigent, filthy, decrepit women'. The adverts sample revealed that approximately 39 % of the advertisers explicitly mentioned that they

were 'respectable' with a further 8.9 % conveying their respectable status with reference to their high social position. To illustrate:

A HOME for a LITTLE CHILD.—WANTED,
by a highly respectable Person, the CARE of a LITTLE
BOY or GIRL. Every care and comfort may be relied upon.
Situation healthy, and terms moderate.—Address Mrs Gibson,
Blomfield-street South, Kingsland, N.E.

87

ADOPTION.—An Officer's Wife in good position desires
to Adopt entirely as her own a Young CHILD (infant from
birth not objected to); thoroughly happy and refined home, with
exceptional advantages, offered; all answers treated in the strictest
confidence.—Write E. 773, at Shelley's, 38, Gracechurch-street, E.C.

88

In addition to the frequent overt signalling of their 'respectable' social characters, analysis of the advert sample also revealed that advertisers regularly conveyed their respectable status through more latent means. Most significantly, this was relayed through the use of the term 'lady' the hallmark of the bourgeois female ideal - which, as already mentioned, appeared in approximately 40.1 % of the advert sample. Likewise, due to its ideological and mythical status, its centrality to the bourgeois dream of 'civilised' culture, the term 'mother' (20 %) also powerfully conferred respectability upon the advertiser. Similarly, because of the fundamental importance of marriage to 'respectable' society, the terms 'married' or 'wife' (28.7 %) and even 'widow' (9.5 %) functioned in a similar manner.

Many of the terms used to describe the services offered such as 'home' (30.4 %), 'family' (9.9 %), and 'religion' (3.3 %) were themselves also deeply rooted cultural signifiers of respectability as they communicated other correlatives such as wealth, property, marriage, and morality. To further affirm their respectable

⁸⁷ *Morning Post* (27th May 1863^b). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved.
With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁸⁸ *Morning Post* (7th September 1895). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved.
With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

identity, the advert sample revealed that around 40 % of advertisers stated that they could provide references or recommendations. To illustrate:

TO PARENTS and OTHERS.—A highly-respectable Widow (whose house is most beautifully situate) is desirous of TAKING CHARGE of a CHILD, whom she would much like to adopt, having lost several of her own. The highest references can be given.—Address Z. A., post-office, Upper Baker-street, N.W.

89

CLIFTONVILLE, Margate.—Delicate children received; refined home surroundings; open air life; nourishing diet; resident trained nurse and governess; facing sea; parents', doctors', and surgeons' references.—Glengarriff, Eastern Esplanade.

90

Mirroring the conception of 'farming' outlined by Jonas Hanway, approximately half (49.5 %⁹¹) of the advert sample made direct reference to the child being placed in a bucolic and salubrious rural environment. Similarly, 84.9 %⁹² of the advert sample made explicit reference to the forms of familial, maternal 'out-of-house' substitute child care promoted by Hanway. Several advertisers also directly stated that the child would receive some form of education or training (13.1 %) and would be placed in a Christian family (3.3 %).

⁸⁹ *Morning Post* (12th October 1859^c). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

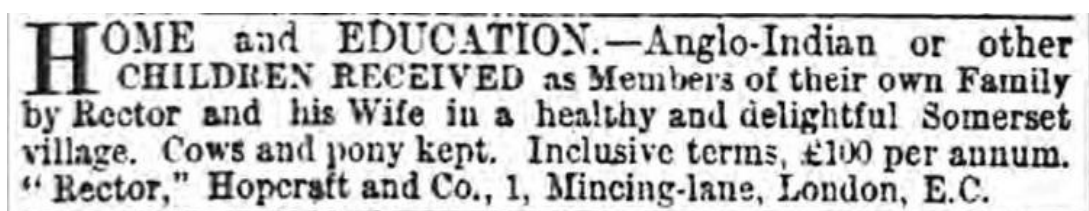
⁹⁰ *Morning Post* (17th November 1900). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁹¹ This percentage is limited to the frequency of the following word-images: 'healthy' (10.9 %), 'country' (9.1 %), 'comfortable' (8.1 %), 'airy/fresh air' (5.8 %), 'garden' (3.1 %), 'large/spacious' (2.9 %), 'cottage' (2.5 %), 'sea' (2 %), 'park' (1.4 %), 'village' (1.2 %), 'charming' (0.7 %), 'beautiful' (0.7 %), 'dry' (0.6 %) and 'clean' (0.5 %).

⁹² This percentage is limited to the frequency of the following word-images: 'house/home' (30.4 %), 'bring up as own/with own' (14 %), 'family' (9.9 %), 'best/individual care' (8.7 %), 'every attention/supervision' (8.6 %), 'motherly/maternal treatment' (6.8 %), 'kindness/tenderness' (5.4 %), 'breast milk' (3.2 %), 'happy home/family circle, etc' (2.8 %), 'affection' (2.3 %) and 'companionship' (1.8 %).

Whilst the concepts of education, training, and religion were less frequently referenced, they were all still part of the multi-layered sign system that referenced, or functioned as stand-ins, for 'respectability'. Similarly, for those adverts that did not include such concepts as religion, by simply saying they were respectable automatically made implicit reference to the fact that they were so because morality and religion were central to bourgeois respectability (as discussed in Chapter Four). That terms like 'lady' signified so much, and that mentions of Christianity were but one more measure or marker of respectability and legitimacy, just goes to show how pervasive and strong the ideology of respectability was for these adverts.

By marrying exterior cultural ideals to the interior content of the adverts, the communications thus became suffused with culturally potent symbolic exchange value that not only provided the services offered with a status of authenticity and legitimacy, but also the advertisers themselves. That is, the subjectively generated signifiatory value of the services offered was further tacitly transferred to the advertisers and thus became expressions of identity in and of themselves. By adhering to a standard design, the universality of the adverts also allowed them to be easily recognisable and economical in their communications. To illustrate:



HOME and EDUCATION.—Anglo-Indian or other CHILDREN RECEIVED as Members of their own Family by Rector and his Wife in a healthy and delightful Somerset village. Cows and pony kept. Inclusive terms, £100 per annum. "Rector," Hopercraft and Co., 1, Mincing-lane, London, E.C.

93

⁹³ *Morning Post* (1st November 1883^e). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

A LADY OFFERS a most Comfortable HOME to
 Little Girl as companion to her own: pretty house, beautifully
 situated in high, dry, and bracing air; every care to make child
 happy; inclusive terms by arrangement; no objection to delicate
 child.—Mrs. Hill, 6, Banstead-road, Sutton, Surrey.

94

Also relevant to Jonas Hanway's seminal discourse concerning respectable forms of 'out-of-house' child care were direct or implicit references to the advertiser's distance from the noxious environment of the metropolis. As previously discussed, his proposals on this matter were implemented in the 1767 Better Protection of Parish Poor Children Act which stipulated that children under six should be nursed in the countryside at least three miles, and children under two no less than five miles, from the cities of London and Westminster. Related to his concern that systems of 'out-of-house' care for poor and destitute children required much stricter and more rigorous regulation, Hanway highlighted that placing a child out too far away could hinder efforts towards its safeguarding. The advert sample showed that approximately 40 %⁹⁵ explicitly indicated that their location accorded with these stipulations. To illustrate:

A DOPTION.—A Young Married Lady, residing about
 15 miles from London, wishes to Adopt a **FEMALE CHILD.**
 Address T., 65, Upper Thames-street, E.C.

96

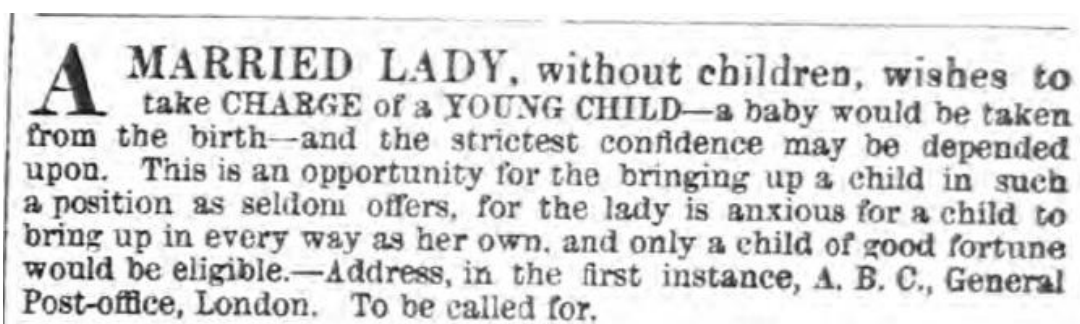
Having created a positive first impression by initially framing the advert and the transaction it entailed through images of respectable substitute motherhood that accorded with the bucolic conception of 'farming' children, service providers were better placed to raise the issue of payment without arousing suspicion or

⁹⁴ *Morning Post* (28th July 1893^c). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

⁹⁵ This percentage is limited to the frequency of the following specifications: country rearing (17.1 %), location outside city (12.1 %) and miles from city (2.1 %).

⁹⁶ *Morning Post* (7th July 1884^b). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

resentment. As discussed, Jonas Hanway had insisted that substitute mothers should be paid a decent wage or lump-sum payment in order to ensure that they could sufficiently provide for the child and to attract more respectable individuals into offering their services. The respectability of these services and their practitioners was fundamentally defined by their socio-emotional, rather than economic, motive. It is interesting to note that only 6.2 % of the advert sample explicitly specified a price whilst a further 14 % made more subtle reference to payment through the inclusion of vague terms like 'premium required' or 'terms reasonable'. The potentially discreditable, 'unwomanly' matter of payment was, as indicated by the common use of phrases like 'particulars by letter' or 'address in the first instance', more often confined to subsequent 'back stage' negotiations. To illustrate:



A MARRIED LADY, without children, wishes to take CHARGE of a YOUNG CHILD—a baby would be taken from the birth—and the strictest confidence may be depended upon. This is an opportunity for the bringing up a child in such a position as seldom offers, for the lady is anxious for a child to bring up in every way as her own, and only a child of good fortune would be eligible.—Address, in the first instance, A. B. C., General Post-office, London. To be called for.

97

By the time this interaction had become more personal through further written correspondences and face-to-face meetings, monetary considerations would have been interpreted within the framework of respectability and in relation to the child being properly provided for to ensure a healthy, long, and happy life. Payment itself would have further conveyed respectability upon the mother for doing all she could by the child. Whilst they could not be a respectable mother in public, they could still appear as a respectable mother within this private arrangement, even if for their own conscience. It would have even been possible

⁹⁷ *Morning Post* (1st April 1852). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

for service providers to frame the necessity of payment in a way that made the mother feel guilty for being suspicious or resentful.

Of further significance to Hanway's discourse on proper forms of 'out-of-house' child care concerned the specification of the child's age within the adverts. As discussed, Hanway had stipulated that children should be placed out to substitute mothers from the earliest age possible in order to ensure they had sufficient opportunity for nurturance and bonding in their formative years. Correspondingly, the advert sample revealed that approximately 29.8 % of advertisers explicitly stated that they wished to take a child less than a year old⁹⁸ whilst many others were fairly open to the age of the child. To illustrate:

WANTED, by a respectable Widow, ONE or TWO NURSE CHILDREN. Will take a baby from the month. A healthy part. Terms very moderate.—G. L., M'Nally's, Wood-street, Walthamstow.

99

A VERY Superior HOME, with Education, OFFERED in a Gentleman's Family residing at the Seaside, for a Little CHILD under 10 years of age. Inclusive terms 50 guineas per annum.—Address "M 651," Address and Inquiry-office, the Times-office, E C.

100

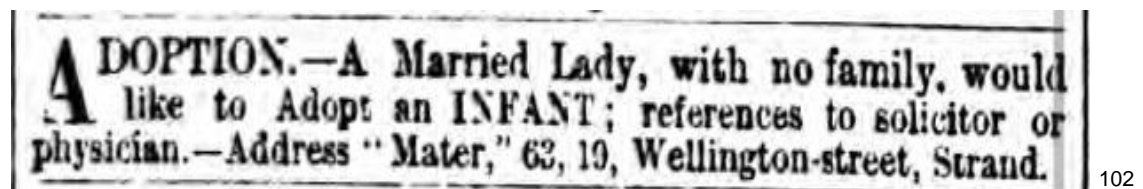
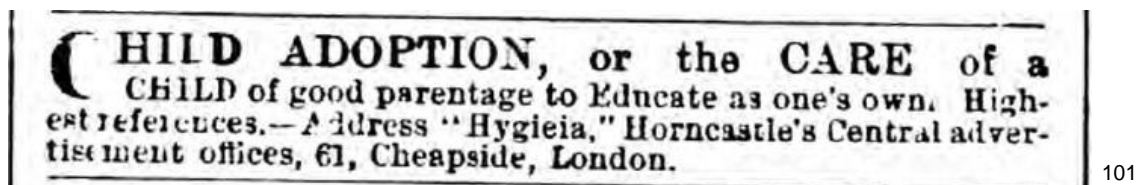
The advert sample further revealed that a significant number of advertisers (12.1 %) used symbolically potent epithets such as 'mother', 'charity', 'rector' or 'rural'. These astute appellations also typically reflected idyllic abstractions, further communicating a sense of maternalism, benevolence, of bucolic environments, and an idyllic upbringing, and thus ultimately 'respectability'. As previously discussed, at least one 'out-of-house' substitute mother charged with the abuse,

⁹⁸ A further 7.5 % stated they would take a child between one and three years old.

⁹⁹ *Morning Post* (25th October 1872). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

¹⁰⁰ *Morning Post* (22nd July 1881). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

neglect, or death of children in their care, Amelia Dyer, also assigned herself the nickname 'mother' (t18960518-451, 1896). This sobriquet epitomises how 'out-of-house' substitute mothers managed their identities as 'respectable mothers'. Through a complete inversion of 'actual' and 'virtual' identity, they promoted that which the actual mother could not be by essentially selling her the ideological conception of respectable motherhood. To illustrate:



With the personal advertising space of newspapers like the *Morning Post* being a popular space for public notices concerning all forms of domestic service, adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering were also a logical and often ambiguous extension of the popular 'in-house' variety of substitute mothering. Being an entirely legitimate and relatively respectable form of women's work in the eyes of the middle-classes, adverts for 'in-house' forms of child care provided a useful model for 'out-of-house' service providers to mimic in order that their potentially discreditable communications remained inconspicuous and appeared fully legitimate. To illustrate:

¹⁰¹ *Morning Post* (23rd December 1879). The name 'Hygieia' comes from Greek and Roman mythology for the Goddess of good health, cleanliness and sanitation. Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

¹⁰² *Morning Post* (3rd July 1884^c). The name 'mater' has Latin origins and, in British English, traditionally means 'mother'. Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

SITUATION WANTED.—A respectable steady Woman WANTS a Situation as HEAD NURSE, in a Nobleman or Gentleman's family; she perfectly understands the arrangement of a nursery; can take a child from the month; the most satisfactory references will be given. A line directed, post paid, to A. B. No. 55, Seymour-place, Bryanstone-square, will be immediately attended to.

103

WANTED, a SITUATION as FIRST GOVERNESS to YOUNG CHILDREN.—The advertiser would be found invaluable to a family deprived of maternal care, from long experience. Being naturally fond of children, she devotes herself entirely to the charge committed to her care.—Address S. B. G., 15, Spring-street, Sussex-gardens, Hyde-park.

104

WANTED, a SITUATION as UPPER NURSE. Can take a baby from the month. Three years' good personal character from last place, and seven years previously. A lady's first baby preferred. Wages £25, and all found.—Address to Nurse, M. G., 13, Prince of Wales-terrace, Scarborough.

105

The overall presentation of self and service exhibited in the adverts therefore reflected what Goffman (1979) described as a 'commercial realism'. That is, advertisers presented plausible yet idealised images of respectable womanhood and maternalism that would attract custom and ensure that their service remained acceptable within a public audience and in relation to social demands for appropriate gender roles and displays. In this sense, the adverts did not necessarily portray 'reality', nor were they entirely fictitious. Instead, they

¹⁰³ *Morning Post* (23rd January 1816). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

¹⁰⁴ *Morning Post* (16th May 1856). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

¹⁰⁵ *Morning Post* (6th April 1874^b). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

exhibited a 'quasi-fictive' rendition of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering as *it was meant to be* (Schudson, 1993). The elicited abstractions were conceivable in every detail and the materiality of the advertiser's avowals could, presumably and reassuringly, have existed as portrayed.

Within the public eye, advertisers thus presented an identity that harmonised with idealised and mythical conceptions of what a 'respectable' 'out-of-house' substitute mother should be. In doing so, they affirmed basic social arrangements and fundamental doctrines about respectable women, children, and maternal care. The representations exhibited were thus consequential to both cultural and individual conceptions of identity (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). The adverts displayed a ritualisation of social ideals, yet these ritualised expressions were not created by the advertisers. Rather, they simply drew upon the "same corpus of displays, the same ritual idiom" that was the resource of all who participated in such social situations and displays to the same end: that which rendered the sparse communications in these adverts easily recognisable and comprehensible (Goffman, 1979: 84). In this manner:

The pictures of life that ads parade before consumers are familiar, scenes of life as in some sense we know it or would like to know it. Advertisements pick up and represent values already in the culture... things that people hold dear and re-presents them to people as *all* of what they value, assuring them that the sponsor is the patron of common ideals (Schudson, 1993: 233).

As bricoleurs, advertisers selected the terms and manipulated signs they believed most powerfully conveyed the significant ideological imagery. Once the ideological and mythical resonance was imagined, seemingly straightforward and simple details could evoke a multi-layered cultural abstraction that impregnated the entire interaction and subsequent transaction with a particular symbolic exchange value and overall sense of 'respectability' (Williamson, 1978). That is, unless discredited, the evoked abstraction came to define the entire situation and directed thoughts and behaviours accordingly.

One further consideration of how the service providers implicitly conveyed a sense of legitimacy was through the advert's appearance as a formal contract. Whilst legal adoption was not officially authorised by statute in England until 1926,

Victorian and Edwardian culture witnessed the development of legal adoption and the use of adoption contracts (Abramowicz, 2014). Following a long history of informal adoption, such practices began to be increasingly framed through contractual claims of custody and narratives of the child's development and best interests (ibid). To illustrate:



106

Such communications found within newspaper advertising sections were essentially for bilateral contracts and considered invitations to treat on the basis that they would lead to negotiations between the parties to the transaction (Elliot and Quinn, 2011). As illustrated previously, the framing of these transactions as legal and authentic forms of adoption was often further expressed through the co-signing of a contract written between the key parties of the transaction. However, despite any legal terminology used by the service providers in the communication of their services, none of the cases considered reveal the presence or involvement of any legal practitioner to draw up legal papers and formalise the adoptive arrangements.

Since the doctrine of freedom of contract of the period's *laissez-faire* economy meant individuals were generally granted private autonomy to contract whatever agreements they chose, legal involvement was typically reserved for instances where the agreements had not been honoured and one party wished to sue the other (Abramowicz, 2009; Elliot and Quinn, 2011). Of course, in the instance of the practice of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering and the cases explored so far, the women who placed their children out for adoption through these adverts were often not in a position to ensure the agreement had been honoured. Even if they knew it had not been, they would likely have often been disinclined to have sued

¹⁰⁶ *Morning Post* (25th August 1888). Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

for breach of contract as this would only have served to bring their crisis of respectability to light.

The appeal and reassurance communicated through these adverts was, in line with prevailing best interests of the child narratives, based upon the implications that the substitute parent could provide a better socioeconomic environment for the child than the biological parents. Their legitimacy was established on the general existing attitude that decisions of parenting should be made in private and that matters of a child's upbringing should be governed by parental affection rather than by lawyers and courts (Abramowicz, 2009). The presentation of such adverts as invitations to treat conveyed that anybody from the general public were free to privately negotiate the terms and conditions of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering arrangements with persons who were, as far as one could see, both willing and well suited to be contractually responsible for the child's welfare.

Whilst the adverts were evidently used to present an identity that related to the advertisers, what is less obvious is how they also related to the individual identities of those who 'bought' into the adverts. Ultimately, the fundamental dynamic within this interaction was between the target of the advertisement and the advert. Those responsive to the advert's pitch themselves became primary interactive actors, rather than passive recipients, in this dialogic by recognising the social cues and responding to them. In doing so, the receiver established that the adverts spoke specifically to them. As such, facets relevant to their own identity was also conveyed by the advert.

Having already assumed a particular target audience, advertisers subtly transmitted an imaginary template of the customer's identity that was formulated in regards to relationships between elements within the advert (Williamson, 1978). Potential customers thus placed themselves in the imaginatory position of the indeterminate 'spoken to' in the advert. The focus on 'respectability' and the nature of the service offered would have resonated with the customer's own identity and the fact that this was at risk because of the discrediting child currently in their possession. The adverts therefore initiated an unspoken conversation, an implicit sub-layer, that the services were offered to people who faced a crisis of

respectability and who required an expeditious and private resolution to their problem.

Potential customers were indirectly addressed as those already interconnected with the service offered. Being inherently related to the service meant that potential customers became the 'totemic identity' which the adverts were already furnished with in order to be meaningful (Williamson, 1978). In other words, potential customers gave the adverts meaning because of their individual situation, because they already had, or would soon have, a child they needed or wanted to part with - essentially, to 'dispose' of - in a manner that accorded with the conventionalised discourse on the respectable care of poor and destitute children.

What began as a reflection of identity, the customer recognising themselves in the advert and what it offers, would come to define and confine the customer (Williamson, 1978). On a basic level, the adverts and the services they offered thus functioned to generate feelings of respectability in the customer. Yet, more tacitly, the adverts created an aura of 'alreadyness' (ibid). That is, customers would not have paid for the services simply to become associated with the people and ideologies the adverts represented. Instead, they employed such services because they already felt that they, in some way, naturally belonged, had belonged, or risked continuing to belong to the 'respectable' classes. This explains why any class of women adhering to middle-class ideologies of respectability who had fallen short of the ideals of respectable womanhood would have recognised themselves in the advert.

In effect, the adverts tacitly conveyed to potential customers that the services offered were fundamentally one of the only means by which they could maintain their respectable identity. The services offered by the adverts were essential to the customers identity. To maintain this identity meant they must employ the services, the continuance of their respectable status was largely confined to them pursuing this course of action over less respectable options. On reading such adverts, women like Ada Galley, Rosina Pardoe, and Esther Amelia Hodson, would have instantly recognised how the services communicated through these

adverts would have functioned to help them 'get back to normal', retain their respectable identity, and continue to operate in 'respectable' society.

By 'disposing' of the stigma attached to a discrediting child through this system, the customer was able to reaffirm their own respectable status, albeit not as a 'respectable mother'. By consuming and becoming identified with that expressed by the adverts, customers engaged in a form of totemism whereby the distinctions made in regards to the services offered from all other possible options also served to differentiate the customer from all those who did not employ this optimal form of care (Williamson, 1978). Whilst such distinctions were fundamentally illusory, they nevertheless functioned to affirm that the customer was a particular type of person those of relative 'respectability' - which they had already idealised and associated themselves with.

The advertisers presented a meaning and identity that was appropriate to their audience's demands and expectations as well as to the definition of the interactional context. They presented a coherent representation of the socially defined and constructed nature of femininity and of 'natural roles'. The practices were positioned firmly within a feminine, maternal, and domestic, rather than a masculine and commercial, sphere. For both the services and identities presented, the adverts generated an intricate and highly-potent multi-layered signifying system that encompassed interconnecting aesthetic and socio-political domains (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). This system of representation, whilst complex in its discursive roots, functioned to clearly locate the adverts within socially constructed parameters of acceptable and archetypal systems of 'out-of-house' child care. That is, they exhibited the precise social ideal that was required by their public audience. The commercial realism reflected in the adverts conveyed enough of a semblance of social 'norms' and 'reality' to be accepted as true and responded to as intended by the advertiser.

7.4. Conclusion

The co-constructed meaning of adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering derived from a bricolage of idealistic iconography. A mélange of symbolically potent word-images served as adjuncts to conveying that the advertiser was fundamentally a respectable would-be mother and that the services were respectable. As their practices were, especially in the shadow of the more noxious and sinister conceptions of 'farming' children, somewhat risqué and problematic, the identity exhibited in the adverts was imperative to the advertisers' success, not only in attracting custom but also in avoiding public condemnation. It was therefore necessary for advertisers to ensure that their communications were not framed by profit, but by socio-emotional and maternalistic designs. That is, their communications could not appear as entrepreneurial and industrial as this was entirely discordant with ideologies of respectable womanhood and contradicted the demand for exclusive, familial, and charitable care as promoted by the conventionalised discourses on female respectability and 'out-of-house' substitute mothering.

The creditable meaning created by the adverts derived from the fact that the interaction was framed by a normative consensus. They did not in any way convey hidden messages of 'infanticide for hire' simply because they would have been completely misunderstood or rejected by their non-exclusive audience for not adhering to the dominant aura of respectability required by adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering. Instead, the definition of meaning forged between the advertisers and those who 'bought' into their pitch established an implicit distinction between the idyllic rural abstraction of 'farming' children the advert generated, and its antithesis. That is, a noxious abstraction of wholesale factory farming and children herded *en masse* to 'slaughter-houses'.

Both parties to this transaction therefore participated in co-constructing something that was fundamentally illicit and problematical as being 'legitimate' and 'respectable'. By correlating particular word-images expressed in the adverts, certain imagery, ideas, and sentiments that existed externally in various ideological referent systems were not only transposed to the services offered, but

also to the identity of the advertiser and the customer. However, this did not mean that both parties were buying into the same result or truly bought into what fundamentally remained to be an illusion. The conspiracy of meaning which imbued these communications entailed that either party, or both together, could have subsequently channelled their superficially 'respectable' interaction towards very different outcomes.

Yet the importance of respectability was so necessary for both parties, particularly for the biological mother, that to realise later down the line that things were not perhaps as they first appeared could have been even more ruinous. The mother who could not be a 'respectable mother' was still compelled to be disassociated from her stigma-prone child. Because the entire situation was stigma-prone, both parties were under pressure to complete the transaction as quickly as possible without having to bring any aspect of this private interaction to the attention of others.

As a consequence of the stigma encompassing the commerce of motherhood and respectability through privatised forms of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, up until the transaction was complete this entire interaction was fundamentally a process of image work. Once the child was passed from one to the other and the two parties had separated the transaction was, for all practical purposes, terminated. From then on, the oddly caricatured form of 'respectability' that had been liminal to the transaction could also be brought to an end. For the overwhelming majority of such dealings within the marketplace of motherhood, the departing assurance that the child would receive the paradisiacal rearing in a respectable family home in the country as agreed through the advert and further correspondence was inevitably where this phenomenon concluded.

It was only possible for service users to infer so far as to the 'truth' of this transaction and the fate of their child. As tenuous as it may have seemed, all they had available as a rational foundation for their actions was the image of respectability they had co-constructed with the service provider that served as an assurance for their moral conscience. The imperativeness unwed mothers experienced to disassociate from their child and their transactions with 'out-of-house' substitute mothers forbade much opportunity for them to monitor the

subsequent fulfilment of the conjured dream-like ideality of a child welfare paradise.

The marketplace of motherhood, as with any marketplace, was composed of a complete spectrum of 'respectable' buyers and sellers, as well as 'disreputable' buyers and sellers and all combinations of the two. It was impossible for either to fully know the others' 'true' self or motive. The conspiracy of meaning that pervaded the performative interaction of the two parties meant that some would have genuinely believed, others may have engaged in a willing suspension of disbelief, whilst a few may have understood the image of respectability for what it was, and some perhaps envisioned a vastly different 'reality' but proceeded with the transaction anyway. By focusing on those 'out-of-house' substitute mothers who were demonstrably 'invalid' is to miss the point entirely - that this process of social interaction in the marketplace of motherhood was about negotiations of respectable womanhood.

This chapter has inverted the conception of 'baby-farming' showing that where others have solely regarded it as a sinister late Victorian term, the image of 'farming' embraced by both service providers and service users within the marketplace of motherhood was far older and far more amiable than that conceived by the likes of the *British Medical Journal*. The co-constructed image of respectability invoked through the adverts came to preside over the entire interactive process. At the heart of this commerce of motherhood and respectability was a system of image work that was liminal to the transaction. Once completed and the parties dissociated, their liminal constructions of respectability were free to take different forms.

The following chapter returns to those 'criminal' cases made available through the archives in order to further explain and make sense of the possible outcomes that occurred after the transaction was completed. Whilst these cases will be used to shed light on the legitimate processes and practices more generally, it will also be shown how subsidiary criminal forms of 'disposal' were a fairly mundane, logical, and ultimately 'natural' extension of the marketplace as a whole. It will be revealed how what essentially was an 'industry of disposal' within the marketplace, fundamentally represented women performing an essential

'dirty work' service in the general management of 'respectable' and 'civilised' society through the removal of stigma.

Chapter VIII: An Industry of Disposal

A criminal system of destruction of life by so-called “baby-farming” exists in London and its neighbourhood... Two hundred and seventy-six infants were found dead in the streets of London in 1870 by the police, and 105 have been found up to the 19th of May this year... Nevertheless some witnesses are of opinion that the great mortality in infant life is due rather to negligence than to anything which can be called actual criminality (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 24th July 1871: 5).

8.1. Introduction

The thesis thus far has shown how the practices that constituted the marketplace of motherhood were all part of a culturally specific functional response to the bourgeois cult of respectable womanhood and the crisis of respectable motherhood that could lead to exclusion from ‘respectable’ society. Where others have understood criminal outcomes within the marketplace in relation to the predispositions of particular practitioners, this chapter examines how all practitioners, their modes of operating, and the ultimate outcomes of their services, whether legitimate or criminal, were ‘natural’ by-products of a unique constellation of circumstances that arose within modernising society which were each by themselves quite normal and commonplace. It will be revealed how the different forms of stigma ‘disposal’ made available within the marketplace were entirely rational - as opposed to the product of individual pathology or aberrant monstrosity - within their social, cultural, and historical context.

As but one extreme, yet most documented, outcome within this industry of stigma disposal, this chapter will re-examine those criminal cases made available within the archives that have provided a window into the processes, practices, and people involved with the general privatised commerce of motherhood and respectability. In doing so, it will be shown how these minority of cases that were deemed demonstrably ‘criminal’ were also a subsidiary ‘natural’ product of the

marketplace. The chapter reveals how the child abuse and death associated with this marketplace was simply an incidental yet mundane extension of the same ingredients that produced the marketplace in its 'legitimate' form: primarily, of the marketplace's transactional nature, its association with stigma, and its objectification and commodification of the child that became a reification of stigma. As shall be shown, the 'criminal' elements of the marketplace were not an antithesis of modern 'civilisation', they were entirely 'normal' in that they were generally compatible with the 'spirit of the times'.

This chapter continues by establishing the pivotal preconditions of Victorian and Edwardian society that channelled or propelled some of those who operated within the marketplace of motherhood towards 'criminal' ends. Drawing upon Bauman's (1989) theoretical consideration of the relationship between modernity, bureaucratic instrumental rationality, and social exclusion, the following section of this chapter will outline how key elements of Victorian and Edwardian culture gave rational 'shape' to this modern industry of disposal - an important feature of the much larger industry of identity management - and how this provided fertile ground for more destructive outcomes. That is, whilst 'disposal' within the marketplace encompassed a wide array of possible means by which the problem of a discreditable child could be 'taken care of' - from genuine systems of substitute mothering, different modes of abortion, abandonment, through to outright murder and the disposing of corpses - particular elements of Victorian and Edwardian society laid a clear and logical, although by no means inevitable, path towards more 'criminal' outcomes.

The third section will then utilise Hughes' (1958) concept of 'dirty work' to consider women's commerce of motherhood and respectability as an informal system of female-centred, stigma-prone labour which, like prostitution, generally operated on the margins of women's destitution and exclusion from 'respectable' society. That is, the female-controlled 'dirty' work within the marketplace represented a kind of 'sisterhood' among abject women where highly stigmatising social problems that 'respectable' society had relegated to women were privately and efficiently managed within female spaces. In effect, the businesses that developed in the marketplace were frequently female-led entrepreneurial

enterprises that were pivotal to the management of 'respectable' and 'civilised' society.

This chapter demonstrates that the 'horrors' associated with so-called 'baby-farming' were not matters of individual aberrancy, particularly of pathology or monstrosity. Women like Amelia Dyer who were found guilty of more 'actively' murdering children they acquired through the marketplace, and whose outcomes lay perhaps at one end of a spectrum of possibilities, were not themselves fundamentally 'abnormal' beyond an ideological sense. These were not the random, disturbed, and malicious acts of so-conceived predatory 'serial-killers', nor were they the predetermined enterprise of mercenary women who openly advertised themselves for 'infanticide for hire'. Their actions were instead merely a small and indifferent step or omission within a chain of complicit actions and interactions that spread far more extensively throughout Victorian and Edwardian society. That is, they operated functionally and accumulatively in accordance with the general visions, instrumental rationality, and other socio-contextual features of Victorian and Edwardian's modern 'civilised' society.

The child victims, who are usually given prominent concern in discussions of crime and criminal justice, have generally remained unconsidered in accounts of 'baby-farming'. What this chapter will reveal is that the reason this problem existed within this time and place was because the children were effectively constructed as 'non-children'. Within the marketplace, children were easily (dis)regarded as problematic objects of stigma that needed to be 'disposed of' one way or another. Their objectification engendered their commodification and dehumanisation which, in turn, made both legitimate or criminal methods of their 'disposal' more straightforward. The 'criminal' elements within the marketplace of motherhood were fundamentally facilitated by passive indifference to the child.

Although it is evident that *some* children 'disposed of' within the marketplace did end up being actively killed and then discarded in the River Thames or around the streets of London, and whilst it is entirely impossible to quantify this outcome, the evidence overwhelming indicates that such outcomes were neither typical, nor were they usually premeditated by both parties to the transaction. Where most of the deaths of children through transactions in the marketplace were

undoubtedly 'matter-of-course' or 'passive' - by, for example, natural causes, neglect, or exposure - it will be shown how instrumental reasoning would have provided a natural justification for more resolute and effective forms of 'criminal disposal'. The most 'criminal' outcomes of transactions within the marketplace were merely the most clean, quick, and efficient. Rationally speaking, such outcomes could be justified as both best for the child and best for all those involved. Those who could properly be considered 'agents of destruction' - such, it seems, as Amelia Dyer - did not have to be 'evil' or 'insane', they were just those doing their job and doing it well, as clean an economical as this 'dirty' job could be. They were the ones who had found one way to refine the process and the ones who did it best were ultimately those who made no mistakes and remained unnoticed.

This chapter demonstrates that where the marketplace of motherhood was wholly centred around the management of respectable womanhood, the rest of the transaction, including all outcomes that involved the child's death, was a result of how the child was ideologically constructed. It shows how the overlooked and obscured victim most commonly ignored in discussions and analyses of 'baby-farming' were generated from the adverts as a commodified object of transaction. Once dehumanised in this way, the child's destruction would have become one more logical and incremental step further along the path of 'disposal' and 'problem-management'. As such, this chapter is not so much about what happened after the handover but about the overall meaning of how a child placed in this system *could* have ended up dead and discarded in the River Thames.

This chapter demonstrates how this phenomenon cannot be properly understood on an individualistic level with reference to a few selective cases. Only by fully appreciating the wider social and cultural context of this period can the full space of possibility within the marketplace of motherhood be understood. The cases discussed in this thesis, and utilised further to illustrate the forthcoming analysis, are simply outcomes of modern Victorian and Edwardian society. They are only a few outcomes. The only outcomes that ever really entered into public conversation and imagination through sensationalistic exposure through the courts and media. All other personal histories concerning more fortunate outcomes were either never recorded or are now much harder to get hold of due

to the cult of respectable womanhood, the modern culture of shame, and the correlative need for secrecy that structured the marketplace of motherhood within Victorian and Edwardian society. By examining data from numerous individual ‘criminal’ cases it is possible to understand the general processes, machinery, and systems of the marketplace that created a path to more destructive outcomes.

It should be noted in advance that this chapter contains some extracts from court transcripts that are quite dehumanising and harrowing in the way they describe the treatment of some children who were neglected, abused, or killed. Whilst wishing to be ethically sensitive in regards to the analysis of these children’s victimisation, it remains important that, wherever possible, the explanation of activities associated with the marketplace are relayed through the voices of those who had direct experience in order to provide a snapshot of how particular outcomes of the marketplace were rationalised. Because these experiences have most typically been relayed through court narrative and recording practices, they are themselves a representation of how court language dehumanises and objectifies its subjects in an effort to be impartial and objective.

8.2. Instrumental Rationality in the Marketplace

As the matter now stands, there is not the slightest difficulty in disposing of any number of children, so that they may give no further trouble, and never be heard of, at £10 per head. The pecuniary responsibilities of maternity and paternity are appraised at this as the current market price... Demand and supply seem to be very equally balanced; and at this time there is certainly a very brisk business. There are, however, many who will “adopt” a child for £5, trusting to their skill in the management of infants for its rapid “disposal” (*British Medical Journal*, Saturday 28th March 1868⁹: 301).

The above statement illustrates how the commerce of motherhood and respectability within the marketplace functioned as a purpose-rational system that

was fundamentally centred on the removal, or 'disposal', of an unviable and stigma-prone child. Regardless of the outcomes, this was the principal functional operation of the marketplace. As further illustrated, the practices within the marketplace operated in accordance to capitalistic instrumental reason and efficiency where supply effectively met demand through frameworks of optimal goal-implementation. However, this did not necessitate that the most efficient 'criminal' outcomes were predetermined or inevitable within the marketplace. Instead, the personal histories brought to light through the archives show how such 'ultimate solutions' generally transpired through a gradual process of calculation, rationalisation, and concealment. That is, systems of child destruction were not preconceived by monstrous or predatory women, nor were they a well-deliberated choice made at the outset of the problem-solving process among those involved in the transaction. Instead, the paths to destruction developed through a process of goal-displacement, emerging "inch by inch, pointing at each stage to a different destination, shifting in response to ever-new crises, and pressed forward with a 'we will cross that bridge once we come to it' philosophy" (Bauman, 1989: 15)¹⁰⁷.

As explained by Bauman (1989), through ideological frameworks of heterophobic exclusion, certain social groups may be converted into objects of dehumanised interaction that can lead to their abuse, neglect, and even destruction¹⁰⁸. Where objectives regarding the treatment or purgation of dehumanised and objectified 'others' are to be realised, their implementation is determined by the surrounding circumstances and based upon judgements of feasibility, cost, risk, and the viability of alternative action. Within the marketplace of motherhood, the stigma-prone child was reduced to a 'problem' that service users could pay to have removed so that they could, in effect, buy back or protect their membership in 'respectable' society. The child became a commodified object of transaction that was devalued by their problematic status. As reflected in the above quotation,

¹⁰⁷ The quote is taken from Zygmunt Bauman's (1989) account of the Nazi holocaust but illustrates the normative processes that can make systematic killing, such as that which apparently existed to a minor extent within the marketplace of motherhood, a relatively easy and rational act.

¹⁰⁸ In *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), Bauman reveals the conditions of modern society that made the mass extermination of the Jews and other 'undesirables' possible and demonstrated how the holocaust was a product of modern society, its technologies, and modern systems of thought.

literally assigned a price value, the child was reduced to an object of trade that could be bought and sold in the marketplace.

Wider cultural frameworks of vilification also provide rational justification for the dehumanised treatment of certain social groups as well as creating opportunity structures for their physical maltreatment (Bauman, 1989). As highlighted in Chapter Four and Five, a child's ideological status was conferred upon them by the respectability of their parentage. The utopian visions of bourgeois 'civilised' society sought to 'weed out' the unfavourable elements of society, those tarnished by heterophobic otherness, in order to preserve the immaculacy of the ideal (ibid). Consequently, the discourses concerning the proper means of 'farming' children discussed in Chapter Seven were underpinned by uncompromising alternatives for those who could not be provided a 'respectable' upbringing. For instance, discussing the essentiality of raising foundlings to be useful, duteous, and respectable citizens, Jonas Hanway himself stated that it "is necessary to make this distinction... in the world, they had better be dead than in idleness or vice" (1766: 96).

The vulnerability of the children who entered the marketplace of motherhood lay in the fact that they were not idealised or humanised in the same way as 'normal' children of respectable society. Whilst easily dehumanised by their commodified objectification within the marketplace and general degradation on account of their 'illegitimacy', the child's 'non-human' status was heightened by the fact they had no voice of their own, no real personality, and were often unnamed when passed through the marketplace. In many cases, the children were unregistered and often simply referred to as 'it' or 'the child'. Those who received insufficient care also began to look less human as they became increasingly atrophied, stupefied, unclean, diseased, or infested with vermin.

To illustrate, when the police traced Sarah Ellis to a house in Brixton they discovered several severely emaciated infants huddled together and covered in clothing, nine of whom were unnamed and were subsequently numbered one to nine and removed to the Lambeth Workhouse (t18700919-769, 1870). The investigating police officer and a woman named Caroline Guerra described one of the infants as looking "scarcely human... it was a shadow, not a bit of flesh and

bones... like a shrivelled up monkey” and described how all the children were in a state of torpor, likely from having been administered opiates (ibid, 1870; see Figure 31).

Figure 31. An artist's representation of the children found at the home of Margaret Waters and her sister Sarah Ellis in the *Illustrated Police News* (9th July, 1870^{a109}).



As demonstrated by Bauman (1989), the abuse, neglect, and destruction of particular social groups often materialises through commonplace means-ends schemas of action that are a condition of bureaucratic, capitalist cultures. Such guiding principles are inclined to side-line or entirely nullify counterproductive moralistic considerations from social action. Processes that lead to instances of human destruction can be subsumed by a moral blindness where individuals advancing a chain of events each attend only to effectively satisfying their immediate objectives without reflecting upon the overall consequences of their

¹⁰⁹ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

contributive action. Networks of contributory action that separate stages of an operation into business-like divisions of labour generate social distancing where individuals throughout the process are disconnected from the end-product or final outcome.

As highlighted through personal histories discussed in Chapter Six, the 'problems' to be solved within the marketplace of motherhood were typically managed through gradual and logical progressions of instrumental rationality. Once the mother had realised that her child was unviable and discrediting, or had been forced to defer to others' appraisal and management of the situation, the most rational option was to utilise the machinery of the marketplace to 'dispose' of the child and be entirely disassociated from them. From the service user's perspective, their primary objective was to complete this task effectively and expeditiously. Their 'division of labour' in the process was focused upon initiating and co-ordinating the chain of events that led to the initial handover. The pressure a mother in particular faced to dissociate from her discreditable child and the precipitancy by which this often occurred restricted much bonding, thus engendering a depersonalised social distancing between her and her baby as well as the baby's ultimate fate.

The primacy of the mother's objective to disassociate herself from her child and the satisfying illusory co-constructed image of utopian welfare discussed in Chapter Seven could bestow upon service users a 'moral invisibility' (Bauman, 1989) wherein the child, once handed over, could easily be dismissed from their sense of obligation. The distancing and attenuation of moralistic concerns further made causal connections and mediation of action within the process, as well as the final outcome, invisible to service users. As revealed through the archives, arrangements for adoption were often made on the basis that the child would be "no further trouble" to the service user (t18990912-624, 1899).

The social distancing between the service users with their initial primary objectives, and their child and the subsequent practical outcomes of their 'disposal', is also reflected in personal histories of transactions in the marketplace. For example, as previously discussed in the cases of Ada Charlotte Galley, Rosina Pardoe, and Miss Harris (t19030112-174, 1903), each woman

arrived at Claymore House for their confinement aware of their predicament and that keeping their child was untenable but were yet uncertain of their options and which possible solution would be available or most practical. After the fathers of each of the children briefly visited the establishment to pay Amelia Sach for the adoption and the business was completed, there was little to no further discussion about the fate of their children.

Similarly, having rented an apartment for her accouchement, a woman who went by the name of Miss Weston managed to engage the proprietor, Sarah Baker, to further assist her in managing the handover of her child after she had made arrangements for adoption through a newspaper advert (t18930306-316, 1893). About a week after the child was born, Sarah Baker took the mother's baby to Victoria Station to hand the child over to a woman neither she nor the mother had ever met. In the few minutes that passed upon the train platform as the women completed the transfer of child and payment, Sarah Baker made clear that she nor the mother would have any further obligation over the child and that no further contact was to be made. As this case reveals, the social distancing experienced by the service users also occurred in consecutive stages of the process as the child was handed along a chain of actors who each, upon passing the child to the next and completing their division of labour, were able to discharge themselves of any further sense of responsibility and avoid any consideration or association with the final outcome.

From the customer's handover, the fate of those children who were 'disposed' of in the marketplace fell along a spectrum of possible outcomes. For those who received genuine care in line with the honourable promises made in the prelude to the transaction, their connection to the marketplace was likely forever obscured as they were assigned new identities that affiliated them with their adoptive family. Their true relations were as likely as not never revealed as the shame and stigma that led to their 'disposal' in the marketplace would also have demanded that there be no further reference to the transaction. That, in effect, her crisis of respectability and its management had never happened. Such outcomes would thus have remained largely invisible to the public eye, leaving little to no trace within the archives. Bound together by a shared commitment to ensure that their stigma-prone temporary affiliation remained as discreet as possible, there was

generally no logical need for any history of the transaction to be recorded or brought to light.

As mentioned, although many 'out-of-house' substitute mothers may have genuinely sought to provide for the child in accordance to the idealised image of maternal childcare established through the adverts, the actual outcomes may have been uncontrollably insufficient as a natural result of the system. Typically paid an inadequate sum to furnish high quality care for the child for long, service providers would likely have quickly discovered that maintaining the idealised type of respectable childcare the adverts generally spoke to was simply impractical, especially if the endeavour was also to provide themselves with an income. To care for a child in accordance with the circumscriptions of respectable society required a fairly substantial sum of money. Enough that the substitute mother and child were financially accommodated so as not to be in serious need of anything. In other words, to actually be able to provide the middle-class lifestyle the adverts spoke too. However, as discussed in Chapter Six, it is likely that most service providers engaged in a degree of deception through their advertisements and further correspondences in order to appear suitably 'respectable' and secure custom. Thus, the direct fulfilment of their somewhat illusory image of childcare would often have been more or less untenable.

One case from the archives reveals how seemingly good will met with financial hardship could also result in a child's neglect and death. Having apparently adopted a child for no payment through an advertisement in the *People*, Charles Nation and his wife decided after around nine months that they could no longer care for the child and so placed an advertisement to have them re-adopted (t18930109-207, 1893). After receiving nearly 100 replies they arranged for them to be re-adopted by Ann and George Broughton. A few months later they received a letter from Mrs Broughton asking if they would take the child back as Mr Broughton had been out of work and they could no longer afford to provide suitable care, a request Charles Nation refused. Left in the care of Mr and Mrs Broughton, the child's health gradually deteriorated through lack of food and warmth. Upon visiting the home before the child's death, a relieving officer named Robert Goldspink described how the child was "a living, seething mass of vermin, scab and filth - the child's body was not dirty, but very emaciated".

A woman seeking to make a living as an 'out-of-house' substitute mother in such circumstances would inevitably have rationalised that the practice was either unfeasible or unremunerative unless certain aspects of the system could be economised or reoriented. For instance, it would have been logical to take on several children who could be kept together, thus collecting multiple payments for only a fraction more work. Similarly, it would have only been prudent to cut costs wherever possible by, for example, reducing the amount or quality of food given, cutting back on or pawning off clothes and bedding, decreasing how often the child was changed or washed, as well as reducing or forgoing things like education and medical care. Several cases brought to light through the archives reveal how children's deaths resulted from the economisation of general provisions. To illustrate, upon calling at the home of Ann Johnson to check on a baby she had helped arrange the adoption of, Minnie Barales described how she "found the child lying on the bed in a very deplorable condition... it was very dirty, its frock and pinafore were miserable... it was a perfect skeleton" (t18770917-736, 1877).

It is easy to see how such practical solutions to economising and making more profitable 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services could lead to forms of insufficient care that may have resulted in a child's death. Cutting back on vital care provisions such as food, water, suitable clothing, sanitation, and medical attendance presented a narrow margin between justifiably making ends meet and starving or neglecting the child. Likewise, the common yet increasingly controversial use of retailed opiate preparations like Godfrey's Cordial, Collis Browne's, or Dalby's Carminative to pacify children, especially those who were teething or suffering gastro-intestinal disorders, could be considered relatively normal practice, yet commonly resulted in death by overdose (Berridge, 1978; Jordan, 1987). Again, several cases from the archives show how children who died in the care of 'out-of-house' substitute mothers had been regularly kept in a state of opiate induced stupor and that the use of such preparations likely contributed to their deaths.

Death by insufficient care, neglect, or starvation thus presented a very 'normal' form of disposal at the margins of the marketplace that blurred lines of intent and accountability. Because so many children, especially of the working classes and

so-called 'illegitimates', were found to die of apparently natural causes most frequently identified as 'Wasting Diseases', 'Diarrhoeal Diseases', 'Convulsions' or 'Common Infectious Diseases', high infant mortality was generally accepted as a common and often unavoidable outcome (Behlmer, 1982; Rose, 1986). Unintentional 'deaths by natural causes' were themselves a relatively normal and unavoidable aspect of the marketplace as well as of the society in which the marketplace operated. Due to the level of suspicion that grew around so-called 'baby-farming', the fact that children often died of natural causes would have caused service providers to have been cautious and calculating in the ways they managed unavoidable deaths.

Because the determined causes of infant death were largely generic, they also allowed for more 'passive' forms of mediated destruction to be obscured and registered as natural deaths. It was a relatively easy thing to simply not do anything and just allow the child die. As reportedly stated by one 'out-of-house' substitute mother, Mary Ann Lipman, "B----r him, the little sod, let him die" (t18700815-645, 1870). Suppressing nourishment, permitting cold, damp, and unhygienic conditions, neglecting to prevent smothering or other injuries, allowing medical conditions to worsen, or incrementally increasing doses of opiates or other noxious substances could all have led to seemingly 'natural' and thus 'excusable' deaths.

Nevertheless, the connection of too many 'natural' deaths to any one caregiver would undoubtedly raise suspicion. If the child's destruction was decided as the inevitable objective then it would be safer, cleaner, and even perhaps more merciful for their death to be more instantaneous and obscure. Keeping the child and any custodial relationship they had to them as limited, unnoticed, and unregistered as possible allowed those in the marketplace to easily process children to almost immediate death. As appeared to be the practice of Amelia Dyer before she was arrested (t18960518-451, 1896), the child's death could quickly and easily be induced through forms of asphyxiation and the body secretly disposed of shortly after the transaction had been completed.

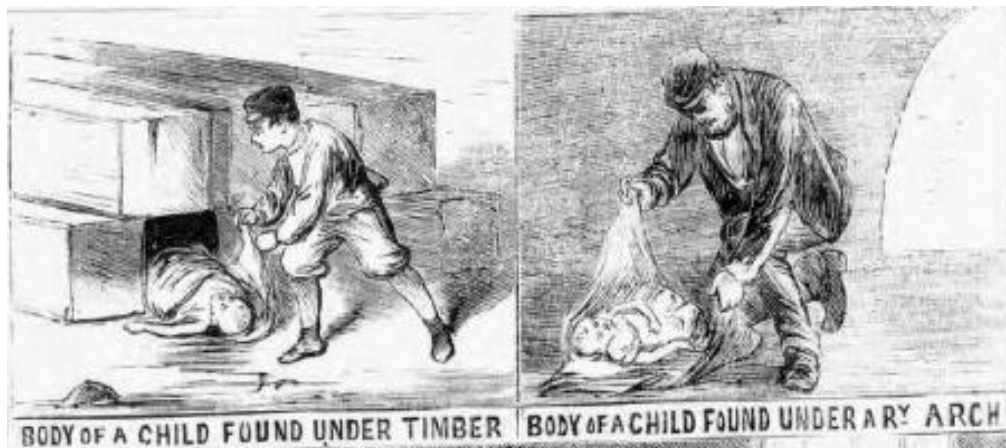
For those women who were found guilty of the deaths of children given to them upon a pretext of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, whether by act or omission,

their rationalisation would have been premised on them not being a proper human being, not suffering, and even perhaps that it was the best thing for them. Especially in instances of more 'active' and instantaneous murder, it could easily be justified that a quick death was the most humane and merciful form of disposal. As argued by Reverend Benjamin Waugh (1890: 16):

In the name of all that is human, stabbing is kinder than inflicting aches and burning sores, and lasting thirst, and famine, and fits; and surely, if anybody, the person who deliberately inflicts these, not the passionate user of the knife, ought to be hanged.

The disposal of bodies presented one final complication in more 'active' and purposefully induced forms of destruction. The cases of Amelia Dyer and Ada Chard Williams showed how large bodies of water like the River Thames offered plenty of secluded and unobserved sites where a weighted 'package' could be dropped in the water when, for example, passing over a bridge at night time (t18960518-451, 1896; t19000212-185, 1900). Details from the case of Margaret Waters and her sister, Sarah Ellis, suggested that those children who died were easily 'dropped' around the streets of Brixton, wrapped up and discarded under railway arches, or hidden in piles of timber (t18700919-769, 1870; *Illustrated Police News*, 25th June 1870^b; see Figure 32).

Figure 32. Artist's drawings of bodies found in relation to the case of Margaret Waters and her sister Sarah Ellis in *Illustrated Police News*, 25th June 1870^b: 1¹¹⁰).



In the case of Jessie Byers, her 10-year-old son, Arthur Byers, gave the following harrowing testimony of how he helped his mother efficiently dispose of the bodies of dead children she had adopted (t19070128-33, 1907):

Children came to our house to be looked after because, I think, father was out of work... They all died at our house except Frankie... Gladys Smythe's body was kept in the first floor room... it was lying on the floor on two napkins with a shawl over. Mother gave me some paper, and told me to go fetch the body down. I brought it down to mother in the kitchen. She opened the top of the stove and put the body in on the fire... She told me not to tell anybody. I saw Winnie's dead body on the second floor. I saw my sister take it into the middle room on the ground floor. One morning mother told me to light the kitchen fire, which I did... She then bolted the door and told me to fetch Winnie's body, which I did, and gave it to mother. It was wrapped in a cloth. She opened the top of the stove and put the body in and shut it down.

Those more business-minded and perhaps less willing to 'get their hands dirty' would have recognised that the most effective way for them to safely make a

¹¹⁰ Newspaper Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

profit from 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services was to procure and then pass on children for others to manage. The archives reveal that some service providers recruited the services of other women to whom they further sub-contracted the 'disposal' of the child, generally unbeknown to the original service user. For instance, in the cases of Ada Charlotte Galley, Rosina Pardoe, and Miss Harris (t19030112-174, 1903), the proprietor, Amelia Sach, employed a woman named Annie Walters, who often used the names 'Mrs Laming' and 'Mrs Merith', to remove the babies from Claymore House after their birth.

Similarly, in the case involving Florence Jones, the woman, Ada Chard Williams, who had agreed to adopt Florence's child for £3 after being contacted by the mother through an advert she had placed, stated that upon receiving the child she had instead advertised again seeking a home for the child and, on reply, had arranged for another woman to take the child for £1 and some clothes (t19000212-185, 1900). Ada confessed that she had advertised to adopt five different children to then advertise to have them re-adopted by others for about half the amount she had initially received¹¹¹. The occurrence of further sub-contracting of a child's 'disposal' reveals how the child's price value could increasingly diminish through consecutive transactions. The economic devaluation coupled with the lack of bonding and social distancing generated through a chain of transaction meant the child could easily be increasingly denied a human status with no real social or economic value.

Perhaps the most efficacious system of 'disposal' was achieved by those who fully exploited the carnivalesque ambiguity within the marketplace (discussed in Chapter Six) to pull off an elaborate 'disappearing act'. As an illustration, Ada Chard Williams, using the name 'Mrs Hewetson', invited Florence Jones for tea at a 'friend's' house, stopping along the way to point out a house in Hammersmith she claimed her and her husband were imminently due to move into where they would raise Florence's child, allowing their new neighbours to believe the child was their own (t19000212-185, 1900). Having been introduced to 'Mrs Hewetson's' new neighbour as her sister-in-Law in order to establish the

¹¹¹ This practice of subcontracting at a cheaper rate - often described as 'baby-sweating' - was often considered to have been a response to legal efforts to limit the adoption of 'illegitimate' children to one child and also to have been a common course to more criminal outcomes (see for example *British Medical Journal* 20th September 1879, 13th October 1888; Rose, 1986).

falsehood among the neighbourhood that 'Mrs Hewetson' and her husband were the actual parents, Florence handed over her baby, part of the payment, and a bundle of clothes, agreeing to be contacted within a few days to arrange paying the remainder of what she owed. Having received no contact from 'Mrs Hewetson', Florence returned to the house in Hammersmith 'Mrs Hewetson' had claimed she and her husband had recently purchased only to find some other people living there. She then visited the address given in the advert only to find that it was a newspaper shop. Finally, she visited the woman, Audrey Woolmer, who 'Mrs Hewetson' had led Florence to believe was a 'friend and neighbour' when they met for tea. However, it transpired that Audrey herself had only recently met 'Mrs Hewetson' when she had called by asking to rent a room from her for herself and 'her baby'.

On arrest, Ada Chard Williams, or 'Mrs Hewetson', claimed that she had advertised to have the child re-adopted under the name of 'Mrs Dalton' to a woman who called herself 'Mrs Smith' from Croydon but was no longer able to trace the woman, partly because she had destroyed all their letters of correspondence (t19000212-185, 1900, 1900). Having searched the area in Croydon to which Ada had claimed the woman, 'Mrs Smith', had stated her address, investigators were unable to find the woman described, nor the street she was supposed to live on.

A similar situation perplexed those investigating the case of Ann Maria Wells, Jane Reeves, and Mary Ann Reeves (t18750301-220, 1875). After the 'illegitimate' infant daughter of Mary had been found, having been thrown over a wall, in a garden ditch with a handkerchief tied round her neck, investigators ascertained from the three women that Mary and her sister Jane had paid Ann one sovereign to take the child to leave on a doorstep or police station. When questioned, Ann claimed that after having carried the child around town for some time she decided instead to give the child to a girl she met asking her to do as she had been instructed. Asked whether she knew where the child lived, whether she knew who she was, or whether she would recognise her if she saw her again, Ann replied 'no' to each question.

Through the 'problem-solving' framework of instrumental rationality, those found guilty of criminalised forms of child 'disposal' did nothing essentially different from the acts of those who preceded them in the chain of transaction. Those at the end of the process who applied 'criminal' solutions to the 'problem' were entirely 'normal' in the ways they could have rationalised their actions. Despite their promises of utopian welfare made during the liminal performance of respectability (discussed in Chapter Seven), responsibility for the child's death could have been psychologically transferred back to the parents, mother, or other guardian figure who, by making arrangements in the marketplace of motherhood, had already 'disposed' of the child by passing their obligation to them, a relative stranger, under dubious circumstances. By determining that the child's parents or other guardians, by not having resolved some way to keep the child, had placed little to no value on the child's life, death could become a logical and convenient result. For so little payment and such limited security on the child's future wellbeing, service providers could easily have justified outcomes on the basis that little could have been expected of them under the circumstances anyway. Any moral obligation, it could be reasoned, was the parent's or mother's for having got themselves into such a mess in the first place and for not taking full responsibility for the child. The death of the child could have been reduced to being part of the overall service and rationalised as just being an extension or unspoken possibility of the initial objective for 'disposal'.

8.3. The 'Dirty Work' of the Marketplace

The notion of necessary evil and the moral menials who undertake to do it disgusts because it means that the boundaries that separate vice from virtue, good from evil, pure from polluted are permeable, and worse, necessarily permeable. To our disgust, good is always engaging in unseemly compromises that implicate us (Miller, 1997: 185).

Those women who were complicit in the 'criminal' forms of disposal within the marketplace of motherhood were not inherently abnormal or exceptional. Instead,

they provided a fairly mundane functional service that was conducted both rationally and efficiently. By offering solutions to problems that could not be as effectively managed elsewhere, their services were evidently in great demand - as is partly reflected by the sheer volume of advertisements. Operating on the borderlines of women's exclusion from respectable circles and consequent destitution, the 'out-of-house' substitute mother supplied a social utility that was crucial to the general maintenance of the cult of respectable womanhood. Considering the centrality of respectable womanhood to the 'civilising mission' and utopian bourgeois ideals, the industry of disposal subsumed within the marketplace was an essential feature of modern 'civilised' society more generally.

Those who provided 'disposal' services within the marketplace were essentially 'moral menials' who performed 'necessary evils' by taking care of a vital facet of society's 'dirty' work. The notion of 'dirty' work encompasses those social occupations considered "physically, socially or morally" unclean (Hughes, 1958: 122). That is, occupations that are either directly associated with noxious phenomena such as death, feculence, or effluvia, that involve contact with stigmatised or degraded 'others', or which relate to somewhat immoral or criminal activities - or a combination of these dimensions (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Despite society's demands and needs for 'dirty' tasks to be performed, such activities and those involved in them are nevertheless often stigmatised for their association with tainted phenomena (Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss, 2006).

As also highlighted in the above quotation, boundaries between 'respectable' and 'non-respectable' society were necessarily permeable. By being fundamentally an ideological construction, the borderland separating the two constituted an ambiguous space in which the marketplace of motherhood operated as a mechanism to facilitate fluctuation through this permeable and slippery margin. Having recognised, developed, and effectuated a crucial social function within a nebulous space of 'respectable' society, those women who provided 'disposal' services within the marketplace were fundamentally entrepreneurs of 'dirty' work in an overarching industry of identity management. They were innovative women who adroitly implemented modern enterprises in the commerce of motherhood and respectability that were accepted within a prominent and indispensable

marketplace during a highly transitional period of modern society (Welter, Smallbone and Isakova, 2006; Green, 2009: 2).

The social and cultural structures of Victorian and Edwardian society (discussed in Chapter Four) that restricted or denied women reasonable opportunity for paid labour and economic independence compelled many to find or create alternative means of generating income. Forms of labour that utilised a woman's femininity presented obvious and socially 'suitable' openings for women to find a way to make a living. As previously discussed, domestic service and nursing provided popular sources of women's labour for being centred around women's 'natural' roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, there were other more 'casual' and 'unskilled' industries that offered women 'natural' forms of work that could be engaged in as needed. For instance, at-home needle-work provided one common source of informal and intermittent employment for women to take on, especially for untrained single women facing poverty (Gleadle, 2001).

Other forms of female-centred, 'casual' and 'unskilled', occupation brought women's utilisation of their femininity into more 'deviant' or 'criminal' forms of remunerative activity. As shown by Walkowitz (1980), women's engagement in prostitution during the nineteenth century often expressed a rational and practical use of their body in order to sustain themselves when faced with limited opportunities and economic hardship. Like 'disposal' services within the marketplace of motherhood, sex work has characterised another prominent substratal 'dirty' work industry of modern societies. Yet, prostitution often presented numerous risks to a woman's health and safety and her 'prosperity' within this marketplace likely depended upon numerous factors such as her age, physical appearance, knowingness, coquettishness, coyness, forms of safeguarding and protection, as well as means to prevent and terminate unwanted pregnancy.

Services for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering represented another form of informal employment for women that could, theoretically, be engaged with on a casual basis and which was an obvious and socially 'suitable' use of their 'inherent' feminine qualities that almost any woman could engage herself in to some form or another. Like sex work, and as discussed in Chapter Six, safety

and success within the marketplace of motherhood, especially in relation to those practices that were more stigma-prone, hazardous, or illegal, also depended on appearances, knowingness, coyness, and forms of safeguarding. However, as shown thus far, those who operated in the marketplace demonstrated through their advertisements, their language and practice that they were both knowing and calculating of the risks they and other women faced in the commerce of motherhood and respectability.

As established in Chapter Seven, a general blueprint for the advertisement 'out-of-house' substitute mothering existed that any woman could draw upon to present herself and her service as 'respectable' and legitimate. In a like manner, high profile *causes célèbres* - like the previously discussed case of Bartholomew Drouet (see t18490409-919, 1849) who conducted more industrial forms of 'farming' children, or of ill-famed so-called 'baby-farmers' like Margaret Waters and her sister Sarah Ellis (t18700919-769, 1870) who practiced more 'criminal' means to capitalise upon their 'disposal' services - also provided general blueprints for making money efficiently very clear to those who followed the reporting of these cases. The chronicling of different models and discourses relating to forms of child care and 'disposal' within newspapers throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century undoubtedly helped develop the knowledge and imaginations of those seeking to develop some line of work in this area.

The provisions of the marketplace also required the availability of organised individuals, or groups of individuals, who possessed the suitable knowledge and skill to co-ordinate different forms of commerce in motherhood and respectability. As shown in Chapter Six, this often involved the specialisation of particular and interlinked services, such, for example, as those who offered assistance during accouchement or forms of abortion. Specialised services such as these would have developed from the re-appropriation of previously acquired specialist knowledge or expertise that had been modified, adapted, and applied to other practices. For instance, those specialising in abortion would likely have had re-applied knowledge and skill acquired either through training in nursing and midwifery, or even simply from their own experiences with pregnancy and child birth, that had informed them of the easy and seemingly 'natural' ways children

could die at birth. Similarly, changing patterns and opportunities of labour meant that those who had experience in 'in-house' forms of substitute mothering could, for example, have easily expanded or reoriented their line of work 'out-of-house' if temporarily faced with unemployment or because they felt the alternative was more lucrative or liberating.

Further evidence of the modern enterprising spirit within the marketplace of motherhood is reflected in women's appliance of the machinery of modernity in order to further their ends. As has so far been demonstrated, this industry of stigma disposal relied heavily upon the distinctly modern systems of mass communication, particularly newspaper personal advertisements and postal services, the use of bilateral contracts and *laissez-faire* economy as well as the modern development of mass literacy that allowed strangers separated in time and space, as well as by social hierarchies of respectable society, to correspond with one another both publicly and privately *en masse* to offer or request services connected to problems of motherhood and respectability.

The personal experiences of the marketplace made available through the archives also highlight that both service users and providers frequently utilised the railway system, another central element of modern society, in order to travel distances to meet and complete transactions. Transforming and transporting Britain and its population, the rail network became the engine of capitalistic movement of bodies, commodities, and money (Freeman, 1999). Train station platforms provided a convenient and common location for the completion of transactions. As a liminal space of passage, the railway became a site of chaotic and ambiguous social mixing (Beaumont and Freeman, 2007) where brief and 'unusual' interactions could surreptitiously take place and be hidden in plain sight. Cases from the archives reveal that shrewd arrangements were often made in precursory written correspondences regarding particular features, such as a particular flower in a bonnet, by which the parties to the transaction could casually and surreptitiously identify one another upon the railway platform (see for example t18930306-316, 1893).

As discussed in Chapter Five, the 'out-of-house' substitute mother's success lay in her ability to ensure that her already 'tainted' service did not appear

entrepreneurial as this would entirely contravene her image of respectable womanhood. The cases brought to light through the archives reveal how those operating in the marketplace adopted a number of strategies that helped obscure the more questionable aspects of their enterprise so that their activity did not profoundly appear to conflict with any of the ideological norms of womanhood. As previously discussed, the troublesome issue of monetary payment could mar the service provider's carefully constructed respectable image of selfless motherhood. The commodification of fashionable apparel meant that children's clothing in vogue with the middle-classes held substantial value (Gillis, 1979) and could augment, or substitute, monetary payment. Moreover, by asking for clothing the 'out-of-house' substitute mother further implied that the child would receive the quality of care that had been projected through the adverts and further correspondences and, reassuringly, that preparations for the child's future wellbeing were already being considered.

Cases from the archives reveal that those offering 'out-of-house' substitute mothering services commonly asked for a substantial supply of clothes for the child alongside a payment with some, such as Sarah Ellis (t18700919-769, 1870), prioritising the request for as much clothing as possible over any monetary payment. In the establishment run by Amelia Sach at Claymore House (t19030112-174, 1903), mothers were required to provide a full selection of clothes for the adoption of their child by 'respectable' women. Amelia stressed to mothers that it was not the quantity but quality that mattered, and that she had pre-prepared 'full-sets' available to sell for a further three pounds and three shillings. Court evidence for several 'out-of-house' substitute mothers found guilty of the deaths of children in their care revealed that quantities of babies clothing as well as pawn tickets for further items of clothing had been discovered within their properties upon arrest.

Another common means by which some 'out-of-house' substitute mothers obscured the discrediting, entrepreneurial character of their 'dirty' work was to masquerade as the actual mother, or close relative, of the child. Pretending to be the biological mother clearly would not be logical if the substitute mother were herself single as she would then face the same stigma as an unwed biological mother who sought to 'dispose' of her child through the marketplace. If married

or even passing as married, a child would only further their appearance of respectability. Such a performance is particularly evident in the previously discussed in the case of Ada Chard Williams who presented herself as the actual mother of the child and other times as the child's aunt (t19000212-185, 1900).

The main way the discrediting and entrepreneurial nature of this work remained obscured was through the bond of secrecy that existed between the service users and service providers. Regardless of the outcomes, the modern cult of respectable womanhood demanded that key parties were kept in a double-bind to protect their identities. Because exposure would have typically incurred severe social or legal penalties all round, nothing was recorded and everything was kept as private and as hidden as possible. Hence the use of straw-man identities, smoke-screens, and false-trails. For this reason, both parties more often than not sought to eradicate all connections they had with one another, as is evidenced by the common destruction of letters by both parties.

The constructions of 'truth' between parties in the marketplace of motherhood was therefore a female-centred exercise of power, or resistance, within an oppressive cultural regime of respectability that disallowed either to 'unmask' or speak openly and plainly of their crisis of respectable womanhood and its system of management. The concealment of this crisis and its management within the marketplace reveals how fragile the deity of respectable womanhood could be and how a specialised industry was fundamental to the utopian visions of 'respectable, 'civilised' society. Within the marketplace of motherhood, the 'dirty' secrets of respectable society could be vanished into thin air, thus leaving the immaculacy of the bourgeoisie dream intact.

8.4. Conclusion

For women who aspired to the 'normalness' of respectable society established in Chapter Four, the most rational solution to having discreditable offspring would be to get rid of the child, to 'dispose' of the 'thing' that would forever prevent her from getting back to 'normal'. Those who provided 'disposal' services within the

marketplace of motherhood all tacitly understood that their work involved the stigma removal and identity management in order that they and their customers could remain within the 'normal' world of 'respectable' society. Knowing that the customer fundamentally did not want or could not have the child and that their role was to assist in their 'disposal', the service provider's hands-on 'vanishing' of the 'problem' could easily have been taken a few steps further when faced with the pragmatics of the situation.

As this chapter has demonstrated, complicity for the destruction of children through the marketplace of motherhood extended far beyond those individuals involved in more 'criminal' forms of disposal. The service users were complicit as, being in a crisis of respectability, they made the initial decision regarding the 'disposal' of their child that was wholly 'abnormal' to the ideological conceptions of respectable motherhood. Rather than the mother and child being lured in a predatory fashion, the children were freely handed over following a generally tacit yet fundamentally uncertain agreement that the child would disappear from the lives of the customers.

The normalcy of 'criminal' forms of disposing of children in the marketplace was not established upon coded and widely understood messages for 'infanticide for hire', it was based upon the complicity around giving a child away. As such an act was entirely 'abnormal' in relation to the ideologies of respectable motherhood established in Chapter Four it could only be done with an 'abnormal' child that was not meant to exist within 'respectable' society. The marketplace thus presented a complete inversion of normalcy in relation to the ideologies of 'respectable' society. When a mother could not be a 'respectable mother' she used the marketplace to reverse her status as mother to return to being a 'respectable woman'. When a child did not fit within respectable society by not, ideologically, being what a child should be their status was converted to that of a 'non-child' and a 'problem' to be got rid of.

This chapter has thus revealed the second-level unspoken normalcy of systems of 'disposal' within the marketplace of motherhood. Where the first-level 'normalness' concerned the ideologically constructed normative conduct of respectable society outlined in Chapter Four, the second-level normalcy was

framed by instrumental rationality. This is the normalcy of identifying practical solutions to problems that may not be acceptable in the public eye but may still need to be processed in order to complete imperative objectives. This second-level normalcy could only be considered 'normal' in specific contexts, like the private and unseen back spaces that existed within the marketplace of motherhood.

The 'criminal' forms of disposal, including outright murder, were thus simply logical and mundane extensions of the 'disposal' process that had been negotiated between the key parties to the transaction. Allowing the child to die or helping them on their way was just another way of 'disposing' of the problem and allowing customers to get back to their first-level 'normality' in 'respectable' society and was thus just a continuation of the service. Whilst they did not orchestrate how exactly their objective to 'dispose' of their child was to be achieved, service users set the process in motion and relegated the completion of the task to others, thus shifting the responsibility onto someone else. Whether or not they cared for the child's future, all customers ultimately sought the same ends - to be free of the stigma associated with the child. Nevertheless, the key to facilitating the child's 'disposal' and the crux of the shared complicity lay in the fact that the child was constructed differently, by all parties, to the conventional valorisation of an ideologically 'legitimate' child.

The overlooked and obscured victim most commonly ignored in accounts of 'baby-farming' is thus central to making sense of this phenomenon. Their deaths were an outcome of them being a very particular type of victim. Other commentators, misled by narratives of (multiple) homicide, have considered their deaths as an 'active' event. Where focus has been on understanding the deaths as being causally related to intrinsic qualities of the 'killer', they have failed to take proper account of how the child's social, cultural, and economic status were the central determinants of their general 'disposal' and possible destruction. Outcomes of death in the marketplace of motherhood were not generally proactive and predetermined as others have represented it. Even in instances that involved more than just neglect, omission, or exposure, it takes very little to 'kill' a child and such small 'acts' would have themselves been fundamentally passive. Causing a baby's death within the conditions of the marketplace,

especially when killing the child outright, was perhaps the most logical thing for service providers to do. No longer considered human, the child could just be left to die or 'helped along their way'.

The largely unacknowledged modern marketplace of motherhood discussed within this thesis provided a central mechanism in the overall maintenance of 'respectable' and 'civilised' society. Whilst many of the practices and some notorious practitioners have historically been anathematised, the enterprises of the marketplace of motherhood were fundamentally forms of 'dirty' work that society needed done but was unwilling to openly accept. Although those who operated more 'criminal' forms of disposal were ideologically 'abnormal', their actions and those who recruited them were entirely in accord with the machinery and mind-set of modernity and 'civilised' society.

IX: Conclusions and Contributions

SOME of the crimes and vices of highly civilised societies are scarcely less inhuman or more refined than the crimes and vices displayed by savages or by semi-barbarians. Among untutored tribes, and among nations like the Chinese, infant life is little valued, and many are the tales recorded by travellers and missionaries of desertion or infanticide. In England... we may hear similar stories almost daily of inhuman mothers, and of women who make it their business to get rid of infants that are not wanted by their parents (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 6th April 1870: 6).

9.1. Summary of Aims, Rationale, and Findings

Having challenged the dominant taken-for-granted conceptualisations of so-called 'baby-farming' that have persisted from the late Victorian period to the present, this thesis sought to provide a revised social-history of this phenomenon that gave voice and agency to those who were directly involved. By reconstructing some of those 'voices from below' that have remained hidden within this aspect of woman's history (cf. Bhattacharya, 1983; Lynd, 1993; Smith, 2010), it has been demonstrated how the practices, people, and outcomes associated with 'baby-farming' were not products of human aberrancy, pathology, or monstrosity. Instead, they were fundamentally the products of the ideological obsessions shared by many modernising societies - such as that found in Victorian and Edwardian London - with 'respectability' and 'civilisation' (cf. Bauman, 1989; Elias, 1939; Foucault, 1984; Hacking, 2002).

It has been revealed how dominant conceptualisations of so-called 'baby-farming' based upon notions of female aberrancy have emanated from ideological constructions of 'otherness' which ultimately tell us very little about the women or the practices themselves (cf. Hodgkinson, Prins and Stuart-Bennett, 2017). The perpetuation of these narratives in relation to 'baby-farming', particularly of

female monstrosity, pathology, and victimhood, highlights how respectable womanhood and motherhood were, and have remained to be, incredibly precious and policed categories in modern 'civilised' societies (cf. Seal, 2010).

Unlike any other account, the thesis has revealed how the practices associated with so-called 'baby-farming' were but one aspect of a well-established and generally legitimate marketplace of motherhood which informally catered for concealing the breaking of rules of female respectability. By providing a space for women to privately negotiate their crisis of respectable womanhood, the marketplace furnished a variety of optional routes in the removal of stigma and management of respectable identity (cf. Goffman, 1959, 1963).

Ideologically constructed as a 'problem', the child thus became an avatar for the stigma of its biological mother's sexual 'fall'. That the mother's stigma could be transferred to the child emphasises the frightening power of respectability during this period. Overriding everything, the mother's concern often became first and foremost to managing her identity as a respectable woman. Doing so meant the child could not 'exist' in her respectable life. Curiously, within this period, a discrediting new-born infant was constructed in a way that it could be sold on to whatever fate. That the marketplace indicated that women were increasingly seeking ways to 'dispose' of stigma-prone children highlights how the systems of respectability were becoming seriously unhinged and that its discourses were ultimately lies that masked the muddy and bloody realities of women's experiences.

Something quite unusual had thus occurred during the Victorian and Edwardian periods in relation to how new-born infants were constructed as well as how they could be viewed by their parents. Given how much the child was sacralised as the most precious product of 'civilised' society, not to mention how women were ideologically constructed as naturally selfless and loving maternal figures who were central to the 'civilising mission', the only way women could possibly not fulfil their loving duty to a child was if they were somehow monstrous, insane, or a victim of some kind (cf. Appignanesi, 2008; Weare, 2013).

It was therefore the biological mother's side of the story that is most interesting and revealing in this phenomenon. The service providers, including those found

guilty of murder, were simply a logical extension of the mother's' primary objective to remove their stigma by 'disposing' of their social constructed 'problem' one way or another (cf. Goffman, 1963; Bauman, 1989). Her identity as a respectable woman or a respectable mother was dictated and enforced by the strict adherents, rule setters, and regulators of 'respectability' (cf. Becker, 1963). This thesis has shown how once a woman broke the fundamental rule of respectable womanhood - of sexual purity and legitimate reproduction - and risked being exposed and discredited as a rule breaker (cf. Goffman, 1959, 1963), then this whole female-centred network of machinery in the private management of respectable identity could be rapidly brought into action. This machinery functioned to help the mother rewrite or preserve her 'front stage' biographical identity as a respectable woman as if her transgression of respectable womanhood had never happened (cf. Goffman, 1959, 1963; Giddens, 1991).

The industry of disposal was ultimately just one important facet of a society that had in many ways become a factory of respectability (cf. Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 1989, 2000). As 'respectable' society needed to cultivate and protect its idealised visions and appearances for the good of the 'civilising project' (Elias, 1939), these systems of identity management were indispensable. However, it was the self-regulating individuals who had to perform the 'dirty work' of identity management, and it was the individuals who really suffered for it (cf. Hughes, 1958; Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss, 2006).

The point then is that the 'killings' associated with this phenomenon were not really about those that killed. Ultimately, 'killing' a child became a logical extension of the overall system of stigma 'disposal' within a space of possibility that made this but one conceivable and viable outcome (cf. Bauman, 1989). The available evidence does not suggest that this was a common outcome, nor does it suggest that it was either predetermined at the start of the process or that it was anything more than a subsidiary aspect of what was essentially a legitimate, albeit stigma-prone, marketplace. Yet, dehumanised in this way, it naturally became far easier to treat the 'non-child' object of the transaction in ways that would have been inconceivable for an ideologically 'respectable' child.

Accordingly, any 'killings' associated with the marketplace cannot be properly understood through traditional frameworks of 'madness', 'badness', 'victimhood', or even 'serial-killing'. Instead, it was based on very normal processes that served identity management. Through systems of dehumanisation, distancing, intermediation, 'passing the buck', moral indifference and invisibility, and rational action, the 'killing' of a child - by whatever degree it could be considered 'active' or 'passive' - was ultimately an entirely 'normal' and even 'logical' outcome (cf. Bauman, 1989). This outcome was thus fundamentally the product of Victorian and Edwardian culture, of modernity, rather than of the abnormal machinations of a few aberrant women.

Within a culture of shame that manifested as a direct corollary of the extreme cultivation of 'respectability', all interactive transactions and outcomes of the marketplace were necessarily secretive (cf. Smart, 2009; Nash and Kilday, 2010). Through enclosed spaces, illusion, inversion, occultation, and 'disappearing acts', evidence of the shared management of deviancy and crisis was effectively directed towards orchestrating this entire process from start to finish as if it never happened (cf. Foucault, 1986). It was only through those instances that were forcibly brought to light that we have any window into the actual workings and experiences of these practices. Ultimately, this is why we know very little about those instances that led to more legitimate outcomes. Unless there was a good reason for any given interactive transaction within the marketplace to be brought to light and investigated, such as following the discovery of a dead infant body that was traced back to the key parties, then they would have been forever hidden leaving little to no trace in the archives (cf. Smart, 2009).

The existence of systems of child 'disposal' within the marketplace of motherhood reflects a culture of resistance among women who were oppressed by the idealised figures of respectable womanhood and faced shame and exclusion for falling short of these ideals (cf. Foucault, 1976, 1991; Nash and Kilday, 2010). In effect, the marketplace was a modern manifestation of a timeworn tradition in which women have habitually stepped up to deal with practices and hardships associated with motherhood, as well as problematic motherhood (cf. Ehrenreich, 1973; Yakushko, 2018). This phenomenon is thus part of a much wider functional role that women have filled across time and culture concerning the muddy and

bloody realities of women's lives. Ultimately, this was an essential social system that was available for all women to utilise, either as service users or providers, in order to survive within 'respectable' society (cf. Walkowitz, 1980, 1992).

The marketplace of motherhood, its discourses, practices, and outcomes, even women like Amelia Dyer, were thus entirely natural and rational products of modernity, of the ideologies and technologies of 'respectable', 'civilised' society. Any child deaths or 'killings' were simply a circumstantial consequence of the modern commerce of motherhood and respectability and the conditions that existed which facilitated the dehumanisation and wholesale commodification of new-born children as well as the various forms of their 'disposal'. Whether entirely legitimate or criminal, the different forms of disposal that manifested within the marketplace were all centred around the primary objective of removing stigma and managing respectable identities. A unique constellation of conditions thus created the space in which killing could quite easily happen, and to the best of our knowledge it did happen, but the full extent to which it happened we will never really know.

Within this period where the cult of respectable womanhood was worshipped as supreme, all that was disgraceful and discrediting was sacrificed upon the altar of respectable identity. Through the renouncement of ideologically unsound children, the respectability of the many was preserved at the expense of the few. Those who performed these sacrifices were not forced or tricked into doing so. They ultimately chose to do so because of their wayward and oppressive obsession with 'respectability' and the 'civilising mission'.

9.2. Contributions to the Body of Knowledge

The key contributions this thesis has made to knowledge can be broadly divided into three areas: (1) to the history and historiography of so-called 'baby-farming', (2) to historical understandings of particular constructs of the period, and (3) to gender studies and women's history.

i. Contributions to the History and Historiography of 'Baby-Farming'

Those working in the field have tended to stick to the paths cut by those who have already passed the same way... we have systematically forgotten many of the most interesting and distinctive aspects of the period, and much of what we think we know about it is utterly false... and lazily accepted as truth (Sweet, 2001: 230).

Unlike any other account of the practices associated with 'baby-farming', this thesis has demonstrated that this phenomenon in its entirety cannot possibly be properly understood solely with reference to a few isolated cases of 'baby-farming'. Instead, it has been shown how adequate understandings may only be generated through a relational perspective that considers all key parties within the wider social, cultural, and historical context that brought them together to create a space in which 'killing' became possible, yet by no means inevitable (cf. Hodgkinson, Prins and Stuart-Bennett, 2017). As the key parties to the transactions associated with 'baby-farming' were, it appears, most commonly brought together by newspaper advertisements for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering, the thesis has innovatively taken this source of data as the most appropriate starting point from which to adequately understand this phenomenon in its entirety as an interactive process.

Where most other accounts have persistently taken the apogee of 'killing' in the marketplace as the foundation of analysis, this thesis has instead subverted 'common sense' to go back and show how what these women were doing was, first and foremost, both normal and legitimate. A required economic function that was, at least on the surface, entirely concordant with cultural ideologies of womanhood, and of women's roles and responsibilities. Below the marketplace's veneer of respectability, these women were rationally undertaking forms of necessary identity work and 'dirty work'.

Accordingly, the explanation has become far broader than what could ever be said through traditional frameworks of 'women who kill' or what could be gleaned from the biographies of individual cases. Instead, it has been shown how adequate understandings of this phenomenon need to consider, for example, women's vulnerabilities through discourses of respectability and civilisation, ideologies of gender, the consumerisation and performativity of gender identity, stigma and stigma management, women's work opportunities, women's spaces, forms of female resistance, 'dirty work', the wholesale commodification of children, the 'civilising project', and the rapidly changing social and technological landscape of modernity.

The thesis has also demonstrated the importance of utilising the newly digitised archives in conjunction with the physical archives in order to develop rich and contextualised histories 'from below' (cf. Stevenson, 2007, 2014; Crone, 2009; Hitchcock, 2013). As described by Sweet (2001: 230-1):

There is a mass of material in archives, libraries, private collections, waiting to be dragged back into public cognisance - a world of exciting, utterly forgotten stories, a huge cast of equally neglected personalities.

Having opened up this phenomenon for re-analysis, this thesis has revealed new ways by which the space of possibility in which the practices and different outcomes connected to so-called 'baby-farming' may be investigated and better understood. By opening up the possibilities of looking at this phenomenon in its wider social, cultural, and historical context, it has been shown how this phenomenon cannot be properly understood any other way. Even if we were able to ask those like Amelia Dyer why they did what they did, they would tell us a story that would still need to be understood in its wider context.

ii. Contributions to Understandings of Particular Historical Constructs

As this thesis has shown, the concept of 'baby-farming' has over the years come to mean something quite far removed from the actual lives, identities, practices,

and experiences of those associated with the term. As such, the overall understanding of this phenomenon does not simply fit into a framework of female deviancy, criminality, and homicide because it is far bigger than that. Having revealed exactly what these women were and what they were doing, the thesis has located this phenomenon within a number of prominent and well-documented constructs of the period. Further related studies should consider the relevance of so-called 'baby-farming' to the following constructions.

Central to this thesis is the revelation that the marketplace of motherhood and those practices associated with 'baby-farming' found within it were a product of the ideologies of respectability, particularly of respectable womanhood, and are therefore relevant to studies of the bourgeois 'civilising mission' (Elias, 1939). Similarly, they are pertinent to how and why women conformed or deviated from the responsibilising discourses of respectable womanhood.

In conjunction, the thesis has revealed how the marketplace of motherhood and all the people, practices, and outcomes associated with it were products of the period and therefore relevant to studies of modernity (cf. Bauman, 1989, 2000). In particular, the thesis has located this phenomenon within the period's consumer culture, especially as it related to women (cf. Loeb, 1994; Richards, 1990). Moreover, it has demonstrated the central importance of the modern commodification of identity, and particularly the commodification of the new-born child, to making sense of this phenomenon. Such constructions remain relevant to this day (see for example Cook, 2004; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 5; Hearn, 2008; Petrie, 2010; Widdows, 2016: 4)¹¹².

The thesis has also situated the phenomenon of 'baby-farming' within historical trends of 'women's work', entrepreneurship, and 'dirty work'. Correspondingly, it has relevance to studies of women's developing social and economic independence, to working class women, poverty, and the notion of 'separate spheres' and the betwixt 'social sphere' (cf. Vicinus, 1977; Davidoff, 1995; Poovey, 1995; Walkowitz, 1998; Gleadle, 2001). In particular, it has shown how the practices associated with 'baby-farming' sat alongside other forms of 'casual',

¹¹² Consider, for example, contemporary issues involving the commodification of the new-born child such as celebrity intercountry adoptions, surrogate motherhood, in vitro fertilisation, and abortion.

‘unskilled’, and ‘dirty’ work available to women that lay on the margins of respectable society (cf. Walkowitz, 1980, 1992).

Correspondingly, the thesis has revealed how the practices associated with ‘baby-farming’ were central to constructions of sex and female sexuality, to motherhood, and problematic parenthood. The thesis is therefore relevant to studies of Victorian and Edwardian sexual relations, to different forms of motherhood and mothering, and to women’s sexual and reproductive independence (cf. McLaren, 1977, 1978; Gillis, 1979; Barret-Ducrocq, 1991; Anderson, 1995; Cook, 2004). Of course, connected to this is the thesis’ relevance to the period’s constructions of ‘the fallen woman’ and how woman managed the stigma and other hardships associated with this (cf. Logan, 1998; Mumm, 1996; Braun, 2015; Maxwell, 2016; Mendonça, 2016).

Related to this, the thesis has shed light upon the living conditions and subcultures that lay behind ideological representations of ‘respectable’ or ‘deviant’ women of the period. As such, the thesis complements other studies that explore the ‘back stage’ and ‘unmasked’ muddy and bloody realities of women’s lives, societal ‘underbellies’, and informal or illegitimate marketplaces that have remained insufficiently explored or ‘hidden’ in histories (cf. Knight, 1977; Andersson, 2015; Connor, 2015; Huggins, 2017; Cheshire, 2017).

By examining the living conditions and subcultures of those women associated with so-called ‘baby-farming’ as well as how they have been represented, the thesis has explored the ideological and practical realities of a Victorian and Edwardian constructed form of female ‘deviancy’ and reproductive ‘otherness’. In consequence, it enriches a body of work that has adeptly explored different constructions of ‘folk devilling’ and ‘moral panic’ during the period (cf. Rowbotham and Stevenson, 2003, 2005; Connor, 2015).

Through the use of the newspaper archives, especially in regards to the central use of the personal advertisements for ‘out-of-house’ substitute mothering to make sense of the practices associated with ‘baby-farming’, the thesis also contributes to the study of Victorian and Edwardian newspaper constructions (cf. Richards, 1990; Stevenson, 2007, 2014) as well as their target audiences, readership, and usership (cf. Jones, 2004: 22; Fernandez, 2010; Vuuren, 2010).

Related to this, the thesis contributes to the history of informal and formal adoption in Victorian and Edwardian England, an area that has received very little scholarly attention (Abramowicz, 2013). In particular, how newspaper advertisements were used by women as invitations to treat in the private bilateral negotiation of child care contracts with 'out-of-house' substitute mothers.

Finally, having deconstructed the multi-layered sign system used within adverts for 'out-of-house' substitute mothering and tracing its discursive roots to a far older and more amiable conceptualisation of 'farming', the thesis is also significant for studies on the development of privatised sub-contracting of poor relief (cf. Coats, 1976; Horsburgh, 1983; Murphey, 2002).

It should be questioned why this significant aspect of women's history has not been paid more attention by historians, sociologists, and gender scholars. Perhaps because they too have been misled by popular conceptions of 'baby-farming' and its sensationalised associations with women who kill, perhaps also believing, like Hinks (2014: 562), that this phenomenon "cannot be studied independently from its representation in the media". As this thesis has shown, this contention is only partly true. Once 'top-down' constructions have been put in their place, it is possible to get back to basics, examine the process from the beginning, allow those voice 'from below' to speak for themselves, and reflect upon their agency, action, and experience within the space they operated in.

iii. Contributions to Gender Studies and Women's History

Feminists have long recognised that changes in the way we represent violence do not only follow social changes but changes in representations - and interpretation - can also lead the way (Boyle, 2005: 13).

The contributions this thesis has made to the studies of gender relate particularly to representations of women's violence and the need to break free of ideological conceptualisations of otherness that are stereotypical, reductionist, and

disempowering and which ultimately lack explanatory power (cf. Seal, 2010). The thesis has demonstrated that by adequately considering such ideologically transgressive behaviours in their wider social, cultural, and historical context they more often than not appear relatively normal, logical, and entirely understandable (cf. Hodgkinson, Prins and Stuart-Bennett, 2017).

The reconceptualisation of female violence that move beyond traditional 'bad', 'bad', and 'victim' narratives has profound implications not just for within academia but also for wider society. To illustrate, such representations still play out within the media (see for example Jewkes, 2004) and affect their legal outcomes in courtrooms (Wilczynski, 1997; Weare, 2013, 2017), particularly in relation to women's violence against children (Barnett, 2006; Downing, 2013). Such understandings blind us to underlying social issues and causes and often diminish our ability to make sense of and prevent female criminal behaviours (Easteal, Bartels, Nelson and Holand, 2015).

As highlighted earlier in this thesis, such narratives construct women who commit acts of violence as either 'non-women' or 'non-criminals' (Worrall, 1989), thus denying them agency. Women who transgress ideological boundaries between masculinity and femininity are subjugated to positions of passivity or entirely excluded from 'human' categories of analysis. This denial of agency is undeniably a response to the threat such women pose to power relations and well-established cultural ideologies and the need to contain such disruption (Morrissey, 2003; Seal, 2010). As discussed by Jenks (2003: 183):

By refusing women who commit acts of supreme violence acceptance within the category of woman (they become monsters), the public [reaffirms] to itself the essence of what women are. Thereby also reaffirming its commitment to a 'shared' social order. That is... a way to restore the primary image of the innate maternal and caring dispositions of womankind through relegating some would-be women (those who commit acts of atrocity) to another category essentialised through images of evil or pathology. Thus, the stigma of anomaly works to explain how certain women may be capable of actions which other, 'normal', women are not: the system of classification stays intact by resisting the 'defilement' of the abhorrent case.

This thesis' most significant contribution is perhaps to the prosperity women's history and the history of gender, especially those 'from below' (cf. Bland and Rowold, 2015; Groot, 2018). As previously discussed, this thesis shared a commitment to rationalising individual agency, action, and experience, especially of marginalised women that has so often been denied or 'occulted' within history (cf. Bhattacharya, 1983; Walkowitz, 1992). In doing so, it has contributed significantly to reconstructing a voice that was previously absent in our histories, one that sits alongside all other reconstructed voices, such as those of 'the fallen woman', 'the working woman', and 'the prostitute'.

As discussed by Andersson (2015: 442), "plebeian women were seldom given a voice in Victorian society; sadly, the same goes for Victorian studies". Through an innovative excavation and analysis of the archives, the thesis has established an important narrative for those who can no longer speak, yet has done so in a way that has allowed them to speak for themselves. This has led to a challenging and rewriting of a dominant narrative constructed by the Victorian and Edwardian 'elite' that has persisted to the present and has so often been simply taken as truth.

Whilst the relevance and usefulness of history is often questioned, we should, as made evident by Sweet (2001: 232), reflect more on the many ways by which the Victorians and Edwardians, particularly the culture of Victorianism, "made us - good and bad - what we are today". It is the existential power of histories like that presented in this thesis, their ability to cast light upon who and how we are and to bridge the past with the present and future, that makes them so valuable.

iv. Limitations and Further Research

It must be recognised that the present thesis only provides a window into part of the story of this modern marketplace and that this history remains fragmented and limited. Whilst data beyond the thesis has been used as far as possible to fill in contextual gaps, there remains much work left to be done. The following

outlines a number of key limitations with this thesis and some of the ways they may be addressed with future research.

The first limitation concerns the circumscriptions that were required for this thesis to achieve the required degree of social, cultural, and historical specificity. Whilst this thesis has focused on the experiences of 'out-of-house' substitute mothering in Victorian and Edwardian London, the widespread existence of these practices has also been documented in many other, if not most, major British cities as well as other Western countries during this period (see for example Broder, 2002; Swain, 2005; Grey, 2009; Hinks, 2014). Although this thesis presents the phenomena subsumed within the term 'baby-farming' as fundamentally a product of 'Victorian culture', and therefore the manifestation of these practices in other places influenced by Victorianism may be partly understood through the same theoretical framework, the idiosyncrasies of particular regions, their unique social structures and resources, demands that analytical and explanatory focus be circumscribed. It would nevertheless be both useful and interesting to examine how the general framework developed in this thesis may be used to better explore and understand similar manifestations within other contexts within this period.

Related to this, the circumscriptions placed on the thesis meant that primary focus was given to those 'voices from below' available through the digital archives in making sense of this phenomenon. Accordingly, as discussed in the methodology section, various other important voices are yet to be considered further. These relate both to other 'voices from below' that could not be included or fully explored within this thesis (such as cases not brought before the Old Bailey), but also to various 'voices from above' (such, for example, as the *Report from the Select Committee on Protection of Infant Life*, 1871) that were not the central focus of this thesis but which may help to further fill in contextual gaps and offer other viewpoints.

A third limitation relates to the general exploratory nature of this thesis and how, in considering a number of cases across a fairly substantial time period, it developed a theoretical framework more through breadth than depth of analysis. What would be especially interesting then would be to return to focusing on particular cases in greater detail and examine them through the framework

developed in this thesis. It would be useful to trace different cases from their actions prior to being arrested, to their experience before the courts, as well as how they came to be represented in the media. Similarly, it would be important to explore those cases that were not brought before the Old Bailey, to compare those that were disposed of in the lower courts and which went to the higher courts and why.

As discussed in the methodology chapter (see Section 3.5), the thesis is also restricted and shaped by the subjectivities of the researcher. Whilst the methodological framework adopted here is interdisciplinary, it is nevertheless structured from a particular socio-criminological viewpoint. Similarly, as reflected in Section 3.5, the general standpoint taken in this research has undeniably influenced the way this aspect of history was studied and written. The further examination of this phenomenon through the eyes of others, especially those wishing to test and build upon the framework developed in this thesis, would be of immense value. Finally, whilst this thesis has to be contained historically, it is important to explore how these marketplaces of motherhood, which so easily remain hidden in history, manifested before and after this period. For instance, more research is required to explore how the marketplace examined within this thesis, and the ideologies of respectability and illegitimacy that shaped it, existed in England during and after the First and Second World Wars. Likewise, there are many fascinating contemporary examples of the unregulated wholesale buying and selling of children and parenthood, such as the discovery of ‘baby factories’¹¹³ in Nigeria and Thailand (*BBC News*, 2018^a; *BBC News*, 2018^b) or the apparent trade of babies on Instagram and eBay in China and Indonesia (*The Guardian*, 2018; *BBC News*, 2005), that require comparative study and understanding.

In conclusion, this research has only begun to scratch the surface and contribute to the understanding of a phenomenon that has likely manifested in some form or another throughout human history and across all cultures. There remains so much more data, ‘voice’, and context left undiscovered or under-researched. As shown in this thesis, the voices, people, and communities of marketplaces of

¹¹³ A term that has been used to describe a location where women are encouraged or forced to become pregnant and for their babies to be sold (Eseadi, Achagh, Ikechukwu-Ilomuanya and Ogbuabor, 2015).

motherhood can easily become 'hidden', and the empowerment and privileging of those narratives 'from above' over those 'from below' can distort our ways of understanding to the convenience of state narrations of normativity, crime, and punishment. We must always be prepared to challenge dominant historical narratives and rewrite new more robust and nuanced histories through a more holistic and contextualised engagement with the evidence.

Appendix

Appendix A. Catalogue and brief overview of criminal cases involving the death or neglect of a child from the Old Bailey archives that occurred pre-1868.

1. In 1686, Mary Jones (t16860224-25) was charged with wilfully killing an infant, John Parker, whom she had taken to nurse. The verdict returned was not guilty and the death considered accidental.
2. In 1693, Mary Compton (OA16931023) was charged with wilfully killing four children she had taken to nurse by means of starvation. She was found guilty and sentenced to death.
3. In 1718, Eleanor Callimore (t17180910-76) was charged with the wilful killing of Thomas Shaw, an infant she had taken to nurse, by means of physically abusing him. As it could not be proved that Thomas had died from her beating him, she was acquitted. Eleanor had previously been arraigned and acquitted for starving another child she had taken to nurse.
4. In 1727, Catherine Banfield (t17270705-52) was charged with wilfully killing an infant, John Cornish, she had taken to nurse for a weekly wage by wilfully burning him in a fire. Catherine was found not guilty and acquitted due to be proved whether the fire was accidental or not and because it seemed a contradiction that “a woman should in such a manner contribute, or be any ways assistant towards the death of the child, when at the same time she took it but for weekly wages, and by consequence proposed some advantage to herself from the child’s life, but could propose none from its death”.
5. In 1790, Lucy Acor (t17900424-26) was charged with wilfully killing an infant named Mary Page whom she had taken to nurse. Lucy was

accused of having intentionally neglecting and refusing to provide sufficient food and assistance for Mary. She was found not guilty on account of a doctor's view that Mary's death was on account of a weak constitution from being born to diseased parents.

6. In 1804, Susannah Garment (t18040704-34) was charged with wilfully killing an infant named William Lee whom she had taken to nurse. Susannah was accused of having neglected William with the intention of causing his death. Due to lack of evidence, Susannah was acquitted.
7. In 1850, Mary Shipley (t18500708-1326) was charged with wilfully killing an infant named Sidney George Laming whom she had taken to nurse for five shillings a week. Mary was accused of neglecting Sidney with the intention of causing his death. Statements from two witnesses who lived in the same house as Mary reported that they had heard her say that she had been given the child "to kill it, feed it, starve it, or do what she liked with it" and that "the mother would have nothing to do with it". Mary was found not guilty.
8. In 1851, Sarah Whitehorn (t18510407-1009) was charged with wilfully killing an infant named Henry Greenaway whom she had taken to nurse. Sarah was accused of physically abusing Henry with the intention of causing his death. One witness reported that Sarah had said to her "a d--n good job if he was dead now, and I should get rid of him". Sarah told the court that she had previously worked as a domestic servant and then a prostitute before becoming employed as a nurse ('out-of-house' substitute mother) whilst she was an inmate of Camberwell Workhouse. Sarah was found guilty and imprisoned for 18 months.
9. In 1853, Joseph Burch and Caroline Nash (t18531024-1123) were charged with wilfully killing an 'illegitimate' infant named Richard Higgs whom Caroline had taken to nurse for half a crown per week. Both Joseph and Caroline were accused of having physically abused Richard. One witness, who claimed to have tried to intervene when seeing them

abusing Richard, reported that Caroline had said that they “would do as they liked with their own” and that the pair presented themselves to the neighbourhood as a married couple and passed Richard off as their own. Another witness reported that she had heard Richard being beaten every day but had not made a complaint to anybody or intervened through fear. Both Joseph and Caroline were found guilty and sentenced to four years penal servitude.

10. In 1854, Trophy Knight (t18540918-1035) was charged with the wilful killing of Henry Groves, an infant she had taken to nurse. Trophy has accused of having intentional neglecting and physically abusing Henry. One witness reported having heard Trophy say on a number of occasions “You little b-----, I wish you were dead”. Trophy was found guilty of manslaughter, recommended to mercy by the jury, and sentenced to one month or imprisonment.

Appendix B: Catalogue and brief overview of criminal cases involving the death or neglect of a child from the Old Bailey archives between 1868-1909.

1. In 1868, Mary Ann Morer (t18680817-731) was charged with wilfully killing an ‘illegitimate’ infant named George Peacock whom she had taken to nurse from a domestic servant named Harriet for three shillings and six pence per week. Mary was accused of having neglected George. One witness reported that Mary had initially done her best to care for George but was then forced to neglect it for her work. Mary was found not guilty.
2. In 1870, Lias Lipman and Mary Ann Lipman (t18700815-645) were charged with wilfully killing Joseph Lipman the child of Hannah Lipman, Lias’s sister. Hannah’s brother, Lias, and his wife Mary had agreed to take Joseph for a payment so she and her husband could go travelling in search of employment. Lias and Mary were accused of having severely

neglected Joseph. Several witnesses described having seen the child severely emaciated, dirty, and covered in scabs and vermin. One witness who worked in the service of Lias and Mary reported that she had heard Mary say “as soon as Hannah [Joseph’s mother] is gone I will get rid of that little b-----“. Lias Lipman was found not guilty but his wife, Mary, was found guilty of causing death by wilful neglect, was strongly recommended to mercy by the jury, and sentenced to 18 month’s imprisonment.

3. In 1870, Margaret Waters and her sister Sarah Ellis (t18700919-769) were charged with the wilful killing of John Walter Cowen, the ‘illegitimate’ baby of 17-year-old Janet Tassie Cowen who had been ‘outraged’ at 16. Whilst Janet was confined at a laying-in establishment, her father, Robert, responded to an advert he had found in *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* to have the child adopted from birth. He received a letter by a person addressing themselves as Mrs Willis which read:

Sir, in reply to your letter, I beg to say we are not willing to give our address. In taking a child we wish to do so entirely, never to be claimed. We have been married many years, but are without family, and have determined upon bringing a little one up as our own. My constant care shall be for the child, and everything which will be for the child’s comfort shall be strictly studied. Should you think more of this, and will write saying where and when I can see you and how I shall know you, we shall feel obliged. We have had several letters, so are anxious to decide which child we shall take. Yours respectfully, M. Willis.

Janet’s father arranged to meet Margaret at Brixton Railway Station and claimed to have destroyed all other correspondence between him and the lady addressing herself as ‘Mrs Willis’. After discussing the circumstances of his daughter and the terms of the adoption, the two agreed that Robert would contact ‘Mrs Willis’ again once the child was born. The following week, they met again at Walwoth Station at 9.30 in the evening to complete the exchange.

The following week, Robert was visited by a police officer who was investigating Margaret Waters and Sarah Ellis. The officer had begun an undercover investigation into the network of laying-in homes and 'out-of-house' substitute mothering advertisements following the discovery of a number of dead infants disposed on around Brixton. By pretending to be the father of a child he wished to put out for adoption, he got in contact with and met Sarah Ellis who presented herself to him as 'Mrs Oliver'. Both using false names, the two made arrangements for the adoption of the fictitious child. Sarah, as 'Mrs Oliver' had previously written a letter to the undercover officer saying:

Sir, in reply to your letter, I beg to say that it would give me great pleasure to adopt, as my own, your little boy, if he is not too old. You omitted to state the child's age, and I wish for one as young as possible, that it may know none but ourselves as its parents. The child would be well brought up, and carefully educated; he would learn a good trade, and be to us in all respects as our own. We have been married several years; but have no family. We are in a comfortable position, have a good business, and a home in every way calculated to make a child happy. We are both very fond of children; and should you entrust your little one to my care, you may rely upon his receiving the love and care of a mother. Any place you like to appoint for an interview will suit me. I can meet you at any time or place, and should be very glad to have the matter settled as soon as possible. Hoping to have an early reply, I am, Sir, respectfully yours, K. Oliver.

No address was provided with the letter and when 'Mrs Oliver' was pressed for an address she declined stating that she did not want anyone to come and claim the child after she had got it. Upon meeting to discuss the terms, 'Mrs Oliver' told the undercover officer to meet her at Camberwell Railway Station with the child, as many clothes as he could get, and five pounds. After they parted, the officer followed 'Mrs Oliver' from a distance in order to trace her to where she lived.

When the house Margaret Waters (otherwise known as 'Mrs Willis') and Sarah Ellis (otherwise known as 'Mrs Oliver) occupied was searched by the police, it was found that they had 10 other children they had taken to nurse, many of whom were extremely emaciated, dirty, and in an opiate induced stupor. When questioned how long they had been in the business of adopting children in this way and how many they had adopted Margaret said replied "about four years" and "about forty". Sarah replied "more than forty". When asked what had happened to the other children they replied that some had been sent away and some taken home but could not tell where any of the where at that time.

The children were removed from the house and taken to Lambeth Workhouse where several subsequently died. Sarah Ellis was found not guilty due to lack of evidence. Margaret was found guilty and sentenced to death.

4. In 1871, Susan King (t18711120-38) was charged with the wilful killing of Alice Butcher, an 'illegitimate' infant she had taken to nurse. Susan was of accused of having intentionally neglected the child. One witness reported how she had repeatedly warned Susan about the way she was mistreating Alice and how she had rarely seen Susan sober. Susan was found guilty and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment.
5. In 1874, Emma McLean (t18740713-454) was charged with unlawfully neglecting to provide proper nourishment for an infant named Alice Irish whom she had taken to nurse, whereby Alice's life was endangered. One witness described how she had discovered Emma inebriated at her lodgings with Alice extremely emaciated and dirty lying in a box covered in rags. Emma was found guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment.
6. In 1874, James William Pollain and Eliza Pollain (t18740608-434) were charged with unlawfully neglecting an 'illegitimate' infant that Eliza had taken to nurse for four shillings per week a few weeks after birth. No evidence was offered against James so he was quickly found not guilty.

Eliza was accused of leaving the child for long periods when she went out throughout the day and night, for not providing proper nourishment, and for physically abusing the child. A police officer who visited the home of James and Eliza found the child tied with cord into a chair. Eliza was found guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment.

7. In 1874, George Alexander and Ada Clifford (t18740608-417) were charged with the wilful killing of Ada Mary Smart, an 'illegitimate' infant whom they had falsely claimed to have put out to nurse on behalf of her mother, Margaret Jane Southey. George and Ada told Margaret that she needed to pay seven shillings a week for her child which they would take to the nurse on her behalf. Margaret was told she could not see the child, nor would George or Ada tell her the address where she was apparently being nursed. Both George and Ada were found guilty of manslaughter and each sentenced to 20 years imprisonment.
8. In 1875, Anne Maria Wells, Jane Reeves, and Mary Ann Reeves (t18750301-220) were charged with the attempted killing of Ada Mary Andrews, the 'illegitimate' infant of Mary Ann. After Ada had been found dropped behind a wall with a handkerchief tied tightly round her neck on a very cold night, a police investigation led to the questioning of Jane and Mary Ann Reeves. After having initially claimed the child belonged to somebody else and that they were just caring for her, an officer ascertained that Ada was Mary Ann's daughter. It was further determined that Jane and Mary Ann had made it be known that they were going to take the child to Roxburgh Grove to be taken care of for eight shillings per week but had instead paid Anne Maria Wells one sovereign to take the child and leave it at a police station or on a doorstep.

Jane and Mary Ann insisted they had no idea any harm would come to Ada, and Anne claimed she had done as requested but had then decided to give the baby to a young girl she met in the street and had asked her to leave the child at a police station on her behalf. However, the hat, cape, pelisse, and pinafore that Jane and Mary Ann had dressed Ada in

before handing her over was later found in Anne's home. When all three women were being held at the police station, one inspector claimed to have overheard Jane say to Anne "When I gave you the child I had not the least idea you were going to injure it, I only thought it was to be placed on a doorstep". Anne Wells reportedly responded "You know you told me that you wanted to get rid of the little b-----".

Jane and Mary Ann Reeves were found not guilty. Anne Wells was found guilty of attempted murder. Later, on the 3rd May 1875 (t18750503-340), Anne Maria Wells was indicted again for the wilful murder of Ada Mary Andrews and found not guilty.

9. In 1877, Ann Johnson (t18770917-736) was charged with the wilful killing of William Onslow, an 'illegitimate' child she had taken to nurse for five shillings a week. Ann was accused of severely neglecting William. One witness described finding him in a "deplorable condition... it was very dirty, its frock and pinafore were miserable... it was a perfect skeleton, and nothing like the child I had seen six weeks before". Ann was found not guilty.
10. In 1879, Anna Jordan (t18790805-674) was charged with wilfully killing Allan Stuchcombe, an 'illegitimate' infant she had taken to nurse for five shillings per week. Anna was accused of having neglected the child, of pawning off much of the clothing given by his mother, and frequently being intoxicated. Anna was found not guilty.
11. In 1879, Laura Julia Addiscott (t18790805-737) was charged with wilfully killing an infant named Kate Smith, whom she had taken to nurse. Laura ran an establishment known as the Home for Friendless Girls at Deptford where several children were kept. She was accused of neglecting and failing to sufficiently provide for the children. One relieving officer who inspected the home described how he had "found very little appearance of food there, a crust or two; there may have been part of a loaf... the

whole of the clothing that I saw there was hardly fit for use of children, not to keep them warm”.

A number of children had previously died at the establishment run by Laura Addiscott. Ellen Smith, who was also at the home, described in court how her younger sister died: “I knew she was ill for about two weeks... she could hardly eat anything and wanted to drink every minute; she was thinner than when she first went into the home, and when she was ill her bones were almost through her skin... I attended on my sister entirely... Miss Addiscott told me to pick off the vermin with my fingers one by one and put them in the fire – there had not been any fire before, it was lighted on purpose to burn the vermin in her hair – Miss Adiscott was obliged to go into the other room because she could not bear the smell of my sister’s head”. Ellen and Kate Smith’s mother had been paying Laura four shillings a week to care for her daughters as she had been ill after the death of her first husband.

Another mother, Frances Sarah Owen, had left her ‘illegitimate’ daughter in the care of Laura Addiscott. Upon marrying and discovering that her child was being mistreated she told her husband about her daughter and together they sought to reclaim her.

Laura Addiscott was found not guilty and several other indictments against her were postponed till the next Session. On 15th September 1879, Laura was again accused of unlawfully assaulting Ellen Smith and causing her actual bodily harm as well as other counts for neglecting to provide proper food and clothing for other children at the home (T18790915-857). She was found guilty on all counts except one of assault and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment.

12. In 1880, Sarah Emmerson and Mary Strickland (t18800426-376) were charged with the wilful killing of Charles Ernest Emmerson, an ‘illegitimate’ infant of Sarah given to Mary to nurse for a few shillings per week whilst she was out at work during the day. Both Sarah and Mary

were accused of neglecting the child. One witness described how he visited the mother when she had the child and found Charles to be “in an emaciated, dirty, and filthy condition”. Both Sarah and Mary were found not guilty.

13. In 1881, Mary Ann Latto (t18810912-818) was charged with the wilful killing of William Arthur Jarry, an ‘illegitimate’ infant she had taken to nurse for five shillings a week. Mary was accused of having neglected William and spending the money meant for him on drink and pawning his clothes for the same purpose. One witness described seeing the child “in a very emaciated state and very sore – at the bottom of the back one bone was nearly through, the skin was broken... its lips were white and compressed, the eyes sunken, and the nose drawn, and it had a deathly smell about it”. Mary was found guilty, recommended to mercy by the jury, and sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour.
14. In 1883, Amelia Evans (t18830129-286) was charged for the manslaughter of Albert Blackman, an ‘illegitimate’ infant she had taken to nurse for five shillings a week. Amelia was accused of having neglected the child. One witness, a surgeon, described how “the child’s cot was in a very filthy condition and the clothes also – there was a smell of decomposition from the clothes... the filth I speak of was excrement and urine... there was a small commencing gangrenous patch on the back – that would be caused by its lying in an irritating fluid... the child’s body was thin, I could see the ribs”. Amelia was found guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour.
15. In 1884, Martha Jones (t18840421-483) was charged with the manslaughter of Adeline Dorothy Brown, an ‘illegitimate’ infant whom she had taken to nurse for seven shillings a week. Martha was accused of neglecting Adeline and frequently being intoxicated. Upon discovering that her daughter was not being cared for in the manner she saw fit, Adeline’s mother removed her from Martha’s care but she died shortly after. One witness described how when seeing the child “everything on it

was wet with urine... the child had a dreadful cough and was very thin". Martha was found not guilty.

16. In 1887, Eliza Britton (t18870131-245) was charged with the manslaughter of Mary Ann Kent, an infant she had taken to nurse. Eliza was accused of physically abusing and neglecting Mary. One witness who lived next door to Eliza described how he "could hear the child as though being beaten with the hand, and it was thumped on the floor and shaken about – I only heard the child just moaning as if it were gagged, as if she had her hand over her mouth to keep her from crying... the language she used to the child was very filthy, she called it a w----, a cow, a mare, and other names". Eliza was found guilty, recommended to mercy by the Jury, and sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour.
17. In 1891, Alice Reeves (t18910309-319) was charged with the manslaughter of Stephen Simmons, an 'illegitimate' infant she had taken to nurse for six shillings per week. Alice was accused of having neglected Stephen. One witness described how he "found the clothing in an extremely filthy and disagreeable condition from the vomit and diarrhoea – the face was thin and dirty and terribly emaciated". Alice was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.
18. In 1891, Annie Davis (t18911019-811) was charged with the wilful killing of Grace Sunman, an 'illegitimate' infant she had taken to nurse for five shillings per week. She was found not guilty. Annie was again indicted for unlawfully neglecting Grace (t18911019-812). One witness, a medical man, described how he found Grace "in a very dirty condition – the lower part of the trunk and thighs were covered with excoriations in a raw state, it was in great pain, and crying – I should say the excoriations were due to the want of cleanliness and proper attention – the child was wet and dirty". Annie was found not guilty.
19. In 1893, Ann Matilda Broughton and George Philip Broughton (t18930109-207) were charged with the manslaughter of Edith Maud

Brown, an infant they had adopted from Charles Nation and his wife who had in turn adopted her from a woman named Mrs Felton through an advertisement in the *People*. Charles Nation and his wife had reportedly adopted Edith for no money but struggling about eight months they sought to return her to her mother. Failing to find her mother, they placed a newspaper advertisement to have her readopted and received nearly 100 replies. Charles testified that Edith was clean, well clothed, and healthy when he gave her to Ann Broughton. A few months later he received a letter from Ann asking if he would take Edith back as George Broughton had been out of work. Charles and his wife declined.

One witness, a relieving officer, reported that when he visited the home of Ann and George Broughton, he found that “the child was lying on a bed made up on the sofa and looked very pallid... it had a cap on its head which later in the evening I took off, and it was a living, seething mass of vermin, scab and filth – the child’s body was not dirty, but very emaciated”. The court found George Broughton not guilty due to lack of evidence. Ann was found guilty and sentenced to six weeks imprisonment with hard labour.

20. In 1893, Ellen Barnabd (t18930306-316) was charged with the manslaughter of Albert Victor Weston, an ‘illegitimate’ infant she had adopted through a newspaper advertisement for two pounds. Ellen had adopted the child using the name ‘Mrs Cox. She was accused of having severely neglected Albert. One witness, a parish doctor described how he saw Albert “in a very weakly emaciated condition, with scarcely any fat on its bones... it was a mere skeleton”. Ellen was found not guilty. On the following day, she was again charged with unlawfully neglecting the child in a manner likely to cause injury to its health, was found guilty and sentenced to two years imprisonment.

21. In 1893, Elizabeth Jane French (t18930626-636) was charged with unlawfully ill-treating and neglecting Frederick Edmunds, an ‘illegitimate’ infant she took to nurse for six shillings a week. One witness stated “I

know that she ill-used it; it was starved and cruelly neglected – some few weeks after she had it I saw a great alteration in it, it was so thin and dirty... the prisoner's own children were in very good condition – this child never looked clean, it never looked as if it had a bath". Elizabeth was found not guilty and upon the coroner's inquisition for the manslaughter of Frederick, also not guilty.

22. In 1895, Mary Ann Davis (t18950909-672) was charged with unlawfully neglecting Herbert Baxter, an 'illegitimate' infant she had taken to nurse for eight shillings a week. One witness stated "I have seen her the worse for drink several times... when I saw the child dirty and filthy it did not appear to be suffering from vomiting. There was no trace of it; it seemed very hungry... it was never clean – I never saw it clean of an evening". Mary was found guilty, strongly recommended to mercy, and sentenced to six weeks imprisonment with hard labour. She was also indicted for the manslaughter of Herbert, upon which no evidence was offered.

23. In 1896, Amelia Elizabeth Dyer (t18960518-451) was charged with the wilful killing of Doris Marmon, an 'illegitimate' infant she had adopted through a newspaper advertisement. Addressing herself as 'Mrs Harding', Amelia had written to the mother of the child saying the following:

To Mrs. Scott [the mother's alias] Dear Madam, in reference to your letter of adoption of a child, I beg to say I shall be glad to have a little baby girl, one that I can bring up and call my own. First, I must tell you, we are plain, homely people, in fairly good circumstances. We live in our own house, and have a good and comfortable home. We are out in the country, and sometimes I am alone a great deal. I don't want the child for money's sake, but for company and home comfort. Myself and husband are dearly fond of children. None of my own. A child with me would have a good home, and a mother's love and care. We belong to the Church of England. I would not mind the mother or any friend coming to see the child at any time, and know the child is going on alright. I only hope we

can come to terms. I should like to have the baby as soon as you can arrange it. If I can come for her, I don't mind paying for one way. I could break my journey at Gloucester; I have a friend in the Asylum there I should be glad to call and see. If you will let me have an early reply, I can give you some references. Yours, Mary Harding.

After the body of Doris was found in the River Thames wrapped in parcel with tape around her neck, the police were able to link the discovery to Amelia due to an address written on the parcel paper. During the trial, evidence was presented to show Amelia had adopted children in this manner for several decades and corpses of many other infants found in the Thames were linked to her. Amelia confessed to her crimes whilst in prison, a plea of insanity was unsuccessful, and she was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to death.

24. In 1898, Maud Esmeralda McKenzie (t18980328-288) was charged with the wilful killing of Henry Francis Tear, an 'illegitimate' infant whom she had adopted through a newspaper advertisement having given her name as 'Mrs Ellis'. Maud was accused of having neglected Henry. One witness, a police sergeant, described visiting Maud's residence to find that "it was very dirty... the clothing was very dirty, almost black with dirt – the child was then lying on the bed uncovered... it was very dirty... it was a mere skeleton". Maud was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to 12 months imprisonment with hard labour.

25. In 1899, Amy Louisa McNeil Douglas (t18990912-624) was charged with the manslaughter of Evelyn Constance Hodson, an 'illegitimate' infant she had adopted through an advertisement in *Dalton's Advertiser* for five pounds and five shillings. Amy had written to Evelyn's mother saying that she wished to take the child for life as she wished to raise her with her own child. One witness, an inspector under the Infant Life Protection Act, who visited Amy's home found seven children, one of whom (Evelyn) was dead. Amy was accused of having starved and neglected Evelyn.

She was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to five years imprisonment.

26. In 1900, Ada Chard Williams and William Chard Williams (t19000212-185) were charged with the wilful murder of Selina Jones, an 'illegitimate' infant adopted by Ada and her husband William for three pounds and a large amount of clothing. Ada had been contacted by Selina's mother after she had advertised that she wished to adopt a child in the *Woolwich Herald* using the name 'Mrs Hewetson'. Ada and William were accused of having physically abused and neglected Selina, of having suffocated her, and disposing of her body in the River Thames after she had died. Ada wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Criminal Investigations Department in New Scotland Yard stating:

Sir, I must apologise taking this liberty, but I see by the papers that I, in conjunction with my husband, are suspected of murdering the little female child found at Battersea on September 27th. The accusation is positively false. The facts of the case are these: I, much against my husband's wish, in August last advertised for a child, thinking to make a little money, the result of which was the adoption of this little girl, with whom I received £3. My next act was to advertise for a home for a little girl; I used some shop in Warwick Road, West Kensington, I forget the number, but I used the name Denton, or Darlton, I am not sure which. I received about 40 replies, from which I chose one, from George Street or George Road, Croydon. The lady from Croydon, Mrs. Smith by name, agreed to take the child for £1 and clothes. I met her at Clapham Junction, the Falcon Hotel, on a Saturday about the middle of September; we were to meet at 7 o'clock. I arrived at time, but Mrs. Smith was 20 minutes late. I handed the child over to her, and she was then quite well. This is the last time I saw her. I have, it is true, been carrying on a sort of baby-farm; that is to say, I have adopted babies, and then advertised and got them re-adopted for about half the amount I had previously received. I have had five in this way; two died within my care, but I can prove that every attention and kindness was shown them; no

money was grudged over their illness. I can prove this by the people with whom I lodged, and also by the doctors who attended them. Two I have had re-adopted; one from Essex, the other Bristol, and the last one I parted with as above stated. From the accounts in the papers I am alleged to have carried on this system for six years; now, that, too, is utterly wrong. I am evidently mistaken for someone else, as the first one I ever adopted was November, 1897. You will say, 'If innocent, why not come forward?' there have been innocent people hanged before now, and I must admit that at the present things look very much against me, but it is not fair to go entirely on circumstantial evidence. I am trying to find the woman to whom I gave up the child, but, unfortunately for me, I destroyed her letters, and if I came forward there would be no possibility of clearing myself unless I could find some clue about her. In conclusion, I must tell you that my husband is not to blame in any way whatever; he has always looked upon the whole matter with great abhorrence, but only gave way to me because he was, through illness, out of employment; he never, however, once touched any of the money I made by these means. Yours truly, M. Hewetson. P.S. We left Barnes simply because we were unable to meet rent, and some time before we heard of this lamentable affair. The shop in Warwick Road is a newspaper shop, the Hammersmith Road end, and only a few doors down on the right hand side.

William Chard Williams was found not guilty. Ada Chard Williams was found guilty and sentenced to death.

27. In 1903, Annie Walters and Amelia Sach (t19030112-174) were charged with the wilful killing of an unnamed 'illegitimate' infant. Amelia ran a private 'laying-in' nursing home, which she advertised in local newspapers, where she offered mothers the option of having their child adopted once it was born for 25-30 pounds. Annie, often using the name 'Mrs Merith', worked with Amelia, who often used the name 'Nurse Thorne', 'Miss Thorne', or 'Mrs Laming', to collect the babies from the 'laying-in' home and was, supposedly, to transfer them to their new

adoptive parents. Having raised police suspicion that a child she had taken from the 'laying-in' home was either dead or dying, Annie was trailed by a detective as she left her residence carrying the infant in a bundle of clothes. The detective eventually approached Annie and found that the child she was carrying was dead.

When both women were detained at the police station, Amelia denied ever knowing Annie. Amelia later admitted knowing Annie but denied ever giving her babies to transfer to adoptive parents. During a search of the 'laying-in' home, detectives found a large quantity of children's clothing, business cards, a number of letters to and from clients, and a fairly substantial amount of money. It was concluded that the infant had been killed from asphyxia and suffocation. Both women were found guilty, were recommended to mercy by the jury mainly because they were women, and sentenced to death.

28. In 1907, Jessie Byers (t19070128-33) was charged with the following offences: That having committed an offence against Section 8 of the Infant Life Protection Act, 1897, in respect of failure to give notice of reception, etc., of Gladys Scythe, an infant four months old, and that the said infant died on August 27, 1906, at defendant's house, she on September 1, 1906, with intent to conceal that offence, procured the cremation of the body of the infant, contrary to Section 8 sub-section 3 of the Cremation Act, 1902; having failed to give notice of death to the coroner for the district, she procured the cremation of the body; corresponding counts in respect of Winnie Davis, an infant five months old; obtaining by false pretences from Frederick William Davis the sum of five shillings with intent to defraud; charged a public nuisance at common law arising from the non-interment of the bodies.

Mildred Byers, Jessie's 14-year-old daughter testified in court that at the time of Winne Davis' death, Jessie had around 10 children she had taken to nurse, many of whom were 'illegitimate'. Jessie's daughter described how she witnessed her mother put the bodies of two of the children that

had died into the stove. The court's verdict was that Jessie was found guilty of concealing by fire the dead bodies of Gladys Smythe and Winnie Davis with intent to obstruct the coroner in the performance of his duty; Guilty of obtaining by false pretences from Frederick "William Davis the sum of five shillings, with intent to defraud; Not guilty on the other counts. Jessie was sentenced on each of the counts for burning the bodies, 12 months' imprisonment; on the count of false pretences, six months imprisonment; the three sentences to run concurrently.

29. In 1909, Jessie Byers was again brought before the Old Bailey (t19091207-23) and charged with the manslaughter of Reginald Turnbull, and 'illegitimate' infant she had adopted through a newspaper advertisement using the name 'Mrs Mathers', and for neglecting Reginald in such manner as to cause unnecessary suffering and injury to his health. Jessie was accused of having neglected Reginald, of keeping him drugged with laudanum, and abandoning him in a street behind some railings with a towel tied round his face and mouth. Jessie was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

30. In 1909, Frederick Chalker and Kate Chalker (t19091207-29) were charged with wilfully neglecting a number of children in their care in a manner as to cause them unnecessary suffering and injury to health; of the manslaughter of Harold Williamson, Cissy Bell, Ellen Cox, and another unknown child.

One witness described how "the two babies were habitually placed in the back yard, tied together in a chair, and left there for hours together without food... I could frequently hear the children crying and screaming". An inspector reported how when he visited the home of Mr and Mrs Chalker, Frederick introduced himself as 'Mr Miller'. Both Kate and Frederick were found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to five years imprisonment.

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