

Childcare and Criminality: Representations of Baby Farming 1834-1908

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Abstract

Baby farming, defined as the rearing of children for others in exchange for payment, had long been in practice across Britain before the term was coined in 1867. However, from the mid-nineteenth century, such arrangements came under increasing scrutiny as a small number of criminal cases emphasised concerns as to the commercialisation of maternal labour. This thesis presents an interdisciplinary study of the changing representations of the trade, both within Manchester newspapers (namely the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier*) and within nineteenth-century literature. It is structured chronologically, with each chapter covering significant cases within each period. The representation of these crimes, both within novels and a rapidly expanding and sensational press, built upon and contributed to pejorative conceptions of the trade, as it became widely associated with child neglect and infanticide.

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Introduction

Determining the Scope of the Thesis: What is Baby Farming?

In 1869, the *Manchester Guardian* relayed a paper read by Mr J. Brendon Curgenven to the Social Science Association. In it, he described a trade known as baby farming:

[Curgenven] described the present condition of the evil, baby farms being kept by ignorant and, generally, depraved persons who take but little care of the children; and the consequence was that the infants speedily passed away, the mortality of these children rising as high as 90 per cent...Some of the nurses were perfectly feckless of life; they were ready to permit the children to die of neglect (*Manchester Guardian*, 1869:7).

This representation encapsulates the stigma associated with baby farming in the mid-nineteenth century. However, its actual definition refers to something much broader: it describes the rearing of children in exchange for payment. It was usually a woman that fulfilled this position, charging either a weekly or lump sum and this included both day care arrangements used by women who worked in factories in the north of England, as well as permanent arrangements (Arnot, 1994:271). Before adoption was introduced as a centralised legal process in 1926 (Rose, 1986a:79), these types of informal arrangements had been occurring for centuries. In this context, the term 'baby farming' can be considered as interchangeable with the term 'paid childcare', due to this broad definition. Although there have been attempts in previous studies to separate these two terms (Hinks, 2015), the vast number of arrangements that baby farming was thought to encapsulate makes them inextricably interlinked.

From the mid-nineteenth century, a panic erupted about the unregulated nature of the trade, as high-profile scandals made their way into contemporary newspapers; women were murdering their charges, either by extreme neglect or violence. Only a minority distorted this essential form of childcare with criminality – eight women were executed in Britain for the death of their ‘adopted’ children (although a handful more also received penal sentences): Margaret Waters in 1870, Annie Tooke in 1879, Jessie King in 1889, Amelia Dyer in 1896, Ada Chard-Williams in 1900, Amelia Sach and Annie Walters in 1903 and Rhoda Willis in 1907. Yet, either because of the notorious nature of their crimes and their subsequent sentencing, or the coverage they received in a rapidly expanding and newly sensational press, such informal means of childcare were consequently perceived through a tainted lens of fear and suspicion. Thus, baby farming became a target for reformers, and protective legislation for children was introduced. The term ‘baby farmer’ became increasingly pejorative – an insult to which no ‘respectable’ woman would identify, and the terms ‘baby farming’ and ‘adoption’ became, if not synonymous, then inextricably linked, with child abuse in the Victorian psyche. This perception persisted for decades, with wider underlying causes of high infant mortality only beginning to be recognised towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.

This thesis aims to present a comprehensive understanding of literary and cultural representations of baby farming throughout the period 1834-1908, determining two things. Firstly, the broader cultural context which fuelled demand for the services of baby farmers, including definitions of motherhood and how this intersected with conceptions of class. It is clear that the legal and economic penalties placed on working-class mothers encouraged the use of baby farmers. Secondly, the underlying reasons for the wide-spread vilification of these women must be explored, as the existence of baby farming challenged conceptions of

maternity as an innate female quality by conducting childcare for payment. They also occupied a liminal space between the public and private spheres by operating businesses within their homes. This transgression not only placed female baby farmers outside conceptions of 'acceptable' feminine behaviour as defined by the middle class, but also drove forward progress in child welfare by justifying interference in domestic affairs. To allow an invasion of the home, the public must first be convinced that a villain lurks in this domain. Indeed, the perceived threat of criminal baby farmers allowed for great introductory strides in child welfare, laying the groundwork for the transition into complete centralisation of adoption through legislation later in the twentieth century. However, as the legal framework surrounding adoption changed, so too did perceptions of the trade. This thesis will therefore track these changes across the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Although baby farming has increasingly attracted the focus of historians from the last quarter of the twentieth century, it remains a vastly under-researched field, often absorbed into broader studies of childcare (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973; Hendrick, 1997), and even sometimes as a sub-category within studies of infanticide (Rose, 1986b; Knelman, 1998; Kilday, 2013). This section will therefore provide an overview of literature that examines the trade as its own entity and outline how this thesis will add to existing research.

English baby farming will be the primary focus of this project. Although the phenomenon occurred in other countries, such as Scotland (Kilday, 2015:74), Australia (Sumerling, 1983) and the United States (Broder, 2002:177), a thorough analysis of these additional cases lies outside the scope of this thesis. Taking into consideration the differing laws and history of each country, they would be better served as the sole focus in future research. Additionally, within existing studies of English baby farming, the sources used to interpret understandings of the trade are often significantly London-centric. Few consider

regional variations in perceptions and representations of the trade, particularly neglecting northern cities. For example, Ruth Homrighaus's claim that the trade occurred in most 'major urban centres' (Homrighaus, 2003: 15), does not appear to have considered how the differing cultural context within regions would have affected how this trade was understood. A vast number of articles discussing baby farming can be found in Manchester-based newspapers. This alone suggests it was considered a prevalent issue worthy of public interest, both within the city and throughout the country. Additionally, the way in which these events were reported gives useful insight into the underlying anxieties that criminal baby farmers touched upon, particularly within the context of sensational journalism. Therefore, this thesis will examine how the trade was represented within Manchester newspapers.

The social geography of Manchester differed vastly from other areas, including London, which provided an alternate cultural context in representations of baby farming. Massive population growth and a dramatic increase in housing resulted in a new urban environment that encouraged a physical separation between social classes.¹ This separation often gave rise to concerns that the Manchester working classes were not receiving proper social 'leadership' from the middle classes. It was often complained that the only relationship many industrial employers had with their employees was the payment of their wages (Kidd, 2006:50). This seemingly distant relationship sheds light on a different type of demand for baby farming, as most literature discussing the trade focuses on the need of single, domestic servants to find care for their children (Stuart-Bennet, 2019; Ross, 1993; Higginbotham, 1989).

¹ At its centre was the location of the unhealthiest and most crowded districts, home to the poorest of the working classes (Kidd, 2006:146). Circling this was an outer ring of middle-class properties, as prosperous families moved away from problems of overcrowding and filth (Kidd, 2006:147). Furthest away were the homes of aristocrats who, facilitated by the introduction of new railway links, established themselves in the more affluent boroughs and rural districts, such as Cheshire (Rose, 2016:179).

It is argued that, as domestic servitude required women to remain single and childless (Kilday, 2013:39) and it was the most common occupation for women at several points in the nineteenth century (Mackinnon et al., 2009:129), baby farmers were mostly used as a discrete service for such women to avoid social victimisation in the event of illegitimate pregnancies. However, pejorative conceptions of illegitimacy were not accepted wholesale by the working classes. In fact, in industrial cities such as Manchester, it was often accepted as a consequence of urban life (Mason, 1994:67). This included environmental factors, such as crowded districts requiring men and women to share close quarters, but also economic insecurities triggered by employment in industry, which had the potential to frustrate marriage plans (Hudson, 1992:146). As a large proportion of ‘farmed out’ children were illegitimate, it is reasonable to assume that baby farmers played a critical role in the support of such women who found themselves with the unexpected burden of a child. In fact, such services were also used by mothers who worked in factories. Consequently, female factory work was often represented as responsible for the high infant mortality rate through this link to baby farming and its associated reputation for criminality.² Despite this, however, these implications have rarely been the focus of comprehensive analysis. This thesis will therefore aim to add to this underrepresented area in the history of baby farming.

Recent studies have questioned the validity of baby farming as a category for analysis due to existing literature largely focusing on criminal activity, which has distorted understandings of the trade and resulted in the perception that all baby farmers were

² Melanie Reynolds even points out that such negative associations may have resulted in an underrepresentation of women working in factories, as discrepancies between census records and records kept by factory workers may suggest ‘a determined effort by nineteenth-century working-class mothers to keep up appearances, and not divulge their waged work during a period of high infant mortality’ (Reynolds, 2016:78).

criminals. As such, Joseph Hinks claims that ‘this period was characterised by a series of competing narratives of which “baby-farming” was just one’, referring to these popular derogatory and sensationalised narratives that represented the trade (Hinks, 2015:282). The stigma attached to the term from such negative representations does in fact encourage analysis that focuses on criminality. However, as has been previously established, the actual definition of baby farming was incredibly broad, and could be used loosely to describe all forms of paid childcare. As such, “baby farming” may have often been used as a pejorative term, but that does not mean that the trade itself was inherently criminal. Moreover, the aspect of baby farming that often drew the most suspicion was the fact that childcare was being performed for payment rather than innate maternal attachment (Arnot, 1994:282) which, incidentally, is exactly what the term “paid childcare” describes. Finally, if, as many recent historians have suggested, baby farming was predominantly an honest trade in which largely successful relationships were formed (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:9), then treating this as a separate entity to paid childcare serves as a limited viewpoint for analysis. The crux of the matter is not the unsuitability of baby farming as a category of analysis, but the fact that representations of the trade captured an important intersection of tensions, as the arrangements that attracted the most suspicion were predominantly those among working-class women. Thus, the term baby farming in itself is a reflection of Victorian suspicions about the nature of childcare among working-class communities.

I will also use the word ‘trade’ in addition to the term ‘paid childcare’ to describe baby farming, in recognition of the monetary exchange that was expected for the provision of childcare, despite the informal nature of many such transactions. Some historians use similar terminology, with Joanne Pearman referring to baby farming as a ‘quasi-industry’ (Pearman, 2017:39) in her thesis. The use of the word ‘industry’ emphasises the frequency with which it

occurred, whilst the qualifier 'quasi' highlights its informality. However, she does not use this term very frequently. This appears to limit the usefulness of the term when defining baby farming as a category for analysis. The terms set out in this section, therefore, will be used consistently to describe baby farming, in the interest of clarity, to aid in identifying cases of baby farming when the term is not explicitly used within Victorian publications.

On the other hand, the parameters of criminal activity that occurred within the trade of paid childcare are more difficult to define. Pearman's work attempts to make these parameters more distinct, separating criminal baby farming into three stages. First, lying-in houses in which women spent their confinement. Secondly, the procuring of infants, either by word of mouth or adoption advertisements. Finally, the baby farms themselves, in which infants would be systematically neglected and then disposed of (Pearman, 2017: 88). A neat explanation of criminal baby farming; however, reality is seldom as tidy. As Pearman herself admits, many women skipped the first 'stage' of lying-in houses, instead giving birth in secret – a solitary affair. Alternatively, sometimes they were the only point of call if the aim was to 'ensure' a stillbirth and an unscrupulous midwife could be found. Such places were expensive, but for a woman of means with an illegitimate child, they were a way to avoid scandal (Bentley, 2005: 200). These establishments, in legal terms, are defined as an extension of abortion practices, hence, it is my intention to treat lying-in houses as a separate entity to baby farming.

Other historians, including Homrighaus, have also attempted to make a distinction between 'baby farming' and 'criminal baby farming' (Homrighaus, 2003). However, this distinction is often unclear, falsely creating the impression of a binary categorisation of baby farmers into those that were either 'dangerous' or 'harmless', when in fact the reality of such

illicit activity was often much more complex. Even within sensationalised press representations of baby farming cases in which figures were accused of neglect or murder, there are often points in which this narrative is challenged, and testimony can be interpreted in a number of ways. As such, it is likely that many of these baby farmers were not as sinister as they were depicted to be. Indeed, Chapters Two and Three in particular will explore this aspect further, analysing other factors that contributed to the high infant mortality rate during this period, such as disease, poverty, or the ignorance of both parents and baby farmers as to the dangers of certain feeding and soothing methods.

One practice that became particularly embedded within conceptions of criminality was the act of advertising within newspapers. As criminal baby farmers such as Margaret Waters and Amelia Dyer were found to have inserted such advertisements in a variety of newspapers, this practice was often interpreted as evidence of a wide-spread system of infanticide for hire, by both contemporary critics (Greenwood, 1869) and historians (Rossini Gill, 2014; Rose, 1986b; Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973; Bentley, 2005). In fact, adverts making claims such as 'HIGHLY Respectable Married Couple wish to ADOPT CHILD; good country home; premium required, very small' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:10) frequented newspapers across the country. However, as Joshua Stuart-Bennet points out, these personal advertisement columns actually demonstrated that "out of-house' substitute mothering services remained a conventional and fairly mundane feature of everyday life' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:11). In his thesis, he argues that, although the structure of the marketplace dehumanised infants as objects of trade (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:14), the majority of these transactions constituted 'legitimate and everyday conceptualisations of the practices subsequently associated with 'baby-farming' that existed prior to any criminal reconceptualisation' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:48). These advertisements will therefore be

examined in Chapters One and Two, analysing both their appeal and the context of their misrepresentation.

Additionally, there is also a further layer of complexity in defining what exactly constitutes a 'criminal' baby farmer, which lies not in the question of whether they deliberately caused the deaths of the children in their care, but in other behaviours they exhibited. A number of baby farmers accused of neglect or murder, although likely innocent of this principal charge, appear to have engaged in other, more ambiguous practices, such as passing the child onto another baby farmer for a lesser fee without the knowledge or consent of the parents. This practice is often referred to as 'baby sweating' (Bentley, 2005:202) and its representation has also come to be associated with the abuse of children. David Bentley, for example, claims it was one of the many ways in which children were exploited for profit (Bentley, 2005:202). This aspect will therefore be explored in Chapter One in an analysis of Margaret Waters, and Chapter Three in the examination of John and Catherine Barnes, as defining the parameters of criminal baby farming cannot be achieved solely by attempting to determine if the figure in question deliberately caused the deaths of the children in their care (which in itself was a problematic process). Thus, although this thesis will continue to use the term 'criminal baby farming' to refer to pejorative representations of the trade in legal, press and literary discourse, it will also attempt to demonstrate the ambiguity within these representations that prevents the setting of such distinct conceptual boundaries.

The Representation of Baby Farming

The large number of Manchester newspaper articles provides rich ground for study that few historians, as of yet, have utilised in the context of baby farming. Indeed, advancements in printing techniques in the first half of the nineteenth century allowed for

the mass-production of newspapers (Barker, 2014:38), whilst the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 made cheap newspapers profitable (Black, 2019:95). This allowed many to change from weekly publications to dailies, 'reducing their price to twopence, and then to a penny' (Cranfield, 2016:206). Manchester had already experienced a surge in circulars as one of the lasting consequences of the Peterloo massacre (Russell, 2016:281), and as such was at the forefront of these developments. This rise in accessibility continued throughout the nineteenth century, as the increasing urbanisation of cities and the development of railways made larger markets and circulations for newspapers possible (Brown, 1985:7). The way in which baby farming was reported within the context of the growing press thus lends useful insight into popular conceptions of the trade, as well as the anxieties it elicited throughout the century. The main publications that will be focused upon are the *Manchester Guardian* (1821-1959) and *Manchester Courier* (1825-1916). The *Manchester Guardian* in particular was at the forefront of developments in printing, switching from weekly to daily circulation and reducing in price (Cranfield, 2016:206). It has been included for study as not only did it quickly become of national significance, but, as Andrew Hobbs states, '[t]he paper's reporting of local events seems to have had a direct relation to its circulation' (Hobbs, 2018:372). The *Manchester Courier*, on the other hand, also achieved a competitive circulation and had a longstanding rivalry with the *Guardian* due to differing political stances³, therefore providing an important alternate viewpoint from which to represent the trade.

Indeed, further reason for the selection of these newspapers as major points of analysis is derived from pragmatism, drawing from the recent proliferation of digitised primary sources. Using such digitised sources allowed for efficient search techniques, such as

³ The *Manchester Guardian* is often referred to as a 'Liberal organ', whilst the *Manchester Courier* can be identified as a Tory newspaper (Clarke, 2007:154).

keyword searches, which greatly improved the speed of compiling the necessary corpus during the stage of data collection (Davies et al., 2015:68). This corpus includes key information on all editions of these two newspapers that featured the phrase “baby farming”, compiled into separate spreadsheets in chronological order. Such key information included a unique reference code, the title, date, a list of locations mentioned and a tally of references to illegitimacy. Such a dataset would have taken months, or even longer, to complete, if they had been processed manually. Of course, such techniques of collecting data are not a complete reflection of the sources available; the use of optical character recognition in keyword searches of digitised texts is not completely accurate. Hence, this thesis makes no claims as to being drawn from a complete corpus of baby farming newspaper articles, however, as each inclusion was manually checked, there can be a reasonable certainty of no false inclusions.

Two potential issues in focusing on the *Manchester Guardian* and *Manchester Courier*, however, are drawn from their readership. Firstly, they both appealed primarily to middle-class readers (Wahrman and Halls, 1995:304) which likely affected the representation of baby farming, as it was largely working-class women that used such services. Hence, this thesis will take care to analyse critically representations of class within these articles. Secondly, it was previously assumed that the literacy of the working class in Lancashire was extremely low, particularly in the early and mid-nineteenth century (Gomersall, 1997:74), narrowing this potential readership even further. However, newer research has revisited this assumption; Hobbs builds on the notion that the working class have always consumed the news and tackles the question of who read the local paper, particularly towards the second half of the nineteenth century. His answer is:

all kinds of people – young and old, from labourers to lords, literate and illiterate. But literacy is a spectrum of abilities, rather than a binary division between the literate and the illiterate, and the local paper was particularly attractive to those who could barely read and perhaps could not write (Hobbs, 2018:35–36).

Indeed, he utilises two examples of readers in Charles Dickens's novel *Our Mutual Friend* to develop this idea, as the character Mrs Higden cannot read handwriting, but can read most printed text (Hobbs, 2018:36). Additionally, there were many instances in which consuming news has been demonstrated to be a group activity, rather than an individual one. Literacy was often a 'shared communal asset' (Hobbs, 2018:36) allowing those that were illiterate to access the news, either through reading rooms (Hobbs, 2018:57), public libraries (Hobbs, 2018:104), being read to by friends or neighbours in pubs (Hobbs, 2018:58) or even, for a generation or two, the reading of children to their elders (Hobbs, 2018:50). Thus, in recognition of this nuance in reading ability, I will refer to those affected by press representations of baby farming in Manchester as a 'news consuming public' rather than a readership.

In addition to newspaper articles and publications, I will also scrutinize the representation of baby farming in fictional material, including Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837), Emma Carolina Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea* (1868), L. T. Meade's *Lettie's Last Home* (1875), the vocal score for William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1878), Wilkie Collins's *The Fallen Leaves* (1879) and George Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894). Broadening the critical exploration to fictional texts will demonstrate that the subject of baby farming also entered literary discourses and while offering a different perspective, both literary and historical sources are 'expressions of the same historical "moment"' (Barry,

2002:173). One further reason for the inclusion of these particular texts is simply that there were few literary publications published throughout the nineteenth century that explicitly referenced the baby farming trade. Firstly, as the term was not coined until the mid-nineteenth century, this resulted in many literary representations published beforehand, such as Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, to be articulated in less specific terms, making them more difficult to recognise. Secondly, the subject often caused controversy when included explicitly within fiction, particularly around the mid-nineteenth century. For example, most of the copies of Emma Carolina Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea* were reported to have been bought by her brother-in-law, Baron Hatherley, only so he could burn them (Matus, 1995:180). This controversy surrounding representations of the trade may indeed have lessened as the century progressed, as demonstrated in the popularity of George Moore's *Esther Waters*.

One potential issue with these texts is their relevance within a study of Manchester representations of baby farming, as they were all published in London and set either within the capital or in other locations in the south of England. Although Manchester had a powerful press of its own, no such literature published within the city was able to be found, during data collection and the sourcing of publications, that explicitly represented the trade. Thus, excluding texts based on this criterion alone would result in a complete absence of explicit literary representation of baby farming in this thesis. However, a number of these publications, particularly *H. M. S. Pinafore*, *Oliver Twist* and *Esther Waters*, were extremely popular and circulated across England. Hence, they still played a significant role in informing understandings of baby farming in Manchester. In fact, Dickens's novel in particular set a pattern of representation that significantly influenced later depictions of the trade, which will be examined in Chapter One. However, to explore these understandings within the context of Manchester as a northern, industrial city, Margaret Harkness's *A Manchester Shirtmaker*

(1890) will also be examined in Chapter Four, to determine commonalities within wider conceptions of motherhood and infanticide.

The relationship between the press and literary representations of baby farming was often reciprocal. Authors of sensation fiction frequently used material from newspapers as the basis for their fictional plots (Brantlinger, 1982:10). This practice will be further examined in Chapters Three and Four, through analysis of L. T. Meade's *Lettie's Last Home* and George Moore's *Esther Waters*. It is clear that their depictions of the trade drew from the work of amateur investigative journalist James Greenwood, who authored *The Seven Curses of London*. Even literature that does not appear to have drawn from such press representations directly, still predominantly adhered to the influential archetype of the greedy and criminal baby farmer. Equally, the creation of sensational content within newspapers clearly utilised narrative tropes from fiction. Lynda Nead claims that the legal cases of baby farmers offered plenty of 'raw material for character and plot; the villains, the crimes and the punishments which newspapers spun into stories' (Nead, 2002:121). Additionally, according to Joseph Hinks, the publications of such amateur investigative journalists were also often styled as 'detective investigations' which utilised 'highly stylised and melodramatic' language that bore 'striking similarities to the detective fiction of the same period' (Hinks, 2015:103). This thesis therefore builds on the premise that both literary and press representations of baby farming changed according to fluctuating narrative and journalistic trends across the century. Each chapter will hence compare fictional representations of the trade to newspaper articles depicting key baby farming cases and legislation, addressing illegitimacy, adoption and child protection in the context of these stylistic tropes.

It is hence critical to establish *which* journalism and literary trends will be focused upon throughout this thesis. Whilst Hinks draws a compelling comparison between detective fiction and the narrative tropes used by amateur investigative journalists, which will be acknowledged in Chapter Two, there were many representations of baby farming that were published in this period beyond that relatively small pool of journalists. Analysis of such press and literary representations in this thesis therefore reveals broader narrative styles; primarily that of sensationalism, from which detective fiction itself is thought to have emerged (Debenham, 2002:219). This was originally categorised as a ‘minor subgenre of British fiction’ (Brantlinger, 1982:1) and was thus initially ignored within literary studies. However, it has since been revisited as an area of investigation, which, as Helen Debenham observes, ‘has been concurrent with the rise of feminist and cultural studies and forms part of a wider reevaluation of popular literature and its role in the formation and negotiation of cultural ideologies’ (Debenham, 2002:209). Sensationalist writing provided a convenient narrative style with which to represent baby farmers, as the characteristics of the female, sensation villain significantly overlapped with existing conceptions of baby farming. Additionally, as Debenham states:

The “sensation,” the special frisson of horror that thrilled the reader, lay not so much in the existence and unravelling of the crime as in its proximity and its contemporaneity. These crimes were not distanced by time or geography like those of Gothic fiction; they occurred within “ordinary” modern society, hinting that the man or woman next door might be harboring some guilty secret or plotting some dastardly deed (Debenham, 2002:211).

As baby farming was a trade conducted largely within the home, it challenged both perceptions of domesticity and maternity. It allowed the public sphere to invade the private and introduced a cash nexus into the provision of maternal labour. As such, the trade engaged with these same anxieties of a potential villain lurking within the domestic domain. It is therefore unsurprising that the murderous baby farmer would emerge as a criminal archetype within sensationalist literature, arguably becoming the most common narrative trope in literary representations of baby farming.

Moreover, this archetype was equally pervasive within journalism from the mid-nineteenth century, as Patrick Brantlinger notes, historically 'there is a direct relationship between the sensation novel and sensational journalism, from the extensive crime reporting in the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* to such early crime tabloids as the *Illustrated Police News*' (Brantlinger, 1982:9). Indeed, as a consequence of the unprecedented development of the press and the new affordability of newspapers, sensationalist reporting also became increasingly common as a technique to attract more readers, as such stories were particularly popular among the working class (Mitch, 2016:54). 'Sensation' has been defined as 'a condition of excited feeling produced in a community by some occurrence' (Diamond, 2004:1). As such, the trials of criminal baby farmers often provided perfect source material to feed this appetite and, in turn, such sensational newspaper articles continued to mark the trade as a point of anxiety within Victorian society. Indeed, newspapers can be directly connected to literary representations of baby farming, as several writers, including L. T. Meade and George Moore, clearly drew inspiration from such publications for their novels. The context of sensationalism within representations of baby farming therefore further highlights the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis, emphasising that press and literary

depictions of the trade continually fed into each other to inform Victorian understandings of baby farming.

However, until the 1880s, no matter how sensational the content, newspapers still only offered a 'mass of small type' as the standard format within their pages (Diamond, 2004:2). This changed upon the rise of 'New Journalism', which not only contained sensationalist articles on formerly taboo subjects, but also presented news as more 'reader-friendly, with smaller pages and clearer, larger print, broken up by cross-headings' (Diamond, 2004:2). This layout made news stories more accessible and easier to consume, and even those who quickly glanced at the 'bold headlines' or briefly skimmed articles could have easily gleaned the impression that crime was increasing (Casey, 2011:370). Thus, the growing eminence of New Journalism fed into anxieties about the prevalence of baby farming. Hobbs also observes a greater focus on "human interest" stories such as crime rather than high politics' (Hobbs, 2018:201) as a trait of New Journalism, which resulted in the trials of 'criminal' baby farmers featuring more prominently within the news. This increasing coverage of crime hence further contributed to misconceptions about the degree of criminality within the trade. As such, within the context of this shift in news practices, crimes associated with baby farming became enveloped within wider concerns that criminality as a whole within society was more widespread than it actually was.

Whilst sensational news and literature were immensely popular, they also aroused fierce hostility. Lyn Pykett has pointed out that sensational journalism was often perceived as a form of 'creeping contagion' by which the deeds of criminals could invade the sanctity of the home (Pykett, 2011:3). Sensational literature was also thought to pose a similar threat, particularly to women, who were perceived to be at greater risk from their reading than men

(Debenham, 2002:211). Women in such novels regularly committed crimes such as murder and bigamy, which challenged middle-class perceptions of femininity and maternity. Such representations will be considered in the context of ‘intensified public agitation about the “condition of women”’ (Debenham, 2002:211–212) throughout this thesis, from the ongoing criticism of female factory workers from the mid-nineteenth century, to fears of ‘degeneration’ linked to the representation of the New Woman at the *fin de siècle* (Caine, 1997:134). Thus, sensational depictions of baby farming not only touched upon fears of domestic criminality, but also tapped into wider concerns about the role of women within Victorian society, highlighting the threat that such women posed to bourgeois conceptions of femininity and maternity.

On the other hand, sensationalism was not the only narrative trope to affect the representation of baby farming. Wilkie Collins, for example, utilised the style of realism within his narrative in *The Fallen Leaves*, which will be analysed in Chapter Three. As C. Levine notes, ‘classic studies of British fiction claim . . . that realism was above all an epistemological project, exploring the processes by which one could know or grasp the real’ (Levine, 2012:86). Thus, it would initially be assumed that a realist representation of baby farming would present a more accurate depiction of the trade than that of sensational depictions. Critically, the narrative tropes associated with this genre, as Anthony Trollope later claimed, were generally assumed as in opposition with sensationalism and as such, the ‘novelists who are considered to be anti-sensational are generally called realistic’ (Trollope, 1947:189). However, rather than considering realism and sensationalism as antithetical within representations of baby farming, this thesis will build on the idea that these genres significantly overlapped. “Real” details can certainly be found in sensational texts ‘not only of real court cases and newspaper reports to inspire its plots (“newspaper novels” was another name for the genre) but also of

“real” material in the form of railway timetables and telegraphed messages’ (Debenham, 2002:212). The clear influence of newspaper representations on depictions of baby farming within sensational novels, such as Emma Carolina Wood’s *Sorrow on the Sea*, is a prime example of this. Equally, *The Fallen Leaves* was considered as an exploration into realism on behalf of Wilkie Collins (Godfrey, 2018). However, it will be demonstrated that the novel also incorporates elements of sensationalism within the story. Thus, this thesis will explore literary and press representations of baby farming in the context of both realism and sensationalism.

Literature Review

The majority of studies on baby farming have been conducted through a historical lens, focusing on sources such as court records and legislation. Consequently, examinations of literary representations of baby farming are perhaps the most underrepresented area in this field of study. One of the few critics that focus on such representations is Audrey Cieslakowska-Evans, who includes baby farmers in her wider study of “the displaced child”, ‘be it orphan, foundling, legitimate or illegitimate, extended family member, welcome or unwelcome, destitute or well provided for’ (Cieslakowska-Evans, 2005:14) with which the nineteenth-century English novel is littered. However, although she includes such fictional characters from Charles Dickens’s novels *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, she does not compare explicit representations of the trade, such as that from George Moore’s *Esther Waters* or Wilkie Collins’s *The Fallen Leaves*. Tamara S. Wagner, on the other hand, does analyse such explicit representations of baby farming in a study of infants in Wilkie Collins’s novels. She argues that in exploring controversial topics such as child stealing, illegitimacy and adoption, Collins ‘exposes the precariousness of childcare at a time when blended families were fairly common’ (Wagner, 2017:130). Examples of blended

families were represented in many forms in nineteenth-century literature and included the profession of wet nursing. Francesca Marinaro, for example, in her analysis of George Moore's *Esther Waters*, compares baby farming with the occupation of wet nursing in the context of class. She argues that the prejudice Esther faces as an unwed mother, combined with the pressure to abandon her child from both her employer and a baby farmer 'give voice to the wet-nurse's struggle to create a maternal identity of her own' (Marinaro, 2014:3). Thus, these two trades together press her 'into maternal service while simultaneously undermining her maternal experience' (Marinaro, 2014:4). This thesis will examine such competing experiences of maternity.

In fact, although each of the literary texts included for study have been examined in separate studies, they have not yet been brought together and analysed within the context of baby farming. For example, critical examination of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* reveals significant characteristics of the representation of the trade in literature, as although the term 'baby farming' had not yet been coined, it is generally agreed upon that the site in which Oliver spends his early years is, in fact, a baby farm (Westland, 2000:367; Ledger, 2010:134). However, many critics such as Sally Ledger and E. Westland often neglect to develop this observation, taking Dickens's criticism of the trade at face value rather than interrogating it. As such, this aspect is often overlooked in favour of wider themes of class and criminality. Further to this, the plot of L. T. Meade's *Lettie's Last Home* is seldom the focus of comprehensive analysis, with studies tending to refer to the text as an example of the author's ability to exploit market trends and current events (Wise, 2009:223; Dawson, 2020:49). Such references hence often only summarise the text, noting that Lettie is ultimately beaten to death by her alcoholic mother who practises criminal baby farming. This thesis will therefore provide a deeper analysis of such literary publications in the context of their depictions of

baby farming. It will provide a chronological study of these literary representations of baby farming, in order to examine how they changed over the course of the nineteenth century.

There are several literary representations of baby farming, however, that have not been included for study in this thesis. The first is *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters and the second is *The Ghost of Lily Painter* by Caitlin Davies. Whilst the second text in particular is based on thorough historical research on the case of Annie Walters and Amelia Sach in 1903, both lie out of the scope of this thesis due to the differing context of neo-Victorian fiction. Another category of literature that has been excluded is the genre of 'true crime' publications. Whilst they also lie in the context of modern recreations of Victorian stories, there are additional issues with including such representations; namely the fact that such texts primarily focus on sensational details from the most famous cases, such as Amelia Dyer (Rattle and Vale, 2011; Buckley, 2016; Webb, 2015). Indeed, as Stuart-Bennet notes, because Dyer seemingly provided irrefutable evidence of systematic criminality and infanticide, 'she has since become a most notable one-dimensional figurehead that many contemporary representations of "baby-farming" generally invoke' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:25). As such, she appears in texts such as William Webb's *Babes, Bitches and Brides: An Anthology of Shocking Crimes* (2015), which, while useful in highlighting the often-horrific nature of criminal baby farming, does little to explore the underlying factors that allowed the trade to continue.

Charlotte Beyer defends the popularity of the subject in true crime literature, engaging with Alison Rattle and Alison Vale's *The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer* (2011). Beyer acknowledges the fact that not all texts treat the subject of baby farming with the same complexity or authority, and that some true crime texts are indeed sensational (citing William Webb as an example). However, she goes as far as to

state that 'true crime books about baby farming serve the purpose of establishing a conceptual and emotional distance' (Beyer, 2015:103). It is true that *The Story of Amelia Dyer* is well researched, though to make a claim of emotional distance is a considerable leap, considering the particularly distressing details stressed throughout the narrative. As Beyer herself acknowledges, these depictions also consistently situate Dyer within the framework of 'serial-killing', which depicts her acts of murder in a specific context of atrocity (Beyer, 2015:111) and results in a sensationalised style of writing that is both 'speculative and linguistically enhanced' (Beyer, 2015:114). Such revelling in sensational detail therefore neglects to present a true interrogation of how such activity came to form a small part of a common and predominantly honest trade.

This genre of true crime also extends to the format of film; several 'true crime' television documentaries have been dedicated to retelling tales of criminality within the trade, such as that of *Baby Killer* (Eubank, 2015). Stuart-Bennet observes that the framework of serial killing is applied in these documentaries, often resulting in a fixation on the number of victims (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:34–35). For instance, he states that in M. Cole's (2008) true crime documentary *Lady Killers*, Alison Vale calculated, 'on the highly unreliable assumption, that if Amelia Dyer killed one child a month through a 30-year career as a 'baby-farmer', she totalled approximately 400 victims' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:36). This speculation on the part of Vale has widely affected twenty-first century conceptions of baby farming, as the accuracy of these claims is often taken for granted in many articles claiming to outline the 'horrors' of the trade. For example, in an article published in the *Independent*, Vale also asserts an allegedly 'conservative estimate of 10 infant deaths a year' compounded to create 'a staggering 300 murders over a 30-year period' (Vale, 2013). The creative guesswork in these estimations as to the number of Dyer's victims, in combination with this sensational rather than analytical

approach, has therefore enabled her infamy to exceed that of most other criminal baby farmers, and yet provided limited critical study of the history of baby farming. Thus, such material will also be excluded from the scope of this thesis.

On the other hand, despite the previously iterated challenges in defining the parameters of criminal baby farming, the framework utilised by many historians that also examine the trade is that of the history of crime. Within this framework, a variety of sources are considered, including legislation, court transcripts and newspapers. For example, Lionel Rose concludes his publication *Massacre of the Innocents* by connecting the high birth rate with a low value placed on infant life, in which he dubs the disposal of “surplus” infants a ‘biological necessity’ (Rose, 1986b:187). Although Rose provides an important account of the conceptual difference between women who killed their own children and women who killed the children of others, this crude utilisation of biological determinism neglects to interrogate the reliability of pejorative representations of the trade. Indeed, George K. Behlmer even addresses baby farming in his study of voluntary organisations, including the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in their campaigns against child abuse in England. Although he does acknowledge that campaigners for the regulation of paid childcare may not have done so out of unselfish interests (Behlmer, 1982:23), which will be addressed in Chapter Two, he still considers baby farming as an exclusively criminal trade. This thesis will therefore move past such pejorative conceptions, acknowledging the myriad of successful childcare arrangements in Manchester, and examining sensational representations to determine if those accused of criminality were in fact as sinister as they seemed.

However, not all studies that utilise the historiography of crime consider baby farming as an exclusively criminal trade. For instance, Homrighaus argues it was a common practice

within Victorian society, analysing both criminal trials and successful arrangements. She argues that, although a number of baby farmers were certainly treated more harshly than they deserved due to negative representations of the trade, 'in the long run, the "popular clamour" that baby farming inspired contributed to a series of positive changes for illegitimate children' (Homrighaus, 2003:254). Indeed, building on this notion of the progression of child welfare, Pearman analyses the development of legislation surrounding the support of illegitimate children. She notes that changes in legislation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries shifted 'away from an attempt to control the behaviour of feckless, immoral, women, towards an attempt to monitor paid-carers, and ultimately to construct the bastard child as a new target of the law' (Pearman, 2017:6). Furthermore, Daniel Grey also focuses on post-1900 legislation and prosecutions of baby farmers. He states there are only a few sources expressing concern about baby farming from 1909 onwards, as the 1908 Children's Act largely eliminated criminal baby farming. Thus, society as a whole became more likely to give adoptive parents 'the benefit of the doubt in cases of manslaughter and neglect' rather than acting on the instant presumption that they had deliberately caused the child's death (Grey, 2009:77). Hence, although pejorative depictions of baby farming may not necessarily provide an accurate representation of the trade, they provide critical context to changing perceptions of paid childcare and the progression of legislative measures to extend child protection.

On the other hand, other studies articulate the perspective that, as baby farming was a trade largely provided by and for women, a gendered focus is required to analyse such sources. As such, several historians have utilised this focus. For example, Anne-Marie Kilday examines baby farming as a method of infanticide in her study of this practice over four centuries. She claims that a key factor behind the trade becoming a '*cause celebre*' in mid-

Victorian Britain was that 'the importance of family life became a central theme of contemporary writings, with associated calls for a return to the centrality of motherhood and the need to protect infant life' (Kilday, 2013:94). Further to this, Judith Knelman examines press representations of baby farming within her wider framework of the history of women and crime. She argues when baby farmers were discovered to have murdered or abused the children in her care, journalists scrambled to gather salacious and sensational details that would increase the scandal and thus the profitability of their story. In the light of this scrutiny, the sexuality of the criminal woman would play a critical part in her public perception. As such, Knelman states that '[w]herever it was in the evidence, femininity was dissected and displayed' (Knelman, 1998:250) and based upon this display, accused murderesses tended to be represented as either the 'proper' or 'improper' feminine (Knelman, 1998:252). This thesis will hence explore representations of baby farmers in the Manchester press, examining the degree to which such figures were measured against notions of 'respectable' femininity.

Annie Cossins presents a social analysis of baby farmers in her publication *Female Criminality*, examining the laws associated with infanticide as a form of moral regulation. Within the context of pejorative conceptions of the trade, Cossins suggests that 'baby-farmers were often characterised in the typical terms of a "moral panic" – a phenomenon in which one or more people are viewed "as a threat to societal values and interests"' (Cossins, 2015:18). As such, she focuses on the reaction to baby farming as over-inflated. Driving this disproportionate fear, according to Cossins, was the press, presenting a sensationalised report of the criminality within society. Aeron Hunt also considers baby farming in the context of infanticide as a gendered crime in the mid-nineteenth century. In his article, he states that baby farmers were represented as 'monstrous icons of commercial femininity' (Hunt, 2006:80). However, he argues that this was linked to the threat baby farming posed to middle-

class conceptions of the public and private spheres as separate, due to the conducting of business within the home. Presenting such women as abnormal served to 'reinforce the separation of proper domesticity from the market', though at the same time 'the existence of this commercial form of motherhood threatened to explode that distinction' (Hunt, 2006:80). Thus, criminal baby farming 'tended to reveal the repressed economic character of the domestic sphere and the labor that occurred therein' (Hunt, 2006:74). Discussions surrounding baby farming therefore acted as a site in which concerns over criminality emphasised the ideological instability within middle-class conceptions of a gendered separation between the public and private spheres and will be a key focus throughout this thesis.

However, Hunt's article also highlights the factor of class as intersecting with gender in his examination of baby farming, which also forms the basis of critical analysis in several other studies. Ellen Ross, for example, examines this intersection, providing an important contribution to the field as the majority of those who engaged in baby farming were working class, as well as female. In her study of motherhood in London, she found that the money obtained from parents for childcare was often meagre; the average amount netted per week in the 1890s was approximately five shillings per week, whilst reported costs for an infant included 'well over two shillings in milk per week' along with other expenses such as food, soap and even rent', therefore, the child often 'cost more than she could collect from the mother' (Ross, 1993: 108). Thus, there were many situations in which baby farmers sacrificed dearly for those in their care and there was no legal protection for newly 'adoptive' parents in more permanent arrangements, as they had no legal power to retain a child that they may in fact care deeply for, should the biological parents change their mind (Ross, 1993: 137). Indeed, Margaret Arnot builds on this idea that negative representations of baby farmers

were caused by class tensions, despite the majority providing childcare to the best of their ability. In her article examining the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act, she observes that ‘the label “baby-farmer” was used to condemn and marginalise child-carers at a time when strong pressure was coming from the middle class for working-class women to spend all their time caring for children, their menfolk and the home’ (Arnot, 1994:272). Nichola Goc also argues in this vein in her study of infanticide news stories in Britain and Australia, noting the role of the press on this front as she argues that such exposure of neglectful or murderous examples of baby farming ‘also reflected a patriarchal society that could not tolerate a system in which women themselves, outside the institutions of Family and Welfare, found ways to manage their situation’ (Goc, 2013:71). Certainly, this thesis will build on this notion and explore the underlying class tensions that stood behind the demonisation of female baby farmers in Manchester, determining if the representation of paid child carers within the city touched upon these same anxieties.

There are also several other publications that analyse baby farming within the framework of class. For instance, Julie-Marie Strange interrogates the perceived apathy of working-class parents within the context of Victorian anxiety about high infant mortality. Within this study she observes that ‘despite increasing awareness of social and environmental influences on life expectancy, reports on high infant mortality rates were consistently suffused with allegations of baby-farming, infanticide and wilful neglect’ (Strange, 2005:230). Further to this, Stuart-Bennet considers the trade in his thesis, within the context of conceptions of ‘respectability’ according to class, analysing the degree to which the paid maternal labour of baby farming was adapted and disguised to fit with such conceptions. He argues that negative depictions of the trade ‘have been imbued with an institutionally hostile and agenda-driven authoritative narrative that sought to wrest control of child-rearing from

a female centred framework into the regulation and control of male expertise' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:8). Thus, the idea will be explored that pejorative representations of baby farming not only threatened middle-class conceptions of femininity in its amalgamation of maternity and paid labour, but also helped to drive the agenda of those campaigning for greater state regulation of paid childcare.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these studies is that baby farming cannot be extricated from the frameworks of crime, gender, or social class. Therefore, this thesis will adopt the approach of intersectionality, which provides a useful lens with which to explore the institutional intersections that presented a multi-layered structural disadvantage for both baby farmers and the parents that utilised their services. Mary Romero uses the metaphor of a Rubik's cube to imagine an intersectional approach to the analysis of 'multiple identities interacting with societies' social hierarchies', stating that if we 'assign a colour to race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship and abilities, we can begin to analyze the intersection of different dimensions of an individual's personhood' (Romero, 2017:16). She also highlights the importance of such an approach, stating that without 'considering the interacting systems of power, it is easy to miss the variations in the living and working conditions mothers and fathers face in their daily lives' (Romero, 2017:23). This approach is also useful in exploring the underrepresented area of regional variations in the representation of baby farming. However, it also emphasises the fact that there are few studies that explore the aspect of race in this context. This would be a valuable inclusion to this field of study, as the high infant mortality associated with baby farming brought to light anxieties about the future of the British Empire. This included concerns about racial 'deterioration' thought to be triggered by the Boer War and the poor physical quality of British soldiers (Kent, 2002:237). Whilst this study will acknowledge these aspects in Chapter Four, a comprehensive study of how race

intersected with perceptions of baby farming would prove invaluable to understandings of the trade.

Methodology

The primary methodology of new historicism in this thesis is reflected in the contextual synthesis between the newspaper articles and novels that are utilised. Written texts in the form of newspapers and legislation are not a 'body of objective knowledge which can be made to explain a literary text' (Brannigan, 2016:3). Although many literary representations of baby farming were clearly influenced by the publications of amateur investigative journalists and their associated campaigns for legislation, these representations within the press were often far from objective. Equally, literature need not be deemed a mere product of history, but in fact, an active participant in 'constructing a culture's sense of reality' (Brannigan, 2016:3). Hence, although there were many competing narratives even within pejorative representations of baby farming, the depiction of the criminal baby farmer as an archetype both in literature and the press worked to inform conceptions of the trade as associated with the abuse and neglect of children. As Bennet and Royle state, 'Literary texts are bound up with other discourses and rhetorical structures: they are part of a history that is still in the process of being written' (Bennett and Royle, 2009:117). Certainly, this thesis will therefore combine analysis of literature, newspapers and legislation, as it was these aspects that created the 'baby farmer' as a figure known to the Victorian and Edwardian public, coining the term itself and analysing her perceived threat to society.

This thesis refers to a range of critical discourses to analyse conceptions of baby farmers. For example, in her study on the representation of infanticide, Nicola Goc argues that by applying Critical Discourse Analysis, 'the ways in which knowledge and power were

acquired, maintained and understood discursively at given moments in time is better understood' (Goc, 2013:1). Hence, this thesis will build upon this approach, by focusing on discourse theory and how it understands and conceptualises power in social and cultural texts. Goc also takes Foucault's perspective that 'the production of knowledge, of "facts" and truth claims, and the exercise of power, are inextricably connected to discourse' (Goc, 2013:1). This links to her further observations on the representation of infanticidal women, as she claims such discourse compounded 'anxieties about the "woman question" and the changing role of women in an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society' (Goc, 2013:2). This idea can also be applied to depictions of female criminal baby farmers, as pejorative representations informed understandings of the trade as associated with criminal women, emphasising the threat the trade posed to bourgeois conceptions of femininity and maternity. However, they also acted to quell such criminality by displaying the consequences of this behaviour. Thus, such publications worked to discipline and control the population with the aim of ultimately producing 'docile bodies' through their cultural influence (Goc, 2013:12). Indeed, this acted as one of several disciplinary techniques to regulate the population.

Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century, the efforts made to suppress the small amount of criminality that occurred within baby farming demonstrate an overlap in the regulation of criminality and sexuality in England. These efforts, whether directed at the criminal baby farmer or the mother who utilised her, meant they were both the targets of 'biopower', the aim of which was the health, welfare and productivity of bodies in the nineteenth century (Hewitt, 1983:230). This biopower was established via two categories: that of disciplines and regulatory controls. The disciplines focused on the individual body 'as a machine: its disciplining, the optimisation of its capabilities, the exertion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility' (Foucault, 1978:139). Regulatory controls,

on the other hand, served 'as the basis of biological processes: propagation, births and mortalities, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity' (Foucault, 1978:139). As both of these categories were concerned with the processes of life, their effects can be observed in the trade of baby farming, through the regulation of mothers who birthed children outside that conceived of as 'respectable' circumstances, and the baby farmers themselves, who were often represented as responsible for the high rate of mortality among these children.

Though it must again be iterated that baby farming was a largely legitimate system, its reputation and treatment as a criminal practice serves as a window into disciplinary technologies that were involved in attempting to prevent the alleged murder and neglect of children. These technologies were numerous and varied, however, on closer inspection, patterns can be detected. For example, many aspects of the regulation of baby farming were modelled in a way that embodied the principles of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. These principles, risen out of the quarantine of areas struck by the plague in the seventeenth century (Foucault, 1977:195–198) are explained through the design of a prison in which inmates were separated from a collective entity into individualities that could be observed at all times from a single position (Foucault, 1977:201). The panopticon thus, in short, required its subjects to be pushed into a 'field of visibility' - and be conscious of that fact (Foucault, 1977:202). The effect of these mechanisms of power was the process of internalisation, in which prisoners would eventually internalise the roles of their oppressors, surveilling and monitoring their own behaviour; enacting the role of both prisoner and guard (Foucault, 1977:202-203). This thesis will consider this Foucauldian methodology in relation to the regulation of baby farming, including the legislation that was passed throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, which both increased the level of surveillance and encouraged the self-surveillance of baby farmers.

The fluidity in conceptions of the ideal woman enabled the criminalisation of often common behaviour of the working class within the accounts of those investigating the roots of criminality within baby farming. Indeed, transgressions from the private into the public sphere, combined with the association of the trade with criminality, opened up the regulation of baby farming to the binary division by which all authorities exercising individual control functioned. Women were subjected to a constant separation between 'normal' and 'abnormal'. Baby farming was negotiated in accordance with this 'double mode', both in its branding as dangerous/harmless and in the existence of 'techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal' (Foucault, 1977:199). Criticism of the trade in Victorian and early Edwardian society was therefore both drawn from these disciplinary techniques and institutions for 'correcting' criminality and deviant sexualities, and simultaneously helped to build them. The term 'baby farmer' itself was one that no 'respectable' caregiver would willingly go by, as the term became inextricably linked with child abuse (Rossini, 2014:46); she was not only a criminal - she was also an 'unnatural' distortion of the maternal figure. The process of constructing this deviant figure as recognised by Victorian and early Edwardian society was established through the gathering of such 'knowledge' of the practice, as spread through legislation, newspapers and fiction, which largely painted the trade in a pejorative light. As such, the fact that the trade was never in itself a crime has done little to quell its legacy as a trade of infant exploitation and abuse, shedding light on the power of such material on the formation of public opinion.

It is tempting to separate discourses representing baby farming into categories of repression and resistance, the former attempting to 'trap' women within the domestic sphere in the name of reducing criminality, and the latter opposing it. However, Foucault's notion of resistance as present *within* power itself forces reconsideration of this approach:

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it... We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy (Foucault, 1978:100).

The vast number of discourses surrounding the topic of baby farming cannot simply be separated into categories of repression and resistance, of support and opposition. Representations of baby farming that functioned as politically regulatory discourses exercised a power to shock in the form of profoundly negative stereotypes, whether in the claims of the commonality of nurses 'of dissolute habits', poisoning via 'improper food', or 'free use of "quieting stuff"' (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174). However, these negative stereotypes were based on underlying ideologies of the publication, the majority of which were deeply rooted in the notion of the superiority of middle-class values. The application of these notions to the lives of the working class was unrealistic, as many women, for example, needed to enter the public sphere for employment. These assumptions therefore in themselves undermined the power exercised by potentially negative representation, as they were impractical in application to the lives of the working class.

There are, of course, issues with using the works of Foucault as a methodological approach. Some critics claim that Foucault's conception 'of "power as everywhere" leaves no way to distinguish the difference in power between the dominators and the dominated' (McLaren, 2002:2). However, as Baxter explains, women adopt multiple subject positions and 'it is far too reductive to constitute women in general, or indeed any individual woman, simply as *victims* of male oppression' (Baxter, 2003:8). Indeed, as will be explored throughout this thesis, both baby farmers and the mothers who used their services were, for example, subject

to negative representation within the press. However, there are several points at which such figures take steps to establish their own narrative within such discourse, such as John and Catherine Barnes, which will be explored further in Chapter Three. This thesis, therefore, will utilise notions of sexuality and biopower, but also explore aspects that Foucault did not cover in his work; he says little about the role of newspapers in exerting disciplinary control over the population, except a short reference to broadsides in his text *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

Foucault's work is also extremely androcentric, which makes the analysis of women's history and perceptions of motherhood more difficult to navigate, but it is an important area to explore because of this very fact. Historians such as Nichola Goc have applied his work in this sense to make poignant and useful observations about crimes such as infanticide in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Goc argues, '[n]ewspaper discourse in the pre-electronic age had a central role in determining what society understood as "real"' (Goc, 2013:7). The inclusion of such material in a Foucauldian analysis of baby farming can therefore be justified as a valid representation of knowledge of the trade as negotiated within power relations. Critically, sexuality was central to the identity of men and women across social classes, which significantly impacted the literary and journalistic representation of both baby farmers and the people who utilised their services. Thus, a Foucauldian analysis of the history of baby farming will highlight an intersection of both the sexual and criminal regulation that occurred throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Summary of Chapters

The first chapter will cover the period 1834-1865, beginning with the 1834 'new' Poor Law. The Bastardy Clause in this legislation made illegitimate children solely the financial

responsibility of their mothers until they turned sixteen (Webb and Webb, 1910:7). The type of relief available for those in desperate circumstances was also changed from 'outdoor' monetary support to the 'indoor' aid of workhouses (Boyer, 2006:202). Though this was meant to temper illegitimacy rates and discourage non-marital, sexual relations, it fuelled demand for baby farming. Although this trade was in occurrence for centuries, the phrase 'baby farming' was not actually coined until the 1860s ('Baby Farming,' 1867:343). Consequently, texts published prior to this date lack this term, though they describe the same phenomenon (Bentley, 2005). Despite this, much of the press discourse surrounding the subject uses language critical to establishing the history of baby farming in the early-nineteenth century. Examining these representations is therefore vital in order to understand their influence on later depictions. Further to this, early literary representations of the trade will also be analysed. For example, Pearman refers to the institution of *Oliver Twist's* early years as a workhouse (Pearman, 2017:72). I will acknowledge this observation, as the nature of the institution in Dickens's novel may indeed be part of 'indoor' relief, but it is also quite clearly a baby farm. The fact that his work is said to have been a significant factor in the creation of sensationalism as a narrative style (Brantlinger, 1982:8; Debenham, 2002:214), combined with the fact that baby farming features in *Oliver Twist* before the term was even coined, marks Dickens's work as critical in the emergence of the baby farmer as a literary and cultural creation, which had a marked impact on later representations of the trade.

The second chapter in this thesis will address the period of 1866-1878 in the history of baby farming. This period witnessed the coining of the term, and the discovery of the case that arguably triggered the first legislative reforms in the regulation of paid childcare: Margaret Waters. Many sensational texts focused on the existence of the trade in London, and often emphasised the role of non-marital relations as the primary factor contributing

towards criminality, as the majority of children 'farmed out' were illegitimate (Bentley, 2005:201). Fictional representations of the trade also embodied this same sensationalist style, therefore, this chapter will also feature analysis of Emma Carolina Wood's novel *Sorrow on the Sea* (1868). Indeed, such discourse demonstrates a pattern of representation that was set in texts published in London. Thus, this chapter will compare this novel to news articles produced in Manchester to demonstrate commonalities in understandings of baby farming across regions, but also to establish how these understandings diverged. Critically, although the trade also occurred in Manchester, it was represented in a different manner, both by Manchester texts themselves and by London publications. Primarily, it was depicted as stemming from the childcare needs from female factory workers (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174). Manchester newspapers, at this point, although focusing predominantly on major sensational cases, such as Margaret Waters, also discussed the trade in Manchester primarily in this context. Thus, although investigations into criminal baby farming were thought to start in London, other cities also began to develop more localised understandings of the trade during this period.

The third chapter will examine press and literary representations of baby farming from 1878-1894. Articles within Manchester newspapers will be examined in the context of continual anxieties about the crime rate within Victorian society. Even though statistics clearly stated that crime in general was decreasing, historians note that there was a prevalent and maintained belief that violent crime was increasing, which can be connected to a drastic increase in sensationalist newspaper coverage on the subject (Casey, 2011:368). The role of geographic location will therefore be explored in this chapter in terms of the selection of criminal baby farming cases included in print. These narratives, in the context of the baby farming trade, placed particular emphasis on those accused of criminality, ranging from child

neglect to infanticide, and prejudged them as guilty. Thus, one local case, that of John and Catherine Barnes in 1879, will be examined in more detail, determining if they were indeed as sinister as depicted. Moreover, three fictional representations of baby farming published during this period will also be examined: *Lettie's Last Home* by L. T. Meade (1875), the vocal score of *H. M. S. Pinafore* by Arthur Sullivan and William Schwenck Gilbert (1878) and *The Fallen Leaves* by Wilkie Collins (1879). As can be inferred, this period witnessed somewhat of a surge in publications featuring the trade, suggesting that literature also played an active part in fuelling anxiety about crime within Victorian society, and built upon the notion that criminality within baby farming was more widespread than it actually was. These texts will therefore be compared to determine commonalities in fictional depictions of the trade. Such depictions built upon existing understandings of baby farming. However, the literary styles of realism, sensationalism and melodrama altered the communication of these conceptions in often corresponding ways. Finally, the implications of their publication in London will also be considered in the context of perceptions of the trade in Manchester, examining both the divergence and similarities between these regions in patterns of representation of paid childcare.

The fourth chapter will examine literary and press representations of baby farming within the era of the *fin de siècle*. Critics have observed this period to contain within it fears of cultural decay or, more specifically, 'degeneration' (Taylor, 2007:22). Consequently, representations of the trade echoed these fears, particularly amongst the urban poor, but also through the figure of the 'New Woman', as the act of farming out children to seek employment was often interpreted as a rejection of maternal and domestic responsibility. Indeed, George Moore's *Esther Waters* will be analysed in this context of the New Woman and fears of degeneration, as the mother temporarily farms out her child in order to gain the

occupation of wet nurse and is ultimately presented with the choice to sacrifice her child in order to keep her employment. However, it must again be iterated that this text reflected understandings of the trade that were present in London. Thus, Margaret Harkness's novel *A Manchester Shirtmaker* will be compared to *Esther Waters* to delve deeper into the differing conceptions of motherhood within this context. Such differences in representation will also be examined in terms of the press, as the *fin de siècle* witnessed a rise in civic identity within provincial cities such as Manchester (Guy, 2018:6). As such, the *Manchester Guardian* in particular prioritised articles depicting cases of criminal baby farming close to or within the city, as opposed to the executions of baby farmers within more distant regions. During this period, this concept of civic identity became more pronounced within representations of baby farming in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier*. Hence, this chapter will examine such depictions in comparison to newspaper articles from earlier chapters in order to demonstrate how conceptions of the trade differed regionally.

Finally, this thesis is also structured with appendices for additional context. Appendix A provides a table outlining several baby farming cases between 1849-1907. It does not contain an exhaustive list of all the trials featuring baby farmers during this period. Rather, it is intended as means of providing additional detail to the cases already discussed within this thesis, as the provision of such context would otherwise prove cumbersome if included within the thesis itself (Yang, 2005:55–57). This was informed by an appendix in the unpublished thesis of Ruth Homrighaus, which provides an extensive table of baby farming cases after 1870, from charges of murder to neglect (Homrighaus, 2003: 258-268). The structure of this was adopted to provide a clear overview of the facts of each case. As such, key information is provided in separate columns, such as the name of the defendant, the trial date and place, the primary charge and the sentence, with a general summary of events below. However, a

number of different sources have been used in order to glean the summary of each case, including a strong emphasis on Manchester newspapers, to reflect the regional focus of this thesis. It is also arranged in chronological order to allow for convenient cross-referencing. On the other hand, Appendix B contains the details of articles in the *Manchester Guardian* between 1867-1958 that feature the phrase “baby farming”. This is intended to illustrate the varying amount of coverage of the trade within Manchester newspapers across this period. It includes key information such as the date, title, page number and the name of the baby farmer discussed (if applicable) in each article. Additionally, in order to reflect the wider context of how baby farming was discussed within this newspaper, certain references within each article have also been recorded, for example, legislation that was discussed or the location depicted. It has also been noted if either illegitimacy or the parents of the children farmed out are referenced, to give some indication on the prevalence of each of these factors within the journalistic representation of the trade. It was deemed necessary to include such detail to account for the fact that the history of baby farming is considerably under researched. Hence, there is relatively little general knowledge of the trade as it was represented in Manchester. As such, this information has been provided with the aim of aiding comprehension of this important topic.

It is within these chapters that the transforming representation of baby farming will be examined, from the early-nineteenth century to the first decade of the twentieth century. By analysing such texts, modern representations of the trade can be placed into context, as the roots of centralised welfare can be found in legislative attempts to regulate this trade. Indeed, the fact that the reputation of baby farmers was predominantly pejorative in itself is significant, as the creation of the baby farmer as a villain in the minds of the news and literature consuming public, provides insight into the perceived threat of such unregulated

childcare to middle-class conceptions of domesticity. These perceptions transformed as the centuries passed and the regulation of paid childcare progressed, leading the stigma attached to baby farming to become separated from wider conceptions of paid childcare, lingering as a hangover in our current perceptions, and suspicions, of this trade. Hence, this thesis will attempt to develop a comprehensive understanding of how baby farming was represented, to shed light upon the underlying anxieties associated with motherhood and femininity that it elicited.

Chapter 1 – Suspicion and Scandal: Understanding Victorian Attitudes towards Paid

Childcare, 1834-1865

This chapter will begin with the introduction of the 'New' Poor Law in 1834 and end with the arrest of Charlotte Windsor in 1865. The representation of these events in popular literature and Manchester circulars will be analysed to determine how baby farming was understood in this period and to distinguish the effects of legislation in the provinces as opposed to the capital. The idea of rearing the children of others for payment was not, in fact, new and this introduction of a cash nexus into childcare had long been a source of suspicion. Indeed, caring for the children of others, most often so mothers could seek employment, presented a challenge to bourgeois understandings of feminine behaviour, which demanded a gendered separation between the public and private spheres. A woman's place was thought to be within the home and that her domestic and maternal duties should be prioritised above all else (Langland, 1995:291). These conceptions were represented, perhaps most strikingly, through the notion of the 'angel in the house', derived from the popular poem by Coventry Patmore (Patmore, 1863). As such, although the history of baby farming is often thought to begin when the term was coined, in 1867 by Ernest Hart in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* (*British Medical Journal*, 1867:343), the development of similar language can be found in many newspapers and literary texts. For example, the institution of Oliver Twist's infancy is clearly a baby farm in Charles Dickens's novel of the same name. The trade itself also thrived in this period and many examples of baby farming can be seen prior to the creation of the term. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, however, can be seen as triggering a greater demand for baby farmers. Its impact upon representations of the trade across this period will thus be explored, alongside the two criminal cases of Bartholomew Drouet and Charlotte Windsor, which reinforced the idea that paid child carers would neglect or murder the

children in their care in the name of profit. Analysis of these examples will demonstrate the degree to which cultural and literary representations can shape public attitudes and popular perceptions of social issues. These representations laid the groundwork for pejorative conceptions of baby farming and contributed to its association with criminal activity, in turn ultimately shaping broader cultural anxieties around poverty, sexuality and childcare.

Manchester transitioned from a township to a city in 1853 (Sumner, 2016:130), reflecting the extensive population growth that occurred during this period. Houses were built at an increasing rate in the city centre, and the surrounding areas became vastly popular middle-class suburbs (Kidd, 2016: 306). Additionally, due to lasting political and social effects of the Peterloo Massacre in 1819, the number of newspapers in circulation soared (Russell, 2016:281). This meant that such media outputs were increasing in importance even before drastic increases in literacy and the dropping costs in the mass production of newspapers. Manchester was soon to become a powerful voice of the provincial areas competing against London, with the local press playing a vital part in this. It was the world's first industrial modern city, and as such faced new social and economic challenges, which also affected the trade of baby farming in which many of its inhabitants engaged. However, in the early nineteenth century many literary and journalistic representations of baby farming originated in southern English cities, particularly London. Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist* was also considered a quintessential representation of London poverty. These texts set a pattern of representation, the influence of which can be viewed in later depictions of the trade. Publications from the capital were therefore likely key in establishing initial popular conceptions of baby farming, even though such representations may have not necessarily been compatible with the cultural context of Manchester.

1834 Poor Law Amendments

The 1834 Poor Law Amendments were a drastic rearrangement of poor relief throughout England. 'Outdoor' monetary payments from the parish were changed to 'indoor' relief through means of the workhouse⁴ in an attempt to reduce costs (Englander, 1998:52). The Bastardy Clause in this new legislation also made illegitimate children solely the financial responsibility of their mothers until they turned sixteen (Englander, 1998:18). This section will examine these amendments in terms of their effect on baby farming, as their implementation was intended as a regulatory measure to reduce the production of illegitimate children within the population (Mason, 1995:66). However, instead of reducing illegitimacy, it likely encouraged mothers to resort to other methods to care for their children, including the use of baby farmers. This failure to regulate the sexuality of the poor thus indicated the presence of competing understandings of femininity according to class. Additionally, upon closer inspection, the effects of such legislation were far from uniform across England, in fact differing from region to region. Thus, the regulation of sexuality as intersecting with class tensions will also be examined within the context of the cultural landscape of Manchester.

The implementation of the 1834 Poor Law can be associated with several frameworks of thought, including what can be termed as 'Malthusian fear'. The controversial works of Thomas Malthus appeared to be grounded in a solid foundation of economics; a rising population faced with a limited food supply would undoubtedly lead to starvation (Jones, 2000:5). Malthus's conclusion, however, was decidedly (and unfairly) critical of the working classes, as he labelled their 'irresponsible' breeding as the root problem, arguing 'that poor

⁴ Workhouses were commonly nicknamed the 'Bastilles', inspired by the infamous French prison as a symbol for oppression of the poor (Pearman, 2017:70).

relief only encouraged them in irresponsibility' (Jones, 2000:5). The 1834 Bastardy Clause thus combined a stigma against non-marital sex with a clear undertone of Malthusian thinking, as it attempted to limit the number of illegitimate children dependent on the parish by seemingly disincentivising non-marital, sexual relations between the poor. However, as the number of illegitimate children did not decline during this period, the introduction of this legislation can be argued to have created a new necessity to outsource childcare.

Thus, debates surrounding baby farming were inextricably linked to nineteenth-century intersectional discourses between sexuality and class. The pressures to limit the expression of sexuality into the 'procreative couple', which Foucault also terms the 'Malthusian couple', aimed to restrict the birth rate amongst the poor. The creation of the Malthusian couple as a representation of the benefits of limiting family size was therefore an attempt to modify sex itself into a utilitarian force and 'transform the sexual conduct of couples into a concerted economic and political behaviour' (Foucault, 1978:26). Despite this, the attempted restriction of sexuality apart from a 'single locus', actually increased desires to speak on the subject of 'deviant' sexualities and violate the taboo (Foucault, 1978:44–45), thus constituting these forms of sexuality as *possible* and potentially desirable (Mills, 2003:85). This line of thinking can also be applied to representations of baby farming, as later, legislative measures introduced to regulate the trade in fact increased the amount of discourse produced on the subject. Indeed, Foucault does not argue that sex was not repressed in Victorian society, but that repression in itself is only a "component part" in a power/knowledge *dispositive* (Foucault, 1978:12–13). As Chloë Taylor observes, the 'repressive hypothesis assumes a negative relationship between sex and power', forbidding it, censoring it, and rendering it into non-existence except between heterosexual married people (Taylor, 2017:17). However, in the nineteenth century, power can be observed as

functioning not so much as to repress sex, but as to constitute specific sexualities. Therefore, the repressive discourses that circulated around sexual behaviour in the nineteenth century did not render deviant sexuality to non-existence. Rather, it had productive effects, creating different kinds of sexuality, and making sexuality itself a defining characteristic of subjectivity.

Just as the Bastardy Clause indicated a stigma associated with illegitimacy, debates surrounding charity and poor relief suggest that the use of such services was also stigmatised. Deeply linked to this was the notion of self-help, perhaps best articulated in the writings of Samuel Smiles (1859). The ideology of individualism that was so popular with the Victorians, extended into an assumption that the poor were destitute due to their own personal failings. Smiles supported this by referencing 'a Russian proverb which says that Misfortune is next door to Stupidity' (Jones, 2000:40). Indeed, the concept of 'less eligibility'⁵ also furthered this stigma (Jones, 2000:9). Even if the inmates of the workhouse were not brutalised or mistreated in any physical way, they were still psychologically scarred from an experience of an institution which stripped them of their individual identity.⁶ Jones explains that paupers were forced to wear workhouse uniforms which were 'a badge of shame' and until '1842, silence was enforced at meals. Most bitter of all were the conditions of a pauper funeral: the plain deal coffin, the ban on tolling the church bell' (Jones, 2000:11). The representation of these practices within such institutions combined to form an image of the workhouse that was a source of anxiety among the poorer classes. Hence, in the face of economic hardship,

⁵ The concept of 'less eligibility' described the idea the 'workhouse would be "in no case so eligible as the conditions of the persons of the lowest class subsisting on the fruits of their own industry"' (Jones, 2000:9).

⁶ Jeremy Bentham's principles of pain and pleasure were also interpreted to provide important justification for the harsh treatment of paupers. Put simply, if human beings sought pleasure and avoided pain, then the best form of governance 'involved the utilization of 'the logic of the will'. . . so that good actions were pleasurable to the individual, and evil or anti-social actions were painful' (Jones, 2000:7).

communities often formed cooperative networks of support that would therefore avoid the stigma associated with the use of such relief.

Baby farmers were an important part of the working-class community, providing a vital service for mothers whilst using the payments to supplement their own modest means. Even criminal baby farmers occasionally played a role in this network; John and Catherine Barnes, prosecuted decades later in Cheshire in 1879, were referred to by witnesses in their trial as generous and kind, as they had often lent money to their neighbours (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879:5). Alan Kidd argues that it was ironic the middle class displayed such contempt towards the supposed fecklessness of the masses, as in fact there was overwhelming 'evidence of self-reliance and mutual assistance arising from within the working class itself' (Kidd, 1999:110). Despite fear of the ever-growing number of paupers relying on poor relief, in 'times of hardship. . . a majority of the working classes drew on their own resources or the support of their relatives or neighbours before they considered asking for poor relief or charity' (Kidd, 1999:110). Hence, the changing methods of relief from parish unions may have led to a reinforcement of these other methods of survival, which included baby farming, as there was clearly a preference amongst the poor to avoid accepting such relief that would taint them with the stigma of pauperism.

This reliance on support from the community was especially prevalent in Lancashire, along with memberships of friendly societies, burial clubs and affiliated orders.⁷ Friendly Societies were insurance clubs that offered 'sickness and burial coverage and sociable

⁷ A national estimation of the people that held such memberships was based on case study in Lancashire; on the basis that most friendly society members 'were male and over the age of 20 . . . they imply that some 60 per cent of adult males in England and Wales belonged to a friendly society of some description' (Kidd, 1999:120).

activities' for regular payments (Cordery, 1995:35). Kidd argues that the rapid growth these societies experienced in the 1830s and 40s in Manchester stemmed from anticipation of the New Poor Law. He explains that panic spread from a belief that parish relief would be removed entirely, and the dreaded representation of the workhouse caused 'a rush to join friendly societies in the hope that this would insure members against recourse to a reformed and restricted Poor Law' (Kidd, 1999:114). The existence of these organisations presented a challenge to middle-class notions of 'respectability'. In fact, Simon Cordery states that these societies redefined this concept in a working-class context, 'based on collective self-help and independence from external control' (Cordery, 1995:34–35). These precautionary measures taken in Manchester introduce the idea that 'respectability' was a fluid concept that could be interpreted according to class – a discussion which will be developed in more detail below. However, it also suggests that parish relief was only one option out of many that working-class families may have depended on to support themselves - and by far the least desirable. Cooperation between neighbours and families, including the use of baby farmers to outsource childcare and find work, would always have been attempted first. This provides important context for early-nineteenth century representations of baby farming published in London, as it highlights the roots of regional variations in patterns of childcare and establishes a different narrative from that of pejorative depictions of the trade.

This attempt by the 1834 Poor Law amendments to regulate levels of illegitimacy suggest that sexuality can be seen as both constructed by, and simultaneously productive of, disciplinary techniques and regulatory controls – i.e. biopower. Discussions surrounding the Bastardy Clause often focused on the fact that no 'attempt would be made by the poor law authorities to sue the putative fathers for maintenance on the grounds that, to have done so, would serve "to extend the rights of matrimony to the unqualified and undeserving"'

(Englander, 1998:18). The justification for this, given in the Poor Law Report of 1834, was that 'continued illicit intercourse has, in almost all cases, originated with the females; many of whom, under our knowledge, in this and neighbouring parishes, do resort to it as a source of support' (*Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1834*). This segment demonstrates a clear stigma against the use of relief by the working classes, but also highlights the role of sexuality within biopower. This construction of sexuality is broken down into, firstly, knowledge of sexual behaviour, secondly, systems of power regulating sexual acts, and finally, forms in which subjects recognise themselves as subjects of sexuality (Mills, 2003:87). Hence, 'knowledge' of women allegedly trapping innocent men via pregnancy as means for support was produced by middle-class legislators. This form of regulatory control attempted to discourage non-marital sex, consequently limiting the numbers of illegitimate children who could potentially be a burden upon the local Union (Englander, 1998:18). Although these measures were predominantly unsuccessful, in these circumstances, women recognised themselves as subject to their sexuality, often demonstrated in the act of suing the putative father for payment, which was often the only course of action to support themselves.

Furthermore, a critical aspect of this legislation was derived from middle-class notions of 'ideal' feminine and maternal behaviour. The claims that women purposefully engaged in non-marital sex to gain access to poor relief demonstrates the degree to which such women were situated as outside of this ideal. Ellen Ross connects these conceptions to middle-class discourse of separate spheres. She argues that dividing the women's sphere so totally from men's helped to 'explain husbands' widespread inability to consider sex or conception as a joint responsibility' (Ross, 1993:98). Hence, although the concept of biological fatherhood was understood, 'conception was still vaguely "blamed" on women' (Ross, 1993:99). This understanding of the responsibility for conception can also be observed within the realm of

female employment, as dismissal was thought to be common on discovery of a pregnancy – particularly in the case of domestic servants (Mitchell, 1981:53).⁸ Indeed, as outlined by Elizabeth Gaskell, engagement in non-marital, sexual relations represented a transgression from the bourgeois feminine ideal. As such, the introduction of legislation to regulate illegitimacy highlights sexuality as a source of tension between the middle and lower classes.

The representation of fallen women within literature also typically included such experiences of economic and social ostracism. In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853), for example, the protagonist is unable to remain in her role as a seamstress after becoming pregnant. As George Watt notes, '[h]er later occupation in nursing is a calling rather than a job; it is one of the ways she expiates her sin' (Watt, 1984:21). Gaskell pointedly criticised such treatment in her representation of Ruth; she is depicted as naïve about the standards of behaviour set for her within society, and thus as easy prey for unscrupulous men (Watt, 1984:21). Gaskell was well-known for her work with 'fallen' women who had experienced social marginalisation in Manchester. This included visits to the New Bayley Prison, during which she met a young girl named Pasley, who purportedly served as the inspiration for the character of Ruth (Recchio, 2013:34). Gaskell wrote a letter to Charles Dickens in 1850 to request that Pasley be placed in Urania Cottage, a house for fallen women that he had helped to set up (Scholl and Morris, 2016:84). She described Pasley's life as a series of bleak events from the beginning, with her father's death and her mother's 'complete indifference' towards her (Gaskell, 1997:98). She then entered a downward spiral after being apprenticed to a dressmaker, then placed with a conniving woman who had occasioned the 'girl's seduction by a surgeon in the

⁸ There was a significant number of female domestic servants working in Manchester - 9,961 in 1840 (Kidd, 2006:17).

neighbourhood' (Gaskell, 1997:98). In this letter, as Lynn Mae Alexander explains, emigration is depicted as the only solution to 'escape the hardships of urban industrialization' (Alexander, 2003:113). However, both in her letter and in her novel, Gaskell also draws attention to the double standards within bourgeois attitudes to non-marital sex, emphasising the role of men in the 'fall' and subsequent hardships faced by women.

However, Gaskell's observations may not have necessarily been representative of female workers as a whole within Manchester. Although middle-class conceptions of femininity and maternity were integrated, to a degree, within working-class life, these ideas were not accepted uniformly or wholesale. For example, an economic reinforcement of the separation between the public and private spheres found roots in the notion of the 'breadwinner'. The breadwinner was to 'earn a "family wage", that is, one sufficient to keep his spouse and children housed, fed, and clothed' (Kidd, 1999:141). However, this notion was often unrealistic in the context of the material challenges faced by the poor. It was often necessary for women to obtain employment, either to add to the household income or, in some cases, as the sole wage earner. Moreover, the chastity that was so prized within notions of femininity was often unrealistic for many working-class women who lived in extremely close quarters with their families and neighbours. In fact, according to Michael Mason, 'Nineteenth-century middle-class opinion had a strongly environmentalist bias . . . and was on the whole incredulous that physical proximity could be other than morally depraving' (Mason, 1994:139–140). Hence, even philanthropic middle-class figures, such as Gaskell and Dickens, who recognised the difficulties and injustices faced by 'fallen' women, still operated within understandings of femininity that were not necessarily compatible with the lives of the working class.

Not only did representations of the trade often touch upon anxieties associated with illegitimacy, the outsourcing of maternal labour also brought to light further challenges to middle-class understandings of femininity. For example, the introduction of the Bastardy Clause demanding mothers bear sole responsibility for their illegitimate children was often protested in the context of childcare, signalling a multitude of competing narratives surrounding maternity. It triggered expressions of concern that mothers would be forced to murder their children due to the increased hardships of indoor relief and lack of support from the putative father. As such, Ann R. Higginbotham explains that implicit 'in much of the rhetoric about infanticide was the idea that both mothers and infants were victims. The mother's deed was deplored but blamed not simply on her poverty but also on her betrayal by the father' (Higginbotham, 1989:322). In discussions of baby farming, this multitude of narratives surrounding maternity was further emphasised. Critically, this radical legislation may have inadvertently increased demand for the trade, particularly in Manchester, where anticipation of the Poor law had already led to mass implementations of other preventative measures. Thus, the existence of the trade encapsulated an intersection of class and gender tensions in which conceptions of maternal duty diverged according to both class and region.

These regional distinctions are also evident in the variations in female employment. According to national statistics, in '1851 there were over 900,000 female domestic servants recorded in the census which compares with only 250,000 women in the cotton sector and half of that number in the wool and textile industry' (Purvis, 1995:28). Although this reveals a substantial number of women working in mill and workshop conditions across the country, in Manchester this was the single most common source of employment for this demographic, even before the city reached its peak of industrial development; in '1840 there were 11, 427 women working in Manchester's cotton mills and workshops (out of a total female labour

force of 37, 779)' (Kidd, 2006:17). Whilst any expectation of privacy about their transgression was often unrealistic for domestic servants, a woman who worked in a factory may drop her child off to be cared for in the morning and pick them up after work without her employer knowing.

The strict separation between working-class and middle-class spaces meant that in Manchester, a pregnant, single woman would often only have her own community to contend with. Sally Mitchell states that within the city 'where one birth in twelve was illegitimate, the whores admitted to penitentiaries came overwhelmingly from the ranks of domestic servants – but almost no one deduced from those figures that factory girls were more moral than servants' (Mitchell, 1981:53). This suggests that there were often different consequences for non-marital relationships and illegitimate children within the demographic of female factory workers. In fact, historians such as Mason have argued that non-marital sexual relations were a perfectly normal part of courtship for working-class couples (Mason, 1994:67). Illegitimate children, therefore, may have been simply a natural consequence of the economic frustrations of future plans for marriage, caused by insecure employment (Hudson, 1992:146). Thus, the industrial family would appear to have more freedom to maintain their own version of respectability, without interference from those higher in the social order, in comparison to other members of the working class in cities with no such separation, or those who depended on middle-class households for employment. The fact that one of the most popular occupations for women – many of them young and single – was one in which minimal interaction with their employers was often the norm, challenges arguments by historians such as Lionel Rose that identify shame as a key factor driving demand for baby farming (Rose, 1986b:20). In these circumstances, the need to outsource childcare discretely for fear of their indiscretion being revealed and thus being dismissed, was mitigated.

The idea of 'respectability' among the poorer classes themselves often depended on individual circumstances and was thus a fluid concept. Anna Davin observes that almost no member of the working class ever considered themselves not respectable (Davin, 1996:70). Rather, individuals constructed their own understandings of what respectable behaviour should entail, which in turn informed their expectations of the 'ideal' family. 'Someone with a strong sense of self-respect could engage in non-respectable behaviour without jeopardizing their subjective respectability' (Davin, 1996: 70-71). Davin's study of grief among the working classes explains that the mothers who worked in factories, leaving their children with others, would still view themselves as 'respectable' despite the idealisation of the mother as a homemaker (Davin, 1996: 70). The idea that certain women were failing to engage in 'respectable' behaviour thus came from a number of middle-class employers, who judged such behaviour in the context of bourgeois understandings of motherhood; namely that childcare was a maternal duty. Baby farming challenged these conceptions by presenting mothers with an option to outsource childcare. Hence, the trade acted as a source of tension between the middle and lower classes, which led to the production of pejorative representations that suggested the use of baby farmers was a dangerous rejection of maternal duty.

The Victorian era was an age which placed increasing importance on statistics, which became available as a by-product of 'rapidly expanded census activities undertaken by various government agencies' (Goldman, 2022:xix). The collection of such information associated with marital and parental status reflects Thomas Lemke's observation that 'Sexuality assumes a privileged position since its effects are situated on the microlevel of the body and the macrolevel of a population' (Lemke, 2011:38). Determining how far the working class deviated from the ideal 'conjugal couple' in the eyes of the middle classes thus precipitated

the introduction of regulatory controls and disciplinary techniques. However, as previously established, the regulation of sexuality operated not as a form of repression by the imposition of state power from above. Rather, the aim was to manage populations from within. This aim was achieved through 'governmentality' which, as Margaret McLaren argues, 'can apply to a society, a group, a community, a family, a person. It refers to the multifarious ways that non-sovereign power operates to govern individuals and groups' (McLaren, 2002:167). Hence, the regulation of sexuality; the government of sexuality, gave rise to a number of regulatory controls monitoring birth rates, age of marriage, illegitimacy rates, the use of contraception and so on (Hewitt, 1983:227). This emphasis on the collection of numerical data was critical to representations of baby farming, as attempts to measure the number of active baby farmers at a national level went hand in hand with the later introduction of regulatory legislation.

The emphasis on statistics also allowed different social groups to appropriate these numbers 'to construct or interrogate reality in their interests' (Goldman, 2022:xx). For example, Annie Cossins notes that the Commissioners of the Poor Law interpreted the results of these new clauses according to their own biases, claiming that the subsequent reduction of 'Bastardy orders' (monetary claims from the mothers of illegitimate children against putative fathers) by 90%, was due to the fact that there were fewer children being born out of wedlock (Cossins, 2015: 90). However, an objective assessment would have highlighted that this reduction could also have been due, not to a reduction of illegitimate children, but to the fact that obtaining money had been made so much more difficult that it was seldom

worth starting the process.⁹ The reduction in orders can therefore be attributed to the fact that what used to be taken at the mother's word, now had to be proved in court (Edsall, 1971:13), which made it easy for a man to deny his paternity in cases where the relationship was kept a secret. This removal of such a vital source of income for mothers emphasises the importance of female employment and, by extension, the services that baby farmers provided.

These effects of the 1834 Poor Law amendments demonstrate that the social stigma of illegitimacy and the economic challenges faced by working-class mothers often overlapped. Hence, the implementation of this legislation marks an important intersection between class and gender. Driven by both Malthusian fears of overpopulation and middle-class notions of femininity and maternity, this legislation attempted to regulate the population by confining sexual relations to the marriage bed. However, this did not have a uniform effect across England; rather, there were important regional variations. In the context of industrial Manchester, a degree of separation between lower and middle classes and a large proportion of female factory workers often resulted in discrepancies as to what a 'respectable' working-class family should look like. Further to this, the role of community support was especially prevalent in Manchester, providing many with alternate means to support themselves before relying on state relief. Baby farmers were part of this community, playing an important role within this network of support between neighbours. Thus, the Poor Law amendments made comparatively little difference to the cultural landscape of Manchester. This variation between region and demographic was critical to later representations of baby farming, as it

⁹ According to Mason, bastardy rates 'are definitely high and rising by the late 1830s, and by the beginning of the next decade they have gone up nationally in a really dramatic leap of between 50 and 100 per cent' (Mason, 1995:66).

demonstrates an early example of the cultural differences between cities that affected patterns of childcare. However, this does not render such changes irrelevant to Manchester. Indeed, as demonstrated by the extremely popular work of Charles Dickens, the change in methods of relief made a marked impression on early-nineteenth century representations of baby farming, particularly in literature. These representations acted to inform understandings of the trade, not just within London, but across England.

Language of baby farming in *Oliver Twist* (1837)

Although *Oliver Twist* was published in 1837, before the term 'baby farming' was coined, the place in which the protagonist spends his infancy is now generally agreed upon to be a baby farm (Westland, 2000:367; Ledger, 2010:134). One can assume the novel was influenced by the recent changes in methods of relief implemented by the 1834 Poor Law Amendments, as his criticism of the trade is amalgamated with the institution of the workhouse. However, it was also critical in establishing a pejorative pattern in the literary representation of working-class motherhood and childcare. Indeed, Dickens's influence can clearly be observed in later literary representations of baby farming, establishing the criminal archetype of a woman neglecting infants in the name of profit.

Dickens was also significant in the development of narrative styles utilised to represent the trade. Not only has he been referred to as the 'prototype sensationalist' (Debenham, 2002:213), but his novel also broadly follows the Newgate¹⁰ model. Newgate novels were crime novels, often drawing inspiration from the deeds of eighteenth-century robbers and highwaymen, and followed the daring adventures and escapes of criminals (Pykett, 2003:19). Such novels also often alluded to the idea 'that social conditions create

¹⁰ Newgate fiction was named after the main London prison for condemned criminals (Pykett, 2003:37).

crime' (Pykett, 2002:48) – a notion that Dickens clearly adhered to. The fusion of these two aspects is reflected in the blending of narrative styles within the novel, including realism and melodrama. This greatly influenced later representations of baby farming, both in literature and journalism, marking Dickens's work as key in the emergence of the baby farmer as a cultural creation. Critically, although the novel is often considered as a quintessential depiction of London poverty, its wide circulation enabled the text to inform understandings of baby farming throughout the country, including Manchester. As such, although existing patterns of childcare differed between regions, this text is an important example of London publications establishing initial patterns of representation for the trade.

The definition of baby farming is extremely broad, allowing for a variety of different arrangements to be categorised in the same context. The rearing of non-biological children for payment frequently occurs in Victorian literature. For example, the character of Aeneas Manston in Thomas Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* (1874) is the illegitimate son of Miss Cytherea Aldclyffe, who entrusts him to the care of an elderly woman in order to hide her indiscretion – a (supposedly) common circumstance within baby farming. This is just one example of how the trade may not only play a bigger part in Victorian literature than would initially appear, but even enjoyed an active role in shaping the plots of these well-known stories. This definition will thus also be applied to the representation of childcare in *Oliver Twist*, as analysis of the novel in this context suggests that suspicions of paid childcare were present within Victorian society before the term 'baby farming' was used. In fact, the emphasis of the role of the parish authorities within such transactions even presents the idea that the children of 'branch' workhouses were essentially in government-run baby farms. This notion reinforces the idea that literary representations of baby farming affected, and were

affected by, conceptions of childcare scandals that occurred within the period they were created.

Dickens's writing was often a product of and participated in what literary criticism describes as Realism. The novel aims to give a realist depiction and description of various parts of London,¹¹ including the use of vernacular and slang.¹² This use of observation is also reflected in the inclusion of 'the whole range of society and experience, not excluding the working classes or sexual relations' (Jenkins, 1978:7). In the context of baby farming, the location in which Oliver spends his early years is often considered as drawing on controversies of nineteenth-century workhouses. For example, Joanne Pearman observes that the abuse and neglect depicted in *Oliver Twist*, 'in particular that of an infant scalded to death' (Dickens, 2000:6), can be equated to real workhouse scandals later in the century. In a Wigan Workhouse, 'reported in the *Illustrated Police News* of 18 January 1868. . .an infant was, indeed, scalded to death' (Pearman, 2017:72). It is reasonable to assume that the conditions depicted within Dickens's novel engaged with 'press descriptions of "workhouse abuse", "cruelty" and "inhumanity" characteristic of the 1830s and 1840s' (Jones and King, 2020:1). This method can also be observed in later literary depictions of baby farming, including those by L. T. Meade and George Moore, which drew inspiration from representations of criminality produced by journalists as a result of amateur investigations.

Dickensian realism, however, was also combined with melodrama within the novel. Dickens was criticised for this integration (Keating, 1971:11) in a text that championed reform for the social issues of his day (Pykett, 2002:5). However, he expressed that he felt he could

¹¹ The background of Fagin's lair in the novel is said to be based on his time working in Warrens Blacking Warehouse as a child; Fagin himself is named after one of his fellow workers, Bob Fagin (*Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*, 1999:440).

¹² The novel is known for its accurate language amongst the London poor (Locke, 2011:20).

harness the nature of melodrama to enhance his social critique, and even addressed this issue within the novel itself, referencing the abrupt changes in emotional tone of different scenes:

such changes appear absurd; but they are by no means unnatural. The transitions in real life from well-spread boards to death-beds, and from mourning weeds to holiday garments, are not a whit less startling, only there we are busy actors instead of passive lookers-on (Dickens, 2000:106–107).

The integration of melodrama into the representation of baby farming in *Oliver Twist* indeed emphasised his critique of the trade, which will be explored in greater detail below. The novel marks an early example of a pattern of pejorative representation which later fiction writers almost uniformly adopted. His utilisation of this style can be traced to his ‘deep familiarity with the theatre’ (Schlicke, 1999:440), providing important context for the emergence of sensationalism in the 1860s, as both Dickens and stage melodrama are often credited as important influences in the emergence of the genre (Brantlinger, 1982:2). This, in combination with the fact that later representations of baby farming also often blended sensationalism with realism, suggests that Dickens’s work can be seen as critical in the emergence of the criminal baby farmer as a literary and cultural creation.

Oliver is primarily known as an orphan, whose plight in the workhouse and the streets of London uttered a passionate cry for the protection of parentless children. However, Oliver’s mother is not completely absent from the narrative:

As Oliver gave this first proof of the free and proper action of his lungs, the patchwork coverlet, which was carelessly flung over the iron bedstead, rustled; the pale face of a young woman was raised feebly from the pillow; and a faint voice imperfectly articulated the words, “Let me see the child and die” (Dickens, 2000:4).

The circular nature of these events is no doubt intentional, as Oliver has previously been struggling to 'take upon himself the office of respiration' (Dickens, 2000:3). This woman is offered no identity other than that of a mother, and later of a 'fallen woman' when the doctor states 'no wedding-ring, I see' (Dickens, 2000:4). As mentioned before, the notion of the fallen woman was a cultural construction, produced by systems of power that regulated the sexual behaviour of women. A critical factor behind this focus lies in Foucault's suggestion that a person *was* their sexuality (Mills, 2003:87). The highlighting of non-marital, sexual relations among working-class women as a target for regulation, aided in the constitution of the 'fallen woman' as a type of deviant sexuality. However, rather than acting to render this behaviour into non-existence, it is made her defining characteristic. The body of Oliver's mother is therefore sexualised as, by lacking the accoutrement that typically signalled a woman was of married status, she is subject to the identity of the 'fallen woman'.

The term 'fallen woman' thus typically referred to any woman who had engaged in non-marital, sexual relations, 'whose transgression is marked by the presence of an illegitimate child, whose fallenness justifies her social ostracism' (Logan, 1998:2). The Poor Law as a system of power acted to regulate such sexual non-conformity through modifying relief. As such, the workhouse as an institution played a vital role in the disciplinary mechanisms to which pregnant, single women were subjected. Oliver's mother is forced to attend this institution in order to give birth, devoid of any familial or community support. Consequently, her condition dominates her identity. A pregnant woman physically embodies her sexuality, whilst motherhood itself, '[a]s an identity, an ideology and an institution', Jana Sawiki argues, was 'both a source of power and enslavement for women' (Sawiki, 1991:89). The statement "Let me see the child and die" uttered by Oliver's mother shortly before passing away due to childbirth-related trauma can therefore be interpreted as recognition of

not only her mortality, but also her sexuality as central to her identity. In fact, her death also conforms to the common literary representation of the fallen woman, where her death 'resolves' her condition ('Fallen Woman Trope,' 2006:150). Furthermore, her continuing presence within the novel is communicated through her child, not least in the stigma attached to his illegitimate birth status. Thus, the representation of Oliver, as the product of her sexuality, acts as a link between illegitimacy, the workhouse and baby farming.

Dickens's representation of baby farming also touches upon the common misconception that working-class parents were 'desensitised' to infant death. Rose argues that when the birth rate was high, babies were 'replaceable', so the frequency of infant death was met with 'a helpless, resigned mentality – "it's God's will", "perhaps it's for the best" and so forth – which compounded in the cheapening of infant life' (Rose, 1986b:5). This conception is manifested in *Oliver Twist* through the character of the drunken nurse:

when she has lived as long as I have, sir, and had thirteen children of her own, and all on 'em dead except two. . .she'll know better than to take on in that way, bless her heart! Think what it is to be a mother (Dickens, 2000:4).

Echoing this perceived resigned mentality among the working classes, the death of the majority of a woman's children is deemed, not only part of life, but a critical part of being a mother. Such notions can be connected to the ideology of the 'Malthusian Couple'. In this scene, even where fiscal and economic pressures are presumed to limit sexuality to one monogamous partner, the deaths of the drunken nurse's children are presented as an inevitable consequence of this 'irresponsible' repeated breeding. In a perverse manner, through the many deaths of her other children, the nurse actually fulfils what Malthus argued

was a necessity – that of limiting her family size, in turn acting as a point of resistance for such utilitarian thinking.

However, this assumption of indifference on behalf of the working classes in terms of infant mortality has now been challenged. Strange explains that just because the working class did not conform to middle-class notions of grief, this did not mean they were apathetic towards death, but rather, they expressed this loss in a different ‘language’, mitigated by necessary pragmatism (Strange, 2005:245). Indeed, the fact that displays of grief were affected by the material circumstances of poverty, does not mean that the *feeling* of grief itself was negated. Such negative representations, therefore, must not be taken at face-value, but should be understood as the ideological effect of underlying agendas and associated anxieties. Such agendas included the campaign against baby farming, which stemmed from anxieties towards the professionalisation of maternal labour. Not only were these women regarded as deviating from the ‘ideal’ when interacting with the public sphere, but the introduction of a cash nexus appeared to reflect capitalist transactions that dehumanised children as commodities. The idea of working-class apathy took this capitalist ideology to its extreme. It appeared to suggest that the profitability of baby farming lay in the high infant mortality rates of infants that they were paid a lump sum to care for. Thus, in much of Victorian literature, baby farmers were represented as indifferent to the deaths of their charges, depicted as neglectful, greedy and, most importantly, working-class.¹³

Throughout the novel, Oliver’s mother haunts the text, as her influence can be seen both through her innate goodness passed down to Oliver, and through the unravelling mystery as to his full parentage. References to the ‘gentle heart and noble nature’ that she

¹³ Even Buttercup in *H.M.S. Pinafore* is depicted as poor and ignorant, if not inherently evil.

and Oliver share (Dickens, 2000:342), despite her status as a fallen woman, emphasises Dickens's assertion that circumstances outside a woman's control could lead her to lose her virtue.¹⁴ The relationship between Oliver's mother and father, despite being illicit, was presented as a true expression of love, as opposed to his father and his lawful wife, from which Oliver's half-brother Monks is produced. The latter is presented as a perfunctory and unhappy union undertaken as a mere business transaction (Dickens, 2000:341). Such emphasis of the negative effects of placing duty before love results in an unusually tolerant attitude towards illegitimacy. In Mr Brownlow's condemnation of Monks after he calls Oliver a 'bastard', he states that the term 'reflects disgrace on no one living, except you who use it' (Dickens, 2000:341). Thus, Dickens's representation is placed into conflict with social and cultural discourses surrounding the Bastardy Clause, alluding to the idea that pejorative attitudes towards illegitimacy were a greater issue than illegitimacy rates. As such, Anny Sadrin states the novel presents a 'disturbing' challenge to middle-class ideology due to 'the enthronement of a bastard son and heir, which implies an unusual and unorthodox reversal of parts' (Sadrin, 1994:41). Baby farming therefore acted as a site in which competing concerns over illegitimacy and infant mortality interacted with each other in complex and often contradictory ways, highlighting the multitude of narratives surrounding maternity during this period.

The stigma attached to illegitimacy also affected conceptions of infanticide in the sense that this was a crime predominantly perceived to have grown out of the working classes. This thinking stretched far back into previous centuries, and can be seen in the Infanticide Statute of 1624; this Act aimed to "prevent the destroying and murdering of

¹⁴ This no doubt echoed Dicken's own views on the possibility of 'reforming' such disgrace, which he attempted to do in his private life through various charities working with 'fallen' women (Hartley, 2008:3).

bastard children”, which specifically targeted “lewd women that had been delivered of bastard children” (Sharpe and Dickenson, 2002:36). J. R. Dickinson and J. A. Sharpe explain, therefore, that the ‘very meaning of infanticide until the Act’s repeal in 1803 in fact covered two offences: the murder of new-born children; and the concealment of illegitimate children who had been born dead’ (Dickinson and Sharpe, 2002:36). Thus, the murder of illegitimate children had for centuries been associated, at least in the eyes of lawmakers, with the shame of non-marital sex and the consequent need for secrecy, whilst the practical effects of poverty were largely ignored. Considering the divergence in attitudes among working-class communities, which prioritised a greater degree of tolerance towards illegitimacy, this is a pertinent example of the criminalisation of common behaviour within this demographic. By associating this stigma with infanticide, single mothers were automatically perceived as potentially engaged in illicit activity, which fuelled anxiety not only about infant mortality as a whole, but also as to the scale of criminal baby farming.

The first depiction of the baby farm Oliver is sent to is satirically described through compliments about the parish authorities in order to emphasise their utter apathy and neglect towards the children of the workhouse:

the parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved, that Oliver should be “farmed”, or, in other words, that he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female, who received the culprits at and for the consideration of sevenpence-halfpenny per small head per week (Dickens, 2000:5).

Although the actual phrase 'baby farm' is never used, the evolution of the term is clearly in its early stages, as it does speak of the necessity for Oliver to be 'farmed', in reference to moving Oliver to a 'branch-workhouse'. These early stages of articulation, soon to be coined in the 1860s as a source of anxiety, reveal important aspects of how the trade itself came to be understood as a popular method of adoption and fostering. For example, the references to the 'twenty or thirty' other children alludes to the idea that the trade filled a practical demand for childcare on a large scale. Moreover, it also reinforces the notion that inserting a cash nexus into maternal duties incentivised neglect and criminality, which was key in later pejorative representations of baby farming.

Dickens's disdain for the parish legislative systems is clear, as he ironically labels the infants 'juvenile offenders against the poor-laws'. Indeed, the only crime these infants have had the chance to commit in their short lives is the crime of being born. If we are to assume that these other infants have been produced from similar circumstances as those of Oliver, then we can infer that they are also illegitimate. This makes their given label even more indicative of popular harsh attitudes towards illegitimacy. Single mothers may have sometimes been treated harshly in the workhouse for this supposed sin. In the infamous Andover workhouse in Hampshire¹⁵ for example, 'any additional items allowed for new mothers, such as tea and sugar or toast and water, were not given to those who had had illegitimate children' (Fowler, 2014:77–78). However, Frank Crompton argues that the illegitimate children themselves, when in the workhouse, were not actually discriminated against, which, he argues, 'probably demonstrated that it was contact with immorality, not

¹⁵ Mistreatment within the Andover Workhouse in 1845 was widely scandalised in the Press. For example, the claim that 'starving paupers had been fed on rotting bones', was reported on a national scale (Englander, 1998:16).

heredity, that was thought to be the danger' (Crompton, 1997:43). Hence, although this suggests that the notion of 'less eligibility' was a pervasive ideology that indeed often resulted in harsh treatment, it was not the stigma of illegitimacy that proved to be the most powerful influence in the treatment of these children, rather, it was the stigma of pauperism.

Nevertheless, the theme of hunger within the workhouse is repeated throughout the novel. Referring to the iconic phrase 'Please sir, I want some more' (Dickens, 2000:12), Laura C. Berry argues the novel 'melodramatizes and sentimentalizes starvation to prove the cruelties of Benthamite practice' (Berry, 1999:44). However, it is also a prevalent factor in the construction of Oliver's early years. The satirical representation of food as an 'inconvenience' represents starvation in paid childcare arrangements as a criminal act rather than an effect of poverty, which would prove critical to later discussions of the trade. It can also be linked to critiques of the Poor Law amendments, as it was nicknamed by protesters as 'The New Starvation Law' (Berry, 1999:28). In this context, Dickens subverted the common literary trend present in texts from the '1830s and the "hungry 40s," [where] physiological appetite is often represented as a threat' (Berry, 1999:10). This primal need, which touched upon Malthusian anxieties as to the resources necessary to sustain a growing number of paupers, is rendered unthreatening in its representation through Oliver. As Berry states, 'one effect of the turn to children in nineteenth century culture, especially pauper children, is to transform a large and powerful Malthusian body into a petite and manageable one' (Berry, 1999:10). Hence, Dickens's novel played an active role in debates surrounding the 1834 Poor Law Amendments, challenging attempts to limit the number of illegitimate children whilst reinforcing the pejorative pattern of representation of paid childcare, both within baby farms and within the workhouse as a whole.

Furthermore, the fact that the baby farmer 'caring' for Oliver and the other infants is described as 'elderly' highlights a complex intersection of age and class. On one hand, the knowledge of elderly women within working-class communities often played a significant role in the context of childcare. As Clive Emsley notes, these women often acted as informal caregivers and even midwives (Emsley, 2010:106) as younger mothers took advantage of their years of experience. However, Dickens's representation turns such conceptions on their head in a manner that establishes the role of payment in childcare as an incentive for neglect:

The elderly female was a woman of wisdom and experience; she knew what was good for children: and she had a very accurate perception of what was good for herself. So, she appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use, and consigned the rising parochial generation to even a shorter allowance than was originally provided for them: thereby finding in the lowest depth a deeper still; and proving herself a very great experimental philosopher (Dickens, 2000:5-6).

The 'wisdom and experience' of the elderly woman is satirised in this representation and used as a euphemism for criminality. The role of feeding also remains critical, as Dickens depicts the starvation of 'farmed' children as stemming from criminality, rather than as a consequence of poverty. This introduces the idea that baby farmers walked a precarious line in managing their finances, as 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' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:248). However, it also connects the hunger of children with the criminality of individuals, rather than the systematic disadvantages of poverty among working-class caregivers attempting to make a living. Thus, the elderly caregiver is now disassociated from wisdom and linked to

criminality, using her position primarily to embezzle money from the parish while neglecting the infants under her supervision. This pattern of representation would later resurface even in discussions of baby farming in Manchester (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174). Thus, Dickens's novel is indicative of later depictions of the trade, in which paid child carers within working-class communities were criticised and even criminalised by middle-class authors.

The official regulation of the baby farm in Dickens's novel is depicted as minimal. The regulations themselves also appear to be something of a farce:

Occasionally, when there was some more than usually interesting inquest upon a parish child who had been overlooked in turning up a bedstead, or inadvertently scalded to death when there happened to be a washing – though the latter accident was very scarce, anything approaching to a washing being of rare occurrence in the farm – the jury would take it into their heads to ask troublesome questions, or the parishioners would rebelliously affix their signatures to a remonstrance (Dickens, 2000:6).

The use of the word 'interesting' in reference to the death of an infant due to blatant carelessness emphasises the large numbers by which they died due to 'ordinary' causes, such as starvation or disease. These extreme incidents of negligence attract unwelcome attention from the parishioners. However, their actions (such as signing remonstrances) are depicted satirically as daring feats to emphasise their ineffectiveness, reflecting Dickens's critique of the lack of regulation in workhouse standards of care. Additionally, the description of scalding an infant to death during a 'rare' occurrence of washing highlights the role of dirt within depictions of baby farming. At the beginning of the nineteenth century 'soap was a scarce humdrum item and washing a cursory activity at best' (McClintock, 1995:207). However, as

the century progressed, both the sales and advertising for this commodity drastically increased, to reinforce the cult of domesticity and alleviate both imperial anxiety and tensions between the middle and lower classes. As Anne McClintock explains, soap appeared to preserve unstable boundaries of identity, including class, gender and race, 'in a social order felt to be threatened by the fetid effluvia of the slums, the belching smoke of industry, social agitation, economic upheaval, imperial competition and anticolonial resistance' (McClintock, 1995:211). Representations of baby farming therefore acted as a site for this multiplicity of insecurities to be articulated. As such, emphasis on uncleanness was perhaps the most consistent factor in all pejorative depictions of baby farms, next to starvation. This pattern of representation remained consistent across the regions of Manchester and London and fed into the sensational nature of such reports, which will be explored in the following chapters.

Furthermore, the notion of medical testimony is also introduced in this representation in the form of an investigation. Both the beadle and the coroner are depicted as a hindrance to the progression of child protection, with inadequate methods and questionable motives:

impertinences were speedily checked by the evidence of the surgeon, and the testimony of the beadle; the former of whom had always opened the body and found nothing inside (which was very probable indeed), and the latter of whom invariably swore whatever the parish wanted (which was very self-devotional). Besides, the board made periodical pilgrimages to the farm, and always sent the beadle the day before, to say they were going. The children were neat and clean to behold when *they* went (Dickens, 2000:6).

The language describing the trade is more explicit in this section, as the term 'farm' is used directly. This also alludes to the role of doctors within criminal baby farming transactions,

fuelling anxiety as to the seemingly undetectable nature of the trade. There was limited expertise of paediatrics in this period¹⁶ and many doctors were 'overworked and poorly paid in the slums where the infant death rate often reached 20 or 30 per cent' (Hendrick, 1994:47). This reintroduces the idea that the high infant mortality rate was caused by criminality rather than environmental issues associated with poverty. Representations such as this therefore built upon concerns that a criminal network was operating under the noses of middle-class professionals. Further to this, the position of the beadle is also significant as he informs the superintendent of the baby farm of a visit from the board of guardians, quite obviously allowing for prior preparation. Thus, the system of supervision in place at the workhouse is shown to be entirely fabricated, which allows the baby farmers to operate under the knowledge that their neglect is undetectable. Hence, they fail to regulate their own behaviour. This notion of parish officials turning a blind eye to the problems within workhouses and baby farms under their control therefore echoes the many scandals that frequently emerged within the press about such institutions.

Although Dickens's novel was published in London and unquestionably depicted issues associated with London poverty, *Oliver Twist* was disseminated widely throughout the nation. It was certainly in circulation in Manchester throughout this period, even adapted for the theatres of the city (*Manchester Guardian*, 1857:2). Thus, this particular representation of baby farming set critical patterns of representation on a wider scale outside the capital. Moreover, due to the notion of uniformity in the workhouse regime, much of the Manchester population would have agreed with many aspects of a text that criticised such an institution.

¹⁶ Paediatric medicine was commonly viewed as an inferior branch of study, which for many medical professionals resulted in a decided disinterest in the specialism, lasting until even the Edwardian era (Rose, 1986:52).

Not only was Dickens credited as influencing the emergence of sensationalism - arguably the most important narrative style in the representation of baby farming - he was also a prominent voice in the protest for child protection and an outspoken opponent of the Poor Law Amendments. His legacy is far-reaching – so much so that he was even referenced during the creation of the Infant Life Protection Society (IPLS).¹⁷ As depicted in the *Manchester Guardian*, one member, Rev. C. W. H. Clark, ‘quoting the words of Charles Dickens. . . expressed surprise and sorrow that while “of all things in life there should be nothing so preventable, as there is nothing on the face of it so unnatural, as the death of a little child, yet it is of all things in life the commonest, and the only thing we really make, as a community, the least effort to prevent”’ (*Manchester Guardian*, 1870a:7). Hence, Dickens played a key role in the representation of the baby farmer as a criminal, and this influence affected understandings of the trade in provincial areas just as much as London.

Early examples of Baby Farming in the Victorian Press

This section will explore the representation of baby farming within the *Manchester Times* and the *Manchester Courier* during this period to explore popular understandings of the trade within the city. As will be demonstrated, early-nineteenth century cultural debates surrounding the trade were not dissimilar from those that occurred in the 1860s. Two criminal cases will be focused upon in particular: Bartholomew Drouet and Charlotte Windsor. These two cases were strikingly different and despite the fact that neither were explicitly labelled as baby farmers, it was Windsor that ‘introduced a characterisation of working-class women that later became indispensable to the *BMJ*’s definition of baby farming’ (Homrighaus,

¹⁷ This organisation was critical in the creation of the 1872 and 1897 Infant Life Protection Acts, which increasingly regulated paid childcare.

2001:354). However, they both played a vital role in setting a pejorative pattern of representation for paid childcare. Indeed, these cases demonstrate that the introduction of payment for childcare had long been associated with criminality before the term 'baby farming' was created.

Although the role of baby farmers within the community meant that, at this point, word of mouth was the predominant way to find such services, developments in the production of newspapers initiated a change. From advancements in printing techniques allowing for the mass production of newspapers (Barker, 2014:38), to the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 making cheap newspapers profitable (Krueger, 1997:282), the changing face of the press gave baby farmers, if not a new way of attracting custom, then certainly a more accessible and convenient one. Critically, the cost of posting advertisements also greatly decreased by a reduction and eventual removal of sales and advertising duty (Barker, 2014:39). Consequently, the services of baby farmers could now be found within classified advertisements. These were posted both by baby farmers themselves (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1855a:6) and those seeking out paid child carers (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1855b:12), and began to appear with greater frequency in Manchester newspapers at least as early as 1855. Such advertisements would, after this point, have reached a much wider readership. As Ruth Homrighaus states, from the 1850s 'traditional forms of foster care and adoption coexisted with more commercial, more widespread, and more anonymous forms of baby farming that urbanization, the severity of the Poor Law, and the availability of both cheap newspaper advertising and inexpensive rail travel stimulated' (Homrighaus, 2003:11). Critically, this

growing accessibility in rail travel¹⁸ enabled baby farmers to find trade in communities other than their own. This may have allowed for the trade of paid childcare to grow. However, the anonymity afforded within such arrangements was a troubling development for critics of the trade, feeding into representations of baby farming as a subversive network of infanticidal women.

These developments in the production of newspapers, however, also affected the subject matter and style of reporting within much of the popular press. As Christopher Casey states, '[t]he obsession with crime- particularly murder- within Victorian print culture has its roots in the gradual increase in the size of the reading public' (Casey, 2011:372). Hence, from the 1840s, many circulars became aware of the profitability of extending coverage of crime, consequently diverting more resources to furthering this category of journalism (Carter and Thompson, 1997:34). This increasing focus on crime also signalled the emergence of sensationalism. It did not occur as a result of a single editor or newspaper, but rather built upon this foundation of mid-Victorian changes in popular journalism (Casey, 2011:372). A sensational style of reporting can be defined, according to David B. Sachsman, 'in terms of topic, tone and degree' (Sachsman, 2017:5). The topics covered included crime, scandal and disaster, whereas the coverage often focused on salacious details, with words accompanying 'the appalling minutiae providing the *tone*. Modifiers such as "barbarous" or "disgusting", alongside rhetorical devices such as hyperbole were characteristic of this element' (Sachsman, 2017:5-6). In turn, the degree of this rhetoric served to exaggerate the sensationalist effect, with the 'greater the degree of grotesque detail. . . the stronger the sensationalism' (Sachsman, 2017:6). Whilst not every Victorian newspaper adhered to all

¹⁸ Kidd argues that 'The Railway Age' started in Manchester (Kidd, 2006:26).

elements associated with this style of reporting, most still increased their coverage of crime and often included scandalous details and regular updates of ongoing criminal prosecutions. This therefore formed an important part of mid-Victorian news, 'being cheap, simple to organise, and popular' (Rodrick, 1996:96). These depictions, however, also gave rise to concerns as to the level of criminality within Victorian society, which in turn became embroiled within tensions between the middle and lower classes. The sensational representation of baby farmers therefore contributed to their construction as subjects upon which social anxieties associated with middle-class discourses of maternity were projected.

Prior to the nineteenth century, language surrounding the trade was often more gender-specific. It is a point of agreement amongst critics that baby farming was usually a woman's occupation and the terms used to describe criminality reflected this. For example, the term 'She-Butchers' (Bentley, 2005) had been used in the eighteenth century. David Bentley outlines this history, citing the writer Daniel Defoe, who wrote in 1724 of 'the "unfortunate mother" of an illegitimate child . . ."seeing the poor infant packed off with a piece of money to some of those she-butchers who would take children off their hands" who then "starve 'em and murder 'em'" (Bentley, 2005:201). Indeed, this description appears exactly akin to later criticism of the baby farming trade. However, it is also important to note that there had long since been successful examples of such arrangements. As Claire Tomalin observes, Jane Austen's mother weaned her and her siblings after three months before handing them over 'to a woman in the village to be looked after for another eighteen months' until they were 'old enough to be managed at home' (Tomalin, 2000:6). Thus, outsourcing childcare had been a part of English society long before it became a target for those championing for reform.

However, instances reported in early-Victorian Manchester newspapers reveal a clear formula for what would later be reported as criminal cases of baby farming: an adult takes children for payment and then neglects them in the interest of maximising profits. There was one such famous case of this nature that prompted the use of the term 'child farming' in the 1840s. This was the 'Tooting Farm Disaster': in January 1849, 112 children out of the 13,000 housed at an institution in Tooting died from cholera. On investigation of these deaths, it was revealed that Bartholomew Drouet had spent the minimum amount possible on the children's upkeep, neglecting to provide them with proper nourishment, or clothing in the winter, with reports stating that the children were 'underfed, overworked and often beaten' (Alpert, 2014:80). Drouet was also warned by the General Board of Health that the streams on Tooting land were being treated as open sewers, likely to contaminate the drinking water of the institution. Inspectors were assured that the water was drawn from 'artesian wells supplied by an underground source', however, at an inquest into these deaths 'when asked about the quality of the drinking water, resident surgeon, W. J. Kite acknowledged that the water had an offensive smell' (Thomas, 2015:81). Though it was not known at this point that contaminated water was the main source of cholera, the negligence of Drouet in preventing such contamination lays solid culpability at his feet. Critically, this reinforced suspicions as to the problematic nature of introducing a cash nexus into childcare, whilst highlighting that such demand did not just come from single mothers but was utilised on a large-scale by parish authorities to negotiate the care of the nation's pauper children.

The representation of Drouet's case contains decidedly marked differences to later cases reported in the press. Just as Dickens's depiction of the trade engaged in criticism of paid childcare at an institutional level, so too was Drouet criticised in this manner, as he did not provide the 'care' these children received first-hand. Rather, he was the head of the

institution and though he certainly was responsible for his fair share of cruelty, this position afforded him a degree of distance (and therefore lack of accountability) from some of the abuse that these children endured. This was something that the women later identified as criminal baby farmers did not have, as they were exclusively responsible for the children in their care. Moreover, as Michael Alpert states, the children's consequently fragile states from this treatment were only the 'predisposing causes' of their deaths (Alpert, 2014:81). The primary cause of such high mortality was the contaminated water which was present in much of England at the time, even though the appalling conditions in which these children were kept gave them little opportunity to fight the disease. It is these differences that likely contributed to the treatment he received from the popular press.

Drouet's case was undoubtedly a rare example of male engagement with criminal baby farming. In fact, all of the eight baby farmers executed for causing the deaths of infants in their care were women, as were most of those that received lesser sentences. There were other male criminal baby farmers, certainly, but it was uncommon for them to operate in anything other than a secondary role in the trade – and never without a female partner. Historians have often distinguished between conceptions of infanticidal mothers and infanticidal baby farmers in studies of the trade. It has been observed that, whilst mothers were often viewed sympathetically, baby farmers who were deemed responsible for the deaths of children were often represented in a harsher light and given tougher sentences, due to the seemingly rational motivation of profit betraying middle-class understandings of femininity (Knelman, 1998:230). On the other hand, the representation of male baby farmers also exposed contradictions within understandings of masculinity. As Claudia Nelson notes, this century witnessed a fragmentation in conceptions of fatherhood and the male role within the home, due to 'the stresses placed on the father's role by maternal domestic primacy, by

changing work patterns, [and] by suspicion of masculine biology and masculine preoccupations' (Nelson, 2010:43). As such, although the theme of male responsibility for wives and children was central in discussions on social issues like the Poor Law and factory reform (Walton, 2010:97), Drouet's representation within the press in particular alluded to insecurities as to the ability of fathers to operate as a steady moral influence over their children in the face of their replacement by the maternal ideal as the moral centre of the home (Nelson, 2010:43).

On the other hand, the language used to describe Drouet's case was significantly different to other depictions of female baby farmers. Whilst the latter would later draw from bourgeois understandings of femininity and maternal self-sacrifice, there was no reference to Drouet's paternal responsibility within press discussions of his case. On the contrary, newspaper articles instead focused on the failure of the Poor Law authorities to 'bind Mr Drouet, the proprietor of Surrey-Hall, to fulfil his duty to such a large number of children as they had confided to his care, under a written and more definite contract' (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1849b:3). Thus, whilst paid childcare arrangements between women triggered concerns that this introduction of a cash nexus would incentivise criminality, the childcare arrangements between men as part of the farming out of children by Poor Law authorities were not subject to these same concerns. In fact, they were more easily accepted as a contractual arrangement, demonstrating the influence of middle-class discourse of separate spheres. As Drouet operated within the 'masculine' public sphere, this allowed his failures to be interpreted within the context of businesses conducted within this domain. Thus, his cruelty was depicted as part of a wider institutional failure, rather than a failure in paternal duty.

This story was published in many newspapers throughout the country, including the *Manchester Times*. One striking aspect of these texts is that they speak of ‘the advantages which, in the present day, English crime enjoys over English poverty’ (*Manchester Times*, 1849:6). One article in particular expressed almost exactly the same criticism of an unregulated baby farming system as was repeatedly stated from the 1860s onwards; it stated that whilst not all ‘child-farmers’ are bad, the boarding out of children to private homes leaves room for ‘unscrupulous persons’ to neglect the children placed with them in favour of keeping the allocated funds for themselves (*Manchester Times*, 1849:6). Although in this case the article is referring more generally to the parish authorities farming out children, these anxieties are almost exactly akin to later suspicions about private arrangements between individual parents and baby farmers. This early representation therefore establishes the trade as central within debates as to the growing state regulation of childcare throughout the nineteenth century.

However, one aspect relatively unique to this case emerged in the form of Drouet’s brother. The help of a sibling with the logistics of baby farming was not an unusual occurrence in itself (the infamous Margaret Waters was said to be encouraged into criminality by her own sister Sarah Harris (Homrighaus, 2003:86) which will be explored in the following chapter). Critically, it appears that Drouet’s brother took it upon himself to dole out much of the brutality in the institution and in other facilities (*Manchester Times*, 1849a:6). But there was also the suspicion of a sexual aspect to this cruelty. One article discusses a case of the parish authorities sending more female children to replace ‘some elder girls’, who needed to be moved ‘in consequence of conduct on the part of Drouet’s brother, to which, for obvious reasons, we abstain from more distinctly alluding’ (*Manchester Times*, 1849a:6). There is very little information to gain definitive conclusions from this small snippet included in the article;

the vague insinuations seem to point at sexual misconduct of a man enjoying a place of authority over a group of young girls. This particular aspect, however, does not appear in later representations of the trade, meaning that sexual abuse did not become associated with baby farming in the same way that neglect and infanticide did.

The connection between childcare and the industry of farming is one that has been explored by historians. As Joseph Hinks notes, farming 'is an economic activity and a particularly unsentimental one at that, involving acquiring, raising and slaughtering stock for the maximum return' (Hinks, 2015:11). The early evolution of the language surrounding paid childcare can be observed clearly in Drouet's case, as the culprits are referred to as 'child-farmers'. This also connects with the terms used to describe such arrangements in the previous century, as the phrase 'she-butchers' also evokes similar connotations of slaughter and dehumanisation. Hence, although Ernest Hart is credited for coining the term 'baby farming', these early representations suggest that he may in fact have only adjusted existing language that was already being used. The phrase may have been changed in reference to the high levels of infant mortality.¹⁹ It could also have been altered to deliver greater impact in the context of increasingly sensational news coverage. However, the use of the word 'baby' also touches upon a growth in new understandings about childhood in the nineteenth century. Historians refer to a nineteenth century "invention" of childhood, attributed to both the scientific development as to physical growth during this period (Steedman, 1992:37) and the literary figure of the child 'as a conjunction of innocence and death' (Steedman, 1992:31). The language surrounding paid childcare is therefore characteristic of these evolving

¹⁹ In Manchester, infant Mortality remained notoriously high until the end of the century. 'Up to 50% of all recorded deaths occurred amongst children under five years of age, the majority being under twelve months' (Kidd, 2006:42).

understandings, which heightened anxieties as to the high infant mortality rate by emphasising the defencelessness of those that were 'traded', and their dependence on the care of the people they were entrusted to.

Manchester newspapers were not alone in their condemnation of the Tooting institution. Dickens, true to his earlier depiction of a pauper baby farm 'supervised' by Poor Law authorities, articulated scathing criticism of such institutions and published an article in the *Examiner* titled 'Paradise at Tooting'. Reflecting his usual style of satirical condemnation, he stated:

[Drouet] has been admonished by the authorities to take only a certain number of unfortunates into his farm, and he increases that number immensely at his own pleasure, for his own profit. His establishment is crammed. It is in no respect a fit place for the reception of the throng shut up in it. The dietary of the children is so unwholesome and insufficient, that they climb secretly over pailings, and pick out scraps of sustenance from the tubs of hog-wash (Dickens, 1849:1).

Such criticism also reflects the utilisation of newspapers as a form of social critique, demonstrating their role as 'active participants and vital contributors in an ongoing dialectic with their readers' (McEvoy, 1996:179). This role also contributed to the difference in perceptions of sensational journalism as opposed to sensational literature, as the increasing coverage of crime was enveloped within the perceived 'duty' of the press to inform the public, which will be discussed further in Chapter Two. Both here and in the *Manchester Times*, references to the institution as a 'farm' or 'child-farm' are utilised, reinforcing this early usage of such deprecatory descriptions of childcare. Additionally, the reference to paupers searching the hog-wash for scraps would have struck a note similar to that of the Andover

workhouse where the diet of paupers was similarly unacceptable. This underpins the notion that the representation of baby farming, and equally the targets of reformers, changed over the century from institutional critique to concern as to the childcare arrangements between working-class women. Indeed, all of these reports discussing the Tooting farm were published in January 1849 in an immediate reaction to the discovery. Present in them are frequent condemnations of the negligence shown by the Poor-Law officials in their visits to the institution (*Manchester Guardian*, 1849:6). However, it is important to note that Dickens's essay was published in a London newspaper, and the two articles from the *Manchester Times* were also reprints from London newspapers: the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Times*. Hence, publications in London played a critical role in spreading pejorative conceptions of baby farming to other regions, setting a pattern of representation which initially was followed by the press in other cities.

On the other hand, in February 1849, a month after the conditions of his establishment were revealed, many articles in Manchester newspapers instead centred around the illness and reported death of Drouet. Perhaps the most drastic U-turn was displayed in the *Manchester Courier*. The (later disproved) death of Drouet is discussed and it is stated that the Tooting Farm is 'now celebrated'. A sympathetic statement in his defence is then expressed:

Mr Drouet had for some years been subject to an affection of the heart, and the excitement produced by the late lamentable occurrence in his establishment, and the severe verdicts of the coroners' juries, and attacks of the public press upon him, had so increased the disease as to place the unfortunate man's life in imminent danger. Mr Morris said the poor man lost his wife but a few months back, and that tended

greatly to destroy the order and regulation which had previously prevailed in his establishment. – [This turns out incorrect. Mr Drouet had been extremely ill, but is still living] (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1849a:6).

Drouet may have displayed pronounced differences in his involvement with baby farming, but he was still an adult who reared the children of others for a fee and likely neglected them in the interests of profit. When compared to other infamous criminal baby farmers in England, Scotland and Wales, he was second only to Amelia Dyer in the sheer number of deaths that he was accused of causing (taking into consideration the upper estimation of the number of her victims).²⁰ The fact that Drouet was able to regain his reputation within the popular press therefore was no doubt at least partly due to the fact that he was funded by the Poor Law authorities as opposed to Dyer's private arrangements with individual parents. However, this discrepancy in representation can also be explained by Elizabeth Windschuttle, when she states that Victorian society prescribed a double standard in 'attitudes toward male and female criminals. Men could commit crime, but be reformed, if women committed crime, they were destroyed utterly. They were irreclaimable' (Knelman, 1998:249). The rumour of his wife's death also aided the recovery of his reputation, as his loss was said to 'destroy the order and regulation which had previously prevailed in his establishment' (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1849:6) reaffirming conceptions of childcare as a maternal duty. Hence, although later high-profile cases of criminal baby farming were often not as unambiguous as they were assumed,²¹ Drouet was not subject to the same prescriptive

²⁰ Speculation about her exact number of murders have continued into modern day. The maximum estimation is approximately 400 infants. Source: (*BBC News*, 2017).

²¹ Margaret Waters is perhaps the best example of this, and steps will be taken in the next chapter to demonstrate that she was not the monster she was made out to be.

standards of behaviour that middle-class domestic ideology demanded of women, which was critical to his reputation within the popular press.

Further to this, although the role of cholera helped to distance Drouet from the deaths of the children in this institution, the same cannot be said for later baby farmers when the children they cared for contracted disease. For example, the phenomenon of 'summer diarrhoea', an outbreak of which would be fatal despite the best childrearing practice (Goc, 2013:190), was often blamed on the inadequate childcare provided by baby farmers during inquests. As Nicola Goc argues, 'women were being tried for something that had been almost utterly beyond their control' (Goc, 2013:190–191). This divergence in the representation of institutional childcare as opposed to private childcare will continue to be explored in the following chapters. Critically, it reflected the anxiety triggered by individual working-class women that engaged in baby farming, as by operating businesses from within their homes, they merged the 'masculine' public sphere with the 'feminine' private sphere. As the ideology of separate spheres was never a stable construction, the 'tensions and ambiguities within the arrangement of the separate spheres created a profound instability in the public-private dimension in civil society' (Price, 1999:205). Baby farming, it can be argued, thus emerged as a site which rendered this ideological instability visible by demonstrating that it did not necessarily describe the behaviour of working-class women throughout this period.

Criminal baby farming was also not the only scandal which unsettled conceptions of femininity. Judith Knelman states 'What seemed like a relentless wave of arsenic poisonings resulted in the Sale of Arsenic Act of 1851, which at one point in its evolution had a clause, later removed, barring women from the purchase of this poison' (Knelman, 1998:229). Many serial poisonings occurred throughout this period – between 1850-1860 there were

approximately 250 articles in the *Manchester Guardian* discussing poisoning cases, both within the city and throughout the country. A critical factor that contributed to Victorian anxiety about arsenic was the fact that it was virtually tasteless and odourless, making it easy to be added to food without attracting suspicion (Whorton, 2010:9). Additionally, the symptoms caused by the poison were often confused with that of cholera which, as has been established, was particularly prolific in England during the summer months in this period (Barrell, 2016:9). Thus, it sparked within popular imagination as a far more common murder weapon than it actually was, with London newspapers such as the *Times* stating that cases brought to court were only a tiny sample of uncountable and undetectable crimes (Whorton, 2010:25). Indeed, sensational speculation filled the gaps left by a lack of evidence, signalling the anxieties this crime elicited. Cold and calculating, it challenged domestic ideology. As Helen Barrell states, the Victorian, middle-class home 'managed by women, represented a safe place against the disorder in the streets and further afield, in revolutionary Europe. Female poisoners were a threat to the safe haven of the home' (Barrell, 2016:9). Hence, the representation of poisoning within the press fed into fears of domestic crime and criminal women, laying the groundwork for state regulation within the home.

These complex connections between poisoning and concepts of feminine identity also came to affect later representations of baby farming, as many cases often involved dosing the infant with laudanum – an increasingly controversial drug with toxic effects. Even the feeding of unsuitable food soon came to be represented within the press as its own method of poisoning. Decades later, Benjamin Waugh, head of the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, would give an interview in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, reprinted in the *Manchester Guardian*, stating 'it is the practice in Newcastle to kill babies by boiley, which is bread soaked in water. In Sheffield they put sago into babies' milk. At seaside places dried

herrings are powdered up and introduced into the bottle' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1889b:10). This blurred the line between common working-class childcare practices and infanticide, as certain feeding and soothing methods could not be distinguished from subversive poisoning. Consequently, many well-meaning paid child carers were criminalised within Manchester newspapers, as this ambiguity allowed outlandish claims to be made as to the prevalence of criminality within the trade. The anxiety evoked by conceptions of poisoning therefore played an important role in the representation of baby farming. However, both of these concerns were also connected to the influence of crime reporting from the 1840s. As more resources were diverted to furthering crime journalism, this 'served to amplify existing fears about the effectiveness of the law in preventing high levels of crime' (Carter and Thompson, 1997:34). Press discussions of baby farming thus fed into these anxieties. By associating the trade with undetectable methods of criminality, vague but sensational stories of infanticidal women could be presented to the news-consuming public, and the lack of evidence justified by the claim that baby farmers operated under a veil of secrecy.

Successful childcare arrangements have left far less of an imprint on the historical record, however, it is clear that there was demand for baby farming in Manchester at this point. Arrangements between neighbours were clearly popular, especially in the burgeoning industrial districts. Advertisements for day-nurseries also frequented Manchester newspapers, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter Two. Such arrangements signalled the differing needs of the industrial worker, who came home at night, as opposed to the domestic servant, who lived with her employers. Although the quality of the care received in such places has been questioned (Behlmer, 1982:36) their existence suggest a legitimate effort to mitigate the need for childcare within working-class communities in order to allow for female employment. Criminality was always in the minority and though it was

disproportionately represented, it could only exist as part of a legitimate system. These arrangements, however, also threatened middle-class conceptions of maternity. The idealisation of Victorian motherhood not only demanded that she did not 'sell her labour outside her front door', it also represented the raising of her children as 'the flowering of instinctual love. . . a mother's work was perceived to be of a natural kind, as such, beyond price' (Hughes, 2001:56). The role of domestic servants, nurses and governesses in caring for the children of the middle classes certainly presented contradictions to this notion (a factor that will be explored further in Chapter Four). As observed in the case of Jane Austen, such children were also occasionally farmed out, often so that they could learn skills and/or receive an education. However, the middle-class woman who farmed out her child appeared not to be situated within the same negative conceptual framework as a working-class woman who did the same. This is likely due to a variety of factors, including the representation of the alleged benefits to the physical and intellectual development of the child. However, the most pronounced difference is that these middle-class mothers rarely subsequently entered into the sphere of employment themselves, thus allowing them to maintain the appearance of feminine respectability. The social and economic circumstances of the working-classes prevented them from fully adopting this ideal. Consequently, there was a marked need to both outsource childcare and to utilise maternal labour as a source of income. By conducting such arrangements from within their homes and allowing mothers to continue employment, the trade subverted these prescriptive ideals of behaviour and was thus represented as either immoral or criminal.

Though most examples of baby farming, from both fact and fiction, have so far been arrangements between the Poor Law authorities and branch institutions, the trade encompassed many forms. Casual arrangements between neighbours and family often

involved a cash payment of some form, defying the assumption 'that "family" childcare would be free while the same service from neighbours or strangers would be paid' (Ross, 1993:136). Challenging this notion further was the practice of adoption *without* payment within working-class communities. George K. Behlmer notes that, in mid-Victorian Lancashire and east London '29 per cent of all children could expect to lose one parent and 8 per cent both before reaching the age of fifteen' (Behlmer, 2009:93). Under these conditions, he observes that a far greater number of children should logically have ended up under the care of either Poor Law Unions or private establishments if institutional childcare was as common as it was supposed. Thus, he claims a 'large but unknowable proportion of orphans and children from troubled homes must have been taken in by other families' (Behlmer, 2009:93). Such cooperation observed by historians during this period (Davin, 1996:40) reinforced the idea of a mutual network of support within working-class neighbourhoods, in which baby farmers cared for the children of others, even sometimes without payment.

However, in 1865 an event occurred to cement the pejorative perception of informal adoption and paid childcare within Victorian society; Charlotte Windsor was prosecuted for the murder of Thomas Edwin Gibson Harris and was sentenced to life in prison (Knelman, 1998:165). The way in which her case was represented to the Victorian public suggested that infanticide had become a potentially profitable trade and tainted all baby farmers with the stigma of criminality. Homrighaus argues 'as foster care and adoption networks became more businesslike, they also became detached from community oversight and more subject to abuse' (Homrighaus, 2003:39). The case of Drouet had already demonstrated the negative consequences of the marketisation of child fostering; parish authorities constructed rather vague contracts with institutions, in an attempt to provide care for the vast amount of pauper children whose families were now cut off from 'outdoor' relief. The representation of this

previous scandal undoubtedly affected Windsor's representation – she appeared to fall firmly in the category of the 'unscrupulous persons' that Manchester newspapers had speculated could be exploiting children on a systematic basis (*Manchester Times*, 1849:6). Thus, her case was critical in establishing the baby farmer as a criminal archetype.

The narratives surrounding the Windsor case suggested that the trade of baby farming was constructed of formal and organised illicit arrangements. As Homrighaus explains, she was depicted 'as a professional murderer who charged set fees and attracted many clients, although her trial produced no evidence that she had ever shown such purpose or operated so methodically' (Homrighaus, 2003:38). Windsor's conviction was for the murder of the son of Mary Jane Harris. In the trial Harris claimed, 'she had not wanted her son to die, but Windsor "filed mind up" and confused her' (Homrighaus, 2003:36). This claim may have enabled Harris to escape culpability in the eyes of the law, but some were not completely convinced of her innocence. In one article in the *Manchester Guardian*, Harris's testimony clearly spoke to her own role in the matter:

the prisoner said she did not do it before I came out, because if I told about her I must also tell of myself, for one would be as bad as the other. I said I would never tell if we were never found out (*Manchester Guardian*, 1865:3).

Harris also waited in the next room whilst Windsor committed the murder. Despite this clear culpability, she escaped conviction. This divergence in treatment and representation was thus affected by how far each woman conformed to middle-class conceptions of gender. Harris's claim that her mind was 'filed up' by Windsor conforms to notions of passivity and irrationality that were considered characteristic of femininity in middle-class Victorian England (Busfield, 2017:235). Further to this, as a mother Harris was more closely aligned with 'proper'

femininity in the sense that middle-class Victorian conceptions of womanhood were tightly bound with motherhood (Pykett, 1992:168). Hence, the treatment of Harris was also representative of the wider trend of lenient sentencing of infanticidal mothers (Cossins, 2015:93). This marked the divergence in treatment 'toward "professional' child-carers" as opposed to 'natural mothers' (Arnot, 1994:279) in the construction of a dichotomy that condemned the introduction of a cash nexus into childcare as 'unnatural' and thus in need of state intervention.

However, not all were appeased by Harris's excuses. Some London newspapers such as the *Spectator* were more cynical of her story. The article questioned the assumption that she had been driven to the use of a baby farmer by feelings of shame as to her status as a 'fallen' woman. In fact, it pointed out that she had been living with her partner unmarried for six years and Thomas was their second illegitimate child, lending credence to the idea that non-marital, sexual relations were a relatively common aspect in relationships among the working class. The article therefore surmised that the only other reason she could have wanted to part with her child was to save on the expense in maintaining him (*Spectator*, 1865:4). Manchester circulars on the other hand, rarely, if ever, echoed this rhetoric, taking the word of Harris at face value and exclusively demonising Windsor in an early variation in the representation of baby farming between regions. However, whether Harris's version of events was believed or not, this did not change the fact that both she and Windsor became sources of anxiety in the minds of the Victorian public, as speculation grew as to the number of infanticidal nurses operating across England.

Fuelling this growing fear about systemised infanticide, Harris's testimony in the *Manchester Guardian* spoke of an alleged discussion between herself and Windsor about her

other murders. This was most likely a further attempt on her part to shift the blame onto Windsor for the death of her son. However, the wording of this apparent confession is interesting. Harris stated:

She said she was going away on the morrow if I had not come, as she had received a letter from Plymouth enclosing an order for £3 from a girl she had done it for before, asking her if she could take her in again for £4. She had written back to say she would not, as, if the woman had been honest she would have paid in the first place
(Manchester Guardian, 1865:3).

The language of this statement, though questionable in reliability due to its source, indicates an important detail of how baby farmers apparently represented themselves. Windsor (according to Harris) felt she could condemn other women for whom she had committed infanticide for reneging on payment. This suggests that she may indeed have thought of herself as providing a much-needed service for women struggling to support themselves. Homrighaus also reinforces this idea that 'Windsor herself seemed to view the murders she committed as a charity; she told Harris that by killing children, she "was doing good"' (Homrighaus, 2003:38). This viewpoint echoes a perverse confirmation of Malthusian ideology, as by committing these murders Windsor seemingly provided a solution to the 'irresponsible breeding' that, according to Thomas Malthus, put a strain on society's limited resources.

Whether Windsor actually believed that she was "doing good" by committing infanticide will likely never truly be known. Her intentions are rarely explored in Manchester circulars, though one article reinforces the idea that she did make such a statement: '[Harris] asked her if she was afraid. She replied she was not, for it was doing good, and she would help

anyone that would never split upon her' (*Manchester Guardian*,1865:3). The fact that these statements surfaced in contrast to popular perceptions of her as simply a greedy murderer, suggests that the care (or lack of care) for illegitimate children had become an increasingly important issue. As Cossins argues, 'baby-farming became a necessary thread in the intricate weave of sex and class – providing a solution to the twin burdens of biology and fragile female employment, at the same time as providing a source of income to unskilled working-class women' (Cossins, 2015:67). Thus, the inability of many single mothers to look after their children whilst also maintaining employment had clearly created demand for a system of outsourcing childcare; and as with any unregulated system, there was the opportunity for criminality.

Windsor set a vital precedent in the representation of baby farming later in the century, particularly in the *BMJ*, which will be explored in the next chapter. Indeed, this characterisation built on anxieties as to the deviation of women from middle-class conceptions of femininity and maternity, constructing what Margaret Arnot terms as the 'anti-mother' (Arnot, 1994:280). From this case onwards, in the minds of the Victorian public the murderous baby farmer would always be a woman and would always be working-class. The representation of this case, in the context of an expanding press that increasingly focused resources on crime journalism, in turn emphasised fears that the introduction of a cash nexus into childcare would inevitably result in infanticide. As such, Victorian newspapers routinely used sensational language such as "shocking" and "horrible" when describing the murders and 'practically every article written about the Windsor case confirmed that it was worse than any in recent memory' (Homrighaus, 2003:37) which helped to bring the subject of infanticide to the forefront of discussion for a short time (Homrighaus, 2003:41). Thus, the depiction of

Windsor within the press acted as a site in which concerns over criminality further emphasised the ideological instability of the middle-class feminine ideal.

Baby farming therefore featured heavily the press throughout Britain and became yet further associated with child abuse. And yet no legislation was introduced to regulate this trade. Not until the discovery of Margaret Waters would the issue be remembered again. The next chapter will discuss these events and attempt to determine why Windsor did not incite the legislation that was pushed through due to Waters. Her demonization, despite the far from unambiguous nature of her crimes, will be analysed in relation to a newly-sensationalist newspaper and literary press, using Manchester newspapers and Emma Carolina Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea*.

As this chapter has shown, early-nineteenth century examples of baby farming, such as Windsor and Drouet, alongside the literary representation of the trade by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*, laid the foundations of pejorative conceptions of baby farming in Victorian ideology. Indeed, the manner in which the trade was depicted in this period demonstrated the complex ways in which baby farming became associated with and linked to criminal activity. Though baby farming in itself was nothing new, it was towards the end of this period that sensationalism as a journalistic trend emerged, which fuelled panic about the trade. The children of the nation, even those who were illegitimate, now had a monster from which they must be protected and the discourse surrounding the trade from this period, whether from legislation, newspapers, or fiction, was close to naming this monster – the “baby farmer”. Windsor in particular appeared to exemplify the need for the regulation of adoption. As such, depictions of the women that succeeded her in the popular press built on this precedent,

driving support for legislative measures attempting to eliminate criminality that the circumstances of poverty and the regulation of sexuality had produced.

Chapter 2 – From Investigation to Infamy: The Criminalisation of Baby Farming, 1866-1874

This chapter will examine representations of baby farming during the period 1866-1874, beginning with the coining of the term itself by Ernest Hart ('Baby Farming,' 1867:343) during one of several amateur investigations into the trade. These investigations revealed a complex network of power relations through their focus on advertisements posted in newspapers. The language used by baby farmers in these adverts demonstrated several ways in which they recognised themselves as subjects of sexuality, which played a significant role in informing understandings of the trade. The depiction of these investigations also continued a pattern of representation that seemingly reinforced the link between baby farming and infant mortality. The representation of the trade within literature also continued to perpetuate this narrative through the character of Mrs Drury in Emma Carolina Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea* (1868). Mrs Drury's depiction as a threat to the novel's heroine thus will be explored as a reflection of the challenge baby farming posed to bourgeois conceptions of femininity. Additionally, the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act, introduced in the aftermath of the sensational press representation of Margaret Waters, will also be examined. Not only did this legislation fail to regulate the trade, but it was also a topic of controversy within political debate. This debate will be assessed to demonstrate that political groups perpetuated a multiplicity of narratives surrounding the trade, ultimately circling back to reinforcing class-specific practices in domestic ideology. The continuing production of such literary and cultural material representing the trade during this period hence emphasised the significance of baby farming as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that intersected with broader social, economic and cultural concerns.

The term 'baby farming' was predominantly used in a pejorative context in medical publications, fictional texts and in Victorian circulars. For example, Emma Carolina Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea* (1868) depicts the practising of baby farming by private individuals and will be examined in this context. Wood's text features similar narrative styles utilised by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*, emphasising his influence on the emergence of literary sensationalism and the creation of the baby farmer as a criminal archetype. Sensationalism was thus a critical aspect in the depiction of baby farming in both literature and the press. In order to attract a mass readership, newspapers continuously increased the coverage of crime. In fact, according to Christopher Casey, after 1866 the '*Manchester Guardian* surpassed *The Times* in the number of articles covering murders, increasing its count at the staggering rate of fifteen per annum' (Casey, 2011:377). The cases of baby farmers thus provided perfect material to feed this appetite and their representation had a powerful effect on the provincial public.

There were, however, differences in the depictions of baby farming in Manchester as opposed to London. The high infant mortality rate in the north of England was often linked to the allegedly inept parenting practices within the working class. Discussions of baby farming therefore can be linked to these concerns, as they increasingly featured criticism of mothers who utilised such services whilst working in factories. But despite these divergences in cultural context, the vast number of pejorative depictions both in Manchester and in London drew from and built upon anxieties triggered by the perceived link between child abuse and baby farming. Such criminality did, in fact, occur both within Manchester and across England during this period. Hence, Manchester newspaper articles will also be examined in their representation of two criminal cases: that of Margaret Waters and Frances Rogers. These cases revealed the disparity between middle-class idealisms of motherhood and the practical disadvantages of working-class life. As Elizabeth Langland has observed, '[p]revailing ideology

held the house as a haven, a private sphere opposed to the public, commercial sphere' (Langland, 1995:8). Moreover, the home was presented 'as a moral haven secure from economic and political storms' (Langland, 1995:8). Baby farming challenged this ideology on a number of levels. Firstly, engaging in paid childcare as a way to earn a living, as well as allowing mothers to continue in their own employment, brought the economic insecurities of the working classes within this domain. The homes of baby farmers could not be separated from economic storms of the public sphere because their demand was fuelled by it. Secondly, the literary and press representations of the trade as a criminal network also overturned notions of moral purity within the private sphere, as they emphasised the existence of domestic crime. However, these depictions also demonstrated the regulatory power of the law and the consequences of committing infanticide. They at once championed these ideals whilst also unsettling the foundations on which they were based. Hence, these representations will be analysed both in the context of the anxiety that baby farming evoked, and in their function as disciplinary discourses.

Investigations into Baby Farming

This section will address amateur investigations that were critical in the emergence of concerns about baby farming practised by individual women. These investigations were informed by middle-class conceptions of motherhood and, in particular, the idea that childcare should be the product of an innate maternal drive. This idea stemmed from the concept of separate spheres, which was also entrenched within middle-class understandings of gender. As such, the 'masculine' public sphere was associated with 'business, politics and professional life' and the 'feminine' private sphere was associated with 'love, emotions and domesticity' (Gorham, 2012:4). The key factor in this ideology is that the characteristics of

each sphere were presented as antithetical to each other. Hence, in introducing a cash nexus into childcare arrangements, baby farmers 'masculinised' the home, replacing their love and emotions with the logic of business. This process exposed weaknesses in the middle-class discourse of separate spheres by emphasising their fluidity, triggering anxieties that emerged within pejorative representations of the trade as a network of 'infanticide for hire' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:18). These investigations often made sensational claims about the existence of criminality within paid childcare across England. However, during this period, trade in Manchester was represented differently in the northern, industrial city compared to London. The concept of industry played a key role in this divergence, as concerns over the employment of mothers in factories became the focus of much criticism regarding the trade. This context of rapid industrialisation will thus be explored in terms of its implications for working-class women and their deviation from the prescriptive ideals set by middle-class domestic ideology.

The term 'baby farming' was introduced as a product of one such amateur investigation by Ernest Hart, who was prompted to act after Walpole (the Home Secretary) had rejected twenty recommendations from the Harveian Society to reduce infant mortality, as he deemed domestic legislation too controversial (Hendrick, 1994:40). In the first of a series of articles in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* on 19th October 1867, a mother was depicted who apparently could not suckle her children, and thus 'put out' all four to the same nurse. These children subsequently died. Interestingly, although the term 'baby farming' came to be associated with illegitimacy and the criminality of working-class women, this first article displays neither of these aspects. Firstly, it noted 'child's mother stated that she was the wife of a hairdresser' (*British Medical Journal*, 1867:343) suggesting her child was 'legitimate'. Of the baby farmer, it was claimed that 'in order that she might give some sustenance to the deceased, she weaned her own child' (*British Medical Journal*, 1867:343).

Such an act also appears contrary to popular perceptions of baby farming, which often involved problematic artificial feeding methods (rather than breast feeding).²² The pejorative representation of the trade in the following articles in the *BMJ* therefore alludes to the degree to which honest child carers were often misrepresented according to their divergence from conceptions of 'acceptable' maternal behaviour.

Indeed, this article certainly communicated the suspicions that had come to surround paid childcare; their authorship stemmed from a predetermined assumption of criminality. It is reiterated that 'the mother of the deceased had had four children, all of whom had died whilst out at nurse' ('Baby Farming,' 1867:343), which established the perceived link between baby farming and infant mortality. It does not explicitly accuse her of any wrongdoing, but simply stated that 'the death in the particular case before them might not seem to result from any design or want of care' ('Baby Farming,' 1867:343). However, the qualifying descriptions of 'might not seem' and 'this particular case' hints at circumstances in which 'design or want of care' *were* the causes of death. Such vague insinuations were characteristic of Ernest Hart's writing style whilst editor of the *BMJ*. As Joseph Hinks observes, in 'the absence of evidence, Hart was willing to fill the gaps as to the ultimate fate of the infants he encountered, offering tantalising hints' instead of actual facts (Hinks, 2015:60). With this 'journalistic flair', Hart utilised the *BMJ* to campaign for the regulation and supervision of baby farmers (Hinks, 2015:55), but his criminalisation of the trade also reflected the middle-class belief in the importance of a family structure in which the 'natural' mother, rather than a surrogate, was together with her child in the domestic sphere.

²² According to Homrighaus, the trade was often perceived as a form of 'dry nursing' (Homrighaus, 2003:166). For more detail on this aspect in the context of wet nursing, please see Chapter Four.

This article marked the beginning of an increasingly sensational campaign against baby farming, with titles such as 'Baby-Farming and Baby-Murder' (1868) and 'The Baby Farming Horror' (1896) mirroring the tone of the arguments within. The formula of Hart's investigation set a significant pattern for the ways in which the trade was represented, as it was replicated by other amateur detectives later in this period. This formula required the investigator to pose as the parent of an infant and place advertisements in a newspaper to take the child in exchange for a one-off fee. Similarly, James Greenwood depicted his 'findings' within a publication titled *The Seven Curses of London*, and Fanny Hodson also documented her investigation in letters to *The Times* (Hinks, 2015:111). Hinks has observed that these reports, which were 'often highly stylised and melodramatic in their use of language, bear striking similarities to...detective fiction' (Hinks, 2015:103). Considering the fact that detective fiction is widely agreed to be a direct descendant of sensation fiction (Debenham, 2002:219), the utilisation of this style reiterates the continued significance of sensationalism within representations of the trade. Critically, whilst the reality behind these particular accusations of criminality is questionable, their appearance highlights the representation of crime as a productive-disciplinary force. The idea of the criminal baby farmer triggered the production of masses of material in the form of newspaper and journal articles. These texts served as part of the machinery of disciplinary force, holding ideological control over the population by discussing their trials and executions as a consequence of breaking society's rules.

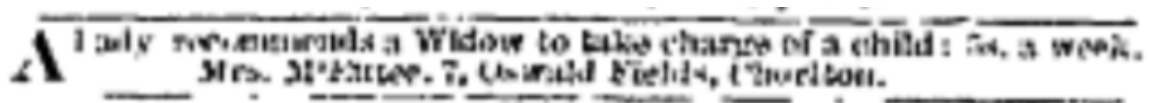
The framing of these reports as 'investigations' into 'crime' served to reinforce the notion that baby farmers engaged in the trade with criminal intent. Hinks argues that by 'couching the relationship they had with these women as being one of a 'detective' and 'suspect' it created a power imbalance and created suspicion around these women before they'd even uttered a word' (Hinks, 2015:131). This utilisation of power was demonstrated in

their assumed right to probe into the details of the businesses and homes of baby farmers with questions and visits. Although the fact that these detectives were middle-class and predominantly male did indeed allow the majority of these figures to exercise power over the baby farmers they investigated, through the role of 'detective' that they assumed, it is important to reiterate Foucault's notion that 'power is everywhere' (Foucault, 1978:94). The very reason for these investigations and interviews of baby farmers was that the practices of informal adoption and paid childcare were largely unknown to them. This enabled baby farmers' agency over how they represented themselves. The very fact that none of these investigations were able to provide conclusive evidence proving the presence of widespread criminal activity, despite their clear inclination to do so, reinforces the notion that this utilisation of power was not completely one-sided.

These investigations enabled the production of material on the subject to be produced, the majority of which continued to inform understandings of baby farming as a criminal practice. It was Alfred Wiltshire, a medical officer of the Privy Council, that conducted the actual fieldwork for Hart (Rose, 1986a:79). In 1868, he posted an advertisement in the *Clerkenwell News*, stating he wished to have a child 'adopted' and offered a premium of £5. He received 333 replies (Behlmer, 1982:26), which was quoted as further evidence of a large-scale system of infanticide for hire. The fact that the adverts posted by convicted criminals appeared exactly akin to other, legitimate proposals for paid childcare, appeared to further reaffirm these fears about the trade. However, as Joshua Stuart-Bennet observes, they appeared with such frequency it is unfeasible to assume that behind every one there lurked an infanticidal woman (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:39). Most of these proposals for adoption were likely legitimate, stemming from a demand for childcare for working-class women. Indeed, it must be reiterated that all sorts of people engaged in baby farming. For example, Ruth

Homrighaus notes the ‘wife of “a coal-yard labourer, who had a chance of buying his master’s business if he could raise money by Christmas” wanted ten pounds with an infant’ (Homrighaus, 2003:161). This particular example demonstrates that baby farming was not always a permanent occupation, but sometimes a one-off arrangement fuelled by the need to quickly raise capital to improve the economic security of the whole family. As Aeron Hunt observes, the trade took the work undertaken by mothers and ‘stripped it of the mystifying glow of maternal feeling, and placed it on the market, thus allowing it to become visible as *labour*, rather than natural and spontaneous womanly self-sacrifice’ (Hunt, 2006:80). The use of advertisements linked childcare with business and therefore heightened anxieties associated with baby farming, which overturned conceptions of motherhood as separate from the economics of the public sphere.

The manner in which baby farmers represented themselves whilst advertising for custom typically adhered to bourgeois notions of ‘respectable’ femininity. This allowed them to navigate within domains primarily controlled by the middle class. Though these investigations into baby farming adverts primarily focused on London and the surrounding districts, they even featured in Manchester newspapers:



A lady recommends a Widow to take charge of a child: for a week.
Mrs. M'Farlane, 7, Oswald Fields, Chorlton.

(*Manchester Guardian*, 1870b:2)²³

This advert is fairly representative those featured so frequently around the country. The fact that women changed their title to reflect their marital status emphasised the central role that

²³ Newspaper Image © The Manchester Central Library. All rights reserved with thanks to the Manchester City Council Archive (https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/448/archives_and_local_history).

sexuality played in the construction of their identity. The use of the titles 'Mrs' and 'Widow' therefore alludes to a recognition of the totality with which their sexuality defined them, even in the event of a spouse's death. Additionally, the alleged recommendation by a 'Lady' not only continues this use of gendered language, but also acts as a marker of 'respectability', which introduces a layer of power relations interconnected with class. This suggests that conceptions of 'respectable' femininity formed a basis of knowledge of middle-class sexuality within Victorian society. These conceptions, centred around the idea of the public and private spheres as separate, argued that the family was 'a woman's profession' (Davidoff and Hall, 2007:311). The key factor here, however, was that it had to be her own family. Therefore, the identities of baby farmers were defined in terms of their divergence from this ideology, by utilising maternal labour to gain income. To mitigate this, the signalling of feminine respectability was often critical when submitting adverts to newspapers controlled by middle-class editors and administrating staff (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:165). Stuart-Bennet, for example, notes that 'masquerades of respectability were a fundamental aspect of the marketplace' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:18). This represents a pragmatic navigation of domestic ideology on the part of baby farmers. Whilst the existence of the trade presented a challenge to bourgeois understandings of 'respectable' femininity, baby farmers were able to situate themselves within the confines of this ideology to continue engaging in paid childcare.

However, discussions surrounding baby farming were multi-faceted. The journalistic representation of baby farming in Manchester often alluded to anxieties that were culturally specific to the northern city, as will be explored below. Additionally, not every newspaper within the city followed the same narrative. For example, Hart and Wiltshire claimed that the baby farming issue "went to sleep" from the autumn of 1868 to the summer in 1870. (Behlmer, 1982:28). Coverage from the *Manchester Guardian* appeared to support this claim,

as no articles featuring the phrase 'baby farming' appear in 1868 after July and only three in 1869. George K. Behlmer argues this governmental and public distraction was likely caused by the 'general election of November 1868, together with subsequent parliamentary absorption in Irish affairs and elementary education' (Behlmer, 1982:28). However, not all Manchester newspapers followed and reacted to events at the same rate. The *Manchester Courier* did not 'go to sleep' in this period; in 1869, nine articles were published criticising the system of baby farming. Additionally, at the end of this allegedly 'dormant' period, no articles featuring the phrases 'baby farming' or 'Margaret Waters' appear to have been published at all. This silence continued until 1874. In comparison, articles in the *Manchester Guardian* increased from three to twenty-four in 1870 upon the discovery of Margaret Waters. This neglect of the *Manchester Courier* to follow such a major event in the chronology of baby farming reflects the fact that no single account followed a standard agenda: rather, each publication framed its own narrative as to what was deemed significant.

Indeed, as discussed in Chapter One, Manchester was at the forefront of industrialisation and factory work in the nineteenth century, and representations of baby farming often reflect this context. For example, one article in the *Manchester Guardian*, reprinted from the *BMJ*, closely links baby farming to anxieties about women working in factories:

Factory workers marry very early; and, as female 'hands'²⁴ can earn nearly as much as their husbands²⁵, the babies of these young couples are left, not unfrequently, in the

²⁴ The representation of female factory workers as 'hands' directly links to Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) in which workers are depicted as a disembodied mass of the only parts deemed useful to their employer. Such references within discussions of the trade signal his continuing influence in pejorative depictions of baby farming.

²⁵ This claim is questionable, as women were usually utilised as a form of cheap labour and often barred from membership to trade unions (Neff, 2013:32).

entire charge of old women, who 'take care' of as many children, legitimate and illegitimate, as they can get (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174).

Although the *BMJ* was produced in London, the author of this article claimed to have held the appointment of medical officer at the Sick Children's Hospital in Manchester during this period (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174). Its reproduction within the *Manchester Guardian* therefore set a key precedent in the representation of Manchester baby farming, by alluding to anxieties associated with industrialisation and factory work. Firstly, the influx of anonymous populations into cities triggered concerns as to the criminality of strangers, in this case 'old women'. Secondly, the economic opportunities for women in factories threatened the ideology of separate spheres, highlighting domesticity as predominantly a middle-class practice that was not representative of Victorian society as a whole. These issues were encapsulated within pejorative representations of baby farming. As Karl Ittmann explains, 'middle-class reformers defended the status quo. . . by focusing attention on the failings of working-class families rather than the environment in which they lived and worked' (Ittmann, 2016:154). Thus, rather than addressing the social and economic challenges faced by the working-class, criticism was directed at female factory workers to depict infant mortality as triggered by the personal failings of working mothers.

Certainly, the issue of infant mortality in Manchester is explicitly linked with commercial mothering in this article, which emphasises the role of class tensions within patterns of childcare:

Some of the nurses were women of dissolute habits and without shame; others, feeble women, so old as to be in their second childhood (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174).

As noted in Chapter One, elderly women often played a significant role in the context of childcare within working-class communities (Emsley, 2010:106). However, these women were depicted as neglectful and incompetent within newspapers and also in literature, for example, Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. Medical men and in particular the *BMJ* are often credited for creating panic as to the existence of criminal baby farming (Behlmer, 1982; Kilday, 2013; Cossins, 2015). However, these similarities to earlier depictions suggest that literary representations of the trade played an equally vital role. Furthermore, the common depiction of the neglectful elderly woman also reinforces the notion that concerns over working-class motherhood and, by extension, paid childcare, had been prevalent before this period. Such representations of incompetent child carers, in turn, served to reinforce wider pejorative conceptions of working-class parenting practices in the North of England. The perceived link between northern infant mortality and inept childcare practices, according to Melanie Reynolds, forged conceptions of 'the north-south divide with regard to childcare, with northern mothers supposedly caring less for their infants than southern mothers' (Reynolds, 2016b:4). The criticism of paid child carers within these communities therefore arguably fuelled notions of such a divide.

Moreover, the idea that baby farmers cared for both legitimate and illegitimate children furthered pejorative conceptions as to both the sexual behaviour of female factory workers and the moral respectability of baby farmers. Critically, concerns had often been voiced in this period as to the alleged promiscuity of northern women working in factories (Kidd, 2006:50). Such criticism is linked to wider anxieties as to the independence afforded to female factory workers. The perceived dichotomy of the public and private spheres meant that this apparent freedom afforded to women within the public sphere was represented as a threat to the home. Hence, the factory mother was often criticised for her allegedly 'poor

cooking, inadequate cleaning and thriftlessness', depicted as slowing 'the improvement of conditions for her family' (Ittmann, 2016:154). The representation of baby farming echoed such criticisms of inadequacy. As such, the idea of baby farmers caring for illegitimate children was presented as an indication of their own lack of 'respectability'. This, in turn, reaffirmed anxieties associated with paid childcare and the perceived incentive for criminality, as upon being 'farmed out', their 'general degradation' on account of their illegitimate birth status was heightened by 'their commodified objectification within the marketplace' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:243). The perceived merging of the home and the market was therefore represented as an 'unnatural' and dangerous distortion of motherhood, which itself was considered innate, emotional and, most importantly, beyond price. Pejorative depictions of baby farming in Manchester thus acted as a site for the articulation of these anxieties as to the supposedly damaging impact of industrialisation upon working-class motherhood.

Further to this, the criminalisation of baby farmers was also deeply embedded within the increasing professionalisation of medicine. This, in turn, amplified the effects of power in medical discourses, such as the *BMJ*. Advancements in medical knowledge led to growing criticism of common working-class childcare practices, due to the dangers they were said to present. However, such criticism was also inextricably linked to underlying class tensions:

The diseases from which the farmed children suffered could be traced in nearly all cases to the improper food that had been systematically given to the child; in some cases, to the insufficiency of the quantity of food, and to the free use of 'quieting stuff' (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174).

The use of the word 'systematically' in reference to improper feeding can be connected to the association between baby farming and poisoning. As explored in Chapter One, such

representations blurred the line between infanticide and common feeding and soothing methods among working-class communities. This ambiguity enabled baby farmers to be criminalised within the press in the absence of actual evidence. It also reaffirmed conceptions of poverty as a 'natural' state (Kidd, 1999:20) rather than the source of infant mortality. Critically, working-class women often did not have the knowledge or funds to distinguish between healthy or dangerous food for their children. Notwithstanding the high price and variable quality of milk available (Reeves, 1913:90–91) mothers and baby farmers alike were often given contradicting advice as to methods of feeding and soothing (Homrighaus, 2003:67). The multitude of competing medical opinions ultimately led to entropy and confusion in attempts to instruct the working class in terms of childcare. In the face of this contradictory advice, many mothers and caregivers frequently adhered to the familiar wisdom of older women within their communities, whose convenient and cheap home remedies had supposedly stood the test of time. The representation of such practices within the *BMJ* therefore fuelled tensions between medical men and working-class women, but also highlights the idea of competition within medicine in an era of increasing professionalism, which complicated this relationship further.

Despite these accusations of illicit activity, the proposed solution was not to regulate all paid childcare, or even increase surveillance to monitor potential criminality. Such were the calls made in negative representations of baby farming in other cities, especially London. The argument made for Manchester was quite different:

Now, if no child-bearing woman were allowed to work in any factory or warehouse until her child became a year old, much disease and early death might, I am certain, be prevented (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174).

This was not the first attack on women in factories; the subject attracted vociferous criticism throughout the century (Rendall, 1990; Gray, 1996). Female employment was a concern within factions of both the working class and the middle class. For some male factory workers, there was a perception of women as unfair competition driving down their earnings due to their typically lower wages (Gomersall, 1997:10). For middle-class critics, it signalled a breakdown of values associated with the family and the home. Attempts to maintain the perception of a separation between the public and private spheres thus also attempted to sever two intersecting facets of identity, dismembering the factory mother 'into her constituent parts: "woman" and "worker" (Zlotnick, 2001:222). The connection of this debate with the issue of baby farming hence differentiated the representation of the trade in Manchester, reflecting tensions associated with the rapid industrialisation of the city.

Indeed, the context of Manchester industry proved significant for both the existence and representation of baby farming within the city. It drove demand for childcare from factory mothers, highlighting domesticism as only one part of a multiplicity of power relations present within Victorian society. Factory owners acted as an opposing force to this ideology, utilising their position as employers to pull them back into the public sphere, into work. Quick returns after giving birth were a fact of life for factory workers, returning in sometimes as little as three days for fear of losing their position (Engels, 1987:180). The insecurity of their employment therefore often undermined the influence of domesticism, highlighting the role of class as critical in informing understandings of a separation between these spheres. If the permeation of women from the private into the public sphere was to be stopped, then the barriers between these two domains had to be reinforced with wealth. Discussions of baby farming therefore provided a space in which the fragility of this ideology was exposed.

Pejorative depictions of northern factory mothers and their use of paid childcare can thus be interpreted as a reaction to this challenge. Such representations demonstrated the concept of industry as distorting notions of 'natural' motherhood through the subjection of infants to the dehumanising principles of trade. This therefore led to distinctions between conceptions of industrial 'farming', associated with large numbers of pauper children like Bartholomew Drouet's establishment (explored in Chapter One), and a more wholesome notion of farming, associated with individual children adopted into small families in the countryside (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:206).

Additionally, the availability of factory work for women also affected patterns of childcare, as it led to the demand for less permanent arrangements such as day nurseries. Several advertisements appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* for such services:

Whilst the rate of mortality amongst children in this city is so lamentably great, and whilst the horrible disclosures of the baby-farming cases are fresh in the memories of your readers, I will, by your kind permission, invite their attention to our Orphans' Institute, Sunday School, and Day Nursery . . . It is intended for the especial benefit of poor widows who go out to wash and clean. (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871c:7)

This example takes pains to distinguish day care services from baby farming, despite the fact that the term was often used loosely to describe all forms of paid childcare. The attempt to make such a distinction was no doubt an effort to destigmatise the provision of day care services. The advert also appeals for donations rather than payments from parents, which introduces a cash nexus in a manner that avoided damaging conceptions associated with engaging in childcare as a business. Indeed, a further advert for this same institution merely

urged readers to provide against baby farming 'by helping the Day Nursery for fatherless children' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871a:1). This reference specifically to 'fatherless' children, whilst posing an interestingly vague stance on illegitimacy, avoids such stigma as their services were primarily reserved for widows. Thus, the day care centre is represented as a charitable institution, smoothing over concerns of the existence of childcare within the public sphere by appealing to middle-class notions of the importance of providing aid to the poor (Goodlad, 2004:39). This advert is hence a key example of how those engaging in paid childcare were able to navigate within middle-class conceptions of maternity to provide their services.

There were, however, suspicions as to the quality of care in these day-nurseries. Behlmer argues such institutions were as bad as the worst baby farms in London, claiming one in Salford saw 80-90% of the children 'cared for' die (Behlmer, 1982:36). His conclusion is that northern mothers did not use criminal baby farmers because they had a method of disposal that was already established (Behlmer, 1982:36–37). This point, however, must be questioned, as it has been demonstrated that baby farming was a vital part of the provision of mutual support in communities in Manchester. Therefore, this criticism likely stemmed from the influence of negative representations of northern, working-class patterns of childcare. Both baby farmers and the women who used their services could be deemed as falling short of middle-class standards of 'respectable' motherhood; the baby farmer by utilising maternal labour for income and the mother by seemingly 'neglecting' her family duties. The impact of such representations was demonstrated by the calls made to block female employment in factories (such as those made by the *BMJ*). However, beyond regulatory legislation of factory work, such criticism arguably had a limited effect on the behaviour of working-class factory mothers. Critically, such women continued to return to work only days after giving birth in order to maintain their positions (Ravenhill-Johnson,

2013:120). Precarious employment, mixed with the need to fulfil parental duties, pulled mothers simultaneously in different directions; towards both the public and private sphere. Baby farmers in Manchester thus provided an essential service that allowed mothers to successfully navigate between these two spheres.

Although infant mortality in day care facilities was high, this was less to do with criminal intent and more to do with the issues of being raised 'by hand' in an industrial city. There was a plethora of diseases to which a Victorian infant in Manchester may fall victim. The umbrella terms of 'wasting diseases', 'respiratory disorders' and 'diarrhoeal diseases' and further blanket terms of 'convulsions' and 'seizures' were commonly used to cover a range of underlying problems (Kilday, 2013:102). Issues of sanitation and the spread of disease within crowded working-class neighbourhoods contributed greatly to infant mortality, as well as the practice of 'hand rearing'. Ross notes that when bottle-feeding became popular, it presented dire health problems for those who lacked the facilities and knowledge required for sterilization and refrigeration (Ross, 1993:143). The issue, although eventually resulting in the Manchester Milk Clauses in 1899,²⁶ triggered widespread infant mortality during this period. Representations of baby farming in Manchester during this time therefore largely overlooked such environmental issues associated with industrialisation and placed the responsibility of the deaths of infants upon allegedly inferior childcare practices.

Many large cities in England had also been subject to rapid industrialisation in the mid-nineteenth century, and indeed endured the environmental and social problems caused by rapid urban growth. However, it was Manchester that 'became a symbol for the nation of twin developments. It combined massive urban growth with factory production and acquired

²⁶ This legislation demanded systematic milk testing for farm inspection (Nimmo, 2010).

almost mythical status as the emblem of a new order of things' (Kidd, 2006:14). The concept of industrialisation thus had a dramatic impact on understandings of motherhood, which was reflected in the fact that concerns over female factory workers took prominence in discussions of baby farming in Manchester. The engagement with this trade by factory mothers presented a challenge to middle-class domestic ideology and, in particular, the notion of a separation between the public and private spheres. It demonstrated that such ideas were not accepted wholesale by working-class women. Far from being an 'angel in the house', the factory mother and the baby farmer threatened to tear apart the distinctions between the public and private sphere by emphasising their fluidity and thus threatened to reveal the extent to which it served as an ideological disciplinary discourse. This relationship, linked through a cash nexus, indicated a recognition of childcare as a form of labour. The marketisation of such labour therefore stripped the maternal role of the emotion and innate drive thought to be characteristic of motherhood and replaced it with the economics of trade. Representations of baby farming in Manchester therefore reflected the concern that the home was not a haven away from industry but had been distorted into a place of business in itself.

Sorrow on the Sea (1868): The Baby Farmer as a Literary Villain

Pejorative representations of baby farming also featured within literature during this period, for example, *Sorrow on the Sea*, by Lady Emma Carolina Wood. This novel, part of the emergence of sensation fiction in the 1860s that both scandalised and captivated the Victorian public (Debenham, 2002:209), was tremendously controversial. Jill Matus claims it outraged readers 'on account of its sexually predatory villain, and its graphic depiction of baby disposal and unscrupulous midwifery' (Matus, 1995:180). This section will explore how the text both built upon and drew from understandings of motherhood at this point in the century

and how the context of the sensation genre affected this representation. The novel ultimately reinforces middle-class understandings of maternity as an innate quality driven by an emotional bond through the representation of the protagonist Cora. However, it also unsettles the foundations on which these conceptions are based. As such, the novel also features two characters who display characteristics contrary to conceptions of their gender which, according to Lyn Pykett, relates to the anxieties associated with class, of which gender is inextricably intertwined (Pykett, 1992:107). Specifically, the masculinisation of baby farmers in the novel alludes to underlying anxieties as to their potential to destabilise existing class structures. In this vein, the power relations within criminal transactions will also be analysed in an effort to explore the represented relationship between baby farmer and mother.

As shown previously, Wood's brother-in-law was reported to have bought most of the published copies of *Sorrow on the Sea* and burned them (Matus, 1995:180). This immediate stifling of circulation is as important for the history of Manchester as it is for London. Manchester, although home to a powerful press of its own, was still subject to the publishing capabilities of the capital in terms of fiction with most nineteenth-century novels, including this one, published in London. In the instance of *Sorrow on the Sea*, this dominance exerted itself through a form of censorship, as it likely never-entered into provincial circulation. The difference in access to textual representations likely contributed to differing perceptions of baby farmers by the literate public. Therefore, the representation of the trade in this novel highlights the continuing pattern of representation set in London publications, which diverged from provincial depictions as the century progressed.

Sorrow on the Sea was published in 1868, during the emergence of sensationalism within both literature and the press. This emergence was seen as both a response to 'the growing commercialisation of the literary marketplace' as well as increasing industrialisation and urbanisation, triggering 'a state of rapid change' (Debenham, 2002:209). Sensational literature also drew inspiration from coverage of crime within the press, with critics often claiming the newspaper court being to the sensation novel "what the bud is to the flower" (Ward, 2014:64). Wood's novel evidently followed this trend, with her representation of baby farming a clear reflection of the negative coverage in the press, even being published in the same year as Alfred Wiltshire and Ernest Hart's investigation into the trade. The story follows Cora Noble, who marries in secret and thus is unable to prove her child is legitimate in the absence of her husband. She is manipulated into engaging the services of a baby farmer (who plans to murder the child) through a newspaper advert, stating that 'ladies requiring temporary retirement might be attended with perfect secrecy and safety, and the infant provided for on reasonable terms' (Wood, 1868:14). This depiction drew directly from concerns over newspaper advertisements, which, as discussed in Chapter One, were often thought to make use of coded language in order to negotiate the criminal disposal of children.

The use of advertisements was also associated with another criminal trade - lying-in houses. They appeared in newspapers parallel to those posted by baby farmers and were similarly crafted to convey the impression of respectability (Rose, 1986a:80). These establishments, however, also had a pejorative reputation. Depicted as places in which an abortion could be procured, or in which children were disposed of after birth, several investigations were conducted into such places during this period (Rose, 1986a:93). Joanne Pearman has previously made a connection between such establishments and baby farming, claiming that both were intersecting methods of infant disposal (Pearman, 2017:88).

Although it has been established that these trades were often conducted independently of one another, Wood alluded to concerns that they often worked in tandem and to the same end – that of the death of children. These early indicators of a perceived overlap had significant consequences for later representations of the trade, as Benjamin Waugh would later claim that lying-in houses were the places from which “baby farmers got the material for their trade” (Bentley, 2005:210). The fact that advertisements were depicted as illicit snares within both trades therefore touched upon the purported threat they posed to the private sphere. The newspaper acted as a bridge between the home and the outside world. It allowed news of society and business to enter this sphere and, when utilised by baby farmers, also enabled maternal labour to be outsourced. This further exposed the fragility in conceptions of an apparent separation between the private and public spheres. Hence, their depiction as a contaminating influence, tempting mothers to disregard their familial duties, directly linked to such underlying anxieties.

It is important to note that the term “baby farming” is never actually explicitly referenced in Wood’s novel, which could stem from it being set at the end of the eighteenth century. In attempting to separate the story from the mid-Victorian period, she was unlikely to use new phrases. This was unusual in the context of sensation fiction, as such publications were typically set in the time they were published (Matus, 1995:185). Matus proposes that this was partly to accommodate the plot of a hero ‘marooned on a desert island with the daughter of a mutineer from the *Bounty*, and partly to pretend that the shocking practices of Mrs Drury are a thing of the past’ (Matus, 1995:185). The removal of the immediacy of baby farming is significant, as Matus also notes that all other aspects of the novel are thoroughly mid-Victorian (Matus, 1995:185). Other elements, such as the secret marriage between Cora and Edmund, as well as the money-troubles of his younger brother Rufus, were both also

characteristic of the genre of sensation. As Pamela Gilbert notes, the 'ordinary' Victorian challenges of bankruptcy and legitimacy elaborate a familiar community in which the lives of characters are "speeded up" (Gilbert, 2013:184). Thus, the attempt to distance the practice of criminal baby farming from present day could allude to the controversy of the subject.

However, the reception of Wood's novel also demonstrates a key difference in conceptions of sensational literature as opposed to sensational journalism. In reality, *Sorrow on the Sea* was no more graphic than that of, for example, James Greenwood's *Seven Evils of London* (1869), which spoke of parents anxious to be 'rid of' children, passing them off to 'ignorant and brutal' baby farmers (Greenwood, 1869:42). Indeed, the characteristics of sensation could be found in all kinds of publications during this period. Ernest Hart, for instance, in the absence of real evidence about the criminality of baby farming, improvised narratives and commentary to fit his preconceived notions, 'essentially creating its plot and character' (Liddle, 2017) to fit his own specifications. However, Wood's representation was presented in literary form. As Dallas Liddle observes, 'even the most flamboyant crime reports in the Age of Sensation' may have been opposed to the 'projects of the 1860s sensation novel' (Liddle, 2017). This attempt made by journalists to separate the newspaper from the novel is encapsulated within an article in *The Times*:

No writer of fiction is justified, in a work which he well knows will find its way into innocent family circles, in describing scenes and people such as pure-minded young persons of either sex ought neither to imagine nor to know (*The Times*, 1871:4).

This statement condemns sensation fiction by depicting it as a source of moral contamination amongst the population, concurring with critics that labelled the genre as a symptom of national decline (Debenham, 2002:210). However, the article then justified the presence of

crime reports with similar content through the insistence on the public responsibility of newspapers, stating '[t]he public must have their facts' (*The Times*, 1871:4). Nicola Goc has noted this manner in which newspaper proprietors viewed themselves, stating they saw it as 'their civic duty to report on police and crime matters. . .reinforcing society's expectations in terms of law and order' (Goc, 2013:12). As such, they acted as a disciplinary mechanism to regulate the behaviour of the population by displaying the consequences to criminality. This reveals a critical factor in the controversy of sensational novels such as Wood's. Although such literature possessed striking similarities in character and plot to crime reports, their fictional stories could not lay claim to the same duty of informing the public. Thus, 'sensational' publications were often criticised for their potential for spreading moral contagion.

This risk of moral contagion from sensation literature was considered particularly prevalent for women. Although the article in *The Times* explicitly included both sexes as potential victims, references to 'innocent family circles' and 'pure minded young persons' were decidedly associated with domesticism and femininity. This highlights that sensation novels were thought to be predominantly consumed by women (Bernstein, 2022:215). The fear of psychological contamination stemmed partly from the perceived emotional susceptibility of women (Debenham, 2002:211). However, it was also fuelled by themes of crime, murder and adultery that commonly featured in such novels, which engaged with anxieties associated with the transgression of feminine identity. For instance, Wood depicts the criminal baby farmer Mrs Drury as possessing distinctly masculine qualities. Specifically, she is described as having a powerful grip 'like a vice' (Wood, 1868:33). Domestic ideology built on the idea that women possessed innate qualities antithetical to men (Bennett and Royle, 2009:179). Thus, the blurring of these boundaries through emphasis of Mrs Drury's physical strength marked her as a threat, both physically and conceptually 'to the domestic

ideal of the genteel heroine of mainstream fiction' (Bernstein, 2022:213). This in turn built upon pejorative conceptions of baby farming, as women who engaged in the trade also challenged middle-class understandings of femininity. Such representations therefore appeared to associate such transgressions with criminality.

Mrs Drury's role as a villain is therefore critical. She continually displays duplicitous behaviour, as despite her strength she claims she is suffering 'from rheumatics in her limbs, which prevented her attending Divine service' (Wood, 1868:19). This trope of the ambitious and cunning underclass woman who manipulates her identity and commits domestic crimes (Bernstein, 2022:216) renders her as an obstacle for the heroine to overcome throughout the story. Her vilification displaces her from society, 'thereby avoiding the knowledge that she is produced *by* that society' (Morrissey, 2003:24). Matus also observes this, noting that 'Wood's novel certainly associates Mrs Drury with the age-old superstition of witchcraft and evil that surrounded midwives' (Matus, 1995:182).²⁷ As such, other people in the village are said to claim she has 'dealings with unseen powers' (Wood, 1868:19-20). Such a description endows Mrs Drury with a mythical quality to her villainy, simultaneously overlooking the fact that her illicit dealings depend on demand from her community for such services. Wood's representation thus reflected underlying concerns as to the threat baby farmers posed to middle-class domesticism, whilst overlooking the environmental factors present within society that allowed characters like Mrs Drury to exist. This aspect can also be connected to the theme of melodrama, which sensationalist literature drew from. Matus notes that '[m]elodrama depends on the unproblematic distinction between good and evil and on unambiguous resolution; it leaves a final stasis in which good triumphs and evil is trounced'

²⁷ Ehrenreich and English popularised the idea that midwives were some of the main victims of the sixteenth-century witch craze (Ehrenreich and English, 1973:13).

(Matus, 1995:185). Thus, as Mrs Drury embodies the power of destructive female agency, the ending of the novel depends on her downfall, which allows the social order to be re-established.

Wood's novel also depicts men who possess both masculine and feminine qualities. For example, Mrs Drury strikes an illicit bargain with the character Rufus, who dresses as a woman to disguise himself. This overt feminisation may indicate a recognition of the female-centric nature of baby farming. However, it was also a common trope of the male sensation villain, who often pushed the boundaries of appropriate masculinity (Macdonald, 2013:136). Tara Macdonald observes that such 'melodramatic men are sensation versions of the gothic villain who imprisons his victim . . . and takes advantage of her naivete and vulnerability' (Macdonald, 2013:136). Indeed, the influence of this gothic style can clearly be seen in the character of Rufus, who entraps Cora within the clutches of Mrs Drury. Wood's destruction of their plan returns the novel to the status quo, whilst unsettling the foundations on which these assumptions of gender are based. They fail, but they still maintain their capability to transgress these boundaries.

The representation of baby farming in *Sorrow on the Sea* is hence largely pejorative and is depicted as an intrinsic character trait of Mrs Drury. She is introduced as "a wise woman" (Wood, 1868:19), which is topographically emphasised to indicate underlying sinister implications of criminality. As discussed in Chapter One, this highlights the divergence in conceptions of elderly women according to class. Indeed, the character bears a marked similarity to earlier literary representations of baby farmers, namely Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, in which one such figure was satirically described as 'a woman of wisdom and experience' (Dickens, 2000:5). Wood's representation hence built upon existing middle-class

understandings of working-class childcare practices as the destructive product of 'having lost their "natural propensities" through the acquisition of debased morals and habits' (Matus, 1995:158). However, it also reinforces the idea that Dickens played a critical role in the formation of the baby farmer as a criminal archetype within literature.

The location of Wood's baby farm further alludes to popular pejorative conceptions of the trade. The farmhouse itself is named 'Off-Hand Farm' (Wood, 1868:18), which is perhaps a distortion of the popular term 'raised by hand', as there is no raising of infants here, by hand, breast or otherwise. Matus also notes this foreshadowing, stating the region is 'ominously described as a 'thinly populated' part of Essex' (Matus, 1995:183). Following this theme, the farm itself is devoid of all life; Wood describes in detail its 'sterile land' (Wood, 1868:18) home to a 'leafless tree, having sought a reflection in a stagnant pond, where a few ducks amused themselves with the long slimy weeds which covered it, and rendered it opaque' (Wood, 1868:20). The symbolism of stifled life foreshadows the revelation of the illicit dealings undertaken within it. However, the imagery of an opaque pond with slimy weeds covering its surface also hints at the way these transactions are conducted; through innuendo and insinuation, creating a layer of ambiguity that hides criminality just under its surface. This is then made explicit when a poacher is introduced as a witness to heavy sacks being carried to a dry well, hearing the '*thud* of a heavy body falling down a considerable depth' (Wood, 1868:22). Covered and thrown into the darkness, their victims are robbed of their identity, their dignity and subjected to a worse method of disposal than even the dreaded pauper funeral.²⁸ This sensational visualisation built upon the association between

²⁸ The pauper funeral, in which the dead are buried without ceremony in a plain coffin, was widely feared among the working classes, as discussed in chapter one (Jones, 2000:11).

baby farming and criminal activity, reinforcing concerns as to the role of infanticide within the high infant mortality rate.

When an unmarried mother seeks out Mrs Drury, the scene highlights a series of continually shifting power relations within this transaction. While bargaining, this relationship was balanced on the one hand by the ability of baby farmers to alleviate the burden of maternal duties, and on the other hand by the promise of payment from the mother. However, if a criminal baby farmer were to commit infanticide, these power relations would shift. Pressuring the mother for what she was 'owed' would only draw attention to her own illicit actions and expose the risk of prosecution. Hence, Mrs Drury refuses to pledge her lethal services for less than her stated price, stating 'No pay, no cure, my dear. 'Tis wonderful what short memories folks have as have got what they want' (Wood, 1868:31). Using the term 'cure' as a metaphor for infanticide dehumanises the child as a problem to be solved, reflecting the discursive framing of illegitimacy as quantified in terms of 'the economic burden unmarried mothers and their bastard children imposed on society' (Goc, 2013:22). It also depicts the infant in question as subject to these shifting power relations. Concerns over the welfare of children under the care of baby farmers often stemmed from their perceived objectification within the market of childcare. This, according to Stuart-Bennet, was heightened by the fact that 'they had no voice of their own, no real personality, and were often unnamed when passed through the marketplace' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:243). Thus, although the power relations between mother and baby farmer shifted according to each stage of a transaction, the infants in question consistently remained subject to individual control. Wood's representation reaffirmed the perceived link between illegitimacy and baby farming. Furthermore, by demonstrating the lack of agency in infants that were 'farmed out', the importance of mothers fulfilling their maternal duty was emphasised. Hence, the novel

built upon anxieties associated with both the criminality of baby farmers and with working-class parenting practices, by depicting those who used such services as apathetic towards their children.

However, the novel's heroine Cora does not willingly engage in criminal baby farming. Imprisoned in the house of Mrs Drury, Wood depicts the perilous situation she and her infant are in:

[Mrs Drury] turned and rushed out of the room, and down the stairs, not forgetting, however, to push the bolt outside Cora's prison-room, but in her hurry not succeeding in pushing it thoroughly through the staple. She passed through the outhouse, where the preparations for the coffin were nearly completed, and trod on the small hand, purple now with cold, of the unfortunate infant laid on the floor (Wood, 1868:75).

The depicted entrapment of Cora emphasises her role as a victim, rather than an active participant in the illicit trade of baby farming. This acts to preserve middle-class understandings of motherhood as an innate drive whilst also containing conceptions of criminality within the working classes. Critically, the notion of pushing a bolt through a staple is often associated with farming, in the sense that such mechanisms are often used to keep animals in their enclosures. Such a violent distortion of this imagery continued to inform negative understandings of baby farming, which would in fact endure within many publications produced in London as the century progressed. For example, when Benjamin Waugh's *Baby Farming* was published in 1890 it denounced the trade as 'comparable to sheep farms, whose motive is fleece and flesh which can be turned into money' (Waugh, 1890:12). Thus, as the trade became synonymous with child abuse within the popular press, the infanticidal baby farmer also emerged as a sensational villain within literature.

The traumatic representation of her dying child is depicted as a great strain on Cora in the novel. Mrs Drury stands on his hand turning 'purple now with cold', alluding to the fatal effects of her neglect. Moreover, the 'nearly completed' coffin in the room provides further foreshadowing of the possibility of his death, whilst highlighting the criminal intent of Mrs Drury. However, in his deterioration, he utters a 'low prolonged cry' (Wood, 1868:76). The sound wields immense power over Cora, allowing their bond to become a tangible force, driving her to escape and rescue him. Her reaction is similar to Dickens's depiction of Oliver Twist's mother who, as discussed in Chapter One, is driven to lay eyes on her child before she dies. This appears to reaffirm Jana Sawiki's claim that motherhood was 'both a source of power and enslavement for women' (Sawiki, 1991:89). Although Cora's identity as a mother is a source of power, imbuing her with the necessary strength to escape from her captors, it also removes her agency by replacing rational thought with maternal instinct. This depiction emphasises 'natural' motherhood as superior to all other forms of care, but also suggests that no 'good' mother would outsource her duties.

The representation of maternal instinct also appears in other Victorian texts during this period, even in situations in which the child is unwanted. For example, in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) the character Hetty reacts physically to the cries of the baby she ultimately abandons, leaving it to die of exposure. She states 'it was like a heavy weight hanging around my neck; and yet its crying went through me, and I daredn't look at its little hands and face' (Eliot, 1997:389). The depiction of involuntary responses to the child's cries and hands further reinforces the idea of a biological mother-child bond. This relationship was thought to evoke qualities such as a sense of sacrifice, responsibility, unconditional love and selflessness (Matus, 1995:189). The championing of these qualities, however, was entrenched deeply within middle-class understandings of motherhood. As Matus observes, 'the discourse of

maternal instinct and its perversions serves to inscribe class differences as differences among women, and to naturalise the distinctions between middle-class mothers and deviant others' (Matus, 1995:157). As such, when environmental pressures such as poverty, emotional unfulfillment, or social victimisation outweighed the bond between mother and child, as in the case of Hetty, these mothers were depicted as defying their 'natural' instincts, reflecting the challenge they posed to the bourgeois idealisation of family life.

Mrs Drury is also constructed as one such 'bad' mother, placed in contrast to Cora (the narrative's 'good mother'). Wood hints that her son is illegitimate by stating she had been the 'favourite servant' of an unnamed master who gave her some land out of appreciation (Wood, 1868:20). Hugh regards 'his mother with a profound awe, and paid her the obedience which the Indians yield to the Devil, and from the same motive – Fear' (Wood, 1868:19). This 'unnatural' relationship reaches its climax when she gathers an 'apronful of stones' and drops them into a well, accidentally killing him (Wood, 1868:261). The fact that she carries the means for murder in her apron inverts significant conceptions of Victorian motherhood. Aprons were a sign of domesticity and the feminine duties within the home. Ellen Ross has observed that "apronless women" were often referenced to describe the "roughness" of certain areas of London (Ross, 1985:49). Furthermore, the phrase 'tied to his mother's apron strings' originated from the early nineteenth century to mean an adult who is still under the close control of their mother (Wilkinson, 2003:359). The relationship between Mrs Drury and Hugh takes this meaning to its extreme. The phrase 'cut the apron strings', on the other hand, stemmed from this original idiom as a way to describe the ending of this relationship ('*cut the apron strings,*' 2015). To a degree, this process is a second 'birth' into adulthood. Mrs Drury's murder of her son, however, inverts these notions and frames her as the archetypal female villain within sensation literature; 'a demon of domestic crimes for which she is never

convincingly punished' (Bernstein, 2022:216). In this context, the representation of baby farming within sensation fiction built upon concerns as to the prevalence of infanticide and corruption within the domestic sphere during this period.

The ending of this novel, though technically happy, does not completely resolve the challenges the characters have posed to middle-class understandings of maternity and domesticity. As Matus argues, '[b]eneath the cosy and respectable surfaces lurk taint and corruption, so that even when perpetrators are brought to justice, the troublesome sense of association between respectability and corruption remains' (Matus, 1995:185). The heroine Cora experiences the traditional ending of domestic bliss; however, this is undercut by previous trauma. Far from being saved by her husband, this has evoked her strongest exertions 'on behalf of her child, who displaces the husband's prime position in the advised hierarchy of family relations' (Matus, 1995:186). Thus, the flaws in middle-class understandings of domestic 'respectability' are exposed. Additionally, Mrs Drury largely escapes punishment, relocating to London (Wood, 1868:263). She 'pines' at her inability to find custom, facing competition for 'her kind of work' from the Thames, which 'was a favoured place for disposing of infant bodies' (Matus, 1995:186).²⁹ This therefore creates an undercurrent of anxiety as to the future for Mrs Drury. While newspapers often took pains to separate themselves from sensation literature, Wood's novel was undeniably inspired from the pejorative representations published within the London press. Hence, her ending reflects the claims made within such newspapers that that the criminal cases brought to court were a mere tip of the iceberg of the criminality occurring within England.

²⁹ The Thames would soon become of greater significance in the representation of baby farming within the London Press, in the case of Amelia Dyer (see Chapter Four).

Affecting Change? Regulating and representing baby farming.

This section will examine the press representation of Margaret Waters and Frances Rogers, two cases of criminal baby farming occurring in London and Manchester respectively. These cases will demonstrate that Manchester newspapers began to diverge from the pattern of representation set by London publications when reporting on local cases of criminality. However, the sexuality of such criminal women would remain a critical part in their public perception. Judith Knelman comments on this tendency, stating that '[w]herever it was in the evidence, femininity was dissected and displayed' (Knelman, 1998:250). This alludes to the concept of sexuality as central to identity, which will be discussed within a Foucauldian framework; namely the forms in which individuals recognise themselves as subjects of sexuality (Mills, 2003:87). The demonisation of baby farmers within the press also intersected with class tensions, as it served to exclude criminal baby farmers from conceptions of 'respectable' femininity, as the gentle, submissive, passive and self-sacrificing 'angel of the house' does not commit infanticide (Knelman, 1998:20). Newspaper depictions thus acted as a form of disciplinary control by depicting in sensational detail both the crimes themselves and the consequences of either imprisonment or execution. Such pejorative representations also fuelled the criminalisation of common childcare practices within working-class communities. The sensational depiction of Margaret Waters in particular is often noted to have fuelled the 'hazy suspicions of foul play' propagated by figures such as Ernest Hart (Behlmer, 1982:25) swaying popular opinion and allowing reformers to push through regulatory legislation of the trade. Hence, debates surrounding the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act will also finally be considered to demonstrate the ways in which baby farming encapsulated understandings of femininity and how this was impacted by perceptions of class.

The case of Margaret Waters was framed in a manner that automatically presumed her guilt in both Manchester and London circulars, arguably from the moment of its discovery. Critically, when a body was found wrapped in a package on which the name 'Mrs Waters' could be discerned, she soon became connected to several other infant bodies which had been found in the area in the past few weeks (Behlmer, 1982:28). The fact that her handwriting could be discerned, set a key precedent in establishing guilt in later cases of criminal baby farming. This was through the use of basic handwriting analysis, or 'Graphology', as it came to be termed in the 1870s (Thornton, 1996:73). Scientists frequently sought to 'correlate writing style with gender' (Thornton, 1996:136) and though investigations failed to determine universal aspects differentiating one from the other, many agreed that the handwriting of men and women were empirically different. Hence, the paper the body was wrapped in contained 'apparently a female's handwriting' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1870e:6). The use of this observation in such a high-profile criminal investigation therefore signified the emergence of new branches of science as a way to regulate and evaluate crime.

Many of these branches of study focused upon the potential of external characteristics in revealing an individual's inner character. Just as the profession of Phrenology assumed that personality could be determined by the shape of the skull (Anger, 2017:389), some were confident that handwriting analysis could reveal aspects of a person's nature. These developments were significant for the representation of baby farming as they were able to uncover and regulate criminality. However, the perpetuation of the idea that writing style differed according to gender designated the sexuality of an individual as central to their identity. Thus, handwriting was encompassed as a form of recognition of an individual's subjection to their sexuality. Echoing these notions of subjectivity, Victorian notions of

penmanship reflected a hope that such self-presentation could 'confirm the inner reality of character and virtue' (Thornton, 1996:99). However, it has been established that conceptions of virtue differed according to gender. Women were measured according to the qualities associated with selflessness, submissiveness and maternity, whilst men were measured against the oppositional qualities of courage, strength and logic (Bennett and Royle, 2009:179). Hence, within the hope that handwriting could be analysed to reveal inner character was also the assumption that sexuality was central to character.

On the other hand, conceptions of penmanship also triggered anxieties as to the deception for which this medium could be used. As Tamara P. Thornton explains, 'inner reality and outward appearance do not necessarily correspond, opening up the possibility of empty facades and concealed designs' (Thornton, 1996:99). Such concerns appear to align with representations of criminal baby farmers in the sense that they were thought to present a mask of 'respectability' to conceal their involvement in domestic crime. As such, noting the allegedly feminine characteristics of Waters's handwriting and her name, Graphology was represented predominantly as a 'useful means of determining the true identity of crafty men and crafty women in disguise' (Thornton, 1996:99). Hence, this building of 'knowledge' of the ways in which sexuality affects an individual's behaviour was also critical to the regulation of the population. In a period in which industrial cities such as Manchester were undergoing rapid urbanisation due to the influx of people, there were concerns as to the loss of what Raymond Williams termed the "knowable community"³⁰ (Williams, 1975). This in turn

³⁰ The "knowable community" was a term Williams used to describe the fact that perceptions of identity and community became more problematic as Victorian society transitioned from 'a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban society'. He argues that the growth of towns and cities, as well as the 'increasing division and complexity of labour; the altered and critical relations between and within social classes' made the assumption of a 'knowable community – a whole community, wholly knowable' harder to sustain (Williams, 1975).

triggered anxieties as to the duplicity of anonymous strangers. The representation of Graphology therefore acted to strip a measure of this anonymity away. By identifying handwriting as an individual trait, Manchester newspapers perpetuated the idea that such activity could be subjected to surveillance, thus acting as a disciplinary mechanism with which to discourage criminality.

The utilisation of newspaper advertisements also emerged as a critical factor in the exposition of Margaret Waters, seemingly reinforcing their pejorative reputation. When investigating Waters's case the police noticed an advertisement in the *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* posted by a Mrs Oliver, who asked for five pounds and to be contacted via the Post Office in Brixton (*Manchester Guardian*, 1870c:3). As seemingly established within previous amateur investigations, such as that of Alfred Wiltshire and Ernest Hart, these adverts were seen as akin to the negotiation of infanticide for hire. This claim has even been reinforced by several historians (Bentley, 2005; Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973; Behlmer, 1982; Rose, 1986). Thus, in a similar manner to the analysis of penmanship, these adverts were dissected with the intention of determining the "true" nature of the baby farming trade. For example, the journalist James Greenwood argued that the language was embedded with something close to 'code'. He claimed that '[t]he complexion, tone, and terms of their villainously cheap suggestions for child adoption are most cunningly shaped to meet the possible requirements of some unfortunate work-girl' (Greenwood, 1869:33). Consequently, the frequency with which such advertisements appeared in newspapers was deemed to indicate widespread criminality, with their consistent use of language depicted as means to conceal illicit activity through a façade of domesticity.

Although such sensational speculation clearly fuelled pejorative conceptions of the trade, there were often perfectly mundane reasons for women to misrepresent themselves. For example, if a woman genuinely wanted to adopt a child, she may conceal her address, for fear of the biological parents changing their minds, as she would have no legal rights to it (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:604). Further to this, the ‘carnavalesque language of the marketplace functioned to maintain a respectable and legitimate ‘front’ for all transactions and interactions’ (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:18). This indicates a shared understanding between mothers and baby farmers that resulted in a communal language, likely evolving as a way of compensating for the deviation of paid child carers from the middle-class maternal ideal. As such, Stuart-Bennet has identified some of the most frequently occurring terms, such as ‘widow’, ‘lady’ and ‘married’ which he observes were ‘constructed upon Victorian and Edwardian discourses of respectability related to womanhood, motherhood, child care, and work’ (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:65). By representing themselves as conforming to such standards, baby farmers were able to communicate their terms to mothers in a manner that would have been accepted as ‘respectable’ content by middle-class editors. The utilisation of adverts therefore demonstrated the central role of sexuality within the identities of those who engaged in paid childcare, as it contextualised their alleged criminal duplicity as means to navigate within prescriptive middle-class standards of maternal behaviour.

The impact of class upon understandings of motherhood also affected the journalistic representation of mothers who had ‘farmed out’ their children to Waters. Respectability may have been a fluid notion, varying according to class in terms of how families viewed themselves (Davin, 1996: 70), but within newspapers controlled by the middle class, conceptions of ‘respectable’ femininity retained a powerful influence. For example, John Walter Cowen’s grandfather voraciously attempted to control the representation of his family

within the London press. Homrighaus notes, in fact, that he was clearly more interested in preserving his reputation than in the health of his illegitimate grandson, making a point 'several times of publicly announcing that Jeanette's pregnancy was the consequence of rape that took place when she was away from home' (Homrighaus, 2003:60-61).³¹ Cowen claimed he had applied 'for the arrest of the father of the child, but that his daughter had been too ill to participate. . .thus, no prosecution took place' (Pearman, 2017:118). This insistence as to his daughter's victimisation reinforced the stigma attached to illegitimate pregnancies whilst also highlighting the contradictions between 'the ideal of feminine purity as implicitly asexual' and the active sexuality included within the duties of a wife and mother (Gorham, 2012:7). Though it is not unlikely that Jeanette's pregnancy was the product of coercion or violence, her father's claims highlight observations made by Ellen Ross on families that adhered to fixed definitions of respectability. She notes that such people often did so at their own cost, as it meant fiercely defending privacy whilst remaining isolated from the gossip and 'sharing networks that provided both a pleasure and a measure of security' (Ross, 1985:52). These attempts to maintain respectability within the press and among his community, to the detriment of his grandson, thus emphasised the influence of middle-class understandings of femininity. However, it also alluded to the cost that often came with attempting to adhere to an ideology which was often incompatible with the environmental challenges faced by the working classes.

The stigma of illegitimacy also signalled the persisting influence of middle-class conceptions of sexuality, which attempted to confine such relations to the marriage bed

³¹ The actual wording of these accusations within the press was that Jeanette had been 'outraged' (*The Times*, 1870:11). Thus, Homrighaus has interpreted her pregnancy to be a consequence of rape, whilst Pearman also proposes that 'she was working as a servant and that the master of the house either raped or seduced her' (Pearman, 2017:118).

(Foucault, 1978:1). As explored in Chapter One, such attempts were connected to Malthusian anxiety as to the 'irresponsible' breeding of the working classes (Jones, 2000:5). The figure of the 'fallen' woman was a critical demonstration of the centrality of sexuality to identity. Not only was her own condition thought to be irreversible, but should a child be conceived, their illegitimate status was often thought to be a damning indicator of their future character and, in particular, their inherited moral weakness (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:584). The claims of her father that Jeanette was violated therefore attempt to realign her within conceptions of acceptable feminine behaviour by emphasising her as a victim of violence rather than an active sexual agent. This discussion also highlights a divergence in the representation of Waters's case in Manchester newspapers, as there do not appear to be any allusions to this sexual violence. Similar to depictions of Bartholomew Drouet's child-farm (see Chapter One), Manchester circulars appear to have excluded allegations of sexual violence. This difference in coverage may be subtle, but it demonstrated an important divergence in representation, indicating the possibility of regional variations in understandings of baby farming, which, in this case, revolved around the association of the trade with sexual violence committed by men.

One consistent factor in the depiction of Waters's case within the press, however, was the accusation that she poisoned the infants in her care using improper food and laudanum. As established in Chapter One, poisoning had become directly linked with conceptions of baby farming. The use of laudanum was reasonably common across classes,³² often used as a treatment for ailments such as diarrhoea or skin inflammation (Agnew, 2013:64). However, the drug was also widely known as an effective sedative for infants. The use of this and other

³² Coleridge was said to have written the poem 'Kubla Khan' whilst under the influence of opium, signalling its use among the upper classes (Gossop, 2007:13).

similar substances was often framed as a sign of neglect within Victorian literature. An array of characters used such substances, ranging from gin in the neo-Victorian novel *Fingersmith* (2002) to more ambiguous preparations such as ‘the mixture’ in George Gissing’s *The Nether World* (1889). Hence, its utilisation as a soothing method became increasingly condemned by many within the medical profession (Homrighaus, 2003:71). Consequently, the accusation that Waters administered it to infants was read as an indication of guilt within the press. The *Manchester Guardian* relayed testimony of Ellen O’ Connors, a servant to Waters, claiming she had ‘fetched laudanum for toothache, and pieces of lime for lime water to put in the feeding bottles’ (*Manchester Guardian*, 1870d:5). Homrighaus also notes a bottle was found ‘in Waters’s house with an odour “like laudanum”’ (Homrighaus, 2003:70).³³ The depiction of Waters as guilty therefore symbolized the construction of the good/bad dichotomy between ‘natural’ mothers and ‘professional’ child carers (Arnot, 1994:279–280): and serves as another example of how the introduction of a cash nexus into childcare could incentivise dangerous and neglectful practices.

The accusation that Waters deliberately poisoned the children in her care is further weakened by the fact that her sister, Sarah Ellis, feely admitted to giving the infants laudanum without her knowledge to keep them quiet (Homrighaus, 2003:70). Her testimony never made it to trial, likely on the word of Waters herself, who went out of her way to defend her sister during the proceedings (Homrighaus, 2003:70). Such expended effort to save her sister from punishment at the cost of her own conviction reveals a disparity between her

³³ What did Laudanum smell like? One common compound, created by Thomas Sydenham, contained a mixture of opiates was dissolved in sherry wine and mixed with spices such as cloves, cinnamon and saffron to disguise its ‘bitter’ taste (Agnew, 2013:64). Such a potent mixture would undoubtedly have a distinct odour, with several articles in the *BMJ* also referencing a ‘strong smell of laudanum’ when discussing cases of poisoning (Dobbie, 1870:33). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the empty bottle found on Waters’s premises had, in fact, contained laudanum.

representation in the press and the reality of her intentions. Even if we are to overlook the fact that the evidence presented at her trial suggested that Waters likely never gave her infants laudanum, it must again be iterated that the use of the drug was common at this point in the nineteenth century. Many patented products sold at this time for children's ailments contained opiates, including Godfrey's Cordial (Guy, 1845:659). Ross has pointed out that, in the crowded quarters of working-class districts, the temptation to administer quietening drugs to stop a crying baby must have been great (Ross, 1993:140). The treatment of this practice as evidence of neglect therefore signalled the increasing stigmatisation of common childcare practices within working-class communities. Illustrating the growing influence of medical opinion on discourses of baby farming, these attempts to discourage certain soothing methods and home remedies signalled an increasing desire to regulate working-class parenting.

In addition, Waters did not care for John Walter Cowan from birth, he had been kept with relatives for fourteen days before being brought to her (Homrighaus, 2003:63). During this time, he had been hand-fed for at least ten days – a practice incurring risks as some foods could not be digested.³⁴ Waters then cared for John for three days before she brought in a doctor who diagnosed him with diarrhoea, feeding him on 'arrowroot and cornstarch' - foods that women had been giving to their children for generations (Homrighaus, 2003:67). John was then taken from her into the workhouse, shortly after which he died (*Manchester Guardian*, 1870d:7). Baby Cowan thus had had three different types of care: familial care, commercial care, and institutional care. It was determined by the court and the press that the commercial care given by Waters ultimately caused his death. However, this timeline suggests

³⁴ John Brendan Curgenvin, an active figure in the campaign against baby farming, suggested that artificial foods may account for half of all infant deaths under the age of one year (Homrighaus, 2003:67).

that not only did he receive inadequate care from his relatives, he also died several days *after* being removed from Waters's home. The fact that this was not dwelled upon in Manchester newspapers therefore likely stemmed from the fact that her occupation as a baby farmer was regarded as the most 'unnatural' arrangement of the three. It seemingly established a dangerous intersection between the public care provided by institutions such as the workhouse, and the private care provided by the family. Thus, the case provided a discursive framework in which the weaknesses of domestic ideology, predicated on the idea of a separation between these spheres, were exposed.

Waters was certainly a criminal baby farmer. She was known to pass the children in her care off to wet nurses with a week or two of wages before vanishing (Cossins, 2015:132). She also abandoned a number of children; asking a child in the street to hold the baby, claiming she was tired, giving them a sixpence for some sweets, before quickly disappearing (Cossins, 2015:132). However, it is unlikely that she was a murderer. There is evidence to suggest that she treated the infants that she kept with kindness. One man and his wife even informed the Home Secretary that they were "perfectly satisfied" with the care of Waters in 1867, despite their child ultimately dying (Homrighaus, 2003:85). Throughout her life, she accrued more and more debt from disreputable creditors (Homrighaus, 2003: 85) and though her standards of care increasingly slipped as her circumstances became more desperate, her intentions were never necessarily malicious. Despite this, the revelation of her case increased levels of social anxiety about the potential criminal activity of working-class women in many parts of England. As such, soon after her sentencing, the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act was passed in an attempt to regulate paid child carers, demonstrating the significance of the ways in which baby farming was represented in cultural and social discourses.

The prominence of cases in the south of England such as that of Margaret Waters often led some to think that the trade did not exist in other regions (Behlmer, 1982:36). However, the discovery of Frances Rogers disproved such notions. Operating within Manchester, her case was depicted in a sensational manner within local newspapers. Much in the same manner as Waters, she was presented as guilty in such circulars. For example, one article outlines in detail the statement of a police officer on the scene, and his increasing mistrust of Rogers:

the prisoner went to a corner and stooped down with her back towards them. At that moment a very bad smell came from that direction. She turned round with some napkins and a coal bag, and while the officers examined these, the woman seemed very anxious to get away (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871b:6).

The privileging of legal jargon, for example, referring to Rogers as ‘the prisoner’, passes judgement as feigned objectivity. This created a sense of authority and a ‘perception of “truth”’, encouraging interpretation of the article as ‘the reality of law and justice, providing clear evidence of the consequences for those breaching society’s rules’ (Goc, 2013:24). In turn, the observation of a bad smell denotes her dwelling as unclean. Dirt was as meaningful in a cultural sense as it was a sanitary issue within Victorian society. As Natalka Freeland notes, ‘the metonymic relation between poverty and dirt’ was readily translated into ‘a metaphoric association of poverty and vice’ (Freeland, 2002:804). Thus, the representation of baby farmers as ‘dirty’ further cemented the trade within the discursive framework of immorality and criminality, identifying them as subjects in need of surveillance and regulation.

It is therefore important to treat such representations of 'dirty' homes within baby farming cases with caution. Keeping the home moderately clean was one of the many responsibilities of working-class women. However, this was a demanding task, not least due to the difficulty of getting water for washing and cleaning as there was often no piped water, 'no system of drainage, no sewerage, and no privy' (Hill, 1994:107). Such issues, combined with poor housing standards and overcrowding, were faced by many working-class families as Manchester grew to accommodate the vast influx of people into the city (Kidd, 2016:311). The rapid industrialisation of Manchester brought with it intensifying problems of pollution and grime, with the 'black smoke' commented upon by visitors as covering the city (Shelston and Shelston, 1990:8) becoming a symbol of the environmental issues triggered by rapid urban growth. Thus, many working-class homes were classed as 'dirty' or 'foul smelling' by those who had sought to 'escape the city's environs' (Kidd, 2016:306). Consequently, conceptions of dirt served to maintain class boundaries. The notion of 'cleanliness as a guarantor of moral authority' had a profound effect in the ideological creation of the ideal woman (Freeland, 2002:800); if she was to be a domestic angel, the condition of her house must reflect this inner virtue. However, in the dilapidated conditions of many working-class districts in Manchester, such models of domesticity were simply not compatible with the environmental conditions of the urban poor (Freeland, 2002:802). Hence, the association between uncleanliness and neglect fuelled pejorative representations of industrial mothers and child carers, with the dirt in their homes seemingly acting as physical proof of their maternal inadequacy.

Critically, in this case, the source of the bad smell is revealed to be a corpse, reinforcing associations between uncleanliness and immorality. However, it also gives insight into the

representation of criminal women within the framework of binary understandings of masculinity and femininity:

After a fruitless search in the cellar, witness and Slater followed the female prisoner to the kitchen. The bad smell was then, for the first time, perceived there. Slater called out that the female prisoner had something under her dress. Witness searched her, and found inside the opening in front of her dress a paper parcel containing the dead body of a male child (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871b:6).

The absorption of a dead infant into Rogers's figure, albeit through her dress, brings forward disturbing underlying ideas about baby farming; namely the subtext of cannibalism, often present in the 'voraciously consumptive imagery' that represented the trade (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:197). This destructive inversion of maternal duties further characterises baby farming as a capitalistic trade in flesh for profit. Additionally, when the reportedly neglected state of her other children is outlined, the total presumed activity of Rogers is therefore 'a wholly destructive, consumptive, and masculinised image of farming that is embodied by economics, immorality, and "dirt"' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:197). This 'masculinisation' of the home demonstrates that, in disrupting the middle-class notion of a separation between the public and private spheres according to the qualities of gender, criminal baby farmers deviated from characteristics associated with femininity and toward characteristics associated with masculinity. However, this does not mean that their sexuality was any less central to their identity. Even in the rejection of her childcare responsibilities, Rogers still utilised her sexuality by using the folds of her dress, an outwards display of femininity, to conceal her illicit activity. As Knelman argues, women 'were thought of as emotional, not rational beings. Rational, calculating women who killed were despised for making a mockery of the stereotype

as well as for the killing' (Knelman, 1998:230). Thus, female criminal baby farmers were defined by their sexuality, even when they transgressed the characteristics by which they were defined, as it was these transgressions that fuelled their demonisation within literature and the press.

The representation of the examination of the body found on Rogers's person reveals both the growing prominence of medical testimony within such criminal cases and the sensational style of reporting during this period:

The body was much decomposed, especially about the head and the upper extremities. The hands and thumbs were clenched. He found no marks of violence, and the body was not much emaciated . . . The stomach contained a teaspoonful of dark, decomposed fluid. The brain seemed congested. There were no signs of disease (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871b:6).

Such reports highlight the role of the medical profession in the representation of infanticide and baby farming. Through the use of examination to detect illicit activity, they fuelled claims made in publications such as the *BMJ* as to the existence of a widespread criminal networks of abusive and murderous child carers. This enabled the ideological dichotomy between 'natural' mothers and bad 'anti-mothers' to spread 'from medical discourse to achieve wider cultural significance, so that it could be implied that "all mothers were suspect" and needed policing' (Liggins, 2000:18–19). The professionalisation of medicine therefore played a key role in the regulation of sexuality. Moreover, the immense detail with which the body is described connects this professionalisation with the role of newspapers as a disciplinary mechanism and, in particular, the role that sensational journalism played in this. The greater focus on criminal cases as a result of this trend helped to ensure an increasing readership.

News, after all, is a commodity in a capitalist society, and infanticide was a subject that sold immensely well (Goc, 2013:173). This, in turn, heightened the ideological control of such discourses over the population, by displaying the power of the law to ultimately produce 'docile bodies' (Goc, 2013:12). Indeed, by depicting the discovery and punishment of Frances Rogers, Manchester newspapers displayed the consequences to infanticide, forming an important part of the mechanisms regulating paid maternal labour at this point in the nineteenth century.

The representation of Rogers's case paralleled Waters in a number of ways, primarily in the sense that the use of adverts and analysis of handwriting were important steps in her discovery (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871b:6). Investigators compared Rogers's writing in the letters she sent in correspondence to a mother of one of the 'farmed' children, and the orders given to the *Manchester Examiner* for the insertion of advertisements. These samples allegedly proved a damning match, thus posing the idea of 'the uniqueness of human character, its emanation from the unconscious, its governing influence on penmanship style' (Thornton, 1996:86). The fact that a man lodged in Rogers's home reinforced the idea that handwriting varied according to gender, as newspapers were careful to point out, '[n]one of the orders was in the male prisoner's handwriting' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871f:6). Thus, the case reiterated the conception of sexuality as central to identity. However, the depiction of this analysis also acted to regulate the population, pushing the act of handwriting into a 'field of visibility' (Foucault, 1977:202), suggesting it could be surveyed to uncover and punish the illicit activity of its author.

At this point in the century there appears to have been significantly less coverage of local criminal cases within the Manchester press. For example, in the *Manchester Guardian*

in 1871, eight articles were published discussing Frances Rogers. On the other hand, Margaret Waters featured in nineteen issues. Additionally, many of these updates on Rogers's case were extremely short. For instance, one article detailed the removal of the two infants found in her residence to the Manchester Union workhouse. It stated that both children were in 'a greatly reduced condition' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871e:7). This update is seven lines long, and on the same page as a story about a lawsuit against a railway company for lost luggage. Such brief updates were not uncommon in the representation of ongoing criminal trials. However, this does not detract from the fact that Frances Rogers, a local baby farmer, appeared with less frequency in the *Manchester Guardian* than that of Waters. This suggests that, despite the previous concern expressed in the *BMJ*, there was a marked reluctance to accept claims of a widespread criminal baby farming system (Behlmer, 1982:36) within the northern city. In fact, there were some, such as coroner Edward Hereford who even dismissed Rogers's case as unique in terms of criminality within Manchester (Rose, 1986:109). This highlights the multiplicity of narratives surrounding baby farming, and the degree to which regional variations in understandings of childcare affected such discussions surrounding the trade.

A reluctance to accept the idea that criminal baby farming existed beyond the capital has also been observed by Joseph Hinks of Scottish newspapers. He notes 'there was a palpable sense that the wilful neglect and outright murder of "farmed" infants was not a problem in either Glasgow or Edinburgh and that the real evils of the baby-farming system were perpetrated elsewhere' (Hinks, 2015:78). This suggests that the prominence of London publications in setting a pattern of representation for the trade may have initially affected perceptions of baby farming as predominantly associated with this area. As Annie Cossins

states, the case of Margaret Waters ‘occurred at a time when the *BMJ* needed a folk-devil, a woman who could carry the burden of the doctors’ allegations about working-class women’ (Cossins, 2015:100). Hence, Frances Rogers demonstrated that the criminal disposal of children did occur within other cities. However, the fact that Waters’s case is often considered as the trigger for campaigners to push through legislation gives further insight as to the often London-centric nature of the representation of baby farming.

The legislation that was introduced following the scandal of Waters was the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act. This required the registration of anyone taking in more than one child, under the age of one, for more than twenty-four hours, for payment. The local authority could refuse registration to anyone they believed was not of good character, or with an unsuitable home. They could also remove addresses that had fallen below an acceptable standard from the register. The Act demanded that registered carers inform a Coroner within twenty-four hours should any infant die whilst under their care. The Coroner was required to investigate any deaths for which he did not receive a valid death certificate (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:619–620; Homrighaus, 2003:255). On paper, these measures represented a growing belief that children were a separate demographic category and deserving of protection. As such, although baby farming itself was never a crime (Pearman, 2017:89), this was the first official attempt to quell the alleged criminal activity of baby farmers.

This effort to achieve a nation-wide registration of nurses had clearly been informed by pejorative representations of the trade within literature and the press, including the use of baby farmers by northern factory mothers. For example, the setting of the age restriction at one year aligned with criticism of female factory workers in Manchester, as it was likely an attempt to force mothers to care for their infants themselves. As explored above, the *BMJ*

had previously proposed that no mother should return to work until the child was one year old (*British Medical Journal*, 1868:174). This influence is perhaps unsurprising, considering that Ernest Hart had given evidence at the 1871 Infant Life Protection Select Committee, which had been held with the object of introducing legislation to regulate paid childcare (Hinks, 2015:9). Indeed, growing knowledge of paediatrics had led to the conclusion that the first year of infant life was the most precarious for infants. In recognition of this fact, the census would begin to include an 'infant mortality rate' in 1877 (Hendrick, 1997:43). This signalled new medical and sociological interest,³⁵ which identified infants as a new object of surveillance within existing mechanisms of the regulation of sexuality within Victorian society. However, despite being informed by concerns over industrial mothers, this Act was arguably most ineffective in such northern areas, as the existence of day nurseries, stemming from the demand for shorter-term childcare, were largely unaffected. This demonstrated the inefficiency of applying blanket restrictions based upon pejorative representations of baby farming within the context of significant regional variations in patterns of childcare.

Certainly, this ineffectiveness also stemmed from the fact that the Act was repeatedly watered down to bring it into existence. As such, it actually fuelled sensational speculation as to the existence of such illicit activity, as critics were quick to point out that it was full of loopholes. For example, there were claims that the twenty-four hour rule meant there were no measures to prevent 'baby sweating' in which a child was taken in for a premium and then passed along for a slightly smaller one (Bentley, 2005:208). The age restriction was also

³⁵ This interest, though likely due to a myriad of factors and cultural changes in the Victorian era, is often attributed to a combination of Romantic representations of childhood as a period of innocence, and a building up of scientific evidence on the drastic physical changes that occurred in this period of life. This process became increasingly understood as universal, experienced by all in society and important to each individual's psyche. Thus, the nineteenth century is often said to have 'invented' childhood as an ideological concept (Steedman, 1992:31–37; Elkin, 2016:40–52)

allegedly ripe for exploitation, as baby farmers could simply take in more children over this age and stay within the law. Finally, most women who engaged in paid childcare simply ignored the legislation. Outside London, no addresses were registered at all (Bentley, 2005:207). One of the reasons for this apathetic reception lay in a lack of inspection. This failed to produce a panoptic effect, which required baby farmers be pushed into a 'field of visibility' - and be conscious of that fact (Foucault, 1977:202). Such visibility was threatened in the idea that an inspector could visit the home of registered baby farmers at any time and check the standard of care. Hence, it was hoped that baby farmers would continually regulate their own actions, behaving as though an inspector were present all the time, thus becoming the principles of their own subjection (Foucault, 1977:202). The Act, therefore, intended to push this process of internalisation through panoptic principles in an increasing reliance on this technique in the late-nineteenth century. However, it was an empty threat, as with no inspectors, there was no legal pressure for self-surveillance. Thus, the Act was near-impossible to enforce, and was a resounding failure.

The political landscape of Manchester played a key role in fostering debate over the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act, which stemmed primarily from two political bases: doctors and feminist groups. The latter was mainly voiced by the Committee for Amending the Law in Points Wherein it is Injurious to Women (CALPIW), formed in 1867 from 'the Manchester branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage' (Pearman, 2017:147). The CALPIW fiercely opposed the Act, claiming it did not tackle the root causes of infanticide and neglected more important issues, for example 'financial assistance for unwed mothers from their erstwhile partners, which would enable them to care for their children properly' (Kilday, 2013:96). Members of the medical profession, on the other hand, often lobbied for this legislation, as seen in the prolific amounts of material published in the *BMJ* on the 'evils' of

baby farming and the inadequacy of the current law in dealing with such criminality. Cossins states that 'the class and sex battle between the doctors and upper-class women saw the medicos win the public relations war' (Cossins, 2015:116). Indeed, although medical campaigners for reform ultimately succeeded in securing the introduction of the 1872 Act, under the surface of this debate was a myriad of concerns that affected the stance each group took towards this legislation. As such, the role of the Manchester feminists in the pushback against this legislation should not be understated, as it encompassed paid childcare within competing understandings of motherhood at this point in the century.

The motivations of the CALPIW were multi-faceted, stemming from the concern of protecting income for working-class women and from lingering resentment over the past legislative actions of the medical community. Firstly, George K. Behlmer argues that although 'the Manchester Feminists did not say so, they must also have seen Charley's bill as a threat to work opportunities for widows, spinsters and other self-supporting women' (Behlmer, 1982:33). Certainly, they argued that most paid childcare arrangements were completely legitimate and vital to female income, reinforcing the idea of competing narratives in the representation of baby farming that were not necessarily pejorative. Secondly, their willingness to engage in such political conflict is explained by Margaret Arnot as resentment for interference in domestic arrangements, which had stemmed from tensions grown in previous legislative disputes, namely the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869. The forced confinement and inspection of women suspected to be prostitutes to stop the spread of sexual diseases in the army and navy became steadily more controversial (Arnot, 1994:276). Thus, the push-back against regulation of baby farmers was arguably fuelled by the blatant display of sexual double-standards within the medical community.

This controversy also intersected with class tensions, specifically the contradictions within middle-class understandings of the ideal home. For instance, the Manchester branch of the women's suffrage campaign attacked the idea of registration for paid child carers, as they suggested the 'ladies of England' would object if they were prevented from employing servants who were unable to find a registered nurse to care for their child (Committee for Amending the Law in Points Wherein it is Injurious to Women, 1871:7). This was perhaps the clearest demonstration of the contradictions within bourgeois domestic ideology. The creation of the ideal home required at least one servant, who was required to give up 'their *whole* time to their masters or mistresses and to obey all their lawful orders in relation to their employment' (Langland, 1995:14). As such, it was usually a requirement for servants to remain single and childless (Kilday, 2010:69), which directly impacted the demand for longer-term childcare from this demographic. In short, the perpetuation of the notion of the 'ideal' home encouraged the presence of a trade that disrupted the conceptual foundation on which this ideal was based; that of a separation between the public and private spheres. Despite this acknowledgement, however, much of the criticism of CALPIW actually tended to reiterate such conceptions. For example, they claimed that 'the minute and galling supervision by men of the domestic and nursery arrangements of women, would be felt as grievously vexatious by the women of this nation' (Behlmer, 1982:34). By doing so, however, they reinforced the idea that the responsibility for such domestic and childcare duties lay solely with women. As Cossins states, 'feminist acceptance of the notion of women's special domestic role could result in feminist and patriarchal arguments looking similar' (Cossins, 2015:292). Hence, by arguing that men had no place inspecting or regulating the childcare arrangements between mothers and baby farmers, CALPIW reinforced binary understandings of gender that underpinned the very idea of the 'angel in the house'.

On the other hand, medical men campaigning for childcare reform did not necessarily do so for humanitarian reasons, but rather ‘their activism here [...] seems to be linked to a strong need for social recognition’ (Behlmer, 1982:23). These aspirations did not just lead to clashes with feminist groups, but also meant that they cast aside the efforts of philanthropic groups to claim a monopoly on tackling the issue. Homrighaus notes that ‘using their “expertise” to stake a claim on infanticide and to relegate female reformers to the ranks of amateurs’ was ‘one of the many moves to professionalise medicine’ (Homrighaus, 2001:352). Behlmer argues the Manchester feminists had similar tactical motives in opposing the Act, as it ‘offered a target far more vulnerable than Gladstone’s government’ in their crusade for women’s right to vote (Behlmer, 1982:33). However, Hinks notes that the organisation remained surprisingly silent on the subject of equal suffrage (Hinks, 2015:68). Despite this ambiguity, each side of the debate utilised powerful narratives of baby farming, each with their own ‘tactical function’ to suit their agenda (Foucault, 1978:100). This established both the medical profession and the Manchester feminists in the political field. Thus, it appears that the controversy surrounding the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act emphasised and built upon the multiplicity of narratives on baby farming.

The representation and regulation of baby farming during this period therefore clearly demonstrated a divergence in understandings of the trade within Manchester as opposed to London. As such, although the case of Frances Waters highlighted the existence of criminality within paid childcare in the northern city, during this period there appeared to be a marked tendency to represent the trade as contained within the south of England. It is likely this originated in the London-centric nature of many publications discussing baby farming. Such publications set a pattern of representation for female criminals engaging in paid childcare, in which their femininity (or lack of) was dissected, indicating a recognition of sexuality as

central to identity. Furthermore, the influence of campaigners for legal reform in London, such as Ernest Hart, also contextualises the influence of pejorative depictions of Margaret Waters in the introduction of the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act. However, despite this prominence of press representations from the capital, the political landscape of Manchester also played a key role in debates surrounding the regulation of the trade. In fact, the controversy surrounding the Act encompassed baby farming within political discussions of maternity, emphasising the discourse of domestic ideology as an unstable combination of binary conceptions of gender and a hierarchical class structure within a rapidly changing society.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight intersecting sites of conflict between class and gender within representations of baby farming. Firstly, the investigations of Alfred Wiltshire and Ernest Hart were represented as damning evidence of large-scale infanticide. However, in reality, they revealed a largely legitimate system of outsourced mothering, modelled in a language of 'respectability', due to the mediation of newspaper advertisements by middle-class newspaper editors. They also revealed a divergence in conceptions of the trade in Manchester as opposed to the capital. As anxieties associated with rapid industrialisation intersected with concerns over paid childcare, the employment of mothers in factories was often regarded as the principal cause for demand for the trade.

The representation of baby farming in literature also built upon such concerns over the introduction of a cash nexus into mothering duties. This is established in Emma Carolina Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea*, as the character of Mrs Drury clearly demonstrated the influence of pejorative press representations of the trade. Her innate masculine qualities, as well as her

destructive relationship with her son, ultimately positions her as a threat to bourgeois conceptions of femininity and maternity. As such, her role as a villain is vital, as it allows this threat to be resolved and the status quo re-established.

The representation of Margaret Waters also continued in this sensationalist pattern - though her case was not as unambiguous as was often depicted in the press. However, her role within campaigns for the regulation of paid childcare highlights the further divergence of Manchester representations of the trade from that produced in London. While the case of Frances Rogers demonstrated that criminal baby farming did indeed exist in Manchester, representations implicitly propagated that the trade was somewhat contained within the south of England. On the other hand, Waters's case was a vital propaganda tool for campaigners of reform to push through regulatory legislation for paid childcare.

The legislation that was introduced, namely the Infant Life Protection Act of 1872, was also an abject failure in its attempt to regulate baby farming, as registration for these hired mothers was non-existent in many northern cities. However, debates on the subject between medical men and CALPIW also revealed the significance of political groups within Manchester in the perpetuation of a multiplicity of narratives surrounding the trade. They depicted baby farming as a vital resource and source of income for working-class women, exposing domestic ideology as a class-specific practice. However, in doing so, they also reinforced the idea of childcare as exclusively a woman's duty, thus circling back to bourgeois conceptions of femininity even in their criticism.

The next chapter will discuss the cases of John and Catherine Barnes, criminal baby farmers who operated in Merseyside, analysing the ideologies underlying the ways in which they were represented within the press. Analysis of *Lettie's Last Home* by L. T. Meade (1875),

The Fallen Leaves (1879) by Wilkie Collins and Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1878) will also be undertaken, exploring the influence of earlier literature within this surge of representations. The time span also covers the arrest and execution of two further criminal baby farmers: Annie Tooke in 1879 and Jessie King in 1889. The latter will be analysed with particular reference to King's Scottish heritage (Pearman, 2017:127). The reception and representation of all these cases will be explored, as in previous chapters, through use of provincial circulars such as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Manchester Courier*, searching to see if popular perceptions of baby farming remained constant in their pejorative nature, or if they transformed with this new material.

Chapter 3 – Beyond the Sensational Headlines: Exploring the Different Narratives of Baby Farming, 1875-1894

This chapter will examine representations of baby farming within both newspapers and literature from 1875-1894, during a reignition of public interest in the subject.³⁶ Articles within Manchester newspapers in particular drew from and built upon continued anxieties about the Victorian crime rate. As Christopher Casey notes, despite the fact that statistics clearly indicated to the contrary, most Victorians believed that rates of crime, ‘particularly violent crime and murder’ were rising, stemming from a drastic increase in newspaper coverage on the subject (Casey, 2011:368). Such reporting, often in the form of sensationalised narratives, also depicted the baby farming trade, with particular emphasis on those accused of illicit activity. The *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier* showed no reluctance to prejudge those accused as guilty and alongside literary publications during this period, often speculated that the presence of criminal baby farming was far more prevalent than the number of cases that made it to print. However, these publications also revealed regional variations in representations of the trade, with the subject of female employment in factories often taking greater prominence in discussions of baby farming in Manchester.

Several newspaper articles will thus be examined, in an attempt to determine if the geographical location of Manchester affected the selection of examples of criminality that were included in print. Further to this, the case of John and Catherine Barnes in 1879 will also be more closely examined in the context of these fears about the rising crime rate, to establish if their actions were indeed as sinister as they were suggested. Finally, there was also a small

³⁶ There had been a temporary decline between 1868 and 1870 due to a cultural distraction with international affairs (Behlmer, 1982:28).

boom in fictional texts that featured this subject during this period. As such, three literary representations of baby farming will also be examined: *Lettie's Last Home* by L. T. Meade (1875), *H. M. S. Pinafore* by Arthur Sullivan and W. S. Gilbert (1878) and *The Fallen Leaves* by Wilkie Collins (1879). Although these publications varied drastically in popularity, the fact that the subject of baby farming reappeared in all of them suggests that the trade could be identified and understood by a range of different audiences. These texts will hence be compared, to determine commonalities in fictional representations of baby farming. In particular, the depiction of the baby farmer as working class was a common theme, revealing the prevalence of negative stereotypes and acting as a space onto which middle-class conceptions of criminality were projected. Through the examination of such literary and cultural representations, this chapter will therefore demonstrate the multiplicity of narratives that were produced surrounding the trade, with both class and region playing a critical role in these varying perspectives.

Near and far: The Role of Geographic Proximity in Representations of Baby Farming in the Press

This section will explore the role of geographic proximity in representations of baby farming in Manchester. Although the criminal cases discussed in previous chapters, such as Margaret Waters and Charlotte Windsor, received a lot of attention in Manchester circulars, by the end of the 1870s, these newspapers appear to have shown less interest in subsequent executions of criminal baby farmers within the south of England. Discussion of the trade instead focused on cases within the city and the surrounding regions. To present an explanation for this change in coverage, a concept will be borrowed from journalism studies; that of news values. Although their interpretation and construction varies between studies,

these values are generally recognised as defining ‘newsworthiness’ (Bednarek and Caple, 2017:79–80). The key news value that will be examined in this context is the value of ‘Proximity’ (Bednarek and Caple, 2017:80); the fact that certain cases of criminal baby farming occurred closer to Manchester is a clear and tangible example of the geographic proximity of an event. Moreover, proximity is also used to describe the perception and communication of cultural ‘nearness’ in a news item. This means that, for example, discussions of female factory workers in relation to baby farming would be of greater cultural significance to those living in an industrial city such as Manchester, than to those in smaller, rural towns. Equally, as journalistic representation acted to inform understandings of baby farming, the inclusion of distinct cases within the provincial press would cause different understandings of the trade to form. This impact on public awareness hence also aligns with the Foucauldian observation that newspaper discourse is a method of constructing and representing reality, ‘with attendant consequences for power relations (Bednarek and Caple, 2017:7). The prioritisation of local cases of criminal baby farming altered the entire represented reality of the trade. As such, a more ideologically and culturally relevant portrayal was formulated for the news-consuming public of Manchester demonstrating that, although anxieties over the trade were indeed prevalent, this anxiety was interpreted within the specific cultural context of a northern, industrial city.

The case of Annie Tooke, for example, may have resulted in several sensational articles in Manchester circulars, had it occurred nearer the beginning of the decade, at the height of the panic triggered by Margaret Waters. The case was a particularly gruesome ordeal, touching upon Victorian conceptions of deformity, both in the sense of the victim, as Reginald Hyde had a congenital defect, and in the sense of his post-mortem mutilation. Indeed, Tooke’s case was featured in newspapers around Exeter and across England. In the neighbouring area

of Cheshire, for example, she was referred to as the 'Exeter Murderess' (*Cheshire Observer*, 1879:8). However, the case received little (if any) coverage in either the *Manchester Guardian*, *Examiner*, *Times* or *Courier*. Using the concept of 'news values', one glaring issue with this story was that it lacked geographic proximity. Though this is unlikely to be the sole reason for these newspapers to exclude stories about the case, the material that was selected in place of this suggests that it played a significant role.

In fact, in 1879 the case of John and Catherine Barnes featured to a far greater degree in Manchester circulars. The married couple operated predominantly in Cheshire, apparently engaging in illicit activity for at least ten years before they were arrested (Knelman, 1998:160). The *Manchester Guardian* displayed no reluctance to speculate on the widespread criminal activity that the married couple had allegedly engaged in, claiming '30 to 40 children handed over to the prisoners were missing' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879d:4). The role of geographic proximity is therefore a clear distinction between the perceived 'newsworthiness' of the Barnes's crimes as opposed to that committed by Annie Tooke. This case was also clearly framed to encompass a large scope of criminal activity; with one article stating that 'when the whole case was completed such a history of crime would be brought to light as was almost unprecedented' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879c:5). By prioritising and sensationalising a case possessing physical proximity in this way, Manchester newspapers located the issue of criminal baby farming as also culturally 'near' (and therefore relevant) to the news-consuming public of the city. On one hand, this formulated a more effective mechanism of ideological control in the display of consequences to illicit baby farming. However, on the other hand, it also placed wider Victorian fears as to the supposedly rising levels of criminality into a more local context, which fuelled understandings of baby farming as an infanticidal network among the working class, rather than a legitimate trade in which criminals sometimes operated.

This role of geographic proximity can also be observed within the case of the Scottish baby farmer Jessie King, who was executed in Edinburgh for the murder of children in her care. Whilst a comprehensive analysis of Scottish baby farming lies outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to note that historians have identified the trade to be reasonably common in both Edinburgh and Glasgow in the late nineteenth century (Kilday, 2015:74). These arrangements likely provided an honest service of paid childcare for women although, much like baby farming in England, it was often labelled as a method of infanticide by proxy (Harrower-Gray, 2014:123; Kilday, 2015:74). However, Joseph Hinks has observed that there was a marked tendency within the Scottish press to represent criminality as a problem only within the English capital (Hinks, 2015:78). In this context, a parallel can be drawn with earlier representations of the trade in Manchester which, as explored in Chapter Two, often alluded to the implicit assumption that criminal baby farming only occurred within the south of England. Thus, just as Frances Rogers demonstrated the existence of criminal child disposal within Manchester, King's case 'forced a re-assessment of the belief that problematic paid-childcare was not a problem in Scotland' (Hinks, 2015:144–145). However, this anxiety appeared to be short-lived and King's case was soon largely forgotten within the Scottish press (Hinks, 2015:145), whilst Manchester newspapers became increasingly focused upon cases occurring within the north of England.

King's case therefore attracted little attention from Manchester circulars. Her case appeared to be particularly unambiguous; there was no question as to whether she intended to murder the children in her care. However, the number of Manchester articles discussing her was considerably lower than those examining another case closer to home: William and Elizabeth Pearson of Southport. The depiction of baby farming in Manchester newspapers was framed in a way to suit the interests of the local people, of which both geographic and

cultural proximity were significant factors. Stories discussing the arrest of Jessie King did not possess this news value, which could have contributed to the small number of articles present in the *Manchester Courier* and the complete silence on behalf of the *Manchester Guardian*. Such evidence also concurs with Andrew Hobbs's observations on the *Manchester Guardian*, as despite its rapid increase in status throughout the century it 'was still very much a local Manchester newspaper and clearly readers liked it that way. The paper's reporting of local events seems to have had a direct relation to its circulation' (Hobbs, 2018:372). Although, as in the case of John and Catherine Barnes, it was the female culprit, Elizabeth Person, that attracted most of the criticism from the press, the greater focus on this case in general suggests that the Victorian taste for crime narratives in Manchester was not indiscriminate. Materially 'closer' crimes were consistently deemed more 'newsworthy', at least in the context of infanticide and child neglect. The representation of baby farming thus acted as a site in which anxieties over the perceived rise in crime levels intersected with notions of regional identity, which will be explored further in Chapter Four.

This is not to say that geographic proximity was the only news value that influenced the selection (and exclusion) of events in Manchester newspapers. News items describing the Pearsons' case also contained cultural 'nearness', as they touched upon several points of controversy surrounding childcare in the north of England. For example, the lives of the children farmed out to William and Elizabeth Pearson were insured, and newspapers made a point of mentioning this as a way of prejudging their guilt (*Manchester Guardian*, 1889a:5). Insurance was often criticised as a financial incentive for parents to neglect their children (Kidd, 1999:110). Thus, the practice was criminalised through this perceived connection, which is starkly similar to the connection between baby farming and child abuse. However, both insuring children and farming them out were relatively common practices in the north

of England, forming vital parts of survival networks within working-class communities, rather than a widespread conspiracy to murder children.

Burial insurance was often sought after in the same sense of pragmatism as the services of baby farmers. Critically, it has been established that baby farmers were a practical way for single mothers to maintain employment. Equally, with infant mortality rates so high, insurance was often taken as a perfectly innocent protective economic measure to cover funeral expenses, as preparation for the (not unlikely) occurrence of death within the family would save the disgrace of a pauper's funeral (Kidd, 1999:118). Despite this, however, both insurance and paid childcare were often represented as an indicator of criminality in the event of a child's death. In the context of baby farming, as burial insurance-related crime was considered an issue of specific concern within the north of England, a case featuring such illicit activity was of distinct cultural relevance. This lends insight as to why the William and Elizabeth Pearson featured far more in in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier* than the geographically and culturally distant Jessie King. However, such cases also fuelled the criminalisation of this practice among working-class communities. Their case therefore connected negative conceptions of northern, working-class parenting with underlying anxieties as to rising criminality, and acted to inform understandings of baby farming in Manchester.

Building on this notion of cultural 'nearness', the appearance of domestic servants in infanticide cases was also common in nineteenth century newspapers. It is no secret that this form of employment was specifically associated with infanticide. Historians often argue that this was due to the isolation and insecurity of an occupation with high levels of moral scrutiny and low tolerance for unrespectable behaviour. As Kilday states, '[d]omestic servants were

meant to be chaste and childless, as these characteristics were best suited to the needs of their employers' (Kilday, 2013:39). However, such circumstances were not universal, and a single, pregnant domestic servant was not always dismissed by her employers. The case of William and Elizabeth Pearson presents evidence to this effect, as a woman named Mrs Oldfield as well as her servant 'farmed' out their children to them. This act of jointly outsourcing their childcare emphasises that 'fallen' women were not always condemned to destitution, and that mistresses of the household were not always as harsh with their employees as history has represented them to be, which is an aspect that will be explored further in Chapter Four. Despite this, the case possesses a geographic and cultural 'nearness' to the news-consuming public of Manchester, through the association between domestic servants and infanticide. This touches upon Victorian concerns of moral contagion, in which certain unacceptable behaviours were feared to spread 'upward' through to the middle classes (Gilbert, 1997:40), which in turn likely heightened fears of the supposedly rising levels of violent crime, including the illicit baby farming trade. However, this is also undoubtedly an unusual case of criminal baby farming, as it inverts the typical narrative of a desperate servant seeking to farm out their child to keep their situation, into a venture into criminality accompanied by their mistress. Thus, it also possesses a further news value, which has been termed 'Unusualness', 'Amplitude', or 'Unexpectedness' (Foy and Brighton, 2007:7-8), depending on which criteria are used to qualify news values in an article - yet all apply to the relatively unique nature of this case.

There are a myriad of other factors that dictated the 'newsworthiness' of an event beyond that of proximity. Hence, the *Manchester Courier* also reported criminal baby farming cases from different parts of the country, from Cumberland (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1879c:4) to the Isle of Wight (*Manchester Courier and*

Lancashire General Advertiser, 1879f:3). Moreover, the *Manchester Guardian*, whilst predominantly focusing on John and Catherine Barnes in 1879, also covered a case in Bristol (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879e:7). This case initially appears as a standard violation of the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act. However, on closer inspection, this article depicts a successful career in criminal baby farming:

Mrs. Dyer, of Totterdown, a woman known as the Bristol baby farmer, was charged with a breach of the second section of the Act for the Better Protection of Infants by keeping one or more infants without having her house registered. – The Bench passed the heaviest punishment the law allows, namely six months' imprisonment with hard labour. – Nine children placed with the prisoner have died within the last two years. (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879e:7)

This case is clearly significant in the context of Amelia Dyer's infamously long criminal baby farming career (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four).³⁷ However, one clear issue is the fact that, similar to the case of Annie Tooke, it also lacked the news value of geographic proximity to the news-consuming public of Manchester. Therefore, Tooke's exclusion cannot be attributed entirely to this same lack of proximity. Other factors which could have contributed to this include, for example, the number of victims. The study of news values also accounts for events of large scale or scope, often termed as 'superlativeness' (Bednarek and Caple, 2017:3). Thus, the murder of one child could have been excluded from newspapers in favour of a story speculating on the deaths of many children. Theories such as this highlight the fact that discursive news values analysis cannot provide a definitive answer as to why one

³⁷ Considering that records indicate Dyer was arrested around this time for running an unregistered baby farm (Wilson, 1971:234), it is reasonable to assume that this article is referring to her and not another woman of the same name.

event was chosen for interpretation and communication over another; it can only be used to interpret differences or similarities between them. One such commonality within these news items was an underlying anxiety as to the levels of criminality within Victorian society, alluded to in this article in the unspecified, and subsequently wildly speculated, number of Dyer's victims. Baby farming was thus situated within these anxieties, leading to levels of criminality within the trade to be perceived as much higher than statistics perhaps demonstrated. The next section will therefore examine this sensational nature of reporting in the case of John and Catherine Barnes, examining how these underlying anxieties may have affected the tendency of newspapers to prejudge their guilt and interrogating their case to determine if it was, in fact, as damning as it was represented to be.

As sinister as she seems? An Examination of Negative Representations of Baby Farming in the Press

Despite the variation in news values determining the inclusion (and exclusion) of articles depicting baby farming, Victorian conceptions of the trade remained predominantly negative. As such, although there were clear examples of illicit activity that fuelled these conceptions, not all baby farmers were as criminally inclined as they were depicted within the press. This section will analyse the representation of John and Catherine Barnes in Manchester newspapers to explore this concept, aiming to build upon the more nuanced examination of criminality in Chapter Two, in the case of Margaret Waters. It is important to note that this case was relatively unusual as it featured a married couple, both of whom seemingly took an active role in their engagement with paid childcare. This will be explored within the context of conceptions of baby farming as a trade predominantly engaged with by women, as it is Catherine that became the primary target for criticism within Manchester

newspapers. The issue of substandard infant care in workhouses will also be revisited, examining the unavoidable fact that many 'victims' of baby farmers did not die until several days after being removed to such institutions. The depiction of the Barnes's guilt is placed into question when this, alongside wider issues affecting the living conditions of the working class, is considered, such as the malnourishment of children, or the adulteration of cow's milk. The representation of the trade, therefore, simultaneously drew from and built upon Victorian misconceptions of increases in crime.

John and Catherine Barnes engaged in baby farming for at least ten years before they were prosecuted and were apparently linked to the disappearance of 30 to 40 children (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879d:4). As such, they were depicted as calculating criminals who starved children for profit. However, as with Waters, certain details of their case suggest that their pejorative depiction was not entirely justified. For example, the children discovered were described as extremely emaciated, which was depicted as an indicator of neglect. Critically, the Coroner stated in one article: 'What, he would like to ask, was the difference between slow poison and slow starvation?' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879f:8) The implication here is that there is none. However, there was in fact a critical difference. It was a matter of intent; the act of poisoning was typically undertaken with the deliberate aim of causing death, whilst the process of starvation was not always deliberately instigated and was affected by external factors such as poverty, or ignorance as to the correct foods for infants. The suggestion that there is no such difference therefore acts to amalgamate conceptions of crime, and in particular its supposed increase, with the material consequences of poverty. As such, baby farmers became encompassed within a 'criminal class', defined by A. L. Beier as 'a group of offenders allegedly drawn to a crime because of moral degeneracy rather than being driven to it by material circumstances' (Beier, 2005:499). This constructed reality thus

produced material consequences for those that were defined within these conceptual parameters.

Such testimony against John and Catherine Barnes could also refer to wider anxieties as to the criminal practice of poisoning. As discussed in Chapter One, proposed clauses to legislation regulating the sale of Arsenic suggested that the act of poisoning had become associated with conceptions of criminal women. However, between 1870 and 1880, Manchester newspapers reported many cases of poisoning, perpetrated by a variety of people. Though this association may have lingered, it is likely that concern of such illicit activity also correlated with anxieties of adulterated food. As Pamela K. Gilbert observes, investigations into these matters focused on two elements; ‘foodstuffs adulterated with additives for gain. . .and filth-ridden substances added either for gain (to add bulk) or, inadvertently, through carelessness’ (Gilbert, 1997:21). These concerns were amalgamated, both in these investigations and in the above statement, with middle class prejudicial conceptions that the working class were innately inferior (Gilbert, 1997:67) and that degradation amongst this part of the population had the potential to ‘contaminate’ the upper echelons of society (Whelan, 2011:70). Portraying the Barneses as guilty rather than acknowledging the material challenges they faced as working-class child carers isolated baby farming as a criminal issue. Thus, rather than being treated as an indicator of wider socio-economic problems which required state intervention, the trade was depicted as a matter to be managed by the police. This reiterates the damage inflicted by anxieties as to rising crime levels for those who were consequently given harsher sentences. The journalistic representation of baby farming in Manchester therefore conflated poverty and criminality.

Attributing the malnourishment of children to the illicit actions of their carers criminalised the material struggles of the working class. However, it also emphasised the liminal position of baby farming within established methods of childcare:

If a mother, who was unable to obtain food for a child, was unwillingly compelled to leave it without sufficient nourishment, she would not be guilty of an offence; but a person who took a child in for hire, and contracted to support it, would be guilty of manslaughter if she kept that child from food, and her capacity to give it food would not at all be taken into consideration, for she was at liberty to take the child to the workhouse where it would be attended to (*Manchester Guardian*, 1871d:6).

Caught between the domestic and public spheres by conducting a business in childcare from her home, the baby farmer was afforded the protection of neither; she had not the rights of a parent nor a Poor Law Guardian or workhouse master. Baby farmers occupied an intersection between these spheres that was rendered twice as vulnerable to accusations of neglect and criminality. Hence, the association between criminality and low living standards negatively impacted conceptions of Catherine Barnes in particular. As a woman, she also reinforced the notion that middle-class understandings of femininity were not always shared by working-class women. As such, she also occupied a dangerous intersection which was heightened by anxieties over conceptions of crime levels. Both her social class and gender identity thus contributed to her depiction as neglectful and criminal.

It is therefore important to distinguish between the two acts of poisoning and starvation in the case of John and Catherine Barnes, as they were adamant that they had fed the children in their care to the best of their ability. Upon initial accusations, John Barnes declared that he would produce his milkman “and prove that they have wanted for nothing”

(*Manchester Guardian*, 1879:5). The newspapers did, in fact, acknowledge the testimony of two witnesses stating they regularly supplied the Barneses with milk to the amount of two pints and a quart every day (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1879e:3) which appears to indicate that they attempted to care for the children properly. So, why then did they still deteriorate and eventually perish? The answer may lie in the danger of cows' milk to infants. As seen in Chapter Two, Manchester was no stranger to the potential danger of this and took steps to ensure regulation for safer consumption (Nimmo, 2010). However, many dangerous practices, with the support of doctors, continued. Firstly, many bottles used for feeding children were unsterilised, leading to the growth of harmful bacteria (Reynolds, 2016a:86). Secondly, it was considered bad practice to boil milk (Reynolds, 2016a:129). This, combined with the fact that it was also unpasteurized, led many baby farmers and mothers alike to unknowingly feed a dangerously contaminated substance to infants, causing a myriad of problems, such as infantile diarrhoea (Reynolds, 2016:129). Finally, it was common practice that sugar be added to cows' milk, as it was thought to contain less than breast milk; with no real nutritional content, this greatly increased the level of wasting diseases (Reynolds, 2016a:87). None of these practices individually were widely considered harmful and were supported by much of the medical community and Poor Law Unions (Reynolds, 2016a:134). However, together they formed a deadly trio which greatly contributed to the northern infant mortality rate. Technically, this meant that John and Catherine Barnes likely *were* poisoning the children in their care, albeit unintentionally, through practices that were common in working-class families. However, the high infant mortality rate, aggravated by such practices, fed into concerns of the presence of illicit baby farming during this period.

Consequently, the deaths that stemmed from these dangers of cow's milk were often blamed on the alleged inadequacies and criminal tendencies of working-class women. Such a

misinterpretation of cause and effect reveals the increasing authority of science and statistics in the representation of paid childcare. Medical men held a politico-medical hold over populations 'hedged by a whole series of prescriptions relating not only to disease but to general forms of existence and behaviour' (Foucault, 1991:283). Thus, in producing 'knowledge' about infant care, medical figures established the professionalisation of medicine throughout the nineteenth century. However, this also meant that members of the medical community bore a degree of responsibility for the practices in childcare that they advocated for, as their advice led to devastating effects if their interpretation of (often ambiguous) statistics was wrong. Hence, it was not only the misinterpretation of crime levels that contributed to the regulation of baby farming, but also these statements made by medical men that helped to produce the identity of the criminal, working-class mother or baby farmer so often seen in literature or the press.

Moreover, although the Barneses were initially charged with murder³⁸, the children in question did not actually die until several days after being removed to the Birkenhead workhouse (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879c:5). This intersection in mortality between the institution of the workhouse and the care of baby farmers becomes even clearer when other reports on baby farming are considered. Such outcomes were, in fact, a common occurrence across cases of baby farming (*Manchester Guardian*, 1870:3; *Manchester Guardian*, 1891:9; *Manchester Guardian*, 1896; *Manchester Guardian*, 1899:10). For example, in the case of Margaret Waters, the deaths of her 'adopted' children also did not actually occur until after they had been 'rescued'. A double standard thus appears in the representation of 'private' arrangements, such as baby farming, as opposed to the public childcare provided by the

³⁸ This was later reduced to manslaughter (Homrighaus, 2003:259).

workhouse. Whilst the deterioration of children in private care was depicted as stemming from carelessness or criminality, the deterioration, or even death, of children in the workhouse appears to have been overlooked. When examined in the context of anxieties over rising crime levels, and criminal baby farming in particular, this would perhaps suggest that such anxieties overtook concerns as to those over the competency of workhouse institutions to care for the population that they housed.

Criticism of workhouses was prevalent during this period; amateur inspector and philanthropist Joseph Rowntree, upon visiting the Birkenhead institution, made repeated denunciations of the inadequacies he observed. For example, in 1866 he had attacked the way in which the 'casual' poor³⁹ were treated there, observing that 'casuals were expected to bathe in water which had already been used many times over' (Jones and King, 2020:50). Comparatively less research has been undertaken about northern workhouse nurses as opposed to their southern counterparts. However, Melanie Reynolds, upon exploring 16,000 unpublished Poor Law Medical Health Records, established that Manchester employed the largest number of workhouse nurses (Reynolds, 2016a:27) who certainly were burdened with a bad reputation within Victorian society. Often selected from the pauper inmate population, they were rarely portrayed as attentive caregivers, instead depicted in much the same manner as the feckless drunk who attends to Oliver's mother during her confinement and death in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (Dickens, 2000:4). Indeed, many social commentators and reformers such as Florence Nightingale and Louisa Twining claimed these nurses contributed to the notoriously high infant mortality rate because of their inadequate care, labelled 'too old, too weak, and too drunken' to do the job assigned to them properly

³⁹ 'Casual' wards in workhouses were dedicated to 'those with no other refuge and could be accommodated for short periods' (Jones and King, 2020:49).

(Reynolds, 2016a:104). This would seem to suggest, at the very least, that the local workhouse was not equipped to deal with critically unwell children. Therefore, the standards in these institutions must be questioned when determining if the deaths of these children were indicative of their shortcomings or if they were indeed casualties of a wide-spread criminal baby farming trade, as many feared.

References to the Birkenhead workhouse feature frequently in newspaper coverage of this case, and when Catherine Barnes was accused of murder, she allegedly claimed:

How is it then that the people in the Workhouse said that the children looked fat and well? One of the nurses said to me, "Trust in God; the children looked well when they came in here" (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879:5).

No response to this question is included in the article, hinting that she as a social subject 'was positioned and limited within society' (Goc, 2013:7). Because of her social status, her represented interactions within court were limited accordingly and her case was consequently framed in a sensationalist manner that prejudged her guilt. This case therefore became part of the increasing coverage of crime that occurred throughout this period. In the context of the style of 'New Journalism', this affected those who followed such stories closely, 'but even quick glances at the bold headlines, or a brief skim of several articles, could easily have created the impression that the incidence of crime was increasing' (Casey, 2011:370). Thus, the representation of Catherine Barnes further demonstrates that baby farming had become enveloped within these wider misconceptions as to the rising presence of crime.

However, her claim that the children in her care were healthy upon entering the workhouse gives rise to the question of competency among northern workhouse staff. Newer research into the topic has found evidence contrary to the stereotype of the infirm, elderly

nurse argued within some studies (Abel-Smith, 1979:11). For instance, Reynolds has established that many of the inmates selected for nursing duties in such institutions were actually significantly younger than this stereotype suggested (Reynolds, 2016a:112). She uses the example of the Manchester workhouse to establish that, far from being ignorant and feckless, a training school for pauper nurses was introduced in 1879, honing their skills 'over a year-long course in the art of correct and effective infant nursing' (Reynolds, 2016a:117). Although according to an 1881 census, workhouse nurses at the Birkenhead Union workhouse were aged between 40 and 59 (Higginbotham, 2021), this does not mean that they were not qualified for their role. Many of these women also had experience in domestic service, which meant they probably already had experience in childcare (Purvis, 2000:66–67). Servants were more likely to lose their employment if they strayed from 'respectable' behaviour, as opposed to factory workers (which will be explored further in Chapter Four). This meant that they often had to enter the workhouse. Although this was likely not the ideal employment for them, it meant that the infants housed within such institutions were frequently under the care of competent nurses.

Why, then, was the high northern infant mortality rate within the workhouse not countered by this skilled workforce? Such a startlingly high death rate most likely stemmed from three factors: the forced separation of mothers from their illegitimate infants, a lack of equipment and proper facilities, and managerial failings leading nurses to be desperately overworked. The consequences of the first factor towards infant mortality is clear, as in attempting to discourage illegitimate pregnancies, mothers in northern workhouses were only allowed to spend limited time with their infants, often being kept in separate parts of the workhouse and coming together only on 'visiting days' (Reynolds, 2016a:109). This meant that mothers frequently could not breastfeed their children, causing them to be fed artificially

instead (Reynolds, 2016a:108), which proved to be detrimental to their health. Secondly, specific equipment was needed to attend to mothers and infants, for example, 'labour beds' with lead sheeting to stop fluids from the mother staining the floor, which meant that shortages and subsequent makeshift substitutions made it harder for nurses to provide adequate care during and after the birthing process (Reynolds, 2016a:120). Finally, and perhaps most critically, was the sheer, backbreaking number of responsibilities that were laid upon workhouse nurses. This myriad of duties included keeping the wards clean, delivering babies, distributing food and medicines and doing laundry. In workhouses like that of Manchester which housed over 2000 inmates, this meant that infants were in danger of being neglected, not through the fault of the nurses themselves, but because of their small number (Reynolds, 2016a:121–122). Hence, they were often unable to give infants removed from the homes of baby farmers the care or attention they needed. As such, although their deaths were often interpreted as evidence of criminality, the extreme understaffing of these institutions is likely to have also been an important factor.

Peter Jones and Steven King outline the criticisms of Joseph Rowntree on this issue; in April 1866 he condemned the Manchester workhouse on Bridge Street for their woeful understaffing, stating that their one paid nurse – a Mrs Thornton – performed the duties that should have belonged to three nurses. She, in fact, eventually died due to this over-exertion, of 'typhus exacerbated by exhaustion' (Jones and King, 2020: 54). Workhouse nurses, therefore, struggled through exhausting, ceaseless workloads and, far from being feckless, often made extraordinary attempts to rise to the task. The neglect of 'rescued' children from baby farmers was thus not at the fault of these women, but due to the structural inadequacies in the management of many of these institutions. This danger to infants is a key aspect within criminal cases, which was overlooked in many press representations of the trade in

Manchester, working to influence the conceptions of the population to the benefit of the state. Such representations drew from and built upon misconceptions as to the rate of crime which, in turn diverted attention away from the shortcomings of workhouses and created a reality in which costly intervention and reform was unnecessary.

Despite these problems within northern workhouses, including that of Birkenhead, the deaths of the children were laid at the feet of John and Catherine Barnes. The criminalisation of often well-meaning working-class caregivers thus continued during this period. Upon closer inspection of these cases, however, these negative stereotypes fall apart, to reveal nuance and ambiguity. Baby farmers, much like workhouse nurses, predominantly attempted to maintain the children in their care in good faith, often with desperately inadequate money and resources, and yet the entirety of both of these professions was often painted in the light of the actions of an extremely small minority. The Barneses may in fact have neglected many children in their care, but that does not necessarily make them murderers, as according to reports, they did no more or less than many working-class parents were able to do for their children at this point in the nineteenth century. Additionally, it is likely that at the end of their lives, the infants in question were, at the very least, not provided with the type of care that would help them recover from a critical illness. As this case occurred in close proximity to Manchester and was considered more 'newsworthy' than the gruesome deeds of Annie Tooke, the frequent pejorative coverage within newspapers thus informed understandings of crime in the area. They 'claimed authenticity and produced reader pleasure through their specificities and 'localness'' (August, 2015:851). Thus, the case placed concerns as to levels of criminality within a culturally 'nearer' context.

This is not to say that the Barneses were not entirely innocent of all wrongdoing. Indeed, as with the case of Margaret Waters, they regularly sub-farmed the children in their care to other baby farmers for a lesser fee (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879a:8). They also, on occasion, deceived mothers enquiring about their children on this point. One article details several letters' worth of correspondence between Catherine Barnes and a mother who had 'farmed' her child out to her. These letters shared entirely fictional details, for example, 'she is cutting her teeth very fast', or 'she will soon be walking' and on one occasion, the child was even 'borrowed' from the women to whom the child had been sub-farmed to show to the mother, carrying the pretence even further (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879g:8). Their many aliases also suggest that they did advertise to take in a large number of children, and that they wished to operate, to a degree, covertly. The emphasis of these duplicitous practices in the *Manchester Guardian* solidifies their representation as immoral and criminal figures whilst also furthering underlying anxieties as to the deception of strangers and the disappearance of the 'knowable community' (Williams, 1975).⁴⁰ This depiction thus fuelled fears of the potential danger from dishonest strangers operating within the north of England, providing a site within which misperceptions of a rising crime rate were emphasised by associated anxieties produced by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation.

Although Manchester newspapers framed the case in a way that prejudged their guilt, evidence and witnesses frequently surfaced that suggested they had, on many occasions, done their best for these infants. For instance, one child that had passed through their house was found in the home of a married couple who had genuinely wanted to adopt a child for the purpose of becoming parents (*Manchester Guardian*, 1879b:6). Even in another case

⁴⁰ Lyn Pykett also makes further use of this term in connection to sensation fiction, which will be explored later in this chapter (Pykett, 2011:58).

where a child, who was reported to be a 'cripple', had died, a witness came forward to testify that it was a natural passing (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1879b:3). This evidence, however, does not appear to have had a significant impact on their overall representation. The fact that the body of the 'crippled' child was never found is used to suggest criminal intent. Furthermore, the fact that the child was disabled in some way is itself implicitly suggested as the reason for his being 'adopted'. The legal sentence of life imprisonment (Knelman, 1998:160) reflected the same hostile stance of the jury as to their actions, suggesting that underlying anxieties as to the scale of baby farming still lingered within Manchester. Thus, it is cases such as this that suggest the guilt of baby farmers was likely more nuanced than was depicted by Manchester newspapers. As press representations worked to construct understandings as to the reality of criminal baby farming, this had a significant impact 'in its consequences for those at the sharp end of prosecution and punishment' (Beier, 2005:502), further reflecting the material consequences for those encompassed within notions of a criminal class at a time when criminality was perceived to be increasing. Indeed, literary representations of the trade also aided in the construction of such understandings of baby farming, which will be explored in the next section.

Literary Representations of Baby Farming

The 1870s witnessed a small surge in literary publications featuring baby farming; each demonstrated and built upon popular conceptions of the trade. As Casey points out, all forms of printed media were shaped by popular attitudes and during this period '[c]rime was the best seller' (Casey, 2011:375). This section will therefore analyse three literary representations of the trade: Wilkie Collins's *The Fallen Leaves* (1879), Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1878) and L. T. Meade's *Lettie's Last Home* (1875). These texts were set

predominantly in southern English cities (even the ship *H. M. S. Pinafore* docks in Portsmouth) arguably reinforcing conceptions of baby farming as primarily an issue of the south. However, these depictions also touched upon several issues that would have been recognised by inhabitants of Manchester, for example, conceptions of madness and alcoholism and their links to both underlying class tensions and the perceived rise in levels of criminality. These texts will thus be analysed and compared to both each other and to earlier literary representations of the trade, examining their depictions of baby farmers in the context of these underlying concerns.

Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore* was a comic opera performed across Britain and America, when new railway connections brought actors to the provinces and audiences to London. The size of audiences was also growing, as the 'developing taste of a middle class audience' began to combine with 'huge demand for regular entertainment from a much larger working- and lower-middle-class audience' (Booth, 2004:129). The imagination of spectators could be utilised by theatres so as to take one 'outside, rather than inside, the self', providing a sense of escapism for individuals – in the company of others (John, 2001:5). The representation of baby farming within this format acknowledged and attempted to diffuse urban and class tensions, emphasised the benefits of cultural inclusivity, and thus has enjoyed immense popularity during the nineteenth century into modern day. Additionally, both Meade and Collins's novels offer representations of baby farming that have, so far, been considerably under researched in this context. As Janis Dawson states, despite Meade enjoying a considerable literary reputation in her own time, even being ranked by *Strand Magazine* alongside H. G. Wells as a literary "celebrity", a 'subsequent devaluation of her work has contributed to a lack of interest in her life and career' (Dawson, 2009:132). Moreover, the unpopularity of *The Fallen Leaves* was more prominent than any of Collins's

later novels; referred to in nineteenth-century newspapers as ‘no more than a poor example of its author’s latest and worst manner’ (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 1879:12). Hence, this novel, along with most of his later works, is often treated collectively as evidence of the ‘deterioration’ of the literary quality of his publications towards the end of his career (Beller, 2008:10). Collins’s reputation as writer of sensation fiction also led *The Fallen Leaves* to be widely viewed as a sensation novel which, although immensely popular, were often viewed as ‘yet further evidence of that emotional and spiritual degeneracy of modern urban-industrial culture’ (Pykett, 1994:5). Despite this variation in the reception of these texts, however, this section will analyse them in the context of pejorative conceptions of baby farming and consider them as reflections of wider anxieties about discourses of crime in the Victorian age.

Within these texts, many layers of power, privilege and opportunity interact as the relationships between characters transition throughout the narratives, prompting close examination of a number of axes of their identities. For example, the story of Wilkie Collins’s *The Fallen Leaves* begins with John Farnaby, who wishes to progress into the ranks of the middle class and so seduces Emma, the daughter of Mr Ronald – a successful business owner. The relationship results in an illegitimate pregnancy, and he later abducts the child and gives her to Mrs Sowler, a baby farmer. When the character Emma becomes pregnant, her identity as a fallen woman is produced by intersecting understandings of class and gender; pregnancy renders her vulnerable to the systems of inequality within her middle-class⁴¹ community, structured to disadvantage single mothers and ostracise fallen women. The creation of a child not only acts as a biological tie between herself and Farnaby but is a physical embodiment of Emma’s sexual choices and thus is central to her identity as a fallen woman (which is a middle-

⁴¹ It has been established in previous chapters that illegitimate pregnancies often carried less stigma in working-class communities.

class concept in itself). Emma's class status thus intersects with her gender, as bourgeois conceptions of the ideal woman demanded that she be naïve of all expressions of sexuality outside the confines of marriage. However, the lack of education of young women in these matters also raised concerns that such naivety would produce 'easy prey' for unscrupulous men (Logan, 1998:210). Although access to information about sex was incredibly varied, and could not be isolated to factors of class (Malone, 2000:373), this appeared to contradict the ideology of domesticism that demanded such naivety, as it rendered those that adhered to such understandings of femininity more vulnerable to such transgressions. The representation of Emma and John's relationship thus captures this intersection of identities, presenting marriage as a social remedy to save her from integrated social hierarchies structured to disadvantage fallen women, by 'correcting' sexual behaviour conceived as transgressional by the middle classes. This depiction thus links to the fact that it was not only crime that was believed to be rising during this period, but bourgeois definitions of crime had also 'cast its net more widely' (Beier, 2005:500) to criminalise certain behaviour, such as sexual promiscuity.

Farnaby's identity is also produced by hierarchical systems of class and gender, which intersect in a way that allows him to access the privilege and opportunity available to white, middle-class men within Victorian society. His relationship with Emma, however, is also dependent on the conscious decision to use this sexual relationship for subversive means. Emma is critical to Farnaby climbing this social hierarchy; without a marriage to her, he remains a member of the working class. Consequently, he is also subject to the approval and acceptance of her parents, who exercise both influence and control over her future affairs. This acceptance is not willingly forthcoming, both due to his manipulative actions and his lower social standing, as Mrs Ronald expresses:

He has acted throughout in cold blood; it is his interest to marry her, and from first to last he has plotted to force the marriage on us. . . He, the low-lived vagabond who puts up the shop-shutters, *he* looks forward to being taken into partnership, and succeeding you when you die! (Collins, 2014:16)

Analysis of this transition on the axis of class engages with underlying Victorian fears of 'unworthy' people joining the ranks of the middle class through subversive means. The use of the term 'vagabond' in particular echoes concerns as to the fluidity of class identity within Victorian society which was thought to enable opportunities for 'manipulation, misrepresentation and outright theft' (Liddle, 2017: 97). The statement therefore reflects wider fears of class mobility, which were often addressed in the sensation novel (Pykett, 2011:14). This connection between class and criminality also alludes to the notion that the poor are 'naturally' inferior. Pamela K. Gilbert explores this idea, noting that in the 1860s and 70s bodies were 'not merely developed or decorated according to a certain social class, but were biologically classed, in the same way that phrenology located character in anatomy' (Gilbert, 1997:67). The working-class identity of John Farnaby is thus connected with conceptions of criminality. Although as a man he is prevented from encountering the same stigma associated with non-marital relations, his class identity places him at a disadvantage within the upper echelons of society that he is so painfully trying to climb. The act of seduction, therefore, despite being presented as a method for social mobility, also encapsulated these tensions between classes.

Such class tensions are also alluded to Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore*. In the operetta, the idea is also put forward that a person of low birth attempting to assimilate into a community of high-born people via deception, no matter what riches or finery he acquires,

is still a person of low birth and therefore 'unworthy' of middle-class status. In a duet between two characters, the Captain and Buttercup, titled "Things are Seldom what they Seem", aspects of deception are presented within the context of class as foreshadowing for later revelations:

BUTTERCUP: Things are seldom what they seem,

Skim milk masqueraded as cream

(Gilbert and Sullivan, 2011:27)

This reference to the deceptive nature of materiality in the phrase 'skim milk masqueraded as cream', resonated powerfully with audiences. Thornton suggests this line might 'have been the motto of the Victorian social imagination' as the figure of the 'deceiving stranger' lurked throughout literature of the period (Thornton, 1996:99). This substance is not in itself changed by its disguise as a finer product, reinforcing the idea that inferiority is an immutable quality. The verse goes on to list further allusions to class and deception, including the line 'Storks turn out to be but logs' (Gilbert and Sullivan, 2011:27). Such birds are frequently associated with childbirth in Western culture. The qualifier that they 'turn out to be but logs', however, distorts this meaning, indicating false perceptions of birth. This is particularly relevant to perceptions of baby farming, as one of the many accusations directed at this trade was of 'baby planting'. In essence, this was the 'arrangement of fake confinements', in which a child was 'procured' from a mother and 'planted' with one who could not conceive, predominantly under the presumption that the new 'father' of the child would be none the wiser (Rose, 1986b:91). Thus, a revelation is foreshadowed of a false birth which, when indications of class are considered, suggest that an individual is undeserving of their social status.

In Collins's novel, however, class tensions are placed into an urban context when the subject of baby farming is introduced. He hints at an underlying anxiety as to the duplicity of strangers in the interactions of Farnaby and Mrs Sowler – a criminal baby farmer. This duplicity is represented in the assimilation of false identities and is, in turn, associated with criminality and in particular the criminal activity of the working classes. Sowler articulates this anxiety in her recognition of Farnaby's false identity:

You're a stranger, young Mister, and it's as likely as not you've given me a false name and address. That don't matter. False names are commoner than true ones, in my line of life (Collins, 2014:9).

Her distrust in this transaction links baby farming with personal and material falsehood, which was a concern made prevalent after the mid-nineteenth century, in the increasing growth of cities. This association was also emphasised in press representations of baby farming in Manchester in 1879. The use of aliases was often seized upon by newspapers to represent the trade as a criminal one, for example, in the case of John and Catherine Barnes. It was assumed that such false identities were used by baby farmers themselves to prevent their discovery by parents or the police. However, in this instance, the situation is reversed, with the father of the child assuming an alternate identity to prevent further demands of payment. This acts to 'contain' criminality within the working classes, as Farnaby is thus depicted as the primary perpetrator in not only the kidnap, but also the entering of his child into a trade implicated in the buying and selling of bodies, as a way to 'solve' its problematic existence. This reflects a point that has previously been highlighted by historians, that 'crime in Britain was increasingly viewed as a class phenomenon associated with the poor and working classes'

(Beier, 2005:500). Hence, it can be argued that class tensions were a significant aspect in driving the Victorian concern over crime rates.

The theme of aliases is one that also appears in L. T. Meade's *Lettie's Last Home* and is used as an indicator of criminality. After taking in a child named Charlie for payment, Mrs Robson neglects him until his body begins to deteriorate, at which point she poses to his mother that he is merely suffering from an illness. When asked by his mother if Charlie will recover, however, it is revealed that Mrs Robson is using an alias: "Well, and so he will, dear," responded Mrs Meadows, *alias* Robson, in a wheedling tone' (Meade, 1875:27). This aspect directly connects to other negative representations of baby farming that had been circulating at this point in the nineteenth century, including that of James Greenwood's *Seven Curses of London*. As discussed in Chapter Two, Greenwood propagated criminal stereotypes about the trade and often spoke of baby farmers' use of aliases, shortening false names he allegedly found in newspapers to initials such as 'Y. Z.' to indicate their commonality (Greenwood, 1869:53). As Janis Dawson notes, this sensationalist reporting by 'scandal-mongering journalists such as James Greenwood. . . supplied Meade with the requisite details for her works' on the London East End (Dawson, 2009:138) reiterating the dialectical relationship between literature and the press. As such, the representation of false identities as an indicator of criminality, when placed in the context of baby farming, feeds into the notion of a 'maternal performance' on behalf of baby farmers.

Displays of maternal behaviour, when expressed by baby farmers, were often represented as ungenue within literature. For example, Mrs Robson's duplicity keeps Charlie's mother pacified and ignorant of the true nature of the abuse her child is subjected to. Additionally, the depiction of Mrs Sowler in Collins's *The Fallen Leaves* runs in a similar

vein, as she also puts on a 'front' of maternity. She first claims that she had done her best to place the child entrusted to her 'with a good lady, who adopted it' (Collins, 2014:161) before later admitting she 'sold her...for five-and-sixpence' (Collins, 2014:164). This representation of the subversive nature of the trade alluded to fears of the number of baby farmers that could possibly be operating undetected within Victorian society. However, it also meant that when cases were reported within newspapers, even displays of genuine grief or maternal feeling, could be interpreted as a sign of deception, rather than an indicator of actual affection for the children that had been in their care. Stuart-Bennet observes these conceptions of duplicity in his work, stating that '[p]antomimic performances of respectability in relation to "baby farming" have only ever been considered as an indication of inner deviancy and of malicious criminal intent' (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:111). Hence, baby farmers were caught within a discursive framework that operated from the presumption of their guilt, which meant that their representation in literature and the press fuelled fears as to rises in criminality, even sometimes in instances where the culprit may have been innocent of the crime they were charged with.

Representations of baby farming also typically shed a spotlight on female criminals, whilst often omitting any recognition that the child also had a father. Newspaper articles that reported on the trade tended to focus on the female baby farmer, even if married and operating with her husband (as in the case of Catherine Barnes). Because the farmed children were characterised as 'belonging' to their mothers, press speculation tended to focus on the relationship between these two women. As the paternal role in criminal baby farming was often passive (i.e. through their absence), it was therefore frequently overlooked. However, this role was nonetheless detrimental, as the removal of income to the household would put even greater pressure on single mothers to farm out their children to retain employment.

Further to this, there are often hints within narratives of criminal baby farming as to the pressure that lovers and fathers placed on women to have their children adopted. As noted in Chapter Two, in the case against Margaret Waters, it was John Walter Cowen's grandfather that initiated the arrangement (Homrighaus, 2003:60–61). This implication is further strengthened when it is considered that the average weekly payment for a baby farmer – half a crown – was the same as the legally mandated payment from an affiliated father for the maintenance of an illegitimate child. In the words of Joanne Pearman, 'I do not believe that this figure was accidental' (Pearman, 2017:161). Literary representations of the trade also often reflected this female-centricity, with the characters Buttercup and Mrs Robson acting as the primary perpetrators in the trade, with the latter interacting only with the mother of the child. However, Collins's depiction of John Farnaby fills this gap in representation, turning these female-centric conceptions of baby farming on their head. Criminality as a whole was more commonly associated with men and consequently, during this period historians have noted a "civilising offensive" directed at male violence' (August, 2015:845). Hence, although Collins subverted expectations in his representation of baby farming through his depiction of male engagement with the trade, he simultaneously reinforced wider conceptions of crime, which were based on binary understandings of gender.

This is the second male literary figure that has taken an active role in criminal baby farming transactions; in Chapter Two a similar figure was also central to the plot of Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea*. Both Rufus and Farnaby view the children they farm out as obstacles in the way of social or material gain. Certainly, Farnaby's reasoning stems from the notion that an illegitimate child would interfere with the reputations of Emma and himself, which would inhibit his quest to move upwards in the social hierarchy. In this sense, John Farnaby's character forms a critique of Victorian capitalist society, as he is the 'epitome of competitive

individualism, stealing and disposing of his illegitimate child for the sake of respectability' (Taylor, 2006:93). On the other hand, the novel's hero, Amelius Goldenheart, who champions Christian socialism, locates this missing child years later and returns her to Emma. Whilst the circular way in which these characters interact with the baby farming trade emphasises paternal involvement in baby farming, it also depicts a clash in ideologies in which capitalism is clearly associated with criminality and exploitation.⁴² This reiterates the connection between the misplaced belief in the increase of crime and the rapid industrialisation of Victorian Britain, as it touched upon apprehensions as to the duplicity of strangers in these cities that had become so densely populated.

The fact that Emma's daughter is found living among the London underclass acts to further Collins's social critique, however, his use of both realism and sensationalism in the portrayal of her discovery has also become the focus of criticism. On one hand, the novel depicts the London streets as full of 'starving boys and girls', 'furious women' and 'drunken husbands' (Collins, 2014:175), which is then intensified by 'being filtered through the youthful idealism of Amelius, to whom such unfamiliar scenes are tantamount to a vision of hell' (Beller, 2008:16). However, Anne-Marie Beller argues that this sits 'oddly together' with his stubbornly sentimental depiction of Simple Sally as pure and untouched by her surroundings, despite living as a prostitute for a large portion of her life (Beller, 2008:16). Sally's paradoxical status is reminiscent of Dickens's *Oliver Twist*,⁴³ as the novel demonstrates a similar insistence on the innate goodness and persistent innocence of a character born out of the middle class but living amongst criminals. Yet in both texts, the depictions have been found as

⁴² This could have been a factor in causing him to believe that the novel would be popular amongst the working classes, especially after it was attacked by middle-class critics. Unfortunately, however, this popularity never became a reality (Godfrey, 2018).

⁴³ With whom Collins maintained a long-standing personal and professional relationship (Gates, 2014:56).

unconvincing, with Beller suggesting in Collins's case that divorcing his characters from their dilapidated surroundings 'weakens his argument against the injustice suffered by this underclass' (Beller, 2008:16). Hence, the representation of maintained purity amongst immorality and filth also reinforces bourgeois conceptions of a 'criminal class', reiterating the degree to which conceptions of criminality were affected by class identity.

Further to this, Collins's incorporation of both realism and sensationalism within the novel also introduces the idea that his representation of the trade was underpinned by class boundaries. This was also a common issue within press representations, as depictions of supposedly decrepit conditions of criminal baby farms were typically communicated from empirical observations from those on the scene. However, the material realities of working-class life, and in particular the sanitation issues within crowded districts, meant that such observations were interpreted through the lens of middle-class understandings of what a typical home should look like. It has been established that dirt itself was deeply entrenched in class identity and connected with immorality. Andrew August states that '[f]ilth represented a well-established marker of slum life, both repulsive and fascinating to middle-class observers' (August, 2015:862). Conceptions of filth and disease triggered anxieties of contamination amongst the middle classes. Therefore, the dirt and grime of such scenes was often dwelled upon in the press for sensationalist effect. This mixture of empirical and sensational description is also embraced in *The Fallen Leaves*, as Collins's writing conformed with information gleaned from contemporary statistics (Gates, 2014:56), which pertains to a widely agreed-upon aspect of realism; that of 'observation and documentation' (Jenkins, 1978:7). Such depictions, however, are then accentuated with acute, sensational detail. The decrepit nature of simple Sally's surroundings are therefore enhanced, working to accentuate his 'overt attack on contemporary capitalism' (Taylor, 2006:93). Depictions such as this

therefore simultaneously drew from and built upon sanitary discourses which produced and included what legislation and political discussion sought to control: dirt. As S. Schülting notes, '[d]irt in nineteenth-century texts constantly slides between references to its materiality on one hand and its metaphorical implications on the other' (Schülting, 2016:7). Hence, Collins's representation drew from pejorative middle-class conceptions of the Victorian poor whilst sparing simple Sally (technically born into the middle class) the physical stain of the poverty that she has been traded into. Thus, associated conceptions of immoral and criminal behaviour are contained within the working classes and therefore emphasise the context of class tensions within concerns as to the supposedly rising crime rate.

However, references to social and historical reality were also common within sensational texts. As Helen Debenham notes, the genre 'flaunted' its realism not only through the use of newspapers as inspiration for plots, but also in the 'support for current "causes," and other self-consciously topical detail' (Debenham, 2002:212). This is also demonstrated in *Lettie's Last Home* through the depiction of an adoption advert. L. T. Meade's novel may not have been categorised as a sensational text, but she too had seen the potential 'for blending social realism and topicality with the traditional romance' (Wise, 2009:223). As such, the advert featured in the novel matches almost word-for-word those which would appear in Victorian newspapers:

Mrs Popler could read very badly, but she rose up now, and with Charlie in her arms, spelt through the following: -

NURSE CHILD WANTED, OR TO ADOPT. – The advertiser, a widow with one little girl of her own, would be glad to accept the charge of a young child. Age no object. Would

receive a parent's care. Terms very moderate; or would adopt entirely for the small sum of six pounds. *Address* –

MRS MEADOWS

Post Office, _____ Street

(Meade, 1875:87)

The idea that Mrs Poplar 'read very badly', as opposed to not being able to read at all, underlines Andrew Hobbs's suggestion that literacy was not a binary skill that people either did or did not have (Hobbs, 2018:35–36). As such, she is able to decipher the printed text in the newspaper well enough to understand baby farming advertisements. However, it also links this nuance with wider negative conceptions of the trade, using Mrs Poplar's ability to follow the printed word to convey the criminal side of the trade as accessible to the working class. Their alleged coded meaning is hence dwelled upon for sensationalist effect, as it states that this 'innocent-looking' advertisement was in fact 'the trap which had ensnared Charlie' (Meade, 1875:87). Such adverts had frequently been the subject of suspicion (see Chapters One and Two) and their proximity and contemporaneity would therefore have been recognised by the novel's readership. Consequently, upon this revelation, it is thus interpreted in a new light, tapping into underlying anxieties as to the vague wording in such postings by depicting them as concealing a dark reality of cruelty and neglect. As stated previously, Joshua Stuart-Bennet argues that the shared 'front' of respectability in these advertisements was not necessarily a concealment of criminal intent, but rather a means to ensure their inclusion within the newspaper as regulated by middle-class editors (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:52). However, those campaigning for regulation of the trade interpreted such duplicity as an indicator of criminality, which is an aspect that Meade clearly drew from.

Meade also emphasised the dilapidated living conditions of the poor and the effect that this had on their bodies. Lettie's home, a dark and dangerous attic within 'a miserable court in one of the worst London localities' (Meade, 1875:9), is stated to be 'not wholesome for children, and most of those who were born there, laid down their weary little bodies in the last long sleep' (Meade, 1875:13). Living in this environment also takes a toll on Lettie herself, who is described as a 'stunted child, with a yellow face, and sharp, bright eyes' (Meade, 1875:14). The note of her yellow face likely alludes to the darkness of the attic in which she lives, whilst her stunted growth is a clear reference to her long and continued malnourishment throughout her short life. This latter aspect in particular touched upon real issues as to the hunger amongst the poor at this point in the century, represented in a similar manner to Dickens's *Oliver Twist* in that it is propagated as non-threatening due to its embodiment through a child. However, Meade also takes care to isolate these problems further, as Lettie's suffering, as well as the suffering of the adopted child Charlie, is depicted as the direct consequence of Mrs Robson's criminality, rather than the ordinary struggles of poverty (which is an aspect that will be explored later in this chapter). As such, the novel fuelled concerns as to the perceived rising number of criminals at this point in the century, rather than wider issues, such as the hunger of the masses.

Collins's social critique of the exploitation of bodies, however, is furthered by simple Sally's occupation as a prostitute. Reflecting the realist aim to depict characters as 'typical or representative. . . not excluding the working classes or sexual relations' (Gates, 2014:56), she accosts the protagonist Amelius with the phrase "Are you good-natured, sir?" widely recognised as signifying sexual solicitation (Poulson, 2000:117). Tamara S. Wagner claims that this occupation holds greater significance in light of Sally being 'farmed' out as a child; 'fate vividly illustrates how the baby farming/adoption network is imbricated in the buying and

selling of bodies beyond infanticide' (Wagner, 2017:138–139). Just as her life was commodified as a child, so too her body is 'bought' as an adult, as the disadvantages of such a childhood leave her with few other options to gain an income. This depiction exposes both prostitution and baby farming as being underpinned by capitalist logic, linking this economic structure to the exploitation of bodies and, in turn, the presence of criminality during this period. The depicted connection between these two trades thus lends insight as to the construction of bourgeois understandings of sexuality. To reinforce ideas of accepted sexual behaviour as between heterosexual, married couples, notions of sexuality outside marriage were constructed as dangerous and threatening. As baby farming was a trade that predominantly engaged with the care of illegitimate children, it was therefore portrayed as innately suspicious and criminal. Additionally, Godfrey notes that 'prostitution challenged Victorians' perceptions of their own humanity through its blatant expression of economic brutalities and unrestrained sexualities' (Godfrey, 2018). Therefore, Collins's depiction of simple Sally acted to configurate sexuality in a manner directly linked with an ideological enforcement of the status quo.

Contrary to most depictions of prostitutes in the nineteenth century, however, Sally is eventually 'redeemed' through marriage, reflecting Collins's increasingly sympathetic portrayal of fallen women in his later works. These publications echoed the belief that many who committed this moral 'offence' were often, in fact, innocent (Poulson, 2000:32). This echoed the sentiment of earlier nineteenth-century literature, such as Gaskell's *Ruth* (see Chapter One), which was also considered controversial in its sympathetic representation; Ruth's ignorance prevents her from realising the 'danger' of beginning a sexual relationship with Bellingham. Collins, like Gaskell, 'places the blame not, as many of his contemporaries do, on his transgressive heroines' (Poulson, 2000:32). However, he takes this protest even

further in *The Fallen Leaves*, placing this blame 'on the society which conspires to prevent their reclaiming their lost virtue' (Poulson, 2000:32). Ruth eventually dies a martyr's death, as Gaskell bowed to the opinions of her middle-class contemporaries 'that the reintegration of the fallen woman into respectable society was impossible' (Poulson, 2000:89). Simple Sally, on the other hand, is allowed her redemption, marrying Amelius Goldenheart. This solution thus challenged narrative conventions based on middle-class notions of both a criminal class and domestic ideology that demanded the continual punishment of the 'fallen' (Godfrey, 2018).

The redemption of her daughter inversely mirrors the fate of Emma Farnaby. A fallen woman herself, the social cure of marriage is a bitter pill to swallow. Bowing to the pressures of maintaining the appearance of respectability, she allows her fate to be dominated by her husband. As such, she lives in a suspended state of maternal limbo, 'keeping her child's existence secret from polite society, and endeavouring only in the most furtive and clandestine ways to find her' (Poulson, 2000:135). Despite this, her inability to move past the loss of her child is reflected in her many failed attempts of distraction, such as watercolours, learning languages and her single, shallow comfort of exercising herself to the point of collapse (Collins, 2014:75). If marriage and motherhood were considered the twin pinnacles of 'feminine fulfilment' (Poulson, 2000:23), Emma is able to fulfil these requirements without herself being fulfilled. Hence, they are depicted both as dangerously attainable - as they are reachable even by fallen women - and yet ultimately meaningless, as although she is both married and a mother, she is robbed of the experiences which would give these circumstances any emotional significance. Thus, Emma herself embodies this contradiction between material respectability and spiritual anguish.

The theme of lost children is one that also surfaces in Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore*, as the main revelation of the operetta centres around the fact that the Captain was accidentally swapped at birth by Buttercup when she was a 'young and charming' baby farmer (Gilbert and Sullivan, 2011:38). She confesses this through means of the popular ballad "A Many Years Ago":

BUTTERCUP: Two tender babes I nuss'd,

One was of low condition;

The other, upper crust,

A regular patrician.

(Gilbert and Sullivan, 2011:38)

Her claim that she engaged with both middle-class and working-class families distorts the reality of baby farming in order to create the plot twist, as the trade engaged mostly with working-class, illegitimate children (Bentley, 2005:206). The use of food to represent class distinctions, whether through her earlier reference to skim milk masquerading as cream, or now, when she refers to one of her infants as 'upper crust' (typically understood as a term for the highest social class) touched upon common concerns throughout this period. The contamination of milk was a widespread issue for infants, shown, for example, by the Manchester Milk Clauses as an area in need of regulation. However, bread - the cornerstone of the working-class diet - was also entrenched within understandings of class, particularly in Manchester. The cost of food, along with the rate of wages, had been a key factor in the riots against the Corn Laws after 1815, eventually culminating in the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 (Poole, 2019). As Juliet John observes, a 'positive imaginative experience of the theatre

encourages externally focused emotions and personalities (hence the theatre's function in lessening class conflict)' (John, 2001:5). The comedic representation of food and its adulteration as a metaphor for differences in class therefore utilised such tensions within Victorian society to construct the plot of the operetta, whilst simultaneously acting to diffuse them.

The 'mixing up' of children is depicted for comedic effect, and yet no character protests its reality. Thus, the scene portrays Buttercup through negative stereotypes of working-class women as ignorant and deprived. Such an immensely convenient twist may at first seem outlandish, but this ending is no more incredible than Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. After all, '[w]hy is the "Providential coincidence" of melodrama ideologically objectionable, but the final revelation of *Oliver Twist's* identity as a gentleman's son not?' (Cohen, 2009:355) The melodrama of long-hidden secrets spoke to apprehension as to the deception and falsity of strangers in a newly urbanised Victorian society, as the influx of vast populations into cities meant that families often lived in a sea of unfamiliar faces. The revelation of such secrets, therefore, has roots in melodrama, present in both Dickens's novel and *H. M. S. Pinafore*; suggesting that 'passionate ostension or transparency of character is crucial to the survival of the community' (John, 2001:9). Hence, the representation of baby farming in *H.M.S. Pinafore* attempted to alleviate cultural and class anxieties stemming from urban development – including conceptions as to the prevalence of crime - in a way that promoted cultural inclusivity.

One the other hand, in Collins's novel, the revelation of simple Sally's true identity arrives too late to save Emma from her despair. This depiction emphasises class tensions rather than alleviating them, as the trigger for her actions is the cruel manipulation on the part of her ex-

servant and her lover, who pretend to have found her child and promise to return her in exchange for payment. The revelation of this deception, culminating in Emma's eventual suicide, is accentuated by elements of both realism and sensationalism. Her death is at once empirically informed and also imbued with melodrama. On one hand, the fact that Emma poisons herself is statistically representative of female suicides at this point in the nineteenth century. Moreover, her attempt to disguise the manner of her death also exposed the role of 'concealment in pitiful middle-class suicide cases' (Gates, 2014:59) in the name of respectability. However, Collins also invites anxiety as to the question of whether the hero Amelius will arrive in time to reunite mother and child before her death. These experimentations with genre work to the same effect as Dickens's *Oliver Twist*; infusing melodrama with elements of realism to accentuate his social commentary. As such, Emma's attempts at concealment highlight the variation in conceptions of suicide at his point in the nineteenth century. Although for many, the act equated to criminality, 'Collins thought differently. For him, cruelty was crime' (Gates, 2014:59). Thus, Emma's suffering embodies his critique on the treatment of fallen women within Victorian society. However, at the end of this life of anguish, Collins also hints at progressive hopes for the future as Sally, the next generation, escapes her own suffering in her marriage to Amelius. As such, the novel advocates for changes in the treatment of fallen women, drawing upon the blurred parameters in middle-class conceptions of criminality throughout this period.

The melodramatic representation of Mrs Sowler, however, connects underlying anxieties of criminality with working-class alcohol consumption. Her drinking habits are depicted at several points throughout the novel and reach a climax when the chaotic state of 'dreadful drink-madness called delirium tremens' (Collins, 2014:290) is triggered. Consequently, she experiences several hallucinations:

. . .her hair waved wildly about her, torn away in places by her own hands. “Cats!” she screamed, glaring out the window, “millions of cats! all their mouths wide open spitting at me! Fire! fire to scare away the cats!” (Collins, 2014:291)

Cats have long embodied a liminal position between the ordinary and the supernatural. On one hand, they were firmly associated with bourgeois domesticity (Flegel, 2015:60). Their appearance as an imaginary adversary to Mrs Sowler hence symbolises her disruption of the domestic sphere through her kidnap of Emma Farnaby’s daughter. On the other hand, cats have also long since aroused notions of suspicion, due to their association with witchcraft, as evidence in witch trials often included sightings of ‘familiars’ (Lumby, 1995:47). Thus, cats have also been considered as a sign of ‘unnatural’ activity, which connects to a theme that frequently emerges within sensation fiction; that of drawing upon ‘themes and images associated with spiritualism’ (Mangham, 2013:5). This aspect hence also surfaced in Chapter Two in Wood’s depiction of Mrs Drury, as her distribution of ‘remedies’ (i.e. poison) earn her a reputation as an ‘unnatural’ woman. Therefore, the fusion of an avenging figure from the domestic sphere with perceptions of the supernatural emphasise Mrs Sowler’s transgression from middle-class understandings of femininity. Critically, the fact that she is driven to burn the money she has extorted and stolen, reiterates Collins’s critique of baby farming; literally destroying the profitability, and thus the incentive, to engage with a criminal trade implicated in the buying and selling of bodies. This sensational depiction not only monsterizes Mrs Sowler, separating her from conceptions of ‘respectable’ feminine behaviour, but also touches upon concerns as to the role alcohol was thought to play in the perceived rise in criminality in the nineteenth century.

Many of the hallucinations Mrs Sowler experiences may, at first glance, appear unconnected to the first feline image. However, upon closer inspection, connections appear:

She sprang back to the window, with her crooked fingers twisted in her hair! "The snakes!" she shrieked; "the snakes are hissing again in my hair! . . .the beetles are crawling over my face!" She tore at her hair; she scraped her face with long black nails that lacerated the flesh. (Collins, 2014:291)

Snakes have clear connections with Christianity; 'like the serpent in the Bible, they are arch persuaders, tempting their victims to ruin' (Godfrey, 2010:116). However, the depiction of a head of snakes presents a clear Medusa image, in an example of what Belinda Morrissey refers to as the 'mythification' of violent women. In this portrayal, her human agency is denied, as she is instead depicted as 'the living embodiment of mythic evil' (Morrissey, 2003:25). This enables the illusion of an ordered society - with a controlled population - to be maintained. It allows the violence committed by Mrs Sowler, which would otherwise imply 'chaos demonstrated in the inability of society to keep control of its citizenry' (Morrissey, 2003:16), to be separated from that society. These depictions within regulatory discourses, according to Foucault, maintained an ideological hold over the population through the display of negative consequences to crime, producing docile bodies. Building on this notion, the popularity of crime as a subject within literature and the press has been credited for misperceptions within the nineteenth century as to the rise in criminality, leading to harsher punishments of the declining number of criminals during this period, and even delays in the abolition of the death sentence (Casey, 2011:369). As such, the prominence, rather than the mere presence, of sensationalist representations of crime can be interpreted as a key factor in the ideological control of populations through discourses of criminality.

Indeed, in *Lettie's Last Home*, Meade utilises the style of sensationalism to depict Mrs Robson's propensity for alcohol as a symptom of her underlying moral depravity. This is perhaps best encapsulated by her syphoning most of the 'four and sixpence' (Meade, 1875:28) she receives as payment from Charlie's mother to enable these drinking habits, allowing only 'a 'ha'p'orth' of bread and a 'ha'p'orth' of milk daily for him' (Meade, 1875:18). According to August, the reputation of women in working-class neighbourhoods required them to feed their children regularly (August, 2015:857). Thus, the representation of Lettie's mother likely contradicted both working-class and middle-class understandings of femininity as linked to notions of maternal duty. This depiction of baby farmers as cruel and criminally neglectful, however, also propagated negative stereotypes of working-class childcare, as it hints that 'four and sixpence' is enough to sustain the child – an aspect that has been refuted by Ross (Ross, 1993:108). As such, this criminalised many informal arrangements between women in working-class neighbourhoods by building upon the notion that high infant mortality was caused by criminality and not environmental or social issues.

It is at this point that James Greenwood's publication *Seven Curses of London* can perhaps be most clearly observed in terms of its impact on Meade's novel. Within the text he cites the story of one child dying under the care of a 'drunken nurse', for which the mother had paid 'four-and-sixpence a week' (Greenwood, 1869:35). The similarity in detail is clear and Meade appears to have drawn directly from Greenwood's claim that '[a] ha'p'orth of bread and a ha'p'orth of milk daily will keep the machinery of life from coming to a sudden standstill' (Greenwood, 1869:46). However, these two authors diverge on the subject of alcohol in its perceived effect upon baby farming. Greenwood claimed that the 'regular baby farmer' was not 'a person habitually given to drink. The successful and lucrative prosecution of her business forbids the indulgence' (Greenwood, 1869:35). On the other hand, Lettie's

mother Mrs Robson has been able to continue her illicit trade in infants for many years, despite the fact that she has clearly given way to such habits. Meade acknowledges the incapacitating role of alcohol, linking inebriation to Lettie's survival once she has saved Charlie from her clutches:

Her safety lay in the wretched woman either being confused by drink, and so not noticing her absence, or else, as was too often the case, being so blindly drunk as not to be able to return at all that night (Meade, 1875:76).

However, Meade also reiterates the theme of underlying immorality continually throughout the novel, as Mrs Robson's habits of cruelty and consumption eventually culminate in Lettie's death by her own hands, before which she makes a point of noting that '[e]arly as it was, the woman had been drinking, but only enough to render her doubly cruel' (Meade, 1875:94). Thus, during this period, the representation of baby farming in literature linked anxieties as to the consumption of alcohol by the working classes to fears of the perceived rise in criminality, as such habits were thought to encourage such illicit behaviour.

Mrs Sowler and Mrs Robson's identity as alcoholics thus reveals the structural disadvantages within Victorian society for those who became victims of their own consumption. Firstly, Victorian society as a whole was structured to encourage alcohol consumption, especially in industrial cities such as Manchester, as alcohol became a 'mass-produced commodity available to an expanding consumer market' (Hands, 2018:1). Conflictingly, however, it was also blamed for a wide variety of 'social and personal ills, such as insanity, crime, and sexual depravity' (Searie, 1998:248). The representation of Mrs Robson clearly draws from such conceptions of alcohol as encouraging criminal urges. However, as a hallucinating, criminal baby farmer who predominantly traded in illegitimate children, Mrs

Sowler is the physical embodiment of this trio of perceived social evils. Additionally, anxieties as to drunkenness among the working classes are widely documented, stemming from the assumption that they could not 'consume moderately' (Hands, 2018:37). As such, within literary representations of the trade, the consumption of alcohol is often a defining characteristic of baby farmers, rather than an innocuous habit.

In reality, the existence of working-class alcoholism exposed glaring socio-economic flaws. As Deborah Logan claims, it correlated with the literal hunger of the poor; 'not only was gin cheaper and more readily available than bread, but it also numbed one's hunger pangs better and longer' (Logan, 1998:130). Sowler herself is frequently described as 'half-starved' (Collins, 2014:153), reiterating Collins's social critique of capitalist industrialism, and yet also simultaneously undermining it through the portrayal of her criminal tendencies. Furthermore, female consumption of alcohol was particularly problematic to middle-class critics. As Logan points out, 'a literary portrayal of a "respectable" working class woman alcoholic is rare indeed' (Logan, 1998:131). Alcoholism is therefore portrayed as antithetical to femininity – an aspect that also interacts with other axes of identity in the context of baby farmers. They are geared towards alcohol consumption through the structured disadvantages incorporated into working-class life, and yet their habit ultimately causes their demise. Both instances, in fact, occur *within* the domestic sphere. Mrs Sowler barricades herself within a kitchen (Collins, 2014:290). Mrs Robson, on the other hand, beats Lettie to death in their house with an old whip (Meade, 1875:95) – an act which leads to her incarceration. Although this provides a brutal end to Lettie's life, the reader does not actually witness the beating, as she remembers nothing after a 'stinging sound' in her ears (Meade, 1875: 97). This provides a stark contrast to the immense sensational detail in which the suffering of Charlie, the farmed child, is depicted. This is likely due to the overall framing of the novel as a criticism of

baby farming. Thus, rather than focus on the brutality inflicted on Lettie by her natural mother, the story capitalised on public outrage of the trade, claiming '[t]hese things happen every day; in secret, it is true; but now and then the secret starts to light in all its horrors' (Meade, 1875: 110). Despite this, both Collins and Meade connect alcohol with the literal destruction of the family and home in their depiction of baby farming. In doing so, however, they criminalised a common facet of working-class behaviour, by drawing upon the notion of the consumption of alcohol as a gateway to such illicit activity.

At the dramatic peak of her drink-induced madness, perhaps the most sinister connection between Sowler's hallucinations are the sounds of hissing or spitting that she experiences, which is in fact gas being released from the cooker. This intrusion into her other senses links her visions together. As the addition of beetles affects her sense of touch, Mrs Sowler is driven to even more self-destructive behaviour, and the scene acquires a graphic nature. By physically tearing open her face, she rips away her humanity. Her body and mind are now completely consumed by the madness that has been triggered by her own, continuous consumption. In this strangely cyclical moment, she embodies her alcoholism; it is her identity. It is also her death sentence, as although she is forcibly halted in her destruction, the novel condemns her to die of 'liver disease' (Collins, 2014:292). As such, her mythification is halted in favour of an inverse representation of medicalisation; whilst medical discourse often depicted woman as 'in thrall to biology and her body' (Pykett, 1992:13–14), this was often used in defence of female criminals in courts of law. In the nineteenth century, according to Cossins, 'the law took the lead in seeking medical opinion in infanticide cases', allowing 'evidence' linking the crime with insanity to justify acquittals (Cossins, 2015:181). However, Collins's medicalisation of Mrs Sowler presents her with a death sentence, alluding to the fact that criminal baby farmers were often denied clemency due to their perceived

distortion of maternity. When amalgamated with fears as to the supposedly rising crime rate, this often therefore led to the harsher treatment of those accused of such illicit activity, both within the courts and the press.

Conversely, however, Meade depicts Mrs Robson as escaping her crimes with minimal punishment. She evokes religious conceptions in her condemnation: 'Mrs Robson was sentenced to three years' penal servitude; this was, however, only at *an earthly tribunal*' (Meade, 1875:107). This sensational depiction clearly engaged with anxieties as to the extent of baby farming. As Dawson claims, 'the novel exploited growing public outrage over the shocking details of baby farming' (Dawson, 2020: 49). Thus, it not only fuelled negative sentiment towards the baby farming trade, but also championed harsher punishments, as the novel exclaims that 'thousands such as Charlie die in agony too terrible to write about' (Meade, 1875:110). The reiteration of this misperception as to the rates of this particular crime therefore contributed to the severe consequences for a number of baby farmers that came to be classified as criminal, as eight women were dealt a sentence that had yet to be abolished due to these anxieties as to the prevalence of crime.

The ending of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore*, however, presents the happiest scenario out of these representations of baby farming at this point in the century, as this was an 'idealistic and audience-pleasing feature of comedy' (Booth, 2004:132). No matter what troubles stood in the way of courtship and marriage, this factor demanded they be resolved, in this case by Buttercup, who is a rare comical representation of a baby farmer. Gilbert and Sullivan's light-hearted operetta would not profit from the subject of infanticide in the same way that newspapers did, as 'the hunger for romantic illusions rather than domestic truths shaped the plotting and content of comedy' (Booth, 2004:132). Audiences were willing to

allow the inclusion of an unlikely plot twist to achieve this 'illusion'. However, it also hints that despite the pejorative shadow cast over baby farmers, their wider existence as well-intentioned (if ignorant) nurses must also have been familiar to Victorian audiences, as suggested by the immense popularity of the operetta. The sinister depiction of baby farming, therefore, had to bow to the lighter representation in the context of Victorian comedic theatre.

This section has sought to compare literary representations of baby farming during a period of a small-scale peak in publications featuring the subject. Although they were varied in both popularity and format, commonalities can be found between each of these texts that demonstrate popular conceptions of the trade. Such conceptions were predominantly negative, portraying the notion that baby farmers were either ignorant, immoral, or generally unfit to care for the children they were entrusted with. These depictions frequently engaged with underlying Victorian anxieties of femininity and sexuality, which often amalgamated with other concerns, such as the consumption of alcohol by the working classes and the degree to which this habit was thought to encourage illicit behaviour. However, above all else, these texts demonstrate that the trade was recognised by a variety of audiences and readers as a potential threat to the safety of children. In this sense, literary representations produced what they sought to condemn, building upon fears not just as to the extent of baby farming, but the rates of criminality as a whole throughout the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to determine critical factors that contributed towards the inclusion of certain criminal baby farming cases in two Manchester newspapers, the *Manchester Courier* and the *Manchester Guardian*. Utilising the concept of news values, it has

been established that although many factors affected the decision to cover certain events, including the aspect of superlativeness (i.e. large scale or scope), the value of proximity was also often critical to this decision, both in the geographic sense and the aspect of cultural 'nearness' to the news-consuming public of Manchester. Such articles selected for inclusion thus tended to create sensational stories, drawing on ideologically relevant issues, from events that occurred close to or within the city and surrounding regions.

This prominence of sensationalism also extended to literary representations of the trade. Wilkie Collins's novel *The Fallen Leaves* combined references to social reality with sensational detail to emphasise the male role in baby farming and reiterate middle-class conceptions of criminality among the working classes. L. T. Meade also utilised empirical observations from amateur journalist Greenwood's investigations to depict the deprivation of slum living and criminality in *Lettie's Last Home*. On the other hand, Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*, while reinforcing stereotypes of the working-class as ignorant and feckless, did not present Buttercup as inherently evil, suggesting that despite its pejorative reputation, it was still largely considered as a necessary service. Such contradictions in discourses of baby farming were also accentuated according to region, as although in London it was the subject of vociferous criticism in the context of alleged criminality, in Manchester, the trade was more often connected to criticism of female employment in factories.

The next chapter will discuss the most infamous criminal baby farmer in the history of the trade, Amelia Dyer. To date, there is more literature exploring her illicit deeds and mental psyche than any other convicted or executed baby farmer. In reaction to this case, much discussion and debate took place as to the alleged privacy surrounding domestic relations, which, utilising Bentham's theory of the Panopticon, was thought to be aiding the criminality

of baby farmers. However, the validity of this theory, and indeed even the existence of such privacy for working class people, will be questioned.

Chapter 4 – Femininity at the *Fin de siècle*: Examining the Gendered and Class-based

Dynamics of Baby Farming, 1895-1908

This chapter will examine literary and press representations of baby farming within the era of the *fin de siècle* which, in this case, is taken to define the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. The *fin de siècle* was an important moment of transition between the periods known as ‘Victorianism’ and ‘modernism’ (Guy, 2018:2). *Fin de siècle* writing often evoked fears of cultural decay or, more specifically, ‘degeneration’, the concern for which became particularly pronounced in the context of working-class urban living standards, sparking housing and sanitary reform (Taylor, 2007:22). As such, literary and journalistic representations of baby farming echoed these fears of degeneration among the urban poor. This was also prominent in the figure of the ‘New Woman’, as the single mothers who farmed out their children to seek employment were often depicted as displaying a worrying rejection of familial and maternal responsibility. This chapter will therefore analyse representations of the trade within this context, as it often manifested in the depiction of ‘bad mother’ figures in literary and cultural publications, thus connecting the trade with such concerns as to maternal behaviour.

Furthermore, whilst this period is often discussed in terms of a peak in British nationalism (Forman, 2007:105), the *fin de siècle* also encompassed the rise of a sense of civic identity in provincial cities such as Manchester and Birmingham (Guy, 2018:6). The term civic identity, in this chapter, is used to describe the ways in which individuals expressed identification with the geographic and cultural implications of living within a particular city, which was imbricated within other axes of identity, including race, class and gender (Cockin, 2012:12). Manchester had long since manifested its own identity, even before its dramatic

rise in industry (see Chapter One), and circulars had often implicitly reflected this throughout the nineteenth century. For example, the *Manchester Guardian* often prioritised articles depicting cases of criminal baby farming close to and within the city, as opposed to the executions of baby farmers in distant cities (see Chapter Three). However, it was during this period that this was explicitly pronounced within representations of baby farming in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier*. Indeed, although underlying anxieties associated with baby farming and infanticide may have been as prevalent in Manchester as anywhere else (Beattie, 2020:61), it was negotiated in local periodicals both in the context of an increasing prominence of New Journalism and in the context of this civic identity. This tied into the discussion of baby farming in complex, and even contradictory ways, as although newspaper articles occasionally continued to reiterate concerns associated with infanticide and baby farming, they also frequently framed representations of the trade within the context of substandard living conditions among the working class in Manchester – even sometimes going as far as to deny the presence of a criminal trade altogether.

Within this context of the *fin de siècle*, this chapter will also continue to deconstruct conceptions of the domestic sphere in representations of baby farming. As Catherine Waters notes, the division of the world into ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres constituted the basis of Victorian, middle-class conceptions of ‘reality’, stemming from the ‘model of a binary opposition between sexes’, which grounded a ‘division between these supposedly “separate spheres”, shaping and legitimising this social arrangement according to sexual differences that were apparently fixed and innumerable’ (Waters, 1997:4). The baby farming trade, however, challenged this perceived separation between private and public domains and revealed ideological contradictions within representations of privacy in the ‘home’. The first section of this chapter will therefore explore these ideological contradictions as represented

in George Moore's naturalist novel *Esther Waters* (1894). Influenced by 'the literature of urban exploration and by theories of heredity', the genre fuelled 'existing fears of degeneration' (Luckhurst and Ledger, 200:xvi). This will also be compared to Margaret Harkness's *A Manchester Shirtmaker* (1890) to examine competing narratives of motherhood in the context of the northern industrial city. Both novels most notably explore the challenges of working-class single mothers, demonstrating how economic upheaval caused by insecure employment could impact the ability of women to fulfil their maternal obligations. They also depict the domestic sphere as both as a haven in need of protection from the outside world, and yet also occasionally a 'veil' to conceal criminality and misery. The second section will then explore the 'transgressions' of women into the public sphere in more detail, as it was not only baby farmers that presented this challenge, but also the mothers that farmed out their children for the sake of employment. Even the women who were appointed to inspect the premises of baby farmers during this period in the name of regulating childcare practices and criminality, interacted with community issues like sanitation and housing that were thought to lie in the 'masculine' public sphere. However, some 'transgressions' by women were, if not tolerated, then tacitly ignored, whilst others were the target of fierce criticism. Finally, the third section will examine representations of executed criminal baby farmers in Manchester newspapers, alongside more local cases during this period, both of which unsettled conceptions of the private and public spheres as separate, by displaying evidence to the contrary. And yet, such representations also worked to reaffirm the desirability of such domestic ideology, in which the home was separate from commerce and industry, by framing such amalgamations of spheres as potentially violent and tragic. The examination of such literary and cultural material will therefore reveal the nuanced and complex ways in which

baby farming intersected with broader social, cultural and ideological trends during the *fin de siècle*.

The Concept of Separate Spheres in Literary Representations of Baby Farming

This section will explore George Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894) in the context of *fin de siècle* attitudes to motherhood and work. As Minna Vuohelainen explains, the turn of the century was something of a "golden age" for novelists due to improvements in printing methods, 'aggressive' marketing techniques, a reduction in the cost of publications and 'perhaps most importantly, near-universal literacy resulting from the introduction of state primary education' (Vuohelainen, 2013:403). Moore's novel was hence produced within the context of this drastic increase in readership. Published in London, it adhered to the artistic and literary trends most closely associated with the *fin de siècle*. These trends were complex and sometimes contradictory, and frequently 'nudged elbows' in a rapidly expanding and changing cultural landscape (Luckhurst and Ledger, 2000:97). For example, Moore's novel embodied the style of naturalism which 'mimicked the developing technology of photography in its "objective" scrutiny of city life' (Luckhurst and Ledger, 2000:xvi). Literary naturalism also frequently overlapped with proto-feminist writing, 'both being attacked for their "candour" in sexual matters and their scientific scrutiny of areas of human experience considered sordid by the literary establishment' (Luckhurst and Ledger, 2000:97). However, the text can also be considered as part of the literary reaction against the 'New Woman' through its inclusion of 'bad mother' figures, which were prominent among the heterogenous representations created by her opponents (Ledger, 1997: 69). Moore's representation of the 'bad' mother, in the context of the *fin de siècle*, linked to concerns of 'degeneration' among the population, as the act of farming out children was depicted as contributing to the infant mortality rate.

The baby farming trade will therefore be closely examined in the context of the gendered construction of public and private spheres and in particular the liminal position of mothers of farmed out children, who ventured between spheres for employment, for example, through factory work, or integrating into the home of their mistress through domestic service. The latter occupation will also be the focus of this section, in an interrogation of the connection between domestic service and baby farming as represented in the literary figure of Esther.

Middle-class conceptions of femininity underwent a significant challenge in the 1890s, the reaction against which linked to fears of degeneration. The term 'New Woman' came into existence in 1894, after decades of anxiety produced by 'worrying changes' in the behaviour and activities of women (Caine, 1997:134). These 'worrying' changes included the decision of many to limit the size of their families and the subsequent fall in birth rates, which appeared to threaten the imperialist ambitions of Britain. Notions of the Malthusian couple, prescribing that the working classes should limit the size of their families thus became less influential. Instead, women appearing to shirk their 'responsibility' to produce healthy workers and soldiers became subject to criticism (Liggins, 2000:18). Taking active steps to avoid the endless toil of childbirth and labour unsettled the foundations upon which understandings of femininity were based. As Emma Liggins explains, to 'the conservative mind, femininity without maternity was like a summer without sun, unnatural beyond belief' (Liggins, 2000:19). However, in response to this criticism, the campaign for women's rights also became more vociferous, raising high-profile questions as to the role of women and their obligation to marriage and motherhood (Caine, 1997:133). The New Woman can thus be linked to fears of degeneration of the population through the perceived shirking of her 'responsibility' to produce healthy children. This undermined the notion of separate spheres through the acknowledgement that, far from being separated from the public sphere, women

were able to shape its future through their maternal practices, which included decisions to limit their family size, or farm out their children.

Moore's *Esther Waters* engaged with such debates over motherhood, and its popularity resulted in a wide circulation across the country, ensuring cultural significance among the literature-consuming population. The *Manchester Courier*, for example, reacted favourably to the novel, and used praise to denounce Moore's earlier publication, *Vain Fortune* (1891), stating it 'is not in the same class with that powerful story "Esther Waters"' (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1895:3). As Wagner argues, was one of the first literary works to draw widespread attention 'to the dilemma of working-class mothers' (Wagner, 2017:137). However, the reception of the novel was also interpreted within the context of a prominent sense of civic identity in Manchester at the *fin de siècle* and will thus be analysed in the context of newspaper depictions of domestic servants and their interactions with criminal baby farming published by the Manchester press. Although Moore's representation may not have been representative of the majority of informal childcare networks that existed either in Manchester or London, the frequency with which similarly pejorative representations appeared suggests that negative conceptions of the trade had permeated the ideology of the literature-consuming public to the point where criminal baby farmers would be recognised and understood to be of cultural relevance.

Esther Waters earns her living, for the most part, as a domestic servant. In fact, most critical discussion connects baby farming to this profession (Rose, 1986b; Goc, 2013; Stuart-Bennet, 2019). This is likely due to the fact that in the second half of the nineteenth century, over two million women were employed in this position, especially in the south of England, with over forty per cent engaged in domestic servitude (Momsen, 1999:2). Indeed, this role

cannot be ignored in the history of baby farming, as although industrialisation and urbanisation provided factory work for women in Manchester, it also produced 'a servant-employing middle class and a surplus of unskilled female labour' (Momsen, 1999:2). As such, pejorative stories of domestic servants farming out their illegitimate children also frequented Manchester newspapers:

Thomas Southern was charged with the manslaughter of Thomas Alexander Bardsley, an infant 14 months old, the illegitimate child of a servant in Manchester. . . the jury attributed the child's death to the sheer neglect of the prisoner's wife, who received from its mother 4s. 6d. a week for its maintenance.'

(Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 1879a:11)

This article depicts a narrative fairly typical in depictions of the trade; a young, single girl enlists a criminal baby farmer to 'care' for the child, which then soon dies. This echoes certain circumstances that Esther experiences in her attempts to earn money to outsource care for her child. The novel can therefore be seen as a fictional exploration of the difficulties and subsequent criminal activity associated with this form of employment. As such, the literary exploration of Esther's journey is as relevant to the history of baby farming in Manchester as that of London, which is the city in which criminal baby farming is represented to reside in. This representation emphasised the liminal position of the domestic servant. She was integrated into the domestic sphere of her employer, and yet this was not her 'home'.

Domestic servants were a demographic specifically associated with infanticide, reinforcing the paradoxical nature of discussions surrounding the domestic sphere; it was both a veil for criminality and a haven in need of protection from such corrupting influences. Further to this, the notion of the middle-class home as a sanctum in need of protection has

been directly linked as a *cause* for such criminal activity; it is argued by historians such as Nichola Goc that the high level of moral scrutiny domestic servants were subjected to by their employers increased the likelihood of such rash and desperate acts (Goc, 2013). Esther Waters briefly considers the idea of infanticide after being deserted by her lover and giving birth to an illegitimate child. However, her motivation does not stem from this fear of surveillance. Esther wonders if his death would possibly be a more desirable alternative to the unsatisfactory conditions he must face when being 'farmed' out:

What had she done that her baby should be separated from her? What had the poor little darling done? He at least was innocent; why should he be deprived of his mother? At midnight she got up and lighted a candle, looked at him, took him in her arms, squeezed him to her bosom till he cried, and the thought came that it would be sweeter to kill him with her own hands than to be parted from him (Moore, 2012:118).

Such an emotive scene lends sympathy to the predicament of many working-class women who had to part from their infants to work. The act of infanticide is not considered out of fear, but out of an all-encompassing, all-consuming love. Thus, although the maternal instinct is inverted towards an 'unnatural' act, Esther herself is still represented as a 'natural' mother. Far from resenting her child, she cannot bear to see her infant endure hardship, challenging the notion that illegitimate infants were objectified as problems rather than children. This maternal instinct, whether destructive or productive, is a critical characteristic Esther displays throughout the novel, challenging the pejorative representation of working-class mothers that has persisted even in academic literature, with historians such as Lionel Rose arguing that single mothers were somehow indifferent to the survival of their infants (Rose, 1986a:110). Indeed, Esther works hard in her employment to provide for her son, as did many working-

class women with children during this period. Reynolds makes the point that depicting these women as neglectful does not appear to make sense when their hardworking nature is taken into account (Reynolds, 2016b:14). Why would they continually drive themselves to exhaustion in demanding jobs and use such a large portion of their wages to pay for the care of their child, if they were not invested in their wellbeing? Baby farming thus disrupted the idea of public and private spheres in the sense that it combined the concept of the maternal duty, which was carried out within the domestic sphere, with commercialisation, which required interaction with the public sphere. However, this disruption was also predicated on the fact that mothers of farmed out children were already transgressing between these spheres for the sake of employment. Thus, the trade can be viewed as a secondary consequence from this existing overlap between spheres.

The notion of maternal sacrifice from women working in Manchester industry is also represented in Margaret Harkness's novel *A Manchester Shirtmaker* (1890).⁴⁴ The protagonist Mary Dillon lives in 'the worst slum in Manchester', Angel Meadow (Law, 1890:7) and works desperately to provide for her child, just as Esther does, after the death of her husband, ceaselessly looking to 'get along with the sewing machine' (Law, 1890:30) by searching for work as a seamstress. And yet, both protagonists, at some point in their respective novels, must choose between the workhouse and infanticide, and whilst Esther chooses the workhouse (Moore, 2012:131) Mary decides 'a painless death is better than a pauper's existence' for her child (Law, 1890:100). Thus, although Margaret Arnot observes that '[s]evere poverty was undoubtedly a factor contributing to some unmarried mothers destroying their infants' (Arnot, 2000:57–58), in the case of Mary Dillon, 'infanticide is

⁴⁴ Written under the pseudonym 'John Law'.

justified with maternal love and devotion' (Bulmur, 2016:37). As such, the harsh conditions for both mother and child are emphasised in the novel; the cottage in which Mary lives, far from being a domestic haven, is inverted as a prison of suffering and misery. This alludes to the disadvantages to working-class women in maintaining rigid conceptions of separate spheres. Her isolation from the public sphere and her community cuts her off from a potentially valuable network of mutual support; '[f]or a long time she "had made herself miserable by herself," and now she did not dare to ask a favour of a neighbour' (Law, 1890:99). Critically, such support also included sources of childcare, as many informal agreements between neighbours were encompassed within the trade of baby farming. Hence, bourgeois understandings of domestic ideology are emphasised, not only as incompatible, but destructive when implemented within working-class communities.

The choice that each mother makes represents the different ways in which the authors Harkness and Moore depicted the competing struggles of maternity and poverty. Despite the fact that both adhered to a 'quasi-documentary' style in their novels, Moore utilised the representation of maternal self-sacrifice to romanticise the story of Esther overcoming the challenges set for her by society in raising her child. Harkness, on the other hand, utilised naturalist tropes in her heroine's inability to resist the circumstances of their environment (Ledger, 1997:49). As such, Harkness emphasises the innate sensitivity of Mary:

students of human nature know that she was the creature of her circumstances, with a brain incapable of bearing up against long-continued suffering. She had inherited a degree of sensitiveness and refinement, that prevented her from harmonising with her surroundings (Law, 1890:133).

This depiction aligns Mary's actions with Harkness's criticism of the harsh conditions faced by women in industrial cities. Reflecting her socialist roots, the novel stresses the dismal working conditions experienced by seamstresses, delving into questions of 'sweated labour and workers' unity' (Robertson and Janssen, 2018:3). It also echoes the notion that 'environment none the less plays the largest part in determining social character' (Ledger, 1997:49). Although this version of maternity is ultimately depicted as destructive, her innate weakness is emphasised by her seemingly hopeless circumstances, leading Mary to rationalise her premeditated decision to kill her child, and even characterise it as an act of love (Hancock, 2010:304). No matter which choice each protagonist makes in their desperation, however, the fact that the workhouse or infanticide are presented as exclusive, opposing options in both novels speaks to the perceived commonality of such experiences across England. This linked the structured inequalities of female labour and the maternal burden with the concept of the industrial city and the associated economic disadvantages faced by urban women. Such difficulties also highlight the fact that the navigation of the public sphere was a critical factor to their survival. Thus, although childcare options such as baby farming further disrupted notions of a separation between spheres, they were also often a lifeline for the working-class mother to withstand the demands placed upon her from both her employment in the public domain and her familial responsibilities in her private life.

It could be argued that Margaret Harkness's novel demonstrated an awareness of a growing civic identity in Manchester through her detailed depiction of the urban environment and Manchester's slums. However, Harkness was not actually a native of Manchester; she had grown up in Worcester and 'trained as a nurse in London's Westminster Hospital, and her other novels focused upon chronicling the miseries of the poor in the East End' (Glover, 2012:64). The novel itself was also published in London and thus Harkness may have been

faced with 'a need to explain to a metropolitan audience the difference of a northern city such as Manchester, one which many would never have desired nor needed to visit' (Guy, 2012:23). Consequently, the narrator acts as a guide to the presumably non-native reader, and follows a protagonist who does 'not belong to Cottonopolis' herself (Law, 1890:15). Observations about the inhabitants of the city litter the novel, such as 'one is inclined to think that they, also, have their own social distinctions' (Law, 1890:3) and the claim that 'the Lancashire dialect has been translated into English' (Law, 1890:6). Whilst this conforms with the style of literary naturalism, it also evokes what Cockin has observed to be a stark binary between north and south, serving to 'fix the subordinated North, reinforcing the hegemony of the South... The North therefore functions strategically as the Other' (Cockin, 2012:4). This function of the other, however, is not exclusive to discourse produced in the capital. In fact, the press representation of baby farming in Manchester often utilised this same empirical-style observation of working-class language, with one article noting of male factory workers that '[t]oo many of them regard their wives as wage-earning assets, and many of them justify the old Lancashire saying, "Hoo's a fower-loomer – hoo's like t' be wed'" (Rose, 1906:12). As Hobbs notes, dialect was sometimes 'used as a mocking marker of class in newspapers where there were vibrant working-class literary cultures' (Hobbs, 2018:137). Thus, the representation of the baby farmer as the 'other' was affected by intersecting conceptions of both class tensions within Manchester, and cultural tensions between the north and south of England.

On the other hand, George Moore's representation of Mrs Spires appears to conform to the middle-class fears of 'degeneracy'. This was characteristic both of the cultural moment that was the *fin de siècle* and the genre of naturalism, adhering to the tendency to scrutinise details of human experience often considered sordid (Luckhurst and Ledger, 2000:97). It also

builds upon concerns about the domestic sphere as a veil to hide criminality, raising the question of Moore's inspiration for his pejorative depiction of the trade. Paul Sporn debates this suggesting that his tendency to borrow concepts from writers he admired raises the possibility the idea was gleaned from Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) (Sporn, 1968:39). Indeed, this would cohere with the novel's embodiment of naturalism, as although in practice the genre was 'largely English and London-based', it was nevertheless seen as having origins from France (Guy, 2018:2). The connection that Sporn draws, however, is tentative. He himself acknowledges the difference in setting, as Flaubert's baby farm is rural which, he argues, tends 'to reduce the effect of the squalor' (Sporn, 1968:40). An article by Benjamin Waugh, head of the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (LSPCC) titled *Baby Farming* (1890) is thus identified as a more likely source. Indeed, the LSPCC 'emerged as the leading child-protection organisation in England, primarily as a result of Waugh's propaganda' (Flegel, 2016:20). He brought the often-sensational style of New Journalism to his writings on child cruelty, appealing to a market composed of readers of all classes. With this new style of reporting, 'innovation became commonplace: bold headlines, gossip columns, sports reading, pictures and "news stories" whose appeal derived from a subjective interest in the evolving human drama' (Wiener, 1988:xii). Such representations of baby farming thus may have also affected the production of literature on the topic. Sporn claims that certain phrases in Moore's account of Mrs Spires directly match an article written by Waugh describing a baby farm that he had investigated:

It was the back room of a tumble-down labourer's cottage, scarcely fit for a coal place, about twelve feet square. Crouching and sprawling on the floor, in their own excrement, were two of them. Two were tied in rickety chairs, one lay in a rotten basinet. . . In bitter March, there was no fire (Waugh, 1890:4).

When compared to the dwellings of Mrs Spires as experienced by Esther Waters, there do appear to be certain parallels:

At last she found herself in a tumble-down little street, no thoroughfare, only four houses and a coal shed. Broken wooden palings stood in front of the small area whence descent was made by means of a few wooden steps. The wall opposite seemed to be the back of some stables. A high wind was blowing, the shutters of the hay-lofts creaked in their hinges. Three little mites played about the steps of number three, the smallest was tied to a chair (Moore, 2012:117).

The similar aspects Sporn notes, such as cold weather, a small ‘tumble-down’ house, references to the storage of coal, and an infant tied to a chair (Sporn, 1968:40), are certainly striking. However, caution must be used against directly crediting the work of Waugh for Moore’s representation of baby farming. Not only were detailed descriptions of dirt and squalor used as a style trope in naturalist writing (Schülting, 2016:99) but, as seen in previous chapters, accounts of child cruelty also often emphasised allegedly cold and dirty conditions, presenting a ‘morally charged notion of cleanliness’ (Schülting, 2016:6). Moreover, the ill-treatment of children by parents or baby farmers, specifically tying them to chairs, was also (though admittedly less often) represented in both Manchester newspapers (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1894:15; *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1902:8) and London circulars (*The Times*, 1896:6; *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 1893:4; *Illustrated Police News*, 1893:3). The frequency with which these elements appeared in both the London and the Manchester press suggest that, although Moore’s creation of Mrs Spires cannot definitively be established as derived from Waugh’s publications, it certainly drew from widely publicised accounts of child cruelty and the overwhelmingly negative

representation of baby farming in legal, medical and press discourses in the nineteenth century. Thus, the novel fuelled the idea that merging the public and private spheres created a space that was antithetical to middle-class conceptions of the home – in short, a commercial hell rather than a domestic haven.

This connection between Moore's representation of baby farming and pejorative discourses on the trade is further strengthened when the subject of payment is broached. Mrs Spires offers to 'get rid' of Esther's child for five pounds (Moore, 2012:130).⁴⁵ This coincides again with Waugh's propaganda that stated 'the price for the absolute disposal of a child varies greatly. . . from £5 for servants to £200 for genteel people' (Waugh, 1890:9). As discussed in Chapter Two, five pounds was also the amount promised by Ernest Hart and Alfred Wiltshire, in an advert (posted for investigative reasons) requesting that their child be adopted. This proposal from Mrs Spires thus demonstrates that the diffusion of negative conceptions of baby farming, from the capital into the provinces, did not exclusively occur through the press. Manchester circulars were indeed affected by London campaigners against the trade, with *Manchester Guardian* frequently reprinting articles from the *Pall Mall Gazette* detailing its 'evils'. However, literary works that were published in London and circulated throughout the northern regions of England also clearly made an impact in this context. As such, Moore's novel was advertised as a true reflection of working-class criminality by the *Manchester Courier*, stating the 'hideous fiend described in "Esther Waters," is only too

⁴⁵ The figure of £5 in particular, although far from universal in criminal baby farming transactions, appears frequently in representations of the trade and could perhaps also be connected to the sensationalised New Journalism reporting of the Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon, which had become part of cultural memory in the *fin de siècle*. The set of controversial newspaper articles detailed accounts of child prostitution and exploitation, among which was one titled 'A Child of Thirteen Bought for £5' (Soderlund, 2013:35). Though it is impossible to determine with any certainty whether Moore's representation of baby farming drew a purposeful parallel with these discourses, the reappearance of this figure in another trade implicated in the buying and selling of children certainly draws an interesting connection in the context of Victorian conceptions of child abuse.

common a character' (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1900:1). Although such representations cannot be interpreted as valid historical evidence of criminal activity, they signify that anxiety over this had grown to the point that it was recognisable by Moore's readership, emphasising its cultural relevance across England. Such panic about the level of criminal baby farming integrated neatly with wider fears of degeneration occurring at the *fin de siècle*. As baby farming absorbed the maternal responsibility of childcare into a cash transaction, a 'sacrifice of humanity' is made in perpetuating a 'commodity culture' (Lehan, 2006:20). Thus, the baby farmer's character concurs with notions of degeneration; as Mrs Spires dehumanises the children in her care as commodities, so too is she herself dehumanised as an 'unnatural woman'. As such, the novel both unsettled and reaffirmed the boundaries of the public and private spheres; whilst the subject of payment reiterated that baby farming was a commercialised form of maternal labour that had 'torn open' the domestic sphere, the representation of Mrs Spires as unhuman served to reinforce the desirability of such boundaries.

Critically, at its heart, baby farming was a business that capitalised upon the large demand for childcare due to mothers seeking work in the public sphere. Thus, baby farmers, in this sense, were no different than other members of the working class who conducted trade from their homes – the necessity for which further reiterates the idea of separate spheres as a middle-class conception. Building on this notion, on the basis of economic turnover, the taking in of multiple children was a logical choice, just as, for example, one might take in a large amount of needlework to maximise income. However, the large number of children that Mrs Spires 'fosters' is depicted in a way that suggests they are objectified in terms of their economic value, framing her actions in a decidedly criminal light. When viewed within the legal framework of the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act, Spires is running a (likely

unregistered) criminal baby farm, as she takes in more than one infant for payment. Concerns as to the objectification of children that were farmed out stemmed from the replacement of the 'natural' relationship between mother and child with an economic one, thus supposedly resulting in a lack of emotional investment in their wellbeing. In the context of the *fin de siècle*, this can be interpreted as a fear of the disintegration in the quality of childcare among the working class through this overlap between the domestic and public spheres. This was seen as directly impacting upon the health of the next generation of workers and soldiers that would support Britain's imperial interests, simultaneously translating into a concern over the 'degeneration' of the population and building upon the sense of British nationalism that rose in prominence throughout this period.

Historians such as Annie Cossins discuss this demand for such allegedly inferior childcare. She claims that 'the combination of shame and poverty ensured an ongoing market for the farming of babies' (Cossins, 2015:73). This is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, the structured hierarchies embedded within Victorian Manchester disadvantaged both the working class and women, and domestic servants were especially vulnerable to the negative conceptions of their employers. However, this vulnerability did not mean that the identities of all unmarried, working-class mothers working as servants were dominated by the stigma attached to fallen women. As suggested previously, the values of the working class were not simply poorer copies of middle-class values. Rather, they formed their own, fluid interpretations of 'respectability' and, in Manchester in particular, engaged in pre-marital relations frequently as part of courtship and produced illegitimate children when marriage plans were frustrated. Hence, they experienced their unmarried status simultaneously alongside many other aspects of their individual personhood, and often prioritised survival over self-admonishment. Elizabeth Langland observes this in her publication *Nobody's Angels*

(1995), noting that historians have often relied on household manuals such as ‘Mrs Beeton’s *Book of Household Management*, which reflect middle-class aspirations, not actual circumstances’ to form these arguments, creating a ‘distorted picture of domestic service as a “bridging occupation” for the working classes’ (Langland, 1995:15). As such, although some domestic servants may have indeed taken their employers’ ideals to heart and felt shame for their ‘fallen’ state, as Esther does, this reality was not universal. Therefore, the aspect of shame may indeed have been, if not over-estimated, then perhaps generalised by historians as an explanation for criminality within baby farming, neglecting to account for the differing cultural contexts between the various regions of England.

Secondly, this association with poverty and baby farming fuelled pejorative conceptions of working-class parents, by building on the notion that the heavy burden of caring for children, whether illegitimate or not, incentivised infant mortality for those living in poverty. Such concerns reflected a (mis)conception of apathy on behalf of working-class parents which has now been refuted by critics (see Chapter One), as it suggests they were viewed as problems to be solved rather than children to be loved, vastly contradicting Moore’s representation of Esther. Finally, however, perhaps the most important issue with this connection is the fact that shame and poverty are completely different states of being, with entirely different challenges - none of which were necessarily mutually exclusive. Their conflation, therefore, benefited only those that were championing the regulation of baby farming and thus were dependent on such negative conceptions of the trade. This was, in turn, detrimental to how these arrangements were interpreted and understood in the context of the *fin de siècle*. It revealed that the material conditions of the working classes were not conducive to the notion of separate spheres, thus further unsettling these boundaries.

Moreover, the discovery of an illegitimate pregnancy did not always result in dismissal; some mistresses treated their pregnant servants with compassion. This instance is represented in Moore's novel, conflicting with the notion that the domestic sphere veiled criminality. When Esther reveals her pregnancy to her employer, this revelation is received with compassion, and she provides her with money and a letter of reference, despite her dismissal (Moore, 2012:76–77). Later employers take this charity even further, with the character of Miss Rice:

I'll give you the wages you ask for. It is more than I can afford. Eighteen pounds a year!
But your child shall not be taken from you. You shall not go to the workhouse. There aren't many such good women in the world as you Esther (Moore, 2012:154).

The display of sympathy to servants who gave birth to illegitimate children was not as rare as might be assumed. As Melanie Reynolds points out, the perception that they would inevitably be dismissed in the event of a pregnancy is now being challenged. Some employers did indeed take pity on their servants, giving them 'both monetary and emotional support, as they saw them as the victims of unscrupulous men' (Reynolds, 2016b:50). Tanya Evans also notes that some masters and mistresses utilised a variety of 'survival networks' to help their servants in the event of unexpected maternity (Evans, 2005:3). Here, a parallel can be drawn. As previously established, the poverty of the working class did not rob them of affection for their children, nor grief in the event of their death. However, the comfortable circumstances and stringent conceptions of socially acceptable behaviour among the middle classes equally did not necessarily rob them of feelings of compassion and sympathy for the plights of their servants. Therefore, just as the working classes forged networks amongst themselves to survive, such networks also existed amongst compassionate employers, interacting, and

occasionally conflicting with concerns of illegitimacy as a moral 'contagion' and thus a threat to the domestic sphere. Hence, women not only interacted with the public sphere to seek employment, but also carved out a territory for themselves in the name of mutual support, of which baby farming was only one component.

Discussion of the demand for baby farmers from domestic servants also highlights the lack of privacy between mistress and servant. As Elizabeth Langland notes, it 'was in the home, with its select, few workers, each under the surveillance of another in a rigid hierarchical chain, that the moral dimensions of class could be fully articulated and enforced' (Langland, 1995:14). This statement places the panoptical theory of surveillance into the context of middle-class domesticity, in which, theoretically, servants would eventually internalise the role of their mistress by regulating their own behaviour according to middle-class standards of morality. However, such language also emphasises the contradictions within the ideological construction of the middle-class home; it was mythicised as a haven of domesticity, and yet perpetuated standards of surveillance that placed servants in the role of prisoners, with mistresses as their guards. Furthermore, this application of panoptic principles could not truly be taken to its full extent when isolated within a singular 'home', as inhabitants of the domestic sphere were also subject to the disciplinary practices and controls of the population as a whole. Mistresses were also held to perceived standards of respectable feminine behaviour. As Langland notes, 'bourgeois women were both oppressed as women and oppressors as middle-class managers' (Langland, 1995:18). This is revealed in an altercation between Esther and one of her mistresses, as she internally expresses concern as to the public perception of her hiring multiple wet-nurses, thinking 'she did not care for it to be publicly known that the life of her child had been bought with the lives of two poor children' (Moore, 2012:125). Thus, as much as domestic ideology perpetuated the idea of the

home as separate from the public sphere, literary representations of baby farming disrupted this notion, by revealing the degree to which all women were subjected to surveillance from their communities and judged according to middle-class understandings of femininity.

The theme of wet nursing in Moore's novel highlights contradictions within middle-class understandings of domesticism. Sourcing breast milk from working-class women was a popular choice for many middle-class mothers in the nineteenth century (Nelson, 2007:13). It was also a target of criticism, as by definition such a demand relied on the supply of 'fallen' women who were forced to disregard the needs of their own infants for the sake of employment. Thus, Esther's position highlights contemporary criticism towards the child's biological mother for her inclination towards 'fashionable' childcare methods. When Esther undertakes this role, integrating into the domestic sphere of her employer, she is treated in a utilitarian fashion to maximise the production of her breast milk, being fed continuously throughout the day with her exercise restricted (Moore, 2012:120). In this context, Esther embodies the production line, producing a commodity for consumption. This representation is not dissimilar to Dickensian factory workers, who are also dehumanised into 'hands' in the name of efficiency in the novel *Hard Times* (1854). Esther's son, therefore, is a mere trigger for the maternal mechanisms of her body, ensuring her production of breastmilk and thus her income. However, once this process is completed, he 'has fulfilled his economic niche and is therefore dispensable' (Marinero, 2014:11). This commercialist context encompasses the maternal duties of wet nursing as another form of labour which depended on the exploitation of the working classes, specifically mothers and their infants. As such, domestic ideology is revealed as an unstable intersection for both 'a patriarchal ideology regulating interactions between men and women and a bourgeois ideology justifying the class system and supporting the social status quo' (Langland, 1995:18). The limitations that are placed upon Esther's

freedom by domestic servitude therefore reveal the degree to which the labour of the working class was depended upon to create the illusion of separate spheres, which objectified those in such roles as symbols of status, rather than members of family within a home.

The representation of this commercialisation of breastfeeding inverts middle-class fears of contamination. As Pamela K. Gilbert notes, 'eating is the activity which first demarcates the boundaries between inside and outside, and yet perennially destabilizes them' (Gilbert, 1997:20). Thus, Esther's position as a wet nurse embodies these perceived dangers of permeation:

She grew happy in the tide of new blood flowing in her veins, and might easily have abandoned herself in the seduction of these carnal influences, but her moral nature was of tough fibre, and made a mute revolt. Such constant mealing did not seem natural. . . (Moore, 2012:120).

Wet nurses were sources of concern in terms of their potential to contaminate the bodies of the infants they nursed with undesirable traits, from immorality, to even physical diseases such as syphilis (Carpenter, 2010:79). Reflecting the reciprocal nature of this relationship, however, is Esther's continual feeding by her employer. Although allowing her body to heal from the trauma of childbirth and become 'whole' again, such indulgence conflicts with her sense of self and she begins to experience feelings of adulteration, as the bourgeois mechanisms of fashionable childcare continue to integrate within her. In this depiction, therefore, it is Esther that is in danger of becoming corrupted, rather than the child she nurses. Moore's representation of the reciprocal interchange between classes in the occupation of wet nursing therefore inverted associated fears of moral contagion. It is not working-class illegitimacy that is the 'contaminant', but the 'carnal' influence of her employer.

She is thus depicted as a temptress luring Esther away from her own maternal duties, rather than an angel in the house acting as a 'civilising' influence for her working-class servants.

Esther's concern for the physical danger to her child subverts preconceived bourgeois notions of promiscuity as a permanent corruption of a woman's body and soul, linking wet nursing and criminal baby farming in the context of *fin de siècle* attitudes to sexuality. The pressure to neglect her son is inflicted upon her by the demanding nature of her employer and the greed of Mrs Spires. Together, they form a cyclically destructive relationship that Esther highlights in her criticism of her mistress:

. . . you hire a poor girl such as me to give the milk that belongs to another to your child, you think nothing of the deserted one. . . fine folks like you pays the money, and Mrs Spires and her like gets rid of the poor little things (Moore, 2012:125).

Such an overt assertion of a 'fallen' woman's moral superiority over her mistress enables their competing maternal identities to intersect with their differing class status to prioritise 'natural' maternal instincts over middle-class stigmas. Moore attributes the mortality of infants directly to the practice of wet nursing in this interaction. Esther identifies that her employer, who refuses to breastfeed her own infant, and the baby farmer who neglects her child, share equal responsibility for the destruction of infant life. Esther may have integrated into her mistress's home, but the pressure placed on domestic servants to neglect their own familial responsibilities reveals the damage inflicted by attempts to maintain separation from the public sphere. The behaviour of the New Woman and her negative literary representation as a 'bad' mother thus links to anxieties of degeneracy among the working classes by highlighting the children of wet nurses as collateral damage of this middle-class trend. As

such, the private sphere of Esther's mistress, far from being a haven, was directly associated with public issues of infant mortality and criminality.

As Liggins argues, Esther's 'impassioned speech on the untimely deaths of working-class children specifically implicates the fashionable New Woman in the practice of infanticide' (Liggins, 2000:26). Indeed, the 'New Woman' was perceived as 'worrying' as she challenged the conflation of motherhood and femininity. Although Moore challenged certain middle-class conceptions, such as the stigma of illegitimacy, his depiction of Esther's journey is ultimately a criticism of such rejections of maternity. Thus, the milk in Esther's body is depicted as 'belonging' to her child; she recognises her subjection to her identity as a mother as she rejects lucrative maternal labour due to her 'animal-like' maternal instinct to save her child (Moore, 2012:126). Furthermore, Esther's eventual success in raising her son to be a contributing member of society through his occupation in the army signifies the fact that working-class women were burdened with the responsibility of producing the next generation of healthy (and therefore productive) workers and soldiers. Hence, the practice of family limitation or the birthing of sickly or weak children evoked criticism from politico-medical discourses intent on championing Britain's imperial vision. Consequently, throughout this period, concerns as to the behaviour of the New Woman were linked to both nationalism and concerns of degeneration. Liggins argues, however, that celebrations of successful feats with unmarried motherhood 'over the New Woman's shirking of her maternal duty does not take account of class' (Liggins, 2000:30). Indeed, Moore certainly had little knowledge as to the practical struggles of everyday life within the working classes, and his previous work focusing on domestic servants 'was notable for its condescension' (Regan, 2012:x). Therefore, even in the attempt to portray a more sympathetic representation of single, working-class mothers, Moore's depiction of maternity as an innate quality, alongside his negative representation of

commercialised maternal duties, built upon middle-class domestic ideology that was incompatible to the lives of the working classes.

Wider concerns over the perceived correlation between 'unacceptable' femininity and infant mortality also stretched beyond Moore's criticism of wet nursing, affecting for example, disciplinary controls in industrial cities such as Manchester, in which many women farmed out their children to seek employment in factories. The notion of paid maternal labour challenged middle-class notions of maternity as an innate and therefore 'natural' instinct. This, however, was affected by the differing cultural context of industrial cities such as Manchester, as it was not just the decision against procreation that received criticism, but also the informal childcare arrangements set up by women to engage in employment. As discussed in chapter two, mothers engaged in factory work were the targets of vociferous condemnation through regulatory discourses such as the *British Medical Journal*. This movement gained further legislative ground at the *fin de siècle*, through the 1891 Factory Act, which prevented mothers from returning to their employment before their child was one month old (Liggins, 2000:18). This demonstrated a perceived link between infant mortality and female employment in factories, which stemmed from the interpretation of farming out children as a rejection of maternal responsibility on the part of working-class mothers. Such legislation assumed a gendered separation of the public and domestic spheres, presenting a structural disadvantage for mothers with no husband to contribute a 'breadwinner' wage (Kidd, 1999:141) to the household income. As Anne Digby notes, 'such dichotomies are socially constructed and reconstructed according to specific historical circumstances' (Digby, 1992:196). Hence, the ideological construction of maternity was interpreted in the specific cultural context of industrial cities such as Manchester, signifying that baby farming was

considered, not only an urban issue, but also a consequence of rapid Victorian industrialisation.

Moore's representation of Esther Waters demonstrates that the link between domestic servitude and criminal baby farming fed into anxieties as to the presence of criminality within the domestic sphere. Moreover, the experience of maternity for domestic servants emphasised their liminal position between the domestic and public spheres, as their subsequent need to farm out their children further unsettled middle-class perceptions of the home as a separate haven from the rest of the world. The occupations of wet nursing and baby farming were also linked to commonly expressed concerns of degeneration and a simultaneous rise in nationalism at the *fin de siècle*, which connected the maternal practices of women to the supply of healthy workers and soldiers to ensure Britain's imperial future. These maternal practices of working mothers, including the decision to farm out children, will therefore be probed further in the following section, exploring the representation of Health Visiting in Manchester. Building on the notion of increasing structural disadvantages for single mothers working in factories in this period, a question will be posed: Why did certain female 'transgressions' into the public sphere become the target of more vociferous criticism than others?

The Social Borderland: Female Employment and the Surveillance of Baby Farming in Manchester

This section will further explore the ways in which representations of baby farming disrupted conceptions of the public and private spheres. As established previously through the literary figure of Esther Waters, the trade not only allowed industry to invade the homes

of baby farmers, but its very existence was also a consequence of female integration into the public sphere for the purpose of earning a living. However, whilst certain forms of employment, such as domestic service, were considered acceptable, and even desirable for working-class women, other occupations, such as factory work, were strongly criticised, particularly in cities such as Manchester. Moreover, the baby farming trade could even be viewed as cause for further female integration into the public sphere, through the growth of health visiting. This was usually undertaken by middle-class women, for example, the Manchester Ladies' Health Society which, although established in the 1860s (Lewis, 1991 :35), became of greater prominence in the context of the trade during this period. The representation of Health Visitors, female servants and factory workers, and their represented connections to baby farming, will thus be examined and compared in this section, to determine why certain 'transgressions' into the public sphere by women were depicted in Manchester newspapers as more acceptable than others.

In an official capacity, baby farming was extremely rare across the north of England. When the House of Commons Select Committee on the Infant Life Protection Bill met in 1890, members and witnesses voiced the differences they perceived in the levels of illicit activity:

Asked by Mr Walter McLaren whether he desired to strike at people who took their neighbours' children out of kindness as well as baby farmers, the witness said he did not think the former class existed in London. Mr McLaren assured him that in the seaport and manufacturing towns of the North of England people frequently took in the children of neighbours and relatives in distress, and charged the bare cost of maintenance (*Manchester Guardian*, 1890:6).

Indeed, throughout the 1890s, it was noted in local circulars that only two houses outside London were registered to receive infants under the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act; one in Bath and the other in Manchester (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896c:10), the latter of which was under 'supervision and surveillance' by local authorities (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1896:6). Representations such as this are curious considering that there were indeed incidences of criminal baby farming in the north of England. Both John and Catherine Barnes, and William and Elizabeth Pearson were glaring examples of this criminality. And yet, in the context of legislative debate, this does not appear to have affected the depiction of informal childcare arrangements that supported mothers within the city. These claims disputing the existence of baby farming in Manchester had also appeared earlier in the century; for example, Edward Herford, Coroner for Manchester, had previously stated in 1871 that criminal baby farming 'posed little of a problem in the north west' (Pearman, 2017:155) despite the criminal case of Frances Rogers occurring this very same year. Representation of such sentiment, however, appears to have continued throughout this period in the *Manchester Guardian* (*Manchester Guardian*, 1890: 7; *Manchester Guardian*, 1896b:7) and the *Manchester Courier* which, although admitting that cruelty to children existed in Manchester, still referred to the trade in terms of the 'sickening revelations in connection with the baby farming cases in London' (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1891:4). Hence, although representations of baby farming continued to perpetrate negative stereotypes, this variation in the perceived commonality of the trade reinforces the idea that individuals expressed identification with the geographic and cultural implications of living in Manchester as opposed to London. Thus, conceptions of baby farming were negotiated in the context of this sense of opposing civic identity within the city.

Despite this intermittent reluctance to acknowledge the existence of the trade in Manchester, baby farming and its criminal underbelly continued to operate within the city. The denial of these figures, however, becomes more understandable when considered in the context of a code of 'non-interference' within working-class communities. As seen in Chapter Three, in cases of blatant criminality such as that of William and Elizabeth Pearson, neighbours would often provide charity and care to abused children, but they would rarely inform authorities. This code of conduct within such communities meant that, in the context of the geographic separation of working-class districts from middle-class suburbs in Manchester (see Chapter One), knowledge of the childcare practices in such districts was often limited to that gleaned from philanthropic efforts, visits from medical men, or other forms of inspection. These other forms included the efforts of Health Visitors, which, as will be established in this section, were operating at an extremely limited capacity. Thus, it is likely that these demonstrations of ignorance as to both the scope and the material circumstances of adoption practices represented in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier* stemmed from a geographic separation of social classes within the city, rather than a separation of the domestic and public spheres.

Building on this role of inspection, during this period a female-led enterprise of health visitors under the name of the 'Ladies' Health Society' operated in Manchester. The role of these health visitors was more informal than that of inspectors, rather, they acted as an 'official 'friend', gaining voluntary entry into the houses of mill hands and working people' (Pearman, 2017:191). It was this unofficial role that allowed them to interact with working-class mothers with less resentment for their interference (according to the health visitors themselves) (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896a:9). They had no legal power, but where necessary they discretely informed the NSPCC of cases where a child was in danger (Pearman,

2017:192). This scheme was not instigated by any government authority, but from philanthropic intentions and financial backing from the Corporation of Manchester.⁴⁶ The frequently aggressive professionalisation of medicine had often led medical men, through regulatory discourses like the *BMJ*, to use ‘their “expertise” to stake a claim on infanticide and to relegate female reformers to the ranks of amateurs’ (Homrighaus, 2001:352), reinforcing gendered constructions of separate spheres by diminishing conceptions of their professional capacity. However, the Manchester Ladies’ Health Society became intrinsically involved with a number of community matters that medical men were attempting to ‘monopolise’, such as sanitation, public health, and childcare practices, occupying what Anne Digby terms a ‘socially acceptable borderland’ (Digby, 1992:198). Digby argues that this borderland accommodated middle-class women ‘engaging in semi-public activities’, as it allowed ““official” Victorian values to be silently transgressed . . . without formal recognition necessarily having to be taken of such “frontier violations”” (Digby, 1992:198). This observation appears consistent with the representation of the Ladies Health Visitors operating in Manchester, as the domestic focus of their work could have allowed them to be categorised as only ‘semi-public’ and thus still compatible with the ideological construction of separate spheres.

The Manchester Ladies’ Health Society was represented in a largely positive manner within the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier*, as emphasised in the depiction of their evidence given to the Committee for Infant Life Protection upon meeting to discuss the efficacy of the 1872 Act. An outline of operations in Manchester is given, stating that each of the fourteen health visitors in Manchester, along with six in Salford, were paid fourteen shillings per week.

⁴⁶ It was believed that this was the only established society to be working in the particular way of cooperation with other organisations, such as the Working Committee and the Corporation of Manchester (although it was noted that an ‘experiment’ of a similar kind was occurring in Leeds at this point) (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896a:9).

Each were given certain districts to cover and completed a list of visits every day (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896a:9). The article is particularly praising of these Ladies, stating that although they reported the details of their lists with the Health Committee ‘the visitors did not do justice to themselves, and did not record every visit. It was a labour of love with them, and they worked far beyond their prescribed hours’ (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896a:9). This language frames the women involved in the society, not as professionals, but as exemplary maternal figures encouraging the creation of the ideal ‘home’ according to middle-class conceptions. Critically, the occupation of health visitor was represented, not as an occupation at all, but as a calling, conforming with binary assumptions of women as ruled by maternal instincts and concerned only with domestic matters, as emphasised by the championing of extra labour completed for no extra payment. As Digby notes, charitable effort involving ‘moral interaction between donor and recipient, was normatively located in the private sphere, although in practice it involved women in work within the community’. Hence, although their role was a paid one, the domestic focus of the Society meant that their ‘transgression’ into public matters was reconciled with gendered constructions of separate spheres through their depiction as charitable women handling domestic matters, rather than professionals engaging in paid employment.

The aspect of class identity, however, was also a key component in the positive reception of the Society within the public sphere. Their depiction as ‘ladies’ was crucial to their depiction as a positive influence in regulatory discourses that connected ‘the moral qualities of the private woman and the public good’ (Digby, p. 202). Thus, as their name would suggest, the Ladies Health Visitors represented themselves - and were represented as - conforming with middle-class conceptions of ‘ladylike’ behaviour. This included a protestation of ignorance as to certain matters located deeper within the public sphere, such as legislation:

Witness: We are really very old-fashioned, simple people in Manchester, and we know nothing of Acts of Parliament. – (Laughter.)

Lord Llandaff: I do not think that would be generally accepted in Manchester. – (Laughter.)

Witness: I am speaking for our own Society. I could not answer for anything else.
(*Manchester Guardian*, 1896a:9)

This also aligned with the idea of a sense of civic identity in Manchester. The notion that such ignorance of legislation spanned across the whole city was quickly dismissed, conveying an acknowledgement of Manchester as a separate cultural entity and thus reinforcing Kidd's claims that 'late Victorian Manchester still represented an independent-minded cultural force' (Kidd, 1999:164). However, this self-represented ignorance as to legislatures within the public sphere also acted to 'feminize' the activities of the Society within the community. By reiterating 'the longstanding belief that women's portfolio in society did not extend to national politics' (Steinbach, 2012:56) the illusion of a gendered separation of spheres was maintained. This adherence to middle-class conceptions of femininity in terms of their demeanour thus rendered their contribution to the Committee of Infant Life Protection, on the condition of childcare practices and the baby farming trade, as unthreatening, allowing them to maintain this occupation of the social borderland that they had carved for themselves.

However, Digby's suggestion that the social borderland, to an extent, accommodated the experiences of working-class women working outside the home, allowing integration into the public sphere without 'formal recognition' (Digby, 1992:198) is more questionable. Such 'frontier violations' for working-class women working in Manchester factories were indeed

recognised and represented as responsible for the high infant mortality rate. One article in the *Manchester Courier* represented this connection:

No race that aspires to dominion, either in colonisation or in commerce, can afford to squander its children. The factory is not the sphere of the wife and mother (Rose, 1906:12).

In the context of *fin de siècle* attitudes towards motherhood, this statement directly attributes the factory work of women to the high infant mortality rate. It also emphasised the degree to which paid childcare intersected with conceptions of race. Building on the idea that this ‘was a crucial determinant of physical, intellectual and moral character’ (Meyer, 1996:15), the recent imperial defeat of the Boer War had triggered concerns as to the condition of ‘British stock’ (Toynbee, 2008:vii). Such nationalistic insecurities were fuelled by campaigns to push for higher pay, living conditions and benefits for children. For example, in the early-twentieth century Maud Pember Reeves (part of the Fabian Women’s Group)⁴⁷ claimed that the ‘outstanding fact’ about the children she observed ‘was their puny size and damaged health’ (Reeves, 1913:180). Whatever the specific cause for illness and death, she claimed ‘the all-embracing one is poverty’ (Reeves, 1913:181). Baby farming was therefore linked to these anxieties as to the physical condition of the working class, which was represented as a threat to the imperial future of Britain. However, the article also denies any presence of a trade that ‘could be stretched into what is known as “baby farming”’ (Rose, 1906:12) thus distinguishing the childcare practices of Manchester women from pejorative representations of the trade. Rather than depicting the deliberate neglect of children for profit, such informal

⁴⁷ Between 1909 and 1913, she and other members of the Fabian Women’s Group chronicled the lives of 42 working-class families in Lambeth in minute detail and published their findings in the book *Round About a Pound a Week* (Toynbee, 2008:vii).

arrangements are represented as merely inferior to the care provided by biological mothers, which is inevitably withheld through seeking out factory work. The aspect of a gendered separation of spheres is explicitly referenced in this respect; the factory - being part of the public sphere - designated as a place women should not infiltrate.

Mothers engaging in such employment thus encountered far more criticism than, for example, domestic servants as despite the fact that both roles required women to leave their homes, servants technically remained within the domestic space. Thus, service was often portrayed 'as an ideal occupation for a young girl because it kept her under surveillance and out of trouble even as it trained her for running her own household upon marriage' (Langland, 1995:15). Female factory workers on the other hand, had frequently been perceived as a threat to male employment throughout the century, with reports often citing examples of employers exploiting the fact that women would accept lesser wages (Gomersall, 1997:10). By comparison, domestic servitude was a predominantly female profession, as male servants were often seen as more difficult for the mistress of the house to manage, cost more, and were designated to different roles that were not applicable to all middle-class households, such as stable work (Tosh, 1999:19–20). Hence, despite the fact that, for most working-class women, the amalgamation of public and private life could and did occur in the name of employment, the representation of such 'transgressions' into public life varied according to the nature of this employment. As Digby herself admits, the behaviour of women was criticised when 'perceived as an overt challenge to fundamental masculine or patriarchal strongholds' (Digby, 1992:210). Thus, as factories and mills were perceived as an environment in which women could compete directly with men, criticism of those working in the industry advocated to remove mothers from work. However, the 'feminine' labour performed by the domestic servant was instead subject to the continuing 'moral' surveillance aiming to prevent

workers from becoming mothers. The regulation of women in these two roles, although appearing as the inverse of each other, worked to a similar effect in propagating notions of the 'angel in the house' by attempting to maintain a separation of maternal identity from that of the 'breadwinner' (see Chapter Two), building upon and drawing from the gendered construction of separate spheres.

The represented success of the Ladies Health Visitors appears to utilise Bentham's Panoptic principles, as the role of inspection acted to regulate the actions of those who were paid to take in children, in terms of the advice they prescribed on childcare methods and sanitation. Indeed, this appears to reinforce Foucault's argument that enforcement of justice can only be achieved by continuous scrutiny (Foucault, 1977:96). A discreet 'organ of surveillance' in the form of informal inspection by the Ladies' Health Society, paired with the NSPCC's 'machinery of justice' (Foucault, 1977:96) in cases of criminality, would thus initially have appeared to improve the health of children by regulating the behaviour of both mothers and baby farmers. Thus, Joanne Pearman also argues for the efficacy of the Society, stating that they demonstrated their system to be one that acted 'as a means of prevention of harm rather than one of just control and cure' (Pearman, 2017:192). However, the Ladies' Health Society was also extremely limited in number. One health visitor stated that among a population of 500,000 in Manchester, there were only fourteen visitors, and so they could rarely visit the same house twice unless there was a 'special necessity' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896a:9). As such, their efforts also relied on the role of internalisation. Baby farmers were encouraged to regulate their own behaviour, driven by the possibility of an unannounced visit, by which negligence or criminality could be discovered. Such inspection therefore acted as a regulatory control among the Manchester population in an attempt to improve the infant mortality rate. And yet, as these figures relay, this was a very small society working at an

extremely limited capacity; their overall impact on the infant mortality rate in Manchester was likely almost negligible. Their positive representation in the *Manchester Guardian* thus was more likely connected to their conformity to middle-class conceptions of femininity, allowing for the illusion of separate public and private spheres to be maintained.

Furthermore, the advice given by members of this Society attempted to translate middle-class conceptions of the 'ideal' home as a haven away from the public sphere to those that did not have the means to maintain such separation. They attempted to encourage working-class women to keep their homes 'as tidy and attractive as possible, so that the husband returning from work may be induced to remain at home, instead of spending his evenings in the public house' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896g:10). Their advice thus exposed the assumption that working-class families were "'bad managers", who with a bit more home economics advice from their superiors should be able to feed and clothe their children far better' (Toynbee, 2008:x). However, as Maud Pember Reeves's observations of working-class families have indicated, such people were often excellent managers of their small income, because their situation required it. Reeves stated '[t]o manage a husband and six children in three rooms on round about £1 a week needs, first and foremost, wisdom and loving-kindness' (Reeves, 1913:16). Thus, the work of this Society to improve living conditions also inadvertently revealed underlying pejorative conceptions of working-class parenting that were present even within philanthropic and reformist efforts.

Consequently, this was a point of friction between classes, as these efforts from a middle-class society to induce mothers to keep their houses as a domestic haven highlight several ideological differences. Firstly, this method assumed that criminality, whether private, or as part of the commercial system of baby farming, would not occur if a husband was

present and sober within the domestic sphere, ignoring the role of such figures in encouraging such criminal activity (as seen in previous chapters). Secondly, it did not account for the living conditions of single mothers in Manchester who could and did raise their children in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, although Susie Steinbach argues that, even for the working class, 'a home's size and cleanliness were important indicators of status' (Steinbach, 2012:29), as seen in Chapter Two, the conception of 'dirt' in itself was highly influenced by middle-class ideology. Hence, material wealth was critical in any attempts to fulfil middle-class conceptions of the ideal home, either through maintaining a separation of spheres, or aspiring to a higher standard of comfort and cleanliness within the home in order to project the appearance of a higher social status. As such, the conception of the 'home' was not only based on a gendered construction of separate spheres but was also an ideology that was based on rigid hierarchical class systems. It is therefore the structured inequalities on which domestic ideology was based that undermined efforts based to spread these ideals among the working class to regulate their behaviour, as it focused on the reiteration of such inequalities, rather than establishing any measurable improvement in living standards.

This section has sought to examine the representation of the Manchester Ladies' Health Society within the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier*, in the context of female employment in the domestic and public spheres. Comparison of health visiting to other occupations, such as domestic service or factory work revealed that, whilst some female 'transgressions' into the public sphere were considered compatible with conceptions of a gendered separation between the public and private spheres, others were the target of increasingly vociferous criticism. As such, the integration of the Society within the community was reconciled with such ideology due to their focus on domestic matters and their conformance to 'ladylike' behaviour. Similarly, domestic servitude was also considered as an

acceptable form of employment due to their perceived adherence to their employers' middle-class standards of 'acceptable' femininity. Female factory workers, however, did not occupy such a peaceful area of social borderland, stemming, to a large degree, from their representation as a threat to male employment. Consequently, they were represented as responsible for the high infant mortality rate, due to the necessity to 'farm' out their children, which linked the trade to a notable fear of 'degeneration' amongst the population that marked literary and media trends in Manchester at the *fin de siècle*. The next section in this chapter will thus explore this criticism of such informal adoption practices in greater detail, through the representation of criminal cases of baby farming in Manchester circulars.

Public and Private Criminality: Representations of Criminal Baby Farming in the Press

The representation of criminal cases of baby farming throughout this period built upon, and drew from, perceptions of the existence of criminality within the city, which differed from representations of the trade in London and the country. Newspaper articles discussing the five baby farmers executed across Britain during this period will therefore be considered. Whilst the commercialisation of maternal duties unsettled perceived boundaries between the private and the public spheres, the criminal underbelly of baby farming pushed this anxiety a step further in the context of the *fin de siècle*, as it linked the infant mortality rate with anxieties as to Britain's imperial future. These cases will then be compared to representations of baby farming local to Manchester, as despite this strong conceptual link between the trade and child abuse, the representation of criminality among baby farmers was not always consistent. Some cases were framed within concerns for other issues, including poverty and the perceived 'ignorance' of the working classes, rather than an anxiety as to the presence of a wide-spread criminal trade.

In the same year as the publication of *Esther Waters*, Charlotte Windsor died in prison. Though she was given a life sentence, she was one of only 5 prisoners not to be released after 20 years. One article in the *Manchester Courier* made such an observation:

. . . unlike the great majority of “life” convicts, it has not been considered fit by successive Home Secretaries owing to the nature of the crime to recommend her Majesty to exercise her prerogative of mercy. Windsor is now an old woman, and confinement does not now seem to trouble her much (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1894b:3).

The sustained confinement and death of the woman referred to by many as Britain’s first baby farmer signified continuing anxiety as to the prevalence of the trade within Victorian society. This anxiety was expressed both through media and literary discourse and in harsher legal sentences as the century went on, rendering it unlikely that she should be shown mercy, despite the fact that she is depicted in less threatening terms, as a mere ‘old woman’. Judith Knelman argues to this effect, stating that as she neared death she was judged ‘by the standards of the day rather than the standards of the era in which she was convicted; and so, as she grew increasingly harmless, she was held to be more and more of a liability’ (Knelman, 1998:165). This persisting anxiety as to criminal activity within the trade cannot be ignored as cultural context to the pejorative representations of the trade created in this period, both in literature and the media, creating a reality in which murderous baby farmers shattered the barriers between the public and private spheres to commit commercialised infanticide.

Amelia Dyer was represented as one such murderous baby farmer; the length of her criminal career fuelled claims from figures such as Lankester, who argued that the privacy

surrounding domestic relations enabled criminality within the baby farming trade (Goc, 2013:83). Indeed, one article in the *Manchester Courier* alludes to this conception:

Superintendent Tewsley learned from one of Mrs Dyer's neighbours that on the day preceding the finding of the child's body in the river she had borrowed a piece of cord similar to that found round the parcel the corpse was contained in.

(*Manchester Guardian*, 1896d:6)

The fact that Dyer's illicit activity appeared to be aided by the loaning of such a mundane item suggests that her criminality had been carried out unbeknownst to her neighbours. This would, in turn, appear to corroborate claims that the privacy of domestic relations shielded criminal activity. However, the idea that Dyer operated completely free from suspicion from members of the community due to the privacy of her household must be examined critically. Indeed, this allusion to the separation of spheres according to gender intersects with differing conceptions of domestic ideology as constructed by class. Tosh explains that the material prerequisites of Victorian domesticity could often have been taken for granted, and conceptions of the home as 'as a place of peace, seclusion and refuge . . . would have meant little without certain standards of comfort, privacy and routine' (Tosh, 1999:13). Hence, as examined in the previous section, in poorer neighbourhoods these material prerequisites were often difficult to achieve; home ownership was often an unrealistic goal for many (Walsh, 2014:3) and this was especially the case for unmarried workers who, more often than not, needed to board with others (Steinbach, 2012:29). In consideration of the fact that long-term fluctuations in the demand for labour created very little job security (Harrison, 2013:73), conditions of overcrowding were likely to have been as bad as ever. Moreover, houses in poorer areas were often inadequately constructed, as noted by Seebohm Rowntree in his

study of poverty in York, in which he stated that many houses were built with ‘thin walls of porous and damp absorbing bricks’ and that window frames and doors were made with ‘wood so “green” that they eventually ‘shrink, and admit draughts and dust’ (Harrison, 2013:72). Daily life was likely to be heard by neighbours in such conditions. How then, could such conditions aid the illicit activity of baby farmers and, in particular, such a prolific criminal as Dyer, when the reality was that many homes of the working class were neither exclusively domestic nor private?

Upon closer inspection, the representation of Amelia Dyer shattered gendered constructions of the public and private spheres, not least because much of her illicit activity was conducted outside her places of residence, within the public sphere. Indeed, this fact was pointed out in one article in the *Manchester Guardian*:

The immunity from suspicion which the woman enjoyed during her brief residence in Reading is easily understood, for it is very probable that the children were never brought to Kensington Road (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896e:5).

This statement overturns the idea that it was the privacy within the domestic sphere that shielded the infanticidal acts of criminal baby farmers, by drawing attention to Dyer’s criminal actions within the public sphere. This pejorative depiction unsettles gendered constructions of the public sphere as a masculine domain by displaying her frequent transgressions into this space. However, the negative representation of these transgressions also simultaneously reinforces middle-class domestic ideology through emphasis that they were conducted for a criminal, and therefore ‘unnatural’ purpose.

Furthermore, the bodies of Dyer’s victims were first discovered in the Thames, and only traced back to her residence when analysis was performed on the handwriting of the

package containing the corpse, making out the name “Mrs Dyer” and an address at Caversham (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896d:6). The discovery of these bodies within such a prominent trade and transport route built upon and drew from anxieties as to the deception and criminality of strangers within a densely populated industrial society. Indeed, Dyer did not conduct her criminal business in the same neighbourhood for the entire length of her career, frequently moving around Bristol (Wilson, 1971:234). She also utilised a number of aliases (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896d:6). Hence, the representation of Dyer’s long criminal career may have touched less upon concerns over the ‘privacy’ accorded to domestic relations, due to a separation of the public and private spheres, and more so the perceived ‘crisis of the knowable community’, in which the transition from a ‘predominantly rural to mainly urban society’ triggered anxieties as to the anonymity afforded to transient populations in such urbanised and industrialised cities (Youngs, 2013:7).

The representation of Dyer in the *Manchester Guardian* also connects to the conception of baby farming as a ‘trade’ in infant life, depicting the consequences of distorting gendered conceptions of the public and private spheres, through the commercialisation of childcare, as potentially violent and tragic. Such intensely pejorative media representation of this illicit activity reignited anxiety as to the extent of criminal baby farming as a whole; one article in the *Manchester Guardian* predicted that more victims would be discovered, stating ‘the police will not cease dragging the river, as they believe that the worst is not yet known’ (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896d:6). Such speculation alludes to continuing coverage of the case, reflecting the serial style coverage of murder trials that was characteristic of New Journalism (Carter and Thompson, 1997:34). However, it also demonstrates the continued inclusion of sensational material in the context of the *fin de siècle* (Marshall, 2007:3). The article links criminal baby farming, and Amelia Dyer in particular due to the representation of the sheer

number of her victims, to the wider infant mortality rate. Hence, concerns are touched upon as to the degeneration of the race, both physically, in the sense of the number of deaths attributed to the trade, and morally, due to the number of criminals thought to be committing such crimes. It was representations such as this that therefore led conceptions of baby farming to become increasingly divorced from that of seemingly honest childcare.

Criminal activity within the public sphere was also an aspect that was emphasised in the case of Rhoda Willis, the last criminal baby farmer to be executed in the United Kingdom and convicted of the murder of a child in a railway carriage (Homrighaus, 2003:261). The location of her crime was particularly significant:

After breakfast the condemned woman sent for her solicitor, and made a full confession to him. She said she wilfully murdered the child in the railway train, and desired that the solicitor should let the judge and all connected with the trial know that there had been no miscarriage of justice in her sentence. (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1907:7)

The expansion of railways has been connected to criminal baby farming by Rose which, he argues, gave criminals 'unprecedented geographical range' (Rose, 1986a:79), reflecting anxieties as to the increasingly transient nature of the population in an industrialised and urbanised society. The expansion of railways was also thought to feed into 'indulgent' literary tastes. The 'mass market for cheap fiction' which grew towards the end of the nineteenth century (Kidd, 2006:135) combined with the demand for sensational publications, which were the ideal products for 'the railway bookstall, offering 'something hot and strong' to entice the 'hurried passenger' and relieve the dullness of the journey' (Pykett, 1994:8–9). As such, the railway system is connected with concerns as to the physical degeneracy of the population

through its perceived connection to the criminal underbelly of baby farming, but also the moral and literary degeneration of the population through the demand for publications on such sensational topics. Moreover, arguably the most notable aspect of the location of a train carriage was the fact that it was both a private and public space, both enclosed and yet entirely permeable, depicting criminal baby farming as physically liminal between these two spheres, thus disrupting conceptions that they were separate.

Representations of criminality further amalgamated the trade with conceptions of child abuse, leading to questions as to the culpability of parents in these illicit transactions. As emphasised in the case of Charlotte Windsor (popularly recognised as England's first baby farmer), the parents of children farmed out to criminal baby farmers were often not entirely ignorant, and indeed occasionally complicit in the act of infanticide, despite the fact that most protested to the contrary. This question of culpability can be observed in this period in media representations of Ada Chard-Williams, who was arrested with her husband for the murder of an illegitimate child that they had 'adopted' by posting an advert in a newspaper (Homrighaus, 2003:261). Williams was represented as communicating her criminal intentions through 'coded' advertisements, appearing to reinforce concerns of criminality within this domain, drawing from and building upon representations such as James Greenwood's published work that argued there was indeed such a "code" within adoption adverts (see Chapter Two). Indeed, the interpretation and communication of Williams's case in the *Manchester Guardian* signifies a deep familiarity with such negative stereotypes associated with baby farming:

The child was entrusted to the care of the female prisoner by its mother, who paid a “premium” of £5 for its “adoption” into the Williams family (*Manchester Guardian*, 1900:8)

The typographic emphasis placed on the words ‘premium’ and ‘adoption’ assigned a subversive, double meaning to these words in a way that reiterated the pejorative reputation of the trade. The inclusion of these inflections to form an implicit accusation by such a prominent newspaper therefore suggests a confidence that this double meaning would be interpreted and understood by the news-consuming public of Manchester. This reinforced the idea that much of the population understood the trade to be linked with criminal practices. The fact that such illicit activity was thought to be conducted within such a public medium thus worked to create a reality in which the separation of domestic and public matters was more desirable in order to prevent such criminality. However, it also unsettled the foundations on which this ideology was based, through the representation of newspapers as a clear way for domestic matters to be negotiated within the public sphere.

It has been established that the reality of such criminal, covert communication between parents and baby farmers through advertisements has now been refuted. As Joshua Stuart-Bennet has noted, there was a ‘communal language’ present in all adoption advertisements (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:40). As such, those posted by criminal baby farmers were indistinguishable from honest offers of childcare. Although this contradicts the notion that parents sought out baby farmers to ‘dispose’ of their children, it may have still worked to the advantage of criminal baby farmers, as their illicit activity was effectively camouflaged within the ‘much larger and generally legitimate commercial system of substitute mothering’ (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:40), working to deceive mothers when looking to farm out their

children. Nevertheless, the fact that criminal and honest advertisements for adoption were indeed so similar worked to create anxiety as to the extent of this illicit activity. The range of such informal networks of childcare, however, is not one that could be prevented as long as working mothers required someone to care for their children. This potential for criminality thus not only drew attention to the vastly unregulated nature of paid childcare, but also the multiplicity of ways in which baby farming disrupted notions of a gendered separation of spheres. As such, not only did articles highlight the necessity of factory mothers to farm out their children to integrate into the public sphere for employment, but they also represented an alleged profitability of such commercial integration into the domestic sphere.

This commercialisation of maternal labour, disrupting the myth of 'idle women in the home' (Langland, 1995: 14) also linked to the profession of midwifery, as pejorative representations of baby farmers and midwives often overlapped, reinforcing the notion of a wide and varied network across cities dealing with different facets of childcare. Midwives were also subject to accusations ranging from ignorance to infanticide and were targets of similar regulatory legislation. For example, the Midwives Act, established in 1902, allowed established midwives to continue their practice until they retired, but allowed no newcomers into the profession without official training (Rose, 1986a:85). It demanded that any woman practising midwifery, or assigning herself the title of midwife, be certified by the Central Midwives Board (Homrighaus, 2003:255). Medical men could not completely usurp these midwives in their duties, however, the necessity to complete this training can be seen as an establishment of two categories of biopower; it was both an exercise of disciplinary power, affecting the anatomo-politics of individual bodies in order to increase productivity, and the introduction of a regulatory control, affecting the basis of the biological processes (Lemke, 2011:36–37). Indeed, regulating the alleged ignorance or criminality of midwives thus

rendered them simultaneously more useful and more docile, clearly acting as an optimisation of the capabilities of individual bodies through disciplinary techniques. However, the occupation of midwives also meant that they directly influenced the biological processes of births and mortalities within the population. As such, improving the practices of midwives, in an attempt to reduce infant mortality, can be interpreted as a regulatory control to improve the conditions that cause such biological processes to vary. The knowledge these midwives received from their training thus allowed them to exercise power as legitimate practitioners operating within the field of medicine in the public sphere, whilst subjecting them to the overall supervision, standardisation, and regulation of their occupation.

The criminal partnership of Annie Walters and Amelia Sach not only emphasised this overlap in the representation and regulation of midwifery and baby farming⁴⁸, but also highlighted the importance of the axis of class in the identities of criminal baby farmers. Sach, with enough wealth to maintain her own premises and employ a servant (Wilson, 1971:257), was clearly a baby farmer of means. In Rowntree's survey of York in 1899, the act of employing a domestic servant was used as a 'dividing line' to differentiate between the working class and those higher on the social scale (Langland, 1995:8). Not all criminal baby farmers met such criteria, but the representation of those who did, presented a serious threat to middle-class domestic ideology by inverting a sign of status into testimony of criminality. It also turns the perceived relationship between servant and mistress on its head; as touched upon in the examination of the literary figure of Esther Waters, servants were often subjected to the continuing surveillance of their employers. However, domestic servants, to an extent,

⁴⁸ Sach ran a maternity home and, while she often organised legitimate adoptions, also farmed infants born in her establishment to Walters, who would ensure they soon disappeared (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1902b:9).

reciprocated this surveillance, which affected the regulation of criminality. Servants on several occasions acted as witnesses in the prosecution of their mistresses in cases of criminal baby farming (*Manchester Guardian*, 1907:8; *Manchester Guardian*, 1870:3; *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1902a:7). The representation of such testimony in Manchester circulars thus displayed the consequences of illicit activity, acting to regulate behaviour across social classes to produce 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1977:138). Negative literary and media representations of baby farming, therefore, not only unsettled middle-class notions of the private and public spheres, but also acted as a reminder of the potentially negative consequences should employers stray from these ideological constructions of 'acceptable' behaviour themselves.

Representations of executed baby farmers further divorced conceptions of the trade from honest childcare which, in turn, affected wider conceptions of the trade in Manchester. For example, in one letter to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, one resident of Didsbury named Milson Rhodes claimed:

In Manchester of every 1,000 illegitimate births 263 are dead before the end of the first year. . . Cases have occurred again and again that prove that the so-called adopted children have not been taken with the idea of raising them, but of getting rid of them as quickly as possible (Rhodes, 1905:4).

This statement sets previously examined claims that criminal baby farming was not prevalent in Manchester, such as that from the Manchester Ladies' Health Society, in a different context, suggesting that conceptions of the trade were not unanimous throughout the city in this period. There were thus many factions of the population which subscribed to periods of panic associated with infanticide and baby farming. The letter also references cases which

have occurred 'again and again' which prove that the practice of adopting children was only a pretence for illicit activity. This concern likely stemmed from the representation of criminal baby farming cases, geographically close to Manchester, within regulatory discourses. Such cases continued to feature in a number of articles in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier* throughout this period, one of which featured the abandonment of a child 'in a manner likely to cause it unnecessary suffering or injury to health' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1896f:7). This further framed the trade in a criminal light, disrupting middle-class conceptions of the 'home' as not only the appropriate place for women, but also children.

However, negative representations of the trade were not always consistent within Manchester newspapers. For example, minor cases of criminal baby farming within Manchester were often depicted in a less sensational manner, with the Chorlton Board of Guardians in 1898 claiming that any violations of the Infant Life Protection Act were due 'simply through ignorance of the law' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1898:4). Frances Zanetti, who was appointed in 1898 as an Infant Life Protection Visitor for the Chorlton Union (Grey, 2009:70) also claimed that the children were in 'perfectly good condition in each case' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1898:4). Even in cases in which the health of the children in question had, in fact, deteriorated, the baby farmers responsible were not always depicted as villainous. In one such case, the 'old woman' charged with caring for the child lived in a residence that fell far short of middle-class conceptions of the ideal 'home', living in a cellar with two other tenants, and was clearly reliant on the child as her only source of income; when told the child should be taken to the workhouse 'she was reluctant, and said "What am I to do for a living?"' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1899:10). Though clearly detrimental to the child, the representation of the 'disgraceful condition of the cellar' in which the baby farmer lived (*Manchester Guardian*, 1899:10) communicated wider concerns of the effect of poverty of

the 'lower' population, rather than an anxiety as to wide-spread criminality that had plagued Manchester newspapers earlier in the century (see Chapters Two and Three).

As such, the baby farmer was found 'not guilty', with the judge presiding over the case stating that 'he did not know what people were about in that part of the world to allow people to live in such places' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1899:10). Such cases therefore represent a different set of anxieties in the context of the perceived connection between criminal baby farming and the infant mortality rate; whilst those that took in children for payment without registering their house as a baby farm were indeed classified as criminal, this was often attributed to ignorance, rather than malice. Thus, representations of the trade at the *fin de siècle* did not necessarily feed into a 'moral panic' (Cossins, 2015:16) as to the presence of baby farming. However, the depiction of substandard childcare which children allegedly endured within the trade, created a reality in which registration and regulation of baby farmers was more desirable, whilst also drawing attention to the fact that the living conditions of the poor did not feature the material prerequisites to be compatible with middle-class conceptions of the ideal home as a haven away from the public sphere.

Attempts to address the issue of criminal baby farming and inadequate childcare were often represented in an unenthusiastic light in Manchester newspapers. The *Manchester Courier* in particular, communicated the flaws of existing legislation, establishing the need for more stringent regulations. This included evidence presented by Frances Zanetti, claiming that cases in her area of inspection had dramatically increased in 1906 (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1906:6). Her evidence was presented in Manchester newspapers as validating the need for further legislation:

Miss Zanetti points out that in many “one-child” cases the baby is received into an already overcrowded house, on the plea that one more or less does not matter. It is fed on the domestic menu of older members of the family, and under the present Act an inspector is powerless since, if the mother is satisfied, and she usually says she is, objection to overcrowding and improper feeding is futile.

(Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 1906:6)

The reference to ‘one-child’ cases alludes to a perceived ‘loophole’ in the 1897 Act in which baby farmers who only took one child for payment did not have to register with their local authority and thus were technically free from inspection. However, this does not mean that such residences were entirely free from surveillance. Zanetti was able to gain access to these homes, despite the fact that she had no legal right, stating that baby farmers often welcomed such visits in order to prevent ‘malicious’ remarks from neighbours (*Manchester Guardian*, 1908:14). This represents the majority of childcare arrangements as legitimate, but also suggests that the neighbours of baby farmers, despite the code of non-interference within communities (see chapter three), enacted their own form of ‘moral’ surveillance. This not only demonstrates the degree to which pejorative representations of baby farming affected the behaviour of the news-consuming population of Manchester, but also undermines conceptions of the ‘home’ as separate from the public sphere, by demonstrating the knowledge (and judgement) of neighbours as to the everyday practices of baby farmers within their community.

The representation of the 1908 Children Act in Manchester newspapers, on the other hand, was imbued with a congratulatory tone, with one article in particular encompassing a retrospective outlook on the history of attitudes towards the legislation of baby farming:

There was a time . . . when such a bill would have been treated as a most revolutionary measure; half a century ago it would have led to wild appeals to the doctrine of personal liberty (*Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1908a:11).

The decreasing prevalence of discourse championing 'personal liberty' was a critical factor in the reduction of much of the reluctance and of the abhorrence of extending legislation within the domestic sphere. As such, regulation was championed during this period by many among the middle class, particularly among the Conservative Party. As Prior argues '[a]fter 1906 the official Conservative line became that state intervention was not bad per se. Instead, the concern was with how state intervention was funded' (Prior, 2018:55). This acknowledgement of the need to regulate paid childcare also acknowledged baby farming as a commercial trade, thus overturning conceptions of mothering as a 'private' act undertaken within the home. Moreover, the success of the Act in regulating this trade also fuelled the alleviation of pejorative conceptions of baby farmers during this period, as it popularised the idea that most child carers formed honest and successful relationships with mothers. As such, Daniel Grey observes that both juries and organisations such as the NSPCC 'were increasingly willing to give foster parents the benefit of the doubt in cases of manslaughter and neglect, rather than proceeding from the standard assumption they had neglected or deliberately killed children' (Grey, 2009:77). This statement therefore emphasises the popular change in attitudes towards baby farmers themselves, as well as the regulation of their trade throughout the century. As such, the retrospective comments simultaneously allude to the beginning of a new period of 'modernity' (Prior, 2018:2), looking back to reflect upon the cultural and legislative transformations that occurred, and yet also displaying an excitement for the future.

Conclusion

At the *fin de siècle*, literary and media representations of baby farming disrupted middle-class conceptions of the public and private spheres as separate, as they depicted a clear commercialisation of maternal duties. As explored through the literary figure of Esther Waters, domestic servants occupied a liminal space between the public sphere and the 'home'; although they were integrated into the domestic sphere of their employer, they were objectified as symbols of status, rather than included as members of the family. As such, they were subject to continued surveillance from their employers, perpetuating notions of the domestic sphere as a haven in need of protection from the 'contamination' of the outside world. The connection between domestic servitude and baby farming thus encompassed this liminal position of the mothers of farmed out children, as well as the children that were paid to be cared for. Indeed, the depiction of Mary Dillon in Margaret Harkness's *A Manchester Shirtmaker* also emphasised the infiltration of working-class mothers into the public sphere. However, it alluded to her social critique of the dire experiences of seamstresses during this period. It also demonstrated how the economic upheaval caused by insecure employment could negatively impact the domestic sphere. Thus, Mary's house is not a haven, but a place of misery.

The commercialisation of maternal duties also drew attention to the established activity of other mothers within the public sphere, as the predominant reason to farm out children was for the sake of employment. This was emphasised through the representation of the Manchester Ladies' Health Society in the *Manchester Guardian*, as their informal methods of inspection provided important insight into childcare practices of the working class that may otherwise not have been gleaned, due to the geographic separation of classes in

Manchester. However, the positive representation of the Society also revealed that certain female 'transgressions' into the public sphere, such as those of health visitors or servants, were able to be reconciled with gendered conceptions of the home due to a strong association with domestic matters. However, other female interactions within the public sphere, for example, through factory work, continued to be the targets of vociferous condemnation, largely due to their perceived threat towards male employment within this domain. As such, regulatory legislation of factory work often focused upon keeping mothers from the workplace, whilst the moral surveillance of domestic servants aimed to prevent workers from becoming mothers.

The press representation of executed baby farmers throughout the *fin de siècle*, in turn, further divorced conceptions of the trade from that of honest childcare, though the *Manchester Guardian* and *Courier* did not consistently follow such negative representation. Newspaper articles thus occasionally reiterated concerns associated with infanticide and baby farming, but also frequently framed representations of the trade within the larger context of substandard living conditions among the working class in Manchester, and even occasionally denied the presence of a criminal trade altogether, echoing a growing sense of civic identity in opposition to that of London. However, despite this variation in conceptions as to the levels of criminality within the trade, figures such as Frances Zanetti continued to champion the regulation of baby farmers, and a number of legislative changes were made during this period to this effect. Such legislative discourses therefore decidedly overturned conceptions of mothering as a 'private' act undertaken within the home, by acknowledging baby farming as both a commercial trade and a domestic one.

Conclusion

In 2002, Sarah Waters published the Neo-Victorian novel *Fingersmith*, which featured the protagonist growing up in a baby farm in 1860s London. Waters's depiction alludes to pejorative conceptions of the trade that have lingered into the twenty-first century:

. . .all about the house – laid top-to-toe in cradles, like sprats in boxes of salt – were Mrs Sucksby's infants. They might start up whimpering or weeping any hour of the night, any little thing might set them off. Then Mrs Sucksby would go among them, dosing them from a bottle of gin, with a little silver spoon you could hear chink against the glass (Waters, 2002:6).

This representation demonstrates how understandings of paid childcare have become separated from understandings of baby farming. The literary archetype of the criminal baby farmer has endured, and the stigma attached to the trade has remained, fuelled by such pejorative representations that continue to portray baby farmers as neglectful at best and infanticidal at worst. On the other hand, those who engage in paid childcare in England are, for the most part, no longer presumed to be incentivised to neglect the children in their care. Hence, although the term "baby farmer" was used throughout the nineteenth century to refer to all paid childcare arrangements, it is now used to refer only to the criminal activity that occurred. This change in popular interpretation of the term suggests that the historiography of the trade remains underdeveloped, with understandings of such practices limited by the over-representation of a small proportion of criminality.

This thesis has explored the manner in which baby farming was represented in literature and the press across the period 1834-1908. It makes an original contribution to existing literature on the subject by focusing on Manchester newspapers, as it is important to

reiterate that there were regional differences in how baby farming was understood and represented in England. Few studies have considered how such representations vary according to region, and existing scholarship into paid childcare in northern towns such as Manchester is decidedly limited. This approach has therefore proved fruitful in demonstrating that the largely pejorative representation of baby farming throughout most of the century stemmed from concerns as to the introduction of a cash nexus into maternal duties. This distortion of the 'natural' relationship between mother and child thus evoked concerns that paid child carers would be incentivised towards neglect or murder to maximise profit. Such fears had emanated from bourgeois domesticity and its perpetuation of a gendered separation between the public and private spheres, out of which grew prescriptive ideals of 'respectable' masculinity and femininity. Baby farming challenged this notion, as the commercialisation of maternal labour allowed aspects of business and economics associated with the 'masculine' public sphere to invade the home.

Journalistic and literary representations of the trade in London publications had a marked influence on the Manchester press. However, when viewed collectively across the nineteenth century, the representation of the trade in Manchester followed a different pattern to that of London. The cultural landscape of Manchester differed from that of the capital, not least due to the geographic separation of classes. Understandings of respectability, and in particular respectable maternity, varied according to both region and class. This was encapsulated by discussions surrounding the 1834 Poor Law Amendments. The harsh legislation, in particular the 'Bastardy Clause', was introduced as an attempt to regulate the sexuality of the working class to that which existed between married couples. It stemmed from both the stigma attached to illegitimate pregnancies, which required a woman to deviate from the chastity so prized within bourgeois conceptions of femininity (Mitchell,

1981:x), and Malthusian fears of an ever-growing number of pauper children (Jones, 2000:5). However, these assumptions neglected to take into account the networks of mutual cooperation that were present in many communities within Manchester. Many people would rely on the help of neighbours before accepting relief from the state. This support came in many forms and included the provision of childcare alongside monetary loans. As such, baby farmers played a critical role within their communities.

Additionally, it has been demonstrated that pejorative attitudes towards illegitimacy were not always as prominent among working-class communities when compared to the middle classes. The environmental consequences of industrialisation and urbanisation in Manchester often led to children being born out of wedlock. However, this did not necessarily mean that women would be driven to utilise the services of baby farmers out of shame, as a way to dispose of their children. In fact, baby farmers provided a vital service which helped to enable the survival of both mother and child within these communities. As Melanie Reynolds argues, these women 'took their roles seriously and worked *with* mothers to ensure that the infants in their care flourished' (Reynolds, 2016b:161–162). They did not take advantage of desperate women wishing to rid themselves of their maternal burden. Rather, they formed productive relationships with parents to the mutual benefit of both parties, allowing mothers to return to full-time employment while earning a wage themselves.

Despite this, concerns over paid childcare did not simply emerge in 1867 when the term "baby farming" was coined ('Baby Farming,' 1867:343). Referred to as 'She-Butchers' in the eighteenth century (Bentley, 2005), the depiction of paid child carers within literature and the press prior to the 1860s demonstrated key patterns of representation that would continue throughout the Victorian era. Indeed, many of these press and literary depictions

were produced in London, emphasising the influence of the capital in establishing such precedents. The work of Charles Dickens highlighted this. His depiction of a baby farm in the novel *Oliver Twist*, which integrated melodrama with realism, was key in the emergence of both sensationalist literature in the 1860s and the baby farmer as a criminal archetype. Further to this, Dickens also played a significant role in the pejorative reputation of the trade in the press, authoring several articles for *The Times* on Bartholomew Drouet's 'child-farm' in the 1840s. These representations, which were then built upon by the case of Charlotte Windsor in 1865, seemingly established the notion that paid child carers were incentivised to neglect or murder the children in their care in the name of profit. As such, the depiction of the evil and avaricious baby farmer had developed long before she was given her name, and it remained a durable and popular narrative throughout most of the period.

A significant component in the perpetuation of this narrative, however, was the documentation of several amateur investigations into the trade, including that of Alfred Wiltshire and Ernest Hart, published in the *British Medical Journal*. In the *BMJ*, these articles were constructed of vague and hazy accusations directed at baby farmers. As discussed in Chapter Two, they also indicated a divergence in regional understandings of the trade, propagating the notion that the greatest demand for baby farmers in Manchester stemmed from factory mothers. The concept of industry was therefore vital in the pejorative representation of baby farming within the city. Building upon negative conceptions of northern, working-class parents, the high infant mortality rate became associated with parental apathy and inept childcare within such communities. Sensational hints and speculation were utilised to fill the gaps left by the lack of any actual evidence to suggest the existence of widespread criminality. Yet despite this ambiguity, the articles set out methods of investigation that were followed by other amateur detectives, including James Greenwood,

who published his own findings in the text *The Seven Curses of London*. This in particular provided inspiration for the publication of several literary texts. As demonstrated in Emma Carolina Wood's *Sorrow on the Sea*, the notion of the criminal baby farmer aligned perfectly with the required characteristics for a female sensation villain, committing domestic crimes under a façade of 'respectability'. As such, the representation of the trade throughout the 1860s set out compelling patterns of representation, the influence of which can be viewed throughout the rest of the century.

As a consequence of this influence of publications produced in London, however, Manchester newspapers initially presented criminal baby farming as a problem only associated with the capital. The discovery of Frances Rogers encapsulated this attitude, as her case was overshadowed in the Manchester press by the case of Margaret Waters. Indeed, Waters was a turning point in discussions surrounding paid childcare. Even though she had likely not acted out of murderous intent, her representation within the press appeared to make tangible earlier, ambiguous claims of criminality made in texts like the *BMJ*. Her case was thus critical in enabling figures such as Ernest Hart, whose own investigations had failed to uncover any definitive illicit activity, to successfully campaign for regulatory legislation in the form of the 1872 Infant Life Protection Act. The depiction of both Waters and Rogers, however, served to exclude baby farmers from conceptions of 'respectable' femininity by associating the trade with criminality. As conveyed in Chapter Two, the gentle, submissive, passive and self-sacrificing 'angel of the house' did not commit infanticide (Knelman, 1998:20). Hence, both figures were defined by this transgression from such bourgeois conceptions of 'ideal' female behaviour. These depictions within the press thus also acted as a disciplinary mechanism in the regulation of the population by displaying the consequences of criminally neglecting children.

Nevertheless, despite this initial reluctance to accept the existence of criminality in Manchester, this did mark a significant point within changing conceptions of the trade. Rogers had demonstrated that the criminal side of baby farming did indeed occur within the city. As such, towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, newspapers began to focus increasingly on criminal baby farming cases of closer proximity. This journalistic representation remained predominantly both negative and sensational, and formed part of the vast increase in press coverage of crime. Hence, the trade became enveloped within the (mis)perception that crime was becoming more prevalent. This concern was also reflected in the frequent emergence of the criminal baby farmer within both literature and theatre in the 1870s, indicating that she had become a widely recognised figure within Victorian society. Depictions ranged from the abusive, alcoholic mother of Mrs Robson in L. T. Meade's *Lettie's Last Home*, to the ignorant child carer who mixed up children in Arthur Sullivan and W. S. Gilbert's *H. M. S. Pinafore*, to the sinister trickster Mrs Sowler in *The Fallen Leaves* by Wilkie Collins. These publications, although varying in popularity, contained commonalities, giving insight into the characteristics associated with baby farmers. As such, criminality or ineptitude was central to each character and was often fuelled by vices such as alcoholism. This aspect in particular demonstrated bourgeois anxieties as to the behaviour of the working classes, which resulted in the criminalisation of common leisure activities.

Within the era of the *fin de siècle*, such concerns as to the state of the working classes became encompassed within fears of 'degeneration' of the population. Consequently, the issue of living standards among the urban poor became a prominent factor within discussions of baby farming. The rise of 'Health Visiting' in Manchester emphasised this, as the visitors' main purpose was to educate working-class communities on matters such as hygiene and nursing, rather than to seek out criminal baby farmers. Additionally, the experiences of these

women enabled the predominantly negative conceptions of the trade to be challenged, as they often claimed it was not malicious intent that caused the deaths of children, but the material difficulties associated with poverty and urban living. Thus, as such issues became more widely observed and documented, the press in Manchester often adopted a different framework in the depiction of less severe cases of criminal baby farming that did not necessarily operate from the immediate presumption of criminality.

Nevertheless, this did not mean that the trade attracted no criticism during this period. As emphasised in the journalistic representation of five baby farmers executed between 1896 and 1907, concerns over the criminal disposal of children remained a prevalent issue across England. These frequent instances of criminality linked the perceived neglectful and murderous practices of baby farmers with the poor physical condition of the working-classes, as highlighted by the embarrassing defeat of Britain's soldiers in the Boer war (Kent, 2002:237). This emphasised that concerns over the trade also intersected with notions of race, challenging the idea of Britons as superior to the populations that the Empire had colonised. Hence, the representation of these cases within the context of the *fin de siècle* linked the trade with anxieties as to the nation's imperial future.

Furthermore, fears of degeneration were not only present within discussions of the urban poor at the *fin de siècle*, but also in the figure of the 'New Woman' (Caine, 1997:134). This surfaced within discussions of baby farming, which had long since been connected to the high infant mortality rate. The mothers who farmed out their children were now not only rejecting their maternal duty, but also their duty to their country by failing to produce a healthy generation of workers and soldiers. George Moore's *Esther Waters*, as part of the literary reaction against the 'New Woman', depicted the baby farmer Mrs Spires as one of the

'bad mother' archetypes in his novel. This also reflected the continuation of differences in regional perceptions of baby farming. Rather than focusing on issues of female employment in industry, as in Margaret Harkness's *A Manchester Shirtmaker*, Esther's roles within domestic servitude alluded to the perceived link between servants and the demand for baby farming. Certainly, Mrs Spires is a threat to Esther and her baby; however, she is only forced to utilise her services due to the pressure exerted by the woman who has employed her as a wet nurse. Thus, the middle-class woman who refuses to breastfeed her children was also depicted as a 'bad mother', reflecting the criticism also directed at such figures during this period. Hence, Moore's representation articulated underlying class tensions in conceptions of criminality within the domestic sphere, by implicating bourgeois employers as creating demand for the illicit disposal of children, in their exploitation of the working class.

Viewing these representations of the trade as a whole across the nineteenth century, depictions of baby farming changed according to underlying tensions associated with other facets of identity, including class, gender and race. Hence, it was not merely a brief source of 'moral panic', defined as 'a phenomenon in which one or more people are viewed "as a threat to societal values and interests"' (Cossins, 2015:18). The utilisation of this term by historians such as Annie Cossins reflects a recognition of the extreme bias in Victorian discourses of baby farming. However, Daniel Grey (2013) and Joshua Stuart-Bennet (2019) point out the term is also often 'carelessly misemployed' to imply that a public reaction was disproportionate (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:33). Such perceptions are unfortunately erroneous and do nothing to explain why some criminal baby farmers did murder their charges (Stuart-Bennet, 2019:34). Moreover, moral panics, as Henry Yeomans notes, are usually episodic (Yeomans, 2014:16). This thesis has demonstrated that press and literary representations of baby farming built upon and drew from continual anxiety about the presence of the trade across several

decades, which in turn linked with persisting concerns about motherhood and bourgeois domesticity. Thus, the changing representation of the trade is more accurately described within the context of 'moral regulation', in which the term 'moral panic' could denote 'an extreme episode' within these longer-term processes (Yeomans, 2014:16). Periods of moral panic – or as Nicola Goc notes, 'maternal panic' (Goc, 2013:10) - surrounding outsourced childcare emerged at multiple points throughout the nineteenth century. However, these peaks were clearly embedded within longer-term processes of moral regulation (Yeomans, 2014:16), as baby farming itself remained a topic of regular discussion in Manchester circulars and a target for regulatory legislation across the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Discussions of the trade have thus provided a useful viewpoint from which to observe how these regulatory mechanisms operated throughout the nineteenth century. The representation of the trade highlighted the critical status of maternity, reproductive sexuality and illegitimacy within the population, from the macro level of infant birth and mortality rates, to the micro level of individual pregnancies (Lemke, 2011:38). By engaging in paid childcare, baby farmers were therefore enveloped within concerns over the high infant mortality rate, within Malthusian fears of over population, and within bourgeois concerns over the sexual behaviour of the working classes. Those who engaged in paid childcare were most often not the sinister figures they were often made out to be within literature and the popular press. Rather, they were usually a vital source of support for mothers. Even criminal cases reported in the press revealed the ambiguity of such pejorative conceptions, with many figures likely innocent of the capital crimes they were charged with, and yet still guilty of other, morally ambiguous practices.

However, such nuances were often overlooked within the framework of bourgeois understandings of femininity. These understandings enabled the social construction of the 'ideal' woman – the self-sacrificing 'angel in the house' that derived her worth from her children and remained safely in the home away from the turmoil of the 'masculine' public sphere (Langland, 1995:291). Thus, the sexuality of baby farmers was central to their depiction within literature and the press, as it was against these conceptions that they were measured – and found to be lacking. Their demonisation therefore reflected this powerful regulation of women, to the point where, as Annie Cossins explains, the line between innocence and guilt was lost (Cossins, 2015: 261). Consequently, although the idea of the murderous baby farmer was often unstable and was increasingly challenged throughout the nineteenth century, it has remained a powerful cultural construction, and will likely continue to endure in the collective imagination of modern society.

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Appendix A – Trials of Baby Farmers 1849-1907

Defendant(s)	Trial Dates	Primary Charge	Place of Trial	Sentence	Sources
Bartholomew Drouet	25 th February-16 th April, 1849	Manslaughter	London	Acquitted	<p>Alpert, M. (2014) <i>London 1849: A Victorian Murder Story</i>. London: Routledge.</p> <p>Thomas, A. J. (2015) <i>Cholera: The Victorian Plague</i>. Barnsley: Pen and Sword.</p> <p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> (1849) 'Mortality at Tooting.' January, p. 3.</p> <p><i>Manchester Times</i> (1849) 'Pauper Farm at Tooting.' January, p. 6.</p> <p>Charles Dickens (1849) 'The Paradise at Tooting.' <i>Examiner</i>. January, p. 1.</p> <p>Brice, A. W. C. and Fielding, K. J. 'Dickens and the Tooting Disaster' <i>Victorian Studies</i> (12)2, pp. 227-244.</p>
<p>Bartholomew Drouet's establishment at Tooting was a privately operated residential institution for pauper children. Drouet entered into arrangements with London parishes to farm pauper children and by 1848, the number of children at this institution has almost doubled. In January 1849, it became the focus of a scandal when 112 children out of the 13,000 died from cholera. Several investigations uncovered terrible conditions. It was revealed that Drouet had spent the minimum amount possible on the children's upkeep, neglecting to provide them with proper nourishment, or clothing in the winter. Reports also stated that the children were underfed, overworked and often beaten. Drouet was also warned by the General Board of Health that the streams on Tooting land were being treated as open sewers, likely to contaminate the drinking water of the institution. Inspectors were assured that the water for the institution was drawn from wells supplied by an underground source, however, at an inquest when asked about the quality of the drinking water, resident surgeon, W. J. Kite acknowledged that the water had an offensive smell. As a result of these inquests, Drouet faced a criminal trial for manslaughter. However, the prosecution was unable to prove that the terrible conditions of his establishment had definitively rendered the children unable to recover from cholera and the jury eventually returned a verdict of not guilty.</p>					
Charlotte Windsor	March 1865 And July 1865	Murder	Devon	Life imprisonment (remained incarcerated after 20 years)	<p>Knelman, J. (1998) <i>Twisting in the Wind: The Murderess and the English Press</i>. London: University of Toronto Press.</p> <p><i>Spectator</i> (1865) 'Child Murder.' August, p. 4</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1865) 'Systematic Child Murdering by a Woman at Torquay.' July, p. 3.</p> <p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> (1894) 'Thirty Years Of Imprisonment.' April, p. 3.</p>
<p>In February 1865, the body of an infant was found wrapped in the 6th May 1864 edition of the local paper the <i>Western Times</i>. The identity of the child was traced by the police and Windsor was arrested, alongside the mother of the child, Mary Harris, on the charge of murder. Windsor had been caring for the child for three shillings per week and had offered on multiple occasions to dispose of the child for five pounds. The two women came to an arrangement, and Windsor committed the murder in her bedroom whilst Harris was in the kitchen. The jury of the first trial were dismissed without agreeing to a verdict. At the next Assizes Windsor was tried for the same offence and found guilty, with Harris acting as a principal witness in her prosecution. She was initially sentenced to be executed, but this was later changed to life imprisonment. She was one of few prisoners who remained incarcerated after 20 years - the standard length for life imprisonment - and died in Woking Prison on 19th June 1894.</p>					
Margaret Waters and Sarah Ellis	21 st -23 rd September 1870	Murder	Exeter	Margaret Waters – Executed 11 th October 1870 Sarah Ellis – 18 months penal servitude	<p>Wilson, P. (1971) <i>Murderess: A Study of the Women executed in Britain since 1843</i>. London: Michael Joseph.</p> <p>Homrighaus, R. E. (2003) <i>Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943</i>. University of North Carolina.</p>

					<p>Behlmer, G. K. (1982) <i>Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England 1870-1908</i>. Stanford: Stanford University Press.</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1870a) 'The Baby Farming Case.' June, p. 3.</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1870b) 'The Destruction of Infant Life in London.' June, p. 6.</p>
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In 1870, an infant corpse was found wrapped up in brown paper and partially hidden under a log. It was found by a twelve-year-old boy who conveyed it to the police. Upon examination, they found it was a female child, approximately several weeks old. This was not the first infant corpse found in this area; there had been several cases in the past weeks. The large number of cases across a relatively short amount of time led some to suspect criminal activity on a larger scale. The paper the body was wrapped in contained 'apparently a female's handwriting, the name of Mrs Waters'. The investigation linked these corpses to a series of advertisements, and in particular one in the *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* posted by a Mrs Oliver, who asked for five pounds and to be contacted via the Post Office in Brixton. A Sergeant Ralph thus arranged to meet with 'Mrs Oliver'. She apparently claimed in this meeting she had no children and if he should entrust his child to her, he would be well educated. However, upon tracing her to her residence, he found eleven children, apparently dirty, emaciated and neglected. Upon discovery, Waters admitted to 'adopting' approximately forty children. The whereabouts of many, however, were never accounted for. On her person was eleven pounds, seventy-nine duplicates of various articles, and twelve letters. Her house also contained little furniture, but 35 'medicine and mixture bottles' and 13 feeding bottles. She was tried for the murder of the infant John Walter Cowen in September 1870, as well as her sister Sarah Ellis, who had also been involved with these dealings. However, Ellis was later acquitted of murder, instead serving eighteen months in prison for obtaining money under false pretences.

Frances Rogers	5 th August 1871	Manslaughter	Manchester	20 years penal servitude	<p>Homrighaus, R. E. (2003) <i>Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943</i>. University of North Carolina.</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1871) 'Baby Farming in Manchester.' March, p. 6.</p> <p>Rose, L. (1986) <i>The Massacre of the Innocents: Infanticide in Britain, 1800-1939</i>. London: Routledge.</p> <p><i>Manchester Times</i> (1871) 'Baby Farming in Manchester.' March, p. 7</p> <p><i>Liverpool Mercury</i> (1871) 'Local News.' March, p. 6.</p> <p>'Baby Farming' (1871) <i>British Medical Journal</i> 2(553) p. 156.</p>
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Frances Rogers advertised in the *Manchester Times* to adopt a child in February 1871, which was answered by a woman from Chorley named Agnes Murray. It was agreed that Rogers would take the child in exchange for a Payment of eight pounds. The mother claimed that she had entered into the agreement on the condition that it would be cared for 'properly' and on the understanding that she could visit as regularly as she chose. However, when calling on the house without previously informing Rogers, she was told that she should have given notice of her visit and was kept waiting for four hours. When she was eventually able to see her child, she found it had greatly deteriorated, and ultimately removed the child from the premises by force, with Rogers attempting to stop her. On the 7th March a police Constable went to visit the house. Upon gaining entry they found an approximately nine-year-old boy nursing an eight-to nine-month-old infant in the kitchen, for which Rogers claimed she received four shillings a week to nurse. Upstairs there was another child approximately eight years old nursing an eight-week-old infant, for which she received five shillings a week. The house was reported to be in a very dilated and dirty state and appeared to contain no food for the children. When the police were escorted down to the cellar by Rogers to conduct a search, they also noted a foul smell, which appeared to follow them after they had returned to the kitchen. At this point it was noticed Rogers had something bulging under her dress. The police retrieved it to find it was the body of a dead infant. She denied all knowledge of the corpse, with newspapers reporting that 'She said, "Oh dear! I know nothing about it," and seemed startled'. The police arrested her, as well as a man named Edward James that she had been living with at the time. Whilst he was able to appoint representation for his defence, Rogers appeared undefended at her trial. After this she was found to have been systematically administering laudanum to each of the infants in order to allay their hunger, which contributed to their collective

<p>deterioration and the death of the child found upon her person. She was sentenced to 20 years penal servitude, for attempted murder and wilful neglect of infants in her care.</p>					
Annie Tooke	21 st - 22 nd July 1879	Exeter	Murder	Executed 11 th August 1879	<p>Homrighaus, R. E. (2003) <i>Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943</i>. University of North Carolina.</p> <p>Knelman, J. (1998) <i>Twisting in the Wind: The Murderess and the English Press</i>. London: University of Toronto Press.</p> <p>Wilson, P. (1971) <i>Murderess: A Study of the Women executed in Britain since 1843</i>. London: Michael Joseph.</p> <p><i>Western Times</i> (1879) 'The Murder & Horrible Mutilation of a Child.' June, p. 7</p>
<p>In May 1879, dismembered parts of an infant corpse were found in a mill stream. The body was reassembled and photographed so that it could be identified. The infant was traced to the mother of the child – a woman named Mary Hoskins – and was found to have been named Reginald Hyde. Hoskins's relatives had reportedly contacted Annie Tooke on her behalf, and the two women met and negotiated a fee of twelve pounds for Tooke to care for the child for the whole year. As the child was handed over, it was noticed that he had a malformation on his torso. A few months later, however, the money from the initial payment had run out, and Tooke reportedly contacted Hoskins to ask for more. Upon receiving none, she smothered the child, murdering him, before dismembering him and throwing pieces of his corpse into the river. Upon her arrest, she initially claimed that she had given the child to a heavily veiled lady a fortnight before and did not know what had happened to it. However, she later confessed to the murder and implicated Hoskins in the act. Hoskins was initially arrested and charged with accessory to murder, but these charges were later dropped.</p>					
John and Catherine Barnes	28 th October 1879	Chester	Murder (charge was later reduced to manslaughter)	Life imprisonment (both were released after twenty years)	<p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1879) 'Summary of News: Domestic.' September, p. 4.</p> <p>Knelman, J. (1998) <i>Twisting in the Wind: The Murderess and the English Press</i>. London: University of Toronto Press.</p> <p>Homrighaus, R. E. (2003) <i>Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943</i>. University of North Carolina.</p> <p><i>Evening Telegraph</i> (1879) 'The Liverpool Baby Farmers' Career'. October, p. 2</p> <p><i>Gloucester Citizen</i> (1879) 'The Cheshire Baby Farming Case.' September, p. 2</p>
<p>In October 1879 John and Catherine Barnes were charged with the murder of children in their care. They reportedly had operated predominantly in Cheshire, apparently engaging in illicit activity for at least ten years before they were arrested, at Birkenhead, Tranmere and Bootle. They had operated under several aliases, including Howell, Hull, Banks, Beard, and Hamilton. The disappearance of 30 to 40 children were linked to them, all of which had been handed over to the prisoners to be cared for. Correspondence was found at their house referring to children Hereford, Bath, Bristol, Oswestry, and about 20 other towns. John Barnes was also charged with two other minor cases of obtaining money under false pretences from pawn shops. Evidence, however, was given at trial that they had had milk delivered regularly to their premises so they could feed the children in their care. Several children linked to them were also found alive in the care of others, to which they had passed on the children for a smaller fee than that which they had received from the parents. They were both sentenced to twenty years in prison for manslaughter.</p>					
Jessie King	18 th February 1889	Edinburgh	Murder	Executed 11 th March 1889	<p>Brocklehurst, S. (2015) <i>Jessie King - the last woman executed in Edinburgh</i>. BBC Scotland. [Online] [Accessed on 31st August 2020] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-30850674.</p> <p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> (1889a) 'Baby Farming Murders in Edinburgh.' February, p. 3.</p> <p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> (1889b) 'The Baby Farming Murders in</p>

					<p>Edinburgh. Execution of Jessie King.' March, p. 8.</p> <p>Wilson, P. (1971) <i>Murderess: A Study of the Women executed in Britain since 1843</i>. London: Michael Joseph.</p> <p><i>Pall Mall Gazette</i> (1888) 'The Confessions of a Baby Farmer.' November, p. 6</p>
<p>Jessie King was the only Scottish criminal baby farmer to be executed and was also the last woman to be hanged in Edinburgh. She adopted Walter Campbell for five pounds, Alexander Gunn for three pounds, and Violet Tomlinson for two pounds. One child would disappear before she took in another. King was living with a man named Thomas Pearson at the time, who claimed to have regularly complained about King's habit of taking in children. In the case of Violet Tomlinson, he said that he was pleased when he came home and the child was gone, with King claiming a home had been found for it. However, when the corpse of a male body was found near King's lodging, her landlord and landlady, suspicious of her behaviour, contacted the authorities and Violet's body was found locked in a cupboard. King confessed to both murders, claiming that each time, Pearson had not been in the house. She was sentenced to death for murder, despite efforts to obtain a reprieve on behalf of alleged mental weakness.</p>					
William and Elizabeth Pearson	December 1889-January 1890	Manslaughter	Liverpool	<p>William Pearson – Seven years penal servitude</p> <p>Elizabeth Pearson – Five years penal servitude.</p>	<p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1889a) 'Alleged Baby Farming At Southport. Extraordinary Evidence.' November, p. 5.</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1889) 'The Alleged Baby Farming at Southport.' November, p. 8</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1889b) 'The Alleged Baby-Farming At Southport. Charge Of Manslaughter.' December, p. 8.</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1890) 'The Alleged Baby-Farming At Birkdale. Shocking Story Of Neglect.' January, p. 7.</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1890) 'The Alleged Baby Farming at Birkdale: Extraordinary Evidence.' January, p. 6</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1890) 'The Alleged Baby-Farming Near Southport: Comittal for Manslaughter.' January, p. 8</p>
<p>In December 1889, William and Elizabeth Pearson of 20 Chatham Road, Birkdale were charged with manslaughter for the death of May Oldfield, Rosina Elizabeth Norris Oldfield and Alfred Joseph Rimmer Talbot, all of whom they had taken into nurse for payment for seventeen shillings per week. Two were the illegitimate children of Mrs Oldfield, a 'well to do' widow, and one was the illegitimate child of her domestic servant. The deaths of all three children were attributed to neglect and witnesses spoke to the alleged drunken habits of both William and Elizabeth Pearson, which caused them to go days without paying any attention to them. There were also reports of William regularly beating May Oldfield and neighbours claimed that they had heard him abuse his wife Elizabeth as well, and she had been seen on multiple occasions with a black eye. The lives of both May Oldfield and Alfred Talbot had been insured. When accused of neglect, Elizabeth Pearson accused Mrs Oldfield of asking her to cause the deaths of the children, as she claimed that she had never had any 'natural affection for them'. She was initially charged as an accessory before the fact, but this was later dropped as the judge did not believe that there was sufficient evidence against her.</p>					
Amelia Dyer	18 th February 1896	Murder	Edinburgh	Executed 11 th June 1896	<p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1879) 'The Bristol Baby Farming Case.' August, p. 7.</p> <p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1896) 'Supposed Wholesale Infanticide at Reading.' April, p. 6.</p> <p>Homrighaus, R. E. (2003) <i>Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943</i>. University of North Carolina.</p> <p>Wilson, P. (1971) <i>Murderess: A Study of the Women executed in Britain since 1843</i>. London: Michael Joseph.</p>

Amelia Dyer was England's most prolific criminal baby farmer, executed in 1896. She had been in the trade for at least fifteen years before she was arrested, and indeed had incurred a previous conviction in 1879. The case suggested that she had not only been active in the exploitation and abuse of children for many years but had already accrued a reputation for doing so. There was little proof at this point, however, that she deliberately murdered the children in her care, thus enabling her to escape with a lighter sentence. Such evidence, however, was discovered when a bargeman came across a brown paper parcel in the shallow water of the Thames. He opened it to find the body of a female child wrapped in flannel. The parcel also contained a brick with a piece of cord tied round it. Subsequent examination of the body found clear indications of violence, as round the neck there was a length of tape which had been tied in a knot just over the windpipe. The police examined the brown paper in which the body was wrapped and discovered the name "Mrs Thomas" (one of her aliases) written on it, as well as an address at Caversham. The river was then searched, and six other bodies were found, which appeared to have been disposed of in a similar fashion. When the police traced her, Dyer was living with her daughter and son-in-law, Polly and Arthur Palmer. Both likely had been helping her to some degree in her illicit dealings and were each initially charged as an accessory after the fact. However, upon her arrest, she claimed to be solely responsible for the murders and that they had had nothing to do with it. Dyer had been institutionalised at multiple points in her life and attempted suicide after she was arrested. She pleaded insanity at her trial, but the prosecution managed to argue successfully that this state was feigned.

Ada Chard-Williams and William Williams	16 th -17 th February 1900	Ada Chard-Williams – murder. William Williams – accessory to murder.	London	Ada Chard Williams executed 6 th March 1900. William Williams acquitted.	<p><i>Manchester Guardian</i> (1900) 'Summary Of News: Domestic.' February, p. 8.</p> <p>Homrighaus, R. E. (2003) <i>Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943</i>. University of North Carolina.</p> <p><i>Leicester Chronicle</i> (1900) 'The Battersea Child Murder.' February, p. 3</p> <p><i>Nottingham Evening Post</i> (1900) 'The Mysterious Chard Williams.' March, p. 2</p> <p>Wilson, P. (1971) <i>Murderess: A Study of the Women executed in Britain since 1843</i>. London: Michael Joseph.</p>
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In 1899, Ada Chard Williams adopted an illegitimate child for three pounds via an advertisement posted in a local newspaper. Three weeks later, she stunned the child with a blow to the head – reportedly by picking her up by her feet and throwing her at a wall - before strangling her. Later, she threw a package containing her body into the Thames. She and her husband then moved to a different town. After moving to Hackney, however, Ada Chard-Williams made the decision to write to the police – something relatively unique in the history of criminal baby farming. In this communication, she admitted that she made a profit out of the baby farming trade by taking in children and passing them on for a smaller fee, however, she denied the charge of murder for this latest infant, claiming that she too had been sub-farmed. However, after the body was discovered in the Thames and a medical examination showed the child had been murdered, both she and her husband were arrested on the 8th December. Her previous neighbours reported regularly hearing children crying and Ada beating them. While Williams was initially found to be guilty after the fact, he was later acquitted – though he was later again arrested for obtaining money under false pretences by a pawnbroker.

Amelia Sach and Annie Walters	16 th January 1903	Murder	London	Both executed 3 rd February 1903	<p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> (1902) 'Alleged Baby Farming.' December, p. 9.</p> <p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> (1903) 'Alleged Baby Farming. Verdict Of Murder Against Annie Walters.' January, p. 5.</p> <p>Homrighaus, R. E. (2003) <i>Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943</i>. University of North Carolina.</p> <p>Wilson, P. (1971) <i>Murderess: A Study of the Women executed in Britain since 1843</i>. London: Michael Joseph.</p>
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The cases of Amelia Sach and Annie Walters were notable in the history of baby farming, as they were executed in a double hanging in 1903. As the case unfolded it became clear that the two women had divided up certain duties in their criminal enterprise. Amelia Sach, by Victorian standards, appeared to be a 'respectable' woman, much like Ada Chard-Williams three years before. She was twenty-nine, married at the time of her arrest, and ran a maternity home. Multiple women gave birth to children in this residence, many of which were illegitimate, and often paid between £25-30 to have them adopted. There were occasions where the adoption services Sach offered were legitimate; after her arrest, many of the infants that had passed through her hands were in fact found in loving homes. However, there were also instances when children were farmed out under the promise of being adopted by 'wealthy ladies', only to soon disappear. This is where Annie Walters was thought to enter the scene; she was thought to

undertake most of the 'dirty work' out of the two of them and was reportedly seen removing babies from Sach's residence. In November 1902, Walters was stopped by the police on one such occasion after leaving the maternity home. On her person was the deceased body of an infant. It is unclear whether Walters suffocated the infant or if she poisoned him with chlorodyne – a dangerous drug that she herself was addicted to – which was a mixture of chloroform and morphine; such a narcotic could also have caused asphyxia, and the evidence of such a dose would likely have been undetectable.

Rhoda Willis	23 rd -24 th July 1907	Murder	Cardiff	Executed - 14 th August 1907	<p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> (1907) 'Baby-Farmer Sentenced To Death.' July, p. 5.</p> <p>Homrighaus, R. E. (2003) <i>Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943</i>. University of North Carolina.</p> <p><i>Dundee Courier</i> (1907) 'Woman Executed at Cardiff.' August, p. 4</p>
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Rhoda Willis was the last criminal baby farmer to be executed in the United Kingdom, and the only one to be executed in Wales. Instead of adopting multiple pseudonyms to engage in illicit activity like other criminal baby farmers, it appears that she only embraced one persona by the name of Leslie James, which is the name that Manchester newspapers used to refer to her until her real identity was uncovered. It was under this name that she operated. She convinced two married couples, one after the other, to help her adopt a child. In the first instance, she abandoned the infant. On the second occasion, however, she suffocated the child whilst on a train travelling back from Cardiff. The body was later found under her mattress. Curiously, a number of people came to her defence on account of her alcoholism and a previous head injury. However, Willis later confessed shortly before she was executed.

Appendix B – *Manchester Guardian* Articles, 1867-1958

Article Code:	Date:	Pg No.	References to other Publications.	Referencing Adoption Advertisements?	Title	Location	Legislation referenced	Baby Farmers referenced.	Parents referenced?	Illegitimacy referenced?
MG001	31/12/1867	8			Baby Farming	London	-	Mrs Thorne	Y	Y
MG002	21/2/1868	3	<i>BMJ</i>		Baby Farming and Baby Murder	London	-			
MG003	25/2/1868	6	<i>BMJ</i>		Baby Farming in Manchester	Manchester	Death Registration Act		Y	
MG004	13/3/1868	2			Summary of News: Foreign	-	-	-		
MG005	14/5/1868	6			Salford Town Council	London	Sanitation Act	Irishwoman		
MG006	29/6/1868	5			Parliamentary Proceedings. (By Electric Telegraph,) House of Lords, Yesterday	-	Registration Act	-		
MG007	17/2/1869	6	<i>Gazette des Deux Ports</i>		Baby Farming in France	France	-		Y	
MG008	17/3/1869	7	<i>BMJ</i>		Baby Farming		Registration Act		Y	Y
MG009	12/8/1869	3	<i>The Seven Curses of London.</i> By James Greenwood, the "Amateur Casual."		The Poor and the Criminal of London	London			Y	
			<i>Oliver Twist,</i> Charles Dickens							
			<i>The Times</i>							
MG010	14/6/1870	5			Revelations of Baby Farming (By Telegraph.)	Brixton		Margaret Walters		Y
MG011	15/6/1870	3	<i>Lloyd's Newspaper</i>	Y	The Baby Farming Case	Brixton		Margaret Waters	Y	Y
MG012	16/6/1870	6			The Destruction of Infant Life in London	London		Margaret Waters	Y	
MG013	21/6/1870	4			Summary of News: Foreign	Brixton		Margaret Waters	Y	

MG014	21/6/1870	5			The Brixton Baby Farming Case	Brixton		Margaret Waters	Y	Y
MG015	28/6/1870	7	<i>Lloyd's Newspaper</i>	Y	The Brixton Baby Farming Case	Brixton		Margaret Waters	Y	
MG016	29/6/1870	5			Latest News: The Baby Farming Case	Brixton		Margaret Waters	Y	
MG017	30/6/1870	5			The Baby Farming Case	London		Margaret Waters		
MG018	08/07/1870	3	<i>Lloyds Newspaper</i>	Y	The Baby Farming Case	Brixton		Margaret Waters		Y
MG019	13/7/1870	3			Threatening Witnesses in the Baby Farming Case	Brixton		Margaret Waters		
MG020	28/7/1870	7	<i>Punch</i>		Extracts from "Punch.": Annual Atrocity		Parliamentary baby farming			
MG021	22/9/1870	5			The Baby Farming Case	London?		Margaret Waters		
MG022	23/9/1870	2			Summary of News: Domestic	London?		Margaret Waters		
MG023	23/9/1870	3			The Baby Farming Case	Brixton		Margaret Waters		
MG024	24/9/1870	7			The Baby Farming Case	London?		Margaret Waters		
MG025	1/10/1870	7			Margaret Waters	Surrey		Margaret Waters		
MG026	12/10/1870	8			Execution of Margaret Waters			Margaret Waters	Y	Y
MG027	18/10/1870	4			Summary of News: Domestic		Registration and Supervision of Nurses			
MG028	3/11/1870	7			Baby Farming		Registration of nursed children and nurses.	Margaret Waters, Charlotte Windsor		
MG029	17/11/1870	4			Summary of News: Domestic	London		David Hall, Mrs Hall		
MG030	25/11/1870	2			Summary of News: Domestic	London		David Hall, Mrs Hall		
MG031	14/12/1870	4			Summary of News: Domestic	London		Mary Hall		

MG032	15/122/1870	7	<i>Sunday Times</i>	Y	Subsidiary Court: The Lambeth Baby Farmer	Lambeth		Mary Hall, Margaret Waters	Y	
			<i>Christian Times</i>	Y						
			<i>Lloyd's Weekly News</i>	Y						
			<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	Y						
			<i>Hereford Times</i>	Y						
MG033	20/12/1870	5			The Members of Salford and their Constituents	-	Registration of nursed children and nurses.	Margaret Waters	Y	
MG034	17/2/1871	3			Parliamentary Intelligence: House of Lords, Yesterday. Baby Farming	-				
MG035	22/2/1871	8			Parliamentary Intelligence: House of Commons, Yesterday. The Suppression of Baby Farming	-	Protection of Infant Life			
MG036	23/2/1871	8			Baby Farming	London	Registration of nursed children and nurses.		Y	
MG037	14/3/1871	6	<i>Manchester Examiner and Times</i>	Y	Baby Farming in Manchester	Manchester		Frances Rodgers	Y	Y
MG038	15/3/1871	7			Salford Constitutional Association	Manchester		Frances Rodgers		
MG039	21/3/1871	6	<i>Manchester Examiner</i>	Y	The Baby Farming in Queen's Road.	Manchester		Frances Rodgers	Y	-
MG040	28/3/1871	6	<i>Manchester Examiner and Times</i>	Y	The Manchester Baby Farming Case	Manchester		Frances Rodgers		
MG041	04/4/1871	6			The Baby Farming in Manchester	Manchester		Frances Rodgers		
MG042	19/4/1871	7			The Day Nursery in Jenkinson-Street, <i>To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.</i>	Manchester?			Y	
MG043	26/4/1871	1			Classified Ad 21 - Baby Farming	Manchester?			Y	

MG044	6/5/1871	7			House of Commons, Yesterday: Preservation of Infant Life.	Marylebone				Y	Y
MG045	16/5/1871	4			Brazil & River Plate						
MG046	23/5/1871	6	<i>Clerkenwell News</i>	Y(Wiltshire Investigation)	Salford Hundred Intermediate Sessions: Baby Farming	"the manufacturing districts"	Infant Life Protection				
MG047	6/6/1871	5			The Baby Farming Committee	Marylebone/Preston					Y
MG048	14/6/1871	5			Baby Farming.	Manchester				Y	
MG049	20/7/1871	6	<i>Telegraph</i>		Baby-Farming Committee.	London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Greenock	Registration of baby farms, lying in establishments, births and deaths.				
MG050	26/7/1871	6			Salford Hundred Summer Assizes: Crown Court, Yesterday.	Manchester			Frances Rodgers	Y	
MG051	27/7/1871	5		Report of the Select Committee?	The Baby-Farming Inquiry	England/Scotland	Powers of Supervision for Police, registration of births and deaths, lying-in houses, midwives, hired nurses.			Y	Y
MG052	31/7/1871	3	<i>Manchester Examiner and Times</i>	Y	Salford Hundred Summer Assizes: Crown Court, Saturday. (Before Mr. Baron Martin.) The Baby-Farming Case	Manchester			Frances Rodgers	Y	
MG053	1/8/1871	8			The French Government. (From a French Correspondent.)	-					
MG054	4/8/1871	2			Summary of News: Domestic	Manchester	Greivous Bodily Harm Act(?)				

MG055	4/8/1871	3			Salford Hundred Summer Assizes: Crown Court, Yesterday. (Before Mr. Baron Martin.) The Baby-Farming Case.	Manchester	Grevious Bodily Harm Act(?)	Frances Rodgers		
MG056	19/8/1871	9	Evidence taken by Baby Farming Committee		Baby Farming Revelations.	Kilburn/Mar ylebone/France			Y	Y
MG057	18/9/1871	3			Baby Farming	Clerkenwell		Baker	Y	
MG058	23/11/1871	5			Baby Farming.	London?		Susan King	Y	Y
MG059	9/1/1872	7			Salford Hundred Quarter Sessions	Salford	Registration of death			
MG060	10/1/1872	5			Editorial Article	Salford				
MG061	7/3/1872	5			PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE: HOUSE OF COMMONS, YESTERDAY. PREVENTION OF BABY FARMING	London, Manchester, Brixton	Infant Life Protection Bill	Margaret Waters, Ellen Richards		Y
MG062	9/3/1872	9			PARLIAMENTARY INCIDENTS OF THE WEEK (From a Correspondent.)	-	Infant Life Protection Bill			
MG063	3/8/1872	8			Another Baby-Farming Case.	Fulham		Annie Wheeler		
MG064	7/8/1872	7			The New Law on "Baby Farming."	-	Infant Life Protection Bill			
MG065	9/8/1872	5			The Camberwell Baby Farming Case.	-			Y	Y
MG066	10/8/1872	5			- No Title -	Fulham		Annie Wheeler		
MG067	15/8/1872	6			Baby Farming in Salford	Salford			Y	Y
MG068	17/8/1872	9			Dean Stanley.	Fulham		Annie Wheeler		
MG069	21/8/1872	6			More Baby-Farming	London		Jane Hayley		
MG070	28/10/1872	3			The New Act on Baby Farming.	-	Infant Life Protection Act			

MG071	31/8/1874	7	Daily News (Paris correspondent)		A French Murder	(France) Avrolles		Widow Plais		
			Gazzatte des Tribunea ux							
MG072	16/9/1874	5			Baby Farming Near Hull.	Sutton		Mrs Brundon	Y	Y
MG073	31/10/1874	7			Sentence on a Baby Farmer	London (?)		Augusta Gammage		
MG074	21/11/1874	9			Two Stories of French Crime	(France) Le Gourbet	Lack of.	Nurse from Le Gourbet	Y	Y
MG075	29/11/1876	7			Baby Farming.	Chesterton		Mrs Larkins	Y	
MG076	5/3/1877	8			Baby Farming	London/ Nantwich		M. E. Castle, Mrs Tucker	Y	Y
MG077	19/3/1877	8	Christian World	Y	Baby Farming Case at Nantwich.	London/ Nantwich	Lack of.	Mrs Castle, Mrs Tucker	Y	
			Times	Y						
MG078	27/3/1877	6			Baby Farming Disclosures in Liverpool.	Liverpool		Sophia Martha Todd	Y	
MG079	28/5/1877	7			Baby Farming in South London.	London		Margaret Waters		
MG080	7/8/1877	3	Liverpool Mercury		A Remarkable Career	Liverpool		Sophia Martha Todd		
MG081	8/4/1878	6			The Baby farming Case	London	Infant Life Protection Act	Mary Anne Waller	Y	
MG082	30/8/1879	7			The Bristol Baby Farming Case	Bristol	Infant Life Protection Act	Mrs Dyer		
MG083	12/9/1879	8			Alleged Extensive Baby Farming at Birkenhead	Birkenhead	Infant Life Protection Act	John and Catherine Barnes		
MG084	18/9/1879	8			Baby-Farming in Cheshire	Tranmere				
MG085	19/9/1879	6			The Cheshire Baby farming Case	Birkenhead		John and Catherine Barnes		
MG086	22/9/1879	4			Summary of News: Domestic	Tranmere		John and Catherine Barnes		

MG087	22/9/1879	5			Startling Baby Farming Disclosures: Forty Children Missing.	Birkenhead		John and Catherine Barnes	Y	
MG088	23/9/1879	8			The Birkenhead Baby Farming Case	Birkenhead				
MG089	25/9/1879	8	<i>Manchester Examiner and Times</i>	Y	THE TRANMERE BABY-FARMING CASE: THE INQUEST VERDICT OF WILFUL MURDER	Tranmere	Infant Life Protection Act	John and Catherine Barnes	Y	Y
MG090	26/9/1879	5			THE TRANMERE BABY-FARMING CASE: FURTHER SHOCKING REVELATIONS	Tranmere		John and Catherine Barnes	Y	Y
MG091	27/9/1879	6			Summary of News: Domestic	Tranmere		John and Catherine Barnes	Y	
MG092	27/9/1879	8			THE TRANMERE BABY FARMING CASE: THE CHILDREN SUB-FARMED	Tranmere		John and Catherine Barnes	Y	
MG093	29/9/1879	4			Summary of News: Domestic	Tranmere		John and Catherine Barnes		
MG094	5/2/1880	6			Shocking Baby-Farming Case.	Birkenhead		Martha Ann Denton	Y	Y
MG095	22/3/1881	5	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	Y	THE LAWSON v. LABOUCHERE LIBEL CASE	London		Mrs Jagers		
			<i>Morning Post</i>	Y						
			<i>Pall Mall Gazette</i>							

			<i>Lancet</i>							
			<i>Medical Circular</i>							
			<i>Medical Times</i>							
			<i>Saturday Review</i>							
MG096	25/3/1881	6	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	Y	THE LAWSON V. LABOUCHERE LIBEL CASE: FIFTH DAY	London				
			<i>Pall Mall Gazette</i>							
MG097	16/7/1883	8	"Pinafore"		Prince's Theatre: "Pinafore."					
MG098	18/1/1886	3			MANCHESTER SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS STEAM AND CANAL-BOAT PROPULSION	Manchester				
MG099	29/12/1887	7			Baby Farming in France	France	Roussel/Baby Farming law 1874			
MG100	6/6/1888	5			Summary of News: Domestic	Salisbury		"woman and her husband"		
MG101	5/9/1888	8			The Baby Farming Case.	Wolverton		Arnold/Walpole/Hall		
MG102	28/9/1888	5			Summary of News: Domestic	Wolverton	Infant Life Protection Act	Mrs Arnold	Y	
MG103	28/9/1888	6			THE EXTRAORDINARY CASE OF ALLEGED BABY FARMING	Tooting	Infant Life Protection Act	Mrs Jane Arnold (also Mrs Carter and Mrs Meredith - old and exceedingly poor)	Y	
MG104	27/7/1889	7			SHOCKING CASE OF BABY FARMING: A MOTHER CHARGED WITH MANSLAUGHTER	Hackney		Martha Forward	Y	Y

MG105	20/8/1889	10	<i>Pall Mall Gazette</i>		THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN: HOW THEY ARE TORTURED, AND HOW TO PREVENT IT	-	Prevention of Cruelty to Children Bill		Y	Y
MG106	23/11/1889	5			ALLEGED BABY FARMING AT SOUTHPORT: EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE	Southport	Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act	Elizabeth Pearson	Y	Y
MG107	28/11/1889	8			The Alleged Baby Farming at Southport.	Southport		Elizabeth Pearson	Y	Y
MG108	30/11/1889	8			The Alleged Baby Farming at Southport: Three Children Dead	Southport		William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	Y
MG109	2/12/1889	6			The SouthPort Baby-Farming Case	Southport		William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	
MH110	23/12/1889	8			THE ALLEGED BABY-FARMING AT SOUTHPORT: CHARGE OF MANCHESTER	Southport		William and Elizabeth Pearson		
MG111	1/1/1890	6			INFLUENIA AND THE WEATHER: THE ALLEGED BABY FARMING AT SOUTHPORT	Southport		William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	
MG112	8/1/1890	5			Summary of News: Domestic	Southport		William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	
MG113	8/1/1890	7			THE ALLEGED BABY-FARMING AT BIRKDALE: SHOCKING STORY OF NEGLECT	Southport	Prevention of Cruelty to Children Bill	William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	Y
MG114	9/1/1890	6			THE ALLEGED BABY FARMING AT BIRKDALE: EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE	Southport		William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	

MG115	13/1/1890	8			THE ALLEGED BABY-FARMING NEW SOUTHPORT: COMMITTAL FOR MANSLAUGHTER	Southport	Infant Life Protection Act alluded to.	William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	Y
MG116	16/1/1890	8			The Alleged Baby Farming at Southport	Southport		William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	
MG117	28/3/1890	8			The Southport Baby Farming Case	Southport		William and Elizabeth Pearson	Y	Y
MG118	2/4/1890	7	"A Daziel telegram "		Baby Farming and Infant Insurance	Warsaw	Life and property insurance policies.	Stysinski	Y	
MG119	13/5/1890	12	<i>Daily Chronicle</i> (St Petersbur g correspo ndent)		SECOND EDITION: SPECIAL MORNING EXPRESS (By Private Wire.) Baby Farming in Russia	Russia, Vilna		Two "midwives".		
MG120	2/7/1890	7			Life Insurance and Baby Farming	Edinburgh (for bf)	Children's Life Insurance Bill, Infant Life Protection Act 1872	Jessie King	Y	
MG121	5/7/1890	7			Baby Farming	London	Infant Life Protection Bill		Y	
MG122	11/11/1890	12	<i>Standard</i> (Vienna correspo ndent)		Baby Farming in Poland	(Poland) Warsaw		Madame Skibinska, Madame Wanowska		
MG123	5/1/1891	6	<i>Observer</i>		Baby Farming	Lambeth		Alice Reeves	Y	Y
MG124	10/1/1891	9			Baby Farming in London	London		Alice Reeves	Y	
MG125	21/1/1891	4			Summary of News: Domestic	London		Alice Reeves		
MG126	21/1/1891	7			The London Baby Farming Case	London		Alice Reeves		
MG127	22/6/1891	5	<i>Revue des Deux Mondes</i>		- No Title -	England				

			(M. Decrais)							
MG128	26/11/1892	5			National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children: Meeting at Bowdon	Bowden				
MG129	10/3/1893	3	Reuter (Telegam or pub?)		Baby Farming in Australia	(Australia) Sydney		John and Sarah Makin		
MG130	15/4/1893	5			Imperial Parliament (Private Wire, from our Own Reporters.) Baby Farming	London (?)	Infant Life Protection Act	Mrs Carter		
MG131	16/1/1894	8			THE BABY-FARMING MURDERS IN MELBOURNE: EXECUTION OF MRS. KNORR (Reuter's Telegram.)	(Australia) Melbourne		Mrs Knorr		
MG132	11/9/1894	5			Queen's Theatre: Human Nature	-				
MG133	24/10/1894	6			Corrispondence: Notices to Correspondents, The Insurance of Children	Swindon	Friendly Societies Act, 1875, Infant Life Protection Bill 1890, Committee on the Children's Life Insurance Bill			
MG134	13/4/1895	6			BABY FARMING NEAR BRISTOL. LENIENT SENTENCES	Bristol	Infant Life Protection Act	John Bailey and Agnes Broadhurst	Y	
MG135	13/4/1896	6			SUPPOSED WHOLESAL INFANTICIDE AT READING	Reading		Annie Dyer	Y	Y
MG136	14/4/1896	5			THE ALLEGED WHOLESAL MURDER OF CHILDREN	Bristol, Reading		Mrs. Dyer	Y	Y
MG137	8/5/1896	9			Dr Tatham and the Manchester Ladies' Help	Manchester				

MG138	14/5/1896	10	<i>BMJ</i>		- No Title -	London, Manchester, Bath	Baby Farming Committee			Y
MG139	19/5/1896	9			INFANT LIFE IN MANCHESTER: THE WORK OF THE LADIES' HEALTH SOCIETY	Manchester	Infant Life Protection Bill		Y	Y
MG140	20/5/1896	10			The Protection of Infant Life	London, Manchester	1872 Infant Life Protection Act		Y	
MG141	31/7/1896	3			BABY-FARMING REVELATIONS AT BATTERSEA	Battersea	Infant Life Protection Act	Miss Davis	Y	
MG142	6/8/1896	7			MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL	Manchester				
MG143	12/8/1896	9			Alleged Baby Farming at New Ferry	New Ferry		Richard Joseph and Louisa Brindley		
MG144	25/8/1896	7			The Alleged Baby Farming in Cheshire	Birkenhead, Bomborough		Richard Joseph and Louisa Brindley		
MG145	31/10/1896	7			The Bomborough Baby-Farming Case: Mr Hopwood and the Police	Bomborough		Joseph and Louisa Brindley		
MG146	30/03/1897	7			- No Title -		1897 Infant Life Protection Bill			
MG147	30/03/1897	8			IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT: INFANT LIFE PROTECTION	-	1897 Infant Life Protection Bill			

MG148	19/05/1897	8			IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT.		"Baby Farming Bill"		Y	
MG149	19/05/1897	11			Infant Life Protection Bill.		Infant Life Protection Bill	Mrs. Dyer	Y	
MG150	01/09/1897	3			The "Perfect Lady" and her Child.	London, Camberwell		Elizabeth Sparrow	Y	
MG151	04/09/1897	7			- No Title -		Infant Life Protection Act (1897?)		Y	
MG152	04/09/1897	11			Chorlton Board of Guardians: The Infant Life Protection Act	Chorlton	1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG153	10/09/1897	3			Baby Farming at Stretford: Prosecution by the Police	Stretford	1897 Infant Life Protection Act	William and Fanny Shawcross	Y	Y
MG154	09/07/1898	13			Chorlton Board of Guardians	Hulme	1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG155	13/08/1898	4			The Regulation of Baby Farming: Prosecutions in Manchester	Hulme	1897 Infant Life Protection Act	F. J Headlam		
								Mary Jane Heaton		
								Sarah Hall		

								Charlotte Elizabeth Mosely		
MG156	18/08/1898	10			Baby Farming near Dubmin: "Shocking and Barbarous" Neglect.	Inchicore		Maria Dunne	Y	
MG157	20/10/1898	6			Summary of News: Domestic	Dublin		Maria Dunne		
MG158	04/11/1899	10			The Alleged Baby Farming at Altrincham: The Prisoners Acquitted.	Altrincham		Pamela Handley	Y	Y
MG159	03/02/1890	4			Chorlton Guardians and the War Fund	Chorlton	1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG160	17/02/1890	8			Summary of News: Domestic	London (?)		Mr and Mrs Williams	Y	
MG161	19/02/1890	4			The Battersea Child Murder: Sentence of Death on the Female Prisoner	London (?)		Mr and Mrs Williams	Y	
MG162	08/01/1903	3			Infant Life Protection: Baby Farming in the Chorlton Union.	Chorlton	1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG163	17/01/1903	8			The Baby Farming Case: Sentences of Death.	London		Annie Walters and Amelia Sach	Y	
MG164	03/03/1905	8	-		A Baby Farming Case: Sad Story at Darby Assizes	Derby		Julia Hooper	Y	
								Betsy Newton		
MG165	04/03/1905	10	-		Baby Farming: Sentences at Derby Assizes	Derby	Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act	Julia Hooper	Y	
								Betsy Newton		

MG166	20/04/1905	12			Trafficking in Children: Manchester Baby Farming Case	Manchester, Chorlton-upon-Medlock	1897 Infant Life Protection Act	Lottie Cox	Y	
MG167	09/05/1905	4	Manchester Guardian		The Protection of Infant Life: <i>To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.</i>	Manchester	1897 Infant Life Protection Act			Y
MG168	13/05/1905	10			IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT: HOUSE OF COMMONS. MANCHESTER BABY-FARMING CASES.		1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG169	03/02/1906	6			Baby Farming: More Power of Inspection Needed.	Manchester, Lancashire, Yorkshire	1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG170	08/02/1906	12			Baby Farming Regulations: Attitude of the Home Office		1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG171	20/12/1906	11			A Baby Farming Story: Jury's Recommendations	London, Edmondon	1897 Infant Life Protection Act	Mrs Jessies Byers	Y	
MG172	03/01/1907	8			Edmondon Baby Farming Case: Alleged Illegal Cremations.	London, Edmondon	Cremation Act	Mrs Jessies Byers	Y	Y
MG173	21/05/1907	12	-		A Baby Missing: Alleged "Adoption" Swindle.	Liverpool		Herbert Smith and Lottie Roberts	Y	
MG174	23/05/1907	8			Trafficking in Babies: Fresh Allegations Against the Liverpool Prisoners.	Liverpool		Herbert Smith and Lottie Roberts	Y	

MG175	29/05/1907	12			The Baby-Farming Case: Missing Child Found.	Liverpool		Herbert Smith and Lottie Roberts	Y	Y
MG176	16/07/1907	9			Extensive Baby Farming	Liverpool		Herbert Smith and Lottie Roberts	Y	Y
MG177	26/09/1907	5			Conjurer's Plea at Liverpool	Liverpool				
MG178	11/02/1908	8			HOUSE OF COMMONS: YOUNG CHILDREN AND THE LAW. THE CHILDREN'S BILL. IMPRISONMENT TO BE ABOLISHED.		Children's Bill			
							Liscencing Bill			
							1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
							1904 Cruelty to Children Act			
							1901 Youth Offenders Act			
MG179	28/02/1908	14			Unprotected Children: Miss Zanetti on an Evaded Law		1897 Infant Life Protection Act	Y		
MG180	11/03/1908	3			Infant Life Protection: The Case of One-Child Homes		1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG181	25/03/1908	11			HOUSE OF COMMONS: THE BILL TO PROTECT THE CHILDREN A NEW PROVISION	London, Birmingham, Newcastle	The Children's Bill			
							1897 Infant Life Protection Act			

MG182	30/07/1908	14		SIR CHARLES SCHWANN, M.P.: NORTH MANCHESTER GARDEN PARTY	Manchester	The Children's Bill		Y	
MG183	18/11/1908	3		PROTECTING CHILDREN: WHAT THE N.S.P.C.C. IS DOING IN MANCHESTER MUCH WORK NEEDED.	Manchester	Probation of Offenders Act			
						Children's Bill			
						1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG184	13/01/1909	3		Infant Life Protection Act: Abolition of Baby-Farming. Miss Zanetti's Experiences.	Manchester	1897 Infant Life Protection Act		Y	Y
MG185	19/02/1909	8		POOR LAW REPORT: SOME VIEWS ON THE NEW PROPOSALS. BOARDING OUT OF CHILDREN.					
MG186	30/03/1909	14		The Children's Charter	London, Manchester	1908 Children's Bill			
						1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
						1904 Cruelty to Children Act			
						1885 Criminal Law Amenment Act			
						Liscencing Bill			
						1903 Employmen t of Children Act			

MG187	17/03/1910	4		Correspondence: Answers to Correspondents	Manchester	1908 Children Act			
						1897 Infant Life Protection Act			
MG188	30/05/1912	4		CRUELTY TO CHILDREN: THE NATIONAL SOCIETY'S WORK	England, Ireland and Wales				
MG189	13/12/1913	9		Alleged Baby- Farming in France	France, Montargis				
MG190	23/09/1914	3		Baby Farming at York: One of the Children Missing.	York	1908 Children Act	Annie Burleigh and Edward Morgan	Y	
MG191	30/07/1919	7		ALLEGED BABY- FARMING: BOXES DUG UP IN A BACK GARDEN	London, Leytonstone				
MG192	31/07/1919	9		ALLEGED BABY- FARMING: POLICE COURT CHARGE	London, Leytonstone		Henry Melville and Beatrice Hatchard		
MG193	07/08/1919	10		ALLEGED BABY- FARMING: FURTHER LEYTONSTONE REMAND	London, Leytonstone		Henry Melville and Beatrice Hatchard	Y	
MG194	08/08/1919	10		ALLEGED BABY- FARMING: LEYTONSTONE JURY'S VERDICT OF MANSLAUGHTER	London, Leytonstone		Henry Melville and Beatrice Hatchard	Y	
MG195	14/08/1919	8		INFANTS' PLIGIT: REVOLTING STORY IN BABY FARMING CHARGE	London, Leytonstone		Henry Melville and Beatrice Hatchard	Y	
MG196	20/09/1919	12		ALLEGED BABY- FARMING: CLERK AND HIS WIFE CHARGED WITH MANSLAUGHTER	London, Leytonstone		Henry Melville and Beatrice Hatchard	Y	Y

MG197	22/09/1919	10		BABY-FARMING CASE: HUSBAND ACQUITTED: WOMAN SENT TO PRISON "CONTROLLING" WIVES	London, Leytonstone		Henry Melville and Beatrice Hatchard		
MG198	09/03/1920	8		THE UNMARRIED MOTHER AND HER CHILD: MR. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN'S BILL	England and Wales	1922 (?) Legitimacy Act		Y	Y
						Affiliation Orders Act			
MG199	13/12/1922	7		MRS. THOMPSON'S APPEAL: "POINTS OF LAW AND MISDIRECTION."			Mrs Thompson		
MG200	06/07/1923	15		ARE BOOTLEGGING PROFITS TAXABLE?: Legal Attitude Towards Illegal Gain. CANADIA APPEAL TO PRIVY COUNCIL.	Canada	1917 Income War Tax Act			
						1916 Ontario Temperance Act			
MG203	30/10/1923	6		The French Baby: HOW THE FOSTER SYSTEM WORKS	France, Paris			Y	
MG204	09/06/1928	16		CHILDREN STARVED: Baby Farning Alleged: Prison Sentences	Yorkshire, Withernsea.		Edward and Emily Lamb		
MG205	14/01/1930	3		BABY'S DEATH FROM SCALDS: Pulled Over Jug of Hot Tea	Preston	1908 Children Act	Moorefields Convent, Mother Superior, Sister Isherwood	Y	
MG206	28/08/1930	8		Baby Farming.	N. Ireland, Belfast	1908 Children Act		Y	Y

						1926 Adoption of Children Act			
MG207	13/08/1934	11		In Manchester By Staff Correspondents: The Beggar's Child	Manchester	1932 Children's Act		Y	
MG208	07/07/1937	11		CHILDREN SENT ABROAD FOR ADOPTION: Absolute Prohibition Suggested MANY PROPOSALS FOR TIGHTENING THE LAW		Infant Life Protection Act		Y	Y
						1936 Public Health Act			
MG209	08/09/1938	8		OUR LONDON CORRESPONDEN CE: The Edison Lectures.	London				
MG210	12/12/1938	9		TWO NEW BILLS IN THE COMMONS: Export Guarantees and Cancer CHILD ADOPTION		Adoption of Children Bill			
MG211	02/04/1941	4		OUR LONDON CORRESPONDEN T: Mr. Bevin's "Child-Minders"					
MG212	25/06/1943	3		WOMEN IN WAR WORK: Nurseries for Children				Y	

MG213	20/03/1942	7		CHILD ADOPTION: Preventing Abuses		Adoption of Children Act			
MG214	17/10/1951	5	"Women of Twilight"	"WOMEN OF TWILIGHT"	England		(Fictional) Helen Allistar	Y	Y
MG215	12/03/1958	2		DISPENSING WITH CONSENT OF A PARENT IN ADOPTION: New grounds provided in bill		Children Bill		Y	
						1950 Adoption Act			