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Perceptions of the Murderess in London and Paris, 1674-1789

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Thesis Summary

This project is a comparative study of print about women accused of murder in eighteenth-century London and Paris. While gender played an important role in determining how such women were perceived, in that female killers stimulated forms of social introspection that male murderers did not, this thesis demonstrates that a wider variety of factors affected the kinds of women who stimulated concern among the London and Parisian populace. Most importantly, only eleven women accused of murder stimulated high levels of print reaction in the period, implying that aspects beyond their gender were behind such reactions.

Through focus on the print material and judicial records of these eleven high-profile murderesses, including ballads, pamphlets, images, novels, legal tracts and printed correspondence, this thesis will expose a number of contemporary concerns present in eighteenth-century London and Paris. In both cities, perceptions of the crime of female-perpetrated murder reflected emerging concerns about the impact of urbanisation on social structures and women's roles, alongside shifting European-wide ideas of gender difference. Murderous women's occupations as midwives, servants, aristocrats and household managers were used to explore broader concerns about emerging sites of female independence. Discussion of cases that involved adultery, male sociability and court intrigue were used to reveal the perceived corrupting effects of urban society. But there were noticeable differences in the ways that such women were perceived in London and Paris. Heavy censorship in Paris imbued print on high-profile murderesses with politicised messages of transgression, whereas in London a freer press saw such cases as symbolic of the tensions brought by urban growth to relations between the middle and lower classes.

Contents

<i>Note on the Text and List of Abbreviations</i>	3
<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	4
<i>List of Appendices</i>	5
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	6
Introduction	7
1 Female-Perpetrated Murder in London and Paris: in the Courts and in the Press	34
2 Malcolm and the Marquise: Mass Homicides and the Murderess in Extremis	99
3 Poisoneresses and Petty Tyrants: Narratives of Female Expertise and Governance in 1680s London and Paris	152
4 Wives with Knives and Lovers: the Adulterous Murderous Wife	193
5 ‘Murder by Inches’: Accusing and Abusing Parish Apprentices and Servant Girls in Late Eighteenth-Century London and Paris	240
Conclusion	291
<i>Appendices</i>	307
<i>Bibliography</i>	311

Note on the Text and List of Abbreviations

When quoting from primary sources in English, spelling and punctuation have been kept the same as in the original. Primary sources in French have been quoted in the full body of the text in English translation with the original French, with original spelling, provided in the footnote. All translations are the work of the author unless otherwise indicated.

Sources and online collections frequently cited in the footnotes have been identified using the following abbreviations. All other sources have been cited in full in the first instance of each chapter.

Online Collections of Primary Sources:

OBP – *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*: <http://oldbaileyonline.org> [Accessed 3rd August 2015]. In citing material from this website I have followed the Project Director's Citation Guide: <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Legal-info.jsp#citationguide> [Accessed 3rd August 2015]. Trial accounts are cited with the month and year of the sessions, defendant's name, and the trial reference number, for example: *OBP*, February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm, alias Mallcombe (t17330221-52). Ordinary's *Accounts* are cited with the date on which the edition was published and the project reference number, such as *OBP*, *Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914).

Archives:

[AN]- Archives Nationales

[APP]- Archives de la Préfecture de Police

[BnF]- Bibliothèque nationale de France

[BnF Arsenal]- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arsenal

[Folger]- Folger Shakespeare Library

[LMA]- London Metropolitan Archives

List of Tables and Figures

Tables and figures have been included within the main body when they provide a clearly intelligible and identifiable message, provide information which could not be easily described in prose, and do not disrupt the flow of the text. Additional figures have been placed in the Appendix.

Table:

1.1	Verdicts for women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) at the Old Bailey and Parisian <i>Parlement</i>	44
1.2	Distribution of verdict by marital status for women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in the London Old Bailey	49
1.3	Distribution of verdict by marital status for women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in the Parisian <i>Parlement</i>	50
1.4	Distribution of occupations of women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in the London Old Bailey	51
1.5	Distribution of occupations of women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in the Parisian <i>Parlement</i>	51
1.6	Distribution of conviction rates cross referenced with victim gender in cases of women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) at the London Old Bailey	56

Figure:

1.1	Distribution of trials of women accused of killing per decade (excluding infanticide) at the London Old Bailey and Parisian <i>Parlement</i> , 1700-1790	43
1.2	Distribution of trials of men accused of killing per decade (excluding infanticide) at the London Old Bailey and Parisian <i>Parlement</i> , 1700-1790	43
1.3	Proportional distribution of methods used in cases of men and women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in London, 1674-1790	59
1.4	Distribution of print coverage of women accused of murder in the years surrounding high-profile female killers Sarah Malcolm and Marie Catherine Taperet.	69
2.1	C. Le Brun, <i>La Marquise de Brinvilliers</i> (Paris, 1676) (lithograph reproduction)	106
2.2	W. Hogarth, <i>Sarah Malcolm in her Prison Cell in Newgate</i> (London, 1733)	106
2.3	Distribution of extended print publications about Sarah Malcolm in London by decade, 1733-1789	107
2.4	Distribution of extended publications about the Marquise de Brinvilliers in Paris by decade, 1674-1789	107
2.5	Distribution of publications about the Marquise de Brinvilliers in London by decade, 1674-1789	110
2.6	Main text source for extended publications about Sarah Malcolm by decade 1733-1789	113
2.7	<i>Sarah Malcolm: No Recompense but Love</i> (London, 1735)	122
2.8	'The Apprehending of Sarah Malcolm', <i>The Tyburn Chronicle</i> , Vol. 2	122

(London, 1768), p. 368

3.1	A. Coypel, <i>Portrait de La Voisin</i> (Paris, 1680), two different versions	163
3.2	F. Barlow, 'Revolution' Playing Card Pack (London, 1689)	171
3.3	<i>A Representation of the Bloody Murder Committed by Mary Aubry</i> (London, 1680)	172
3.4	Woodcut from G. Croom, <i>A Warning Piece to all Husbands and Wives</i> (London, 1680)	186
4.1	<i>Portrait de Marie Catherine Taperet</i> (Paris, 1755)	206
4.2	<i>Le véritable portrait de Marie Catherine Taperet</i> (Paris, 1755)	207
4.3	Frontispiece, <i>A Narrative of the Barbarous and Unheard of Murder of John Hayes</i> (London, 1726)	218
4.4	'Catherine Hayes Assisting Wood and Billings in Cutting Off the Head of her Husband John Hayes', <i>The Tyburn Chronicle</i> , Vol. 2 (London, 1768), p. 262	218
4.5	'Catherine Hayes and her Accomplices Cutting Off her Husband's Head' in A. Knapp and W. Baldwin, <i>The Newgate Calendar</i> , Vol. 2 (London, 1824), p. 239	219
5.1	Illustration from <i>The Gentleman's Magazine</i> (September, 1767), p. 578	254
5.2	Frontispiece, <i>God's Revenge Against Murder!</i> (London, 1767)	255
5.3	Illustration from <i>The Annals of Newgate</i> , Vol. 4 (London, 1776), p. 200	255
5.4	Illustrations from <i>The Malefactor's Register</i> , Vol. 4 (London, 1779), p. 311	256
5.5	'The Skeleton of Elizabeth Brownrigg in Surgeon's Hall', <i>The Malefactor's Register</i> (London, 1779), p. 316	262
5.6	<i>L'innocence reconnue de Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon</i> (Paris, 1786)	265
5.7	<i>L'innocence reconnue dédié aux âmes sensibles</i> (Paris, 1786)	265
5.8	<i>L'innocence reconnue de Marie Françoise Salmon au Parlement de Paris</i> (Paris, 1786)	275
5.9	<i>Portrait de Pierre Noël LeCauchois</i> (Paris, 1786)	276
5.10	<i>Convoi de très haut et très puissant Seigneur des Abus mort sous le règne de Louis XVI</i> (Paris, 1789)	278
5.11	'Mrs Brownrigg in her Cell, Newgate', from <i>The Malefactor's Register or New Newgate and Tyburn Calendar</i> , Vol. 4 (London, 1779), p. 312	282
5.12	<i>Le Mariage de la célèbre Dlle Salmon</i> (Paris, 1786)	285
5.13	'Innocence Reconnue' in <i>Cabinet des Modes</i> 22 (1 October 1786)	286

List of Appendices

Appendix One: Records of print material generated on cases of female murder in the years surrounding high-profile cases.	307
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Introduction

'Famous murder trials light up the years and give a more precise sense of period than the reigns of monarchs or the terms of office of presidents', Richard Cobb.¹

Stories about murderesses were a popular feature of the print culture of eighteenth-century London and Paris. Sometimes romantic, sometimes shocking, always dramatic, these stories appeared in a wide variety of print genres, both literary and visual, as well as forming part of the oral and manuscript cultures through which the urban societies of London and Paris functioned. The act of female-perpetrated murder was at once unusual and familiar: unusual in that very few women were accused of murder in the period, and yet familiar in that such crimes were seen as the product of widespread social tensions in each city, and in that the inventive ways in which murderesses' stories were depicted gave such women a firm presence in the London and Parisian social imagination. The rare nature of the crime made it difficult to assimilate into broader discussions of criminal trends and stereotypes, or pin onto a particular social group, as was the case with crimes such as theft or assault. So, in depicting the murderess, societies were forced to turn their gaze inwards, and, through this, to confront the troubling dynamics emerging not only in gender relations but also in changing social, economic and even political, structures in the city environment. Moreover, while stories about murderesses were present in both Parisian and London print cultures, the women upon whom such stories focused, and the ways that such stories were told differed between each city. In this way, writings about women accused of murder can prove a useful way into comparison of these two societies during a decisive period in their development.

¹ R. Cobb, *A Second Identity* (Oxford, 1969), p. 287.

It is a central tenet of this thesis that printed depictions of female killers came loaded with heavy and often contested social meaning, serving as commentaries upon, and sites for debate about, many aspects of London and Parisian life and that, in this way, they provide a window into eighteenth-century urban society. The term 'perception', with its focus on authors and readers, will therefore be favoured over 'representation', which places emphasis on the subject matter of the murderess. This will be done to fully incorporate into analysis the crucial role played by social context and individual concerns in determining which murderesses authors chose to depict in print, the ways in which they depicted them, how authors altered their stories over time, and the broader social dynamics that these women and their crimes were made to represent. Where possible this will be further examined through evidence of those who read such texts, and the ways in which stories that existed on the page were transformed into thoughts and beliefs by individual readers. It will be argued that the female killer was not merely represented; she was perceived, and perceived in particular ways through the blurred gaze of contemporary urban society. This gaze would focus on often entirely unexpected aspects of these women's crimes and interpret them in ways that had little to do with the women themselves but everything to do with the environments in which such interpretations were formed. By turning this gaze back upon itself we can use London and Parisian perceptions of this specific figure and the implications of her crimes to expose the dynamics and tensions at play at the core of these two societies.

There have been several previous studies of representations of eighteenth-century murderesses, particularly English murderesses, often emanating from the field of literary studies. Literary works by Kristen Saxton, Margaret Anne Doody, Susanne Kord and Suzanne Heinzelman, richly detailed in their analysis, have done much to establish the print reaction stimulated by particular murderous women, and have made interesting contrasts of representations of such women with the broader literary culture of the

eighteenth century. There are certain moments in these texts, however, when the authors, literary critics rather than social historians, fall a little too heavily onto assumptions that eighteenth-century society was marked by a cross-class and pan-European patriarchal binary in which much of society and culture was geared towards the control of women.² This has at times limited the analysis of representations of figures who, as this thesis will show, lived, and were perceived, within societies constructed around complex gender relations which were themselves cut through with a variety of other societal, economic and political dynamics.

Outside of the eighteenth century the question of how female killers are depicted in the media has, in particular, been taken up by feminist studies. Ann Jones' ground-breaking 1979 *Women Who Kill* set the parameters for these works. It is notable that Jones focused almost exclusively upon derogatory print reactions to women whose crimes could be seen as retaliations against male abuse. Such women are shown as twice wronged: first by the men who forced them into violence, and second by a media bent on their vilification. However, Belinda Morrissey, Christine Bell and Marie Fox have complicated this narrative through analyses of modern print and judicial reactions to murderesses whose crimes do not fit a simple wronged woman mould, especially women who killed other women and children, to demonstrate, as this thesis will seek to further

² M. A. Doody, "Those Eyes Are Made So Killing": Eighteenth-Century Murderesses and the Law', *Princeton Library Chronicle* 46 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 49-81; M. A. Doody, 'Voices of Record, Women as Witnesses and Defendants in the Old Bailey Sessions Papers', in S. S. Heinzelman and Z. Batshaw Wiseman (eds), *Representing Women: Law, Literature and Feminism* (North Carolina, 1994), pp. 287-308; S. S. Heinzelman, 'Women's Petty Treason: Feminism, Narrative and the Law', *Journal of Narrative Technique* 20.2 (Spring, 1990), pp. 89-106; S.S. Heinzelman, 'Guilty in Law, Implausible in Fiction: Jurisprudential and Literary Narratives in the Case of Mary Blandy, Parricide', in S. S. Heinzelman and Z. H. Wiseman (eds), *Representing Woman: Law, Literature and Feminism* (North Carolina, 1994), pp. 307-336; S. Kord, *Murderesses in German Writing, 1720-1860: Heroines of Horror* (Cambridge, 2009); K. T. Saxton, *Narratives of Women and Murder in England 1680-1760* (Surrey, 2009); S. Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2003); E. E. Ferguson, *Gender and Justice: Violence, Intimacy and Community in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Baltimore, 2010); C. Gonda, 'Misses, Murderesses and Magdalens: Women in the Public Eye', in E. Eger, C. Grant, C. Ó Gallchoir, P. Warburton (eds), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 53-75; J. Knelman, *Twisting in the Wind: the Murderess and the English Press* (Toronto, 1998); S. C. Staub, *Nature's Cruel Stepdames: Murderous Women in the Street Literature of Seventeenth-Century England* (Pittsburgh, 2005).

show, the richer social tensions that could be at play behind representations of murderous women.³

Other recent works have demonstrated for the modern era the complex dynamics of class, age, nationality and occupation that influenced the ways in which murderesses were perceived. Lizzie Seal's *Women, Murder and Femininity* and Lisa Downing's *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality and the Modern Killer* have both shown that reactions to cases of female homicide in 1950s England and Wales and nineteenth- and twentieth-century France, Britain and America respectively were the product of intricate intersecting concerns in which many other factors worked alongside gender in determining how both male and female killers were depicted and understood.⁴ Similarly, Ann-Louise Shapiro has shown that in *fin-de-siècle* Paris discussions of female-perpetrated murder were a powerful vehicle for debate about social evolutions not only in gender relations (changing ideas on divorce law, the rise of the 'new woman') but also the broader effects of urbanisation and industrialisation on social structures. Focusing on a particular form of murderous act rather than perpetrator, Josephine McDonagh's wide-ranging study of representations and appropriations of infanticide across eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British culture demonstrates the versatile ways in which images of child killing could be used both as a rhetorical device, and as a way of framing debates about political and social change. McDonagh argues compellingly that discussion on infanticide could serve as a means of galvanising a wide range of social concerns, and

³ See A. Jones, *Women Who Kill* (New York, 1980, re-released 2009); C. Bell, and M. Fox, 'Telling Stories of Women Who Kill', *Social and Legal Studies* 5.4 (1996), pp. 471-494; C. Bellard, *Les crimes au féminin* (Paris, 2010); H. Birch, *Moving Targets : Women, Murder and Representation* (California, 1993); A. Burfoot, and S. Lord (eds), *Killing Women: The Visual Culture of Gender and Violence* (Ontario, 2006); L. Cadiet, F. Chauvand, C. Gauvard, P. Schmitt-Pantel and M. Tsikoinas (eds), *Figures de femmes criminelles de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Paris, 2010); M. Hallissy, *Venomous Woman: Fear of the Female in Literature* (London, 1987); B. Morrissey, *When Women Kill* (London, 2003); J. L. Parker (ed.), *Representations of Murderous Women in Literature, Theatre, Films and Television* (New York, 2010); C. Régina, *La violence des femmes, histoire du tabou social* (Paris, 2011).

⁴ L. Downing, *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality and the Modern Killer* (London, 2013); L. Seal, *Women, Murder and Femininity: Gender Representations of Women who Kill* (Kent, 2010).

could be just as, if not more, influential in forging masculine identities as reinforcing understandings of feminine threat.⁵

For the eighteenth century also, a smaller group of historians have begun to reveal the variety of factors that determined the print representation of certain murderesses. In Katherine Kittredge's *Lewd and Notorious: Female Transgression in the Eighteenth Century*, Jessica Kimball Printz's chapter argues compellingly that genre and motif played a more important role than gender in determining writings about eighteenth-century criminals on the scaffold, while Patty Seleski's study of Elizabeth Brownrigg, one of the murderesses studied in this thesis, reveals how the case was used to expose specific concerns surrounding weaknesses in systems of parish care. Arlette Farge's keynote lecture for *Figures des femmes criminelles*, a 2008 conference, declared that, contrary to the conference's main suppositions, it was unhelpful to see the criminal woman as an ahistorical figure who transcended the society in which she existed. In order to understand reactions to such women, Farge argued, it is necessary to begin by analysing the specific social conditions in which such reactions were forged.⁶

Compelling analyses of the connection between female-perpetrated murder and wider social concerns can also be found in studies of seventeenth-century representations of female killers and domestic homicide, in particular Randall Martin's *Women Murder and Equity* and Frances Dolan's *Dangerous Familiars*. Martin's broad literary analysis of writing about seventeenth-century female killers provides compelling evidence that pamphlets and ballads on female-perpetrated murder were becoming more complex by 1700 and that they increasingly moved away from transgressive stereotypes to focus

⁵ J. McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture 1720-1900* (Cambridge, 2003); A-L. Shapiro, *Breaking the Codes: Female Criminality in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Stanford, 1996).

⁶ A. Farge, 'L'espace public de la criminalité féminine (keynote)', in L. Cadiet, F. Chauvand, C. Gauvard, P. Schmitt-Pantel and M. Tsikoinas (eds), *Figures de femmes criminelles de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Paris, 2010), pp. 19-25; J. Kimball Printz, "'Every Like Is Not The Same", or is it?' and P. Seleski, 'A Mistress, A Mother and a Murderess too', in K. Kittredge (ed.), *Lewd and Notorious: Female Transgression in the Eighteenth Century* (Michigan, 2003), pp. 165-196, 210-238.

upon the individual characteristics of each killer over the course of the century.⁷ Through a wide-ranging survey of texts on domestic homicide, both male and female-perpetrated, Frances Dolan provides persuasive evidence for the perceived transgressive nature of husband murder but, crucially, places such findings within the complex network of late seventeenth-century marital expectations which were increasingly emphasising the responsibility of men to be affective partners as well as of wives to obey. In Britain, Dolan argued (and is supported in this assertion by Martin Wiener), a stabilisation of gender relations in the post-Glorious Revolution years led to a rising interest in husbands who killed their wives and a declining interest in wives killing their husbands.⁸ This was, as will be shown below, a marked feature of London print on eighteenth-century murderesses, where interest did shift from the husband killer to other forms of female-perpetrated murder. In her study of representations of female criminals, Amy Masciola claims that during the mid-eighteenth century interest in female crime shifted from the rebellious wife to the independent woman living outside of male control within the metropolis. Masciola is limited by her concentration on just three case studies of women with similar lifestyles and on a short time period (Ulinka Rublack, for example, has found evidence that concerns with independent women in criminal representations can be dated back to the sixteenth century⁹), yet she does raise important questions about the ways in which the development of increasingly complex and varied kinds of urban female lifestyle influenced writings about London female criminals.¹⁰

Studies of representations of eighteenth-century French murderesses are rarer than their English counterparts. Scandalous late seventeenth-century cases such as those of the

⁷ R. Martin, *Women, Murder and Equity in Early Modern England* (Abingdon, 2008).

⁸ F. E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1500-1700* (Cornell, 1994); M. J. Wiener, 'Alice Arden to Bill Sikes: Changing Nightmares of Intimate Violence in England, 1558-1869', *Journal of British Studies* 40.2 (April, 2001), pp. 184-212.

⁹ U. Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford, 1999).

¹⁰ A. Masciola, "'I Can See By This Woman's Features That She is Capable of Any Wickedness': Representations of Criminal Women in Eighteenth-Century England' PhD Thesis (University of Maryland, 2003).

Marquise de Brinvilliers and the *affaire des poisons* have provided material for a regular cycle of sensational popular histories since the nineteenth century, yet such cases have been generally neglected by academic circles and have often been seen as one-off events rather than part of late seventeenth-century French history.¹¹ One may expect Parisian representations of female-perpetrated murder (especially those crimes committed in the home) to be influenced by the closer and longer lasting connection between household structure and absolutist politics that existed in early modern France as shown by Sarah Hanley and André Burguière.¹² As will be explored in this thesis, the politically subversive element of print on Parisian cases of female-perpetrated homicide did add an extra dynamic to discussions of such cases not found in England.¹³ However, in-depth studies of later eighteenth-century Parisian murderesses by Anne Duggan, Jeffrey Ravel, Sarah Maza and Sabine Juratic have demonstrated the rich and intricate nature of writing about female killers, and the ways in which their stories could be appropriated into a range of political and social discussions: from the corruption of the Parisian judicial system to the need for divorce reform. Moreover, rather than being vilified, Ravel and Maza have shown that some murderesses were seen as objects of pity and admiration.¹⁴

¹¹ For example: R. Burnand, *Vie et mort de la Marquise de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1931); C. Hermary-Vielle, *La Marquise des ombres* (Paris, 2004); J. Huas, *Madame de Brinvilliers: la Marquise empoisonneuse* (Paris, 2004); J. Saint-Germain, *Madame de Brinvilliers, la Marquise aux poisons* (Paris, 1971); H. Stokes, *Madame de Brinvilliers and her Times* (London, 1924); A. Smith, *The Marchioness of Brinvilliers* (London, 1887); V. Vernon, *Enchanting Little Lady: the Criminal Life of the Marquise de Brinvilliers* (London, 1964); F. Funck-Bretano, *La drame des poisons* (Paris, 1920); T. Lung, *La vérité sur le masque de fer* (Paris, 1873); J. Lemoine, *Madame de Montespan et la légende des poisons* (Paris, 1908); G. Mongredin, *Madame de Montespan et l'affaire des poisons* (Paris, 1953).

¹² A. Burguière, 'L'état monarchique et la famille (XVIe-XVIIIe Siècle)', *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 56 (2001), pp. 313-335; S. Hanley, 'Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France', *French Historical Studies* 16.1 (1989), pp. 4-27; S. Hanley, 'Social Sites of Political Practice in France: Lawsuits, Civil Rights and the Separation of Powers in Domestic and State Government, 1500-1800', *The American Historical Review* 102.1 (Feb, 1997), pp. 27-52.

¹³ The appropriation of discussion of crimes to enact political critique in Paris was not limited to female murder. Peveri has shown that a series of violent robberies during the Regency were used in print culture as a means of criticising the Regent and the John Law system. P. Peveri, "'Cette ville est alors comme un bois...'" criminalité et l'opinion publique à Paris dans les années qui précèdent l'affaire Cartouche (1715-1721)', *Crime, histoire et sociétés* 1.2 (1997), pp. 51-73.

¹⁴ A. Duggan, 'The Tiquet Affair as Recounted in Madame Du Noyer's *Lettres Historiques et Galantes: The Defiant Galante Femme*', *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature* 24.46 (1997), pp. 259-276; S. Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: the Causes Célèbres of Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (California, 1993); J. S. Ravel, *The Would be Commoner: A Tale of Deception, Murder and Justice in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York, 2008); J. S. Ravel, 'Husband-Killer, Christian Heroine, Victim:

Yet, with the exception of Sabine Juratic's excellent but short overview article on *épouses meurtrières*, these micro-historical studies sit disjointedly within the historiography, in need of a more connected approach to bring them together and so form wider conclusions about Parisian attitudes towards female-perpetrated homicide and its social and political implications.¹⁵

In broader studies of gender and crime, also, older tendencies to stereotype female violence have been increasingly complicated through analyses that take into account a broader variety of factors when exploring gender difference and criminal activity.

Because male defendants dominate many forms of criminal records, the quantitative approaches prevalent in the early years of criminal historiography led to criminal women being 'counted and then discounted'.¹⁶ In traditional crime monographs women criminals were given a chapter at best, usually only discussing specifically female crimes:

witchcraft and infanticide.¹⁷ Eighteenth-century women's violent crime was assumed to be rare, almost always committed against other women or children, and on the decline due to an increasing confinement of women to the domestic sphere over the course of the century.¹⁸ Yet more recently scholars have begun to look beyond gender in analysing criminal trends, demonstrating that eighteenth-century women's crime, despite being more unusual, was often not categorically different in nature from men's crime,

especially in urban areas. Studies by Geoffrey Durston, Jennine Hurl-Eamon and Jessica Warner, building on earlier work by John Beattie, have shown that in urban areas female

The Execution of Madame Tiquet, 1699', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 32.2 (Dec 2010), pp. 120-136; S. Juratic, 'Meurtrière de son mari: un "destin" criminel au XVIIIe siècle? L'affaire Lescombat', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 34.3 (1987), pp. 123-137.

¹⁵ S. Juratic, 'Contraintes conjugales et violences féminines: épouses meurtrières au XVIIIème siècle', *Pénélope* 6 (Spring, 1982), pp. 104-108. Thanks to Sabine Juratic for granting me access to this text.

¹⁶ J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and the Courts* (Chapel Hill, 1994), p. 4.

¹⁷ For example F. McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth Century England* (London, 1989); J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England* (London, 1984), although the 1999 second edition includes more references to female criminals; or, more recently, D. J. Cox, *Crime in England 1688-1815* (London, 2014). On the other hand, studies of female crime in general often limit the amount of coverage given to violent crime, again often focusing on infanticide: S. D'Cruze and L. A. Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice in England since 1660* (London, 2009).

¹⁸ M. Feeley and D. Little, 'The Vanishing Female: The Decline of Women in the Criminal Process, 1687-1912', *Law and Society Review* 25 (1991), pp. 719-57.

crime bore some clear similarities to male crime.¹⁹ Indeed, Beattie has established that in the early years of the eighteenth century the London court of the Old Bailey underwent a female ‘crime wave’ with women forming up to 50 per cent of defendants for some crimes, particularly property offences.²⁰ This led directly, Robert Shoemaker demonstrates, to the development of more complex depictions of female criminals through longer and more detailed forms of print. While principally focused on representations of thieves, who formed the central perpetrators behind the crime wave, such developments could have also impacted on representations of murderesses, following trends in the diversification in representations of female killers identified by Randall Martin for the seventeenth century.²¹ In Paris, also, Arlette Farge and Jacob Melish have identified similarly diverse patterns in female crime in communities which, they argue, were much less affected by gender differences than by economic and social status. Farge, for example, argues that the lower rates of female-perpetrated violence than male-perpetrated violence in Parisian records are reflective of nothing more than the fact that female street violence was seen as utterly uninteresting and unthreatening, rather than because it was perceived to be a unique act of transgression.²²

Similarities in trends in the nature of male and female crime have been matched by an identification of some similarities in their representation in eighteenth-century criminal print culture. In both cities improvements in printing technology, increases in literacy,

¹⁹ J. M. Beattie, ‘The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Journal of Social History* 8.4 (1994), pp. 80-116; G. Durston, *Victims and Viragos: Metropolitan Women, Crime and the Eighteenth-Century Justice System* (London, 2007); J. Hurl-Eamon, *Gender and Petty Violence in London, 1680-1720* (Ohio, 2005); J. Warner, K. Graham and E. Adlaf, ‘Women Behaving Badly: Gender and Aggression in a Military Town 1653-1781’, *Sex Roles* 52 (March, 2005), pp. 289-298.

²⁰ J. Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London 1660-1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror* (Oxford, 2001), pp.63-66.

²¹ R. B. Shoemaker, ‘Print and the Female Voice: Representations of Women's Crime in London, 1690–1735’, *Gender & History* 22 (2010), pp. 75–91; R. Martin, *Women, Murder and Equity in Early Modern England* (Abingdon, 2008).

²² C. Dauphin and A. Farge (eds), *De la violence et des femmes* (Paris, 1997), p. 73; A. Farge, *La vie fragile: violences, pouvoirs et solidarités à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1986); Farge, ‘L'espace public de la criminalité féminine’, pp. 19-25; J. Melish, ‘Women and the Courts in the Control of Violence between Men: Evidence from a Parisian Neighbourhood under Louis XIV’, *French Historical Studies* 33.1 (Winter, 2010), pp. 1-31.

and in London a loosening of official censorship following the lapsing of the licensing act in 1695, led to a surge in the volume of print being produced, and a diversification in the forms of print being sold. Crime was a popular topic in these new forms of print, especially in England where it was often consumed by a middling sort audience. Close studies of criminal print in both England and France have shown that these new forms of print were characterised by a series of motifs and narrative structures that were applied to both men and women. In Protestant London, where public confession formed an integral part of a public-facing and exemplary system of justice, capturing the criminal's final scaffold confession and reproducing it within a series of set declarations on Providence, redemption and guilt was an important part of the judicial process. Although Frances Dolan and Sandra Clark have argued that seventeenth-century scaffold confessions gave women a problematic agency, Jessica Kimball Printz and Garthine Walker have shown that in fact such publications were more focused upon the redemptive act and affirming the power and righteousness of the justice system than on the gender of the perpetrator.²³ In Catholic Paris private confession was expected to come before execution, and criminal literature was not as widespread or as established a genre as in London, yet here also forms of scaffold confession literature, often ballads, were created on both men and women in similar ways.²⁴

As the eighteenth-century wore on, however, warnings of the extreme ends of sin were gradually if unevenly replaced by voyeuristic revelations on the monstrosity of the

²³ S. Clark, 'The Broadside Ballad and the Woman's Voice', in Cristina Malcolmson and Mihoko Suzuki (eds), *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (London, 2002), pp. 103-120; F. E. Dolan, "'Gentlemen, I Have One Thing More to Say'", *Women on Scaffolds in England 1563-1680*, *Modern Philology* 92.2 (Nov. 1994), pp.157-178; Kimball Printz, "'Every Like Is Not The Same", or is it?', pp. 165-196; G. Walker, "'Demons in Female Form": Representations of Women and Gender in Murder Pamphlets of the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in W. Trill and S. Trill (eds), *Writing and the English Renaissance* (London, 1996), pp. 123-39.

²⁴ L. Andriès, 'Histoires criminelles anglaises', in L. Andriès (ed.), *Cartouche, Mandrin et autres brigands du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2010), pp. 245-268; U. McIlvenna, 'Singing of Executions: Ballads as News Media in Early Modern Europe', in J. Davidson and R. Prince (eds), *Singing Emotions: Voices from History* (Adelaide, 2012), pp. 13-16; B. Cottret, and M. Cottret, 'Les chansons du mal aimé: raison d'état et rumeur publique 1748-1756', in *Mélanges Robert Mandrou: histoire sociale, sensibilités, collectivités et mentalités* (Paris, 1985), pp. 303-315.

criminal classes, both male and female.²⁵ Such depictions, which increasingly emphasised the exceptional individual identity of the condemned, placed a new importance on defendants' gender, but also their class, occupation, status and nationality. The transformation from one narrative to another, however, was slow and stuttering, and long-standing assertions on non-gendered universal tendencies toward sin continued to be present across the period alongside more specific depictions of vilified criminal men and women. Emerging understandings of women as naturally passive and submissive were slow to influence print depictions of female killers.²⁶ In fact, such understandings were more often exploited by eighteenth-century female defendants to their own advantage. Mary Clayton and Marilyn Francus have shown that defendants accused of infanticide, in particular, sought to capitalise on new narratives of female passivity and domestic subservience in constructing their defences, sometimes with success.²⁷ Tracey Rizzo has found a similar approach being used by late eighteenth-century Parisian women in civic court pleas and Judith Flanders, Lisa Downing and Ann-Louise Shapiro have shown that by the nineteenth century such narratives were increasingly appropriated by both French and British murderesses in their defences.²⁸ In this way, some narratives of feminine identity did come into discussions of female criminals, but often at the behest of the women defendants themselves. But, for the majority of the period, print depictions of murderesses may have been influenced as much (if not more) by the traditions of the print in which they were featured as by their gender.

²⁵ L. Faller, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987); H. Gladfelder, *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore, 2001); P. Rawlings, *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices: Criminal Biographies of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1992).

²⁶ L. Downing, 'Murder in the Feminine: Madame Lafarge and the Sexualization of the Nineteenth-Century Criminal Woman', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18.1 (2009), pp. 121-37.

²⁷ M. Clayton, 'Changes in Old Bailey Trials for the Murder of New-Born Babies, 1674-1803', *Continuity and Change* 24.2 (2009), pp. 337-359; M. Francus, 'Monstrous Mothers, Monstrous Societies: Infanticide and the Rule of Law in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21.1 (1997), pp. 133-156

²⁸ L. Downing, 'Murder in the Feminine: Madame Lafarge and the Sexualization of the Nineteenth-Century Criminal Woman', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18.1 (2009), pp. 121-37; J. Flanders, *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Revelled in Death and Detection and Created Modern Crime* (London, 2011); Shapiro, *Breaking the Codes*; T. Rizzo, *A Certain Emancipation of Women: Gender, Citizenship and the Causes Célèbres of Eighteenth-Century France* (Cranbury, 2004).

Across the study of eighteenth-century gender history, older ideas of masculine and feminine binaries have come to be replaced by more nuanced understandings of the complexities of gender difference in complicated societies with various forms of social, economic and political hierarchy. The history of gender was once caricatured by an, admittedly never entirely accepting, adherence to a model of ‘separate spheres’. In this model, the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were shown to be the period in which industrialisation and the rise of the middle classes meant that women were elbowed out of the public space into domestic idleness, to be increasingly defined by their passivity and chastity. As the Habermasian ‘public sphere’ came to be defined as a largely male space of public knowledge exchange, the female private sphere came to be defined as its antithesis: hidden, restricted, dull and repetitive. It is difficult to find many works since at least the 1960s which actively and wholeheartedly accept such a narrative of change, but in the last twenty years it has come under overt attack.²⁹ Amanda Vickery has cast serious doubt on both the existence of a ‘golden age’ prior to the eighteenth century in which men and women had undifferentiated social roles, and the total segregation of women’s lives by 1800. Women, Vickery argues, had always lived different lives to men, but also continued to have a role in public life.³⁰ Laurence Klein and, at more length, Robert Shoemaker have demonstrated the need to integrate any ideological model of ‘separate spheres’ into the intricacies of lived experience in societies in which, whatever the conduct books and periodicals may say, female labour and social networks were important parts of day-to-day existence.³¹ The ‘separate spheres’ model was simply not practical for survival in the metropolis. Most recently,

²⁹ The exception to this is Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: the Political History of the Novel* (Oxford, 1987) which does propose a separate spheres model. The oft-cited 1987 work by L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (Chicago, 1987), while putting this model forward, also acknowledges its limitations.

³⁰ A. Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *The Historical Journal* 36.2 (1993), pp. 383-414.

³¹ L. Klein, ‘Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytical Procedure’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29.1 (1995), pp. 97-109; R. B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850* (Essex, 1998).

Daryl Hafter and Nina Kushner have called for a ‘historiographical intervention’ in the history of women, in which gendered concepts such as women’s work in the ‘family economy’ are replaced with more integrated methodologies which allow for the realities of a female workforce which was as diverse in terms of demographic make-up, skills and occupations as its male counterpart.³²

In eighteenth-century London and Paris it has been shown that women would very rarely have had an opportunity to withdraw into a domestic idyll even if they had wanted to.

These were cities in which many years of warfare, paired with an increasing demand for female domestic servants, meant that both capitals contained more women than men, many of whom made their own livings or made an important contribution to the family coffers. Sabine Juratic, Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux and D. A. Kent estimate that in both London and Paris up to 15 per cent of the female population remained unmarried throughout the period, with many more living as widows.³³ Olwen Hufton has shown that, across Europe, this led to a proliferation of female only or female-headed households within the urban environment.³⁴ In-depth studies of the expanding eighteenth-century Parisian garment trade by Clare Crowston and Judith Coffin have demonstrated the continued role that women continued to play in Parisian industry, often outside, as well as alongside, male work.³⁵ Arlette Farge, David Garrioch, Jacob Melish, and Robert Shoemaker have further found evidence for the continued presence of women on the streets of Paris and London throughout the period, a space that they inhabited as important actors in social and economic networks where gender formed only one facet of

³² D. Hafter and N. Kushner (eds), *Women and Work in Eighteenth-Century France* (Louisiana, 2015).

³³ A. Fauve-Chamoux, ‘Le surplus urbain des femmes en France préindustrielle et le rôle de la domesticité’, *Population* 53 (1998), pp. 359-377; S. Juratic, ‘Solitude féminine et travail des femmes à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle’, *Mélanges de l’école française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps Modernes* 99.2 (1987), pp. 879-900; D. A. Kent, ‘Ubiquitous but Invisible: Female Domestic Servants in Mid-Eighteenth Century London’, *History Workshop* 28 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 111-128.

³⁴ O. Hufton, ‘Women Without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of Family History* 9.4 (1984), pp. 355-376.

³⁵ C. H. Crowston, *Fabricating Women: the Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham, 2001); J. Coffin, *The Politics of Women’s Work: The Paris Garment Trades 1750-1915* (New Jersey, 1996).

their identity.³⁶ While Peter Earle has demonstrated that female work in London was focused on commercialised forms of domestic tasks such as sewing and cleaning throughout the century, such employments rarely came with the luxury of disappearing from the streets. Domestic service, the occupation that Earle identifies as dominating London women's occupations, has been shown by scholars of both Britain and France to have not been as limiting to women's lives as often believed. Servants did not disappear into the domestic sphere but instead acted as connections between the household and the city, crossing boundaries with ease.³⁷ Even among the middle and upper classes, where family reliance on female labour for survival was less immediate, studies by Karen Harvey, Julie Hardwick, Margaret Hunt and Amanda Vickery have shown that, across both Britain and France, households were not run on a separate spheres basis: women continued to maintain public roles in the community while male reputation continued to be connected to household management.³⁸ In the messy and complex worlds of London and Paris, such dynamics can only have broken down more. Moreover, the patriarchal structures that did exist did not simply function as the oppression of all women by all men. As Alexandra Shepard and Arlette Farge have shown, class, social status and occupation often came into play in determining social hierarchies, meaning that certain

³⁶ Farge, *La vie fragile*; D. Garrioch, 'The Everyday Lives of Parisian Women and the October Days of 1789', *Social History* 24.3 (Oct., 1999), pp. 231-249; D. Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (California, 2004); E. Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 2012); B. Capp, 'Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 117-145; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*; J. Melish, 'The Power of Wives: Managing Money and Men in the Family Businesses of Old Regime Paris', in D. Hafter and N. Kushner (eds), *Women and Work in Eighteenth-century France* (Louisiana, 2015), pp. 77-90.

³⁷ P. Earle, 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review* 42 (1989), pp. 328-47; C. Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and their Masters in Old Regime France* (London, 1984); B. Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1996); T. Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender, 1600-1750* (Essex, 2000); S. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth Century France: the Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, 1983).

³⁸ K. Harvey, *The Little Republic, Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012); J. Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (Pennsylvania, 1998); M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Gender, Commerce and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (California, 1996); A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998).

kinds of women would almost certainly have had power and authority over certain kinds of men.³⁹

In terms of print representations of women, scholars adhering to a model of separate spheres once inferred that women's presence within print literature became increasingly problematic over the course of the century.⁴⁰ But Kathryn Shevelow, Nina Gelbart, Elizabeth Goldsmith, Victoria Rowan and Dena Goodman's analyses of periodicals in Britain and France have shown that, although many such publications emphasised the confining of women's interests to domestic affairs, through discussion of these topics women could continue to have a public presence.⁴¹ As with judicial defences, women may have appropriated narratives of female passivity and virtue when it suited them, and to negotiate systems that were, undeniably, often weighted against them, but that does not mean that they wholly applied them to their lives.

That is not to say that either city was some kind of egalitarian paradise. In many respects Parisian and London men and women did live different kinds of lives, and such differences may have been expanding over the period. This is clearly reflected in the fact that, even in the urban environment, female-perpetrated homicide was a much rarer crime than male-perpetrated homicide. As will be discussed more extensively in Chapter One, a great deal of the print material on murderesses was generated by men, and the spaces for public discussion in which many works on female killers would have been read, such as

³⁹ A. Shepard, 'From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500–1700', *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (April, 2005), pp. 281–295; Farge, *La Vie Fragile*. Shepard's argument is for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but can also be traced in the eighteenth century

⁴⁰ See Gonda, 'Misses, Murderesses and Magdalens', pp. 53–75; Doody, 'Voices of Record', pp. 287–308.

⁴¹ See N. Gelbart, 'The *Journal des dames* and its Female Editors: Politics, Censorship, and Feminism in the Old Regime Press', in J. Censer and J. Popkin (eds), *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France* (California, 1987), pp. 24–75; E. C. Goldsmith and D. Goodman (eds), *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France* (Ithaca, 1995); K. Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: the Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (New York, 1989); E. Harth, *Cartesian Women* (London, 1992); S. I. Spencer, *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Indiana, 1984); and P. McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678–1730* (New York, 1998); V. Rowan, 'La Citoyenne Bien Renseignée: Women, the Newspaper Press and Urban Literary Culture in Paris, Rennes and Lyon 1780–1800', PhD thesis (University of Warwick, 1999).

coffeehouses and *salons*, were becoming increasingly masculinised. This thesis will by no means discount gender as an important aspect in the ways that murderesses were perceived. But, as has been shown by the wider historiography of eighteenth-century gender, a model of gender which is not nuanced by other societal factors can only scrape the surface of such perceptions. Such a nuanced approach has been shown to be successful in studies of male crime. Robert Shoemaker, Stuart Carroll and Robert Muchembled's studies of masculine violence in Britain and France have demonstrated the ways in which masculine identity and honour interacted with a range of other social, political, economic and cultural factors in determining both the nature of masculine violence and the ways in which such violence was perceived.⁴² As with the plural adopted by the history of masculinities, this thesis will embrace a history of femininities that allows for multiple forms of transgressive female behaviour and which integrates the influence of the factors of class, age, occupation, genre and, mostly importantly for this thesis, geography.

It is the contention of this thesis that print generated about murderesses drew from multiple conceptions of criminal or transgressive femininities, with particular kinds of female killers, working in specific occupations and following certain lifestyles, being perceived to be especially threatening. In analysing writings about murderesses in this way, the thesis will build on the historiography emanating from Natalie Zemon Davis' iconic *Fiction in the Archives*. In this work Davis unravelled stories told by members of the sixteenth-century French lower classes to French notaries when seeking pardon from homicide convictions to reveal the complex series of societal assumptions present within

⁴² S. Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 2006); R. Muchembled, 'Fils de Cain, enfants de Médée: homicide et infanticide devant le Parlement de Paris (1575-1604)', *Annales*, 5 (2007), pp. 1063-1095; R. Muchembled, *A History of Violence* (Paris, 2012); R. B. Shoemaker, 'Male Honour and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth-Century London', *Social History* 26.2 (May, 2001), pp. 190-208.

such stories designed to appeal to a collective mentality.⁴³ The influence of *Fiction in the Archives* has been enormous, and, at its best, has expanded from judicial archives out into the world of early modern criminal print to explore the intricate assumptions that lay behind the stories told by early modern peoples about crime and its perpetrators in a variety of different spaces.⁴⁴ Though it is less concentrated on individual authors, who often went unrecorded in texts on female killers, this thesis draws from such a methodology in its contention that in writing about particular female killers eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians revealed more about themselves than they did about their subject matter. But at the same time, it is important to affirm, as Davis did, that such publications are *not* fiction, and cannot be reduced to conflicting and interconnecting types of discourse, but rather are the products of societies' attempts to appropriate and adapt their own concerns and prejudices to make sense of real, frightening acts. To do this, it is therefore necessary to follow Robert Darnton's call to 'get the joke' in seeing such cultural products upon their own terms.⁴⁵ Writings about female-perpetrated murder in this period could indeed be funny, as well as sad, angry, sympathetic, terrifying, apathetic, incendiary, literary, bawdy, erotic, religious, violent, didactic, sarcastic and anarchic. What connects them is not a simple dynamic of men fearing female agency, but rather their authors and readers' desires to understand, to contextualise and to rationalise a rare and destructive act that exposed vulnerabilities within both close relationships and societal structures. Perceptions of female-perpetrated murder in this period serve as a distinct category for analysis not simply because of the unusual nature of such crimes, but because of the social introspection that the unusual nature of such crimes brought about. Such introspection provided an outlet for commentators and readers to explore

⁴³ N. Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987).

⁴⁴ See in particular M. Gaskill, 'Reporting Murder: Fiction in the Archives in Early Modern England', *Social History* 23.1 (Jan., 1998), pp. 1-30.

⁴⁵ R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), p. 5.

their own concerns about the changing roles of women, but also about the shifting nature of urban society itself.

Through this, the murderess serves as a useful springboard from which to tackle the challenging task of comparing the societies of eighteenth-century London and Paris. Comparative methodologies have occupied an uneven and sporadic place in historical study since Marc Bloch's pioneering call-to-arms 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes'. Bloch argued that comparative methodologies are useful in that they render the familiar exotic, and so allow historians to explore causation in more sophisticated ways than a methodology focused on one single subject can yield. Yet such a methodology comes with its difficulties. In comparing two systems of record-keeping, often in two different languages and lexicons, and created in two different societies, one can risk 'sacrificing depth for breadth'⁴⁶: breaking down one set of generalisations only to replace them with another. In criminal history in particular, the challenges of comparing different judicial systems, and definitions of crime itself, can prove difficult, although not unsurmountable.⁴⁷ Moreover, it can be argued that a comparison between only two historical subjects can complicate narratives without offering any feasible alternative explanation unless at least a third subject is also included. Within a contemporary scholarship where fashions for transnational histories of cross-border developments reign supreme, a methodology that seeks to break down commonalities and focus upon the unique and different can seem incongruous.⁴⁸ However, despite these difficulties, there are clear benefits to such an approach. Comparative histories help to

⁴⁶ D. Cohen and M. O'Connor, 'Comparative History, Cross-National History, Transnational History-Definitions', in D. Cohen and M. O'Connor (eds), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-national Perspective* (New York, 2004), p. xvi.

⁴⁷ B. Godfrey, C. Emsley, G. Dunstall, 'Introduction: Do You Have Plane-Spotters in New Zealand? Issues in Comparative Crime History at the Turn of Modernity', B. Godfrey, C. Emsley, G. Dunstall (eds), *Comparative Histories of Crime* (Cullompton, 2003), pp. 1-35.

⁴⁸ M. Bloch, 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes', *Revue de synthèse historique* 46 (1928), pp. 15-50; D. Cohen and M. O'Connor (eds), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-national Perspective* (New York, 2004); R. Grew, 'The Case for Comparing Histories', *American Historical Review* 85.4 (1980), pp. 763-778; W. H. Sewell, 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History', *History and Theory* 6.2 (1967), pp. 208-218.

break down national traditions and perceived commonplaces in gender and class identities by demonstrating that certain historical phenomena extended far across national borders, while others were distinct to particular environments. In this way, comparison can discount, undermine or nuance the role played by traditional factors in determining historical environments and events, while introducing new suggestions for alternative sources of causation.

As yet, however, comparative histories of eighteenth-century gender are rare, as indeed are any form of comparative studies which move beyond the comparison of economic and demographic statistics into the realm of socio-cultural history. In terms of eighteenth-century Britain and France, many comparative studies have focused on economic and political change, following Eric Hobsbawm's *Age of Revolution* in seeking to demonstrate, and then later to challenge, the contrasts and connections between the Industrial Revolution in Britain and the French Revolution in France.⁴⁹ This focus on economic and political history is due in part to a continued adherence to the *Annales* characterisation of culture as the *troisième niveau* of society, in which culture is visualised as the icing on the top of the societal cake, instead of a core ingredient. As cultural history has come to be reframed in recent years through a writing-back-in of cultural products into a more textured form of social history, championed by Robert Darnton among others, few have sought to capitalise upon this shift by integrating such

⁴⁹ Such an interpretation of the historiography is informed by C. Jones and D. Wahrman, 'Introduction: An Age of Cultural Revolutions?' in C. Jones and D. Wahrman (eds), *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France 1750-1820* (California, 2002), pp. 1-16. See for example R. Bonney, 'Towards the Comparative Fiscal History of Britain and France during the Long Eighteenth Century', in L. Prados de la Escosura (ed.) *Exceptionalism and Industrialisation: Britain and its European Rivals 1688-1815* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 191-215; E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (London, 1962); D. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (London, 1969); P. O'Brien and C. Keyder, *Economic Growth in Britain and France 1780-1914: Two Paths to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1978); I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System, Vol. 2, Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy, 1600-1750* (New York, 1980). Within the fields of social and cultural history studies which explore the reception of a particular British or French phenomenon on the other side of the channel are much more popular than strictly comparative works, but the historiography is too vast to list here.

methodologies into a comparative approach.⁵⁰ Yet, when comparisons have been attempted, they have yielded successful results. Of particular note is Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman's 2002 *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France 1750-1820*. Frustrated with the traditional comparative narrative of the respective political and economic revolutions of eighteenth-century Britain and France, 'muddy(ied) almost out of all recognition' by revisionists' questioning of both narratives of abrupt change and contrasts between France and Britain, Jones and Wahrman shifted the focus onto the concept of 'cultural revolution'. There they found a much more flexible and fruitful means of thinking about narratives of cultural change, from which sophisticated narratives of social and economic change (both gradual and sudden) could also be inferred.⁵¹ Such an understanding of the role of culture within, rather than simply reflective of, society will be shown in this thesis through the use of 'perception(s)' which, as discussed above, will be used to indicate the ways in which print on the murderess served as a site for societal reflection, drawing attention to broader social concerns and enacting campaigns for reform.

Following Bloch, comparative histories have often centred upon comparison of the nation state. Yet within the context of eighteenth-century Europe, a continent in which national boundaries were loosely defined and where regional identity was heavily influenced by social, economic and cultural dynamics, a more productive approach may be found by comparing more specific environments with closer geographic and demographic similarities. London and Paris are prime candidates for such comparison. As a pioneering 1970 work by George Rudé has shown, these two capital cities (two of the largest in Europe) were both undergoing similar forms of expansion and growth and yet were also marked by tangible and dramatic differences in their social, political and

⁵⁰ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*; R. Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections on Cultural History* (New York, 1996).

⁵¹ C. Jones and D. Wahrman (eds), *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France 1750-1820* (California, 2002).

judicial structures, as well as in the nature of their cultural outputs. Throughout the eighteenth century, both cities were undergoing pronounced population growth, caused principally by high levels of migration from rural areas. The cities expanded, particularly to the west, and became more densely populated at a time where ideas of privacy were becoming increasingly important.⁵² These were socially promiscuous environments in which it was easy to disappear or reinvent oneself. They were also both capital cities, marked by at times problematic relationships between local governments and the national governing bodies based within (or near) them. Both were marked by a surge in a ‘middling sort’: an emerging class based on newly accumulated wealth who increasingly sought to define themselves from the elite through their ‘professional’ identity and supposed moral fibre.⁵³ In both cities this led to a gradual shift across the period moving, as David Garrioch has termed it, ‘out of a world structured by deference and hierarchy into one governed overwhelmingly by money and appearances’.⁵⁴ It is perhaps not too much to assume that such developments had important effects on Parisian and London women, who probably often followed lifestyles that bore more similarities to one another than to those of their provincial and rural sisters.

Yet there were also profound differences between these societies. As Rudé highlights, the emerging powerful middling sort of each city (who formed the central readership of print

⁵² C. Spence, *London in the 1690s: A Social Atlas* (London, 2000); A. Pardailhé-Galabrun, *La naissance de l'intime* (Paris, 1988); A. Vickery, ‘An Englishman’s Home is his Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-Century London House’, *Past & Present* 199.1 (2008), pp. 147-173.

⁵³ This emerging social group has received much scholarly attention and debate on both sides of the channel, though little comparative study. See in particular for England: J. Barry and C. Brooks, *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England 1550-1800* (London, 1994); P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (London, 1989); M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Oxford, 1996). For Paris, see: D. Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie 1690-1830* (Harvard, 1996); C. Jones, ‘The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution’, *The American Historical Review* 101.1 (Feb, 1996), pp. 13-40; C. Jones, ‘Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and Social Change’, in C. Lucas (ed.) *Rewriting the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 71-100; S. Maza, ‘Luxury, Morality and Social Change: Why there was no Middle-Class Consciousness in Pre-Revolutionary France’, *Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997), pp. 199-229; S. Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: an Essay on the Social Imaginary 1750-1850* (Harvard, 2003).

⁵⁴ Garrioch, *The Making*, p. 302.

about the murderess) took on different forms. In London, a port city, the middling sort lived precarious lives from merchant income and shop keeping businesses, while in Paris the *bourgeoisie* enjoyed a wealth based more on manufacture and gained prestige through legal and bureaucratic roles at the Parlement de Paris, to which there was no London counterpart. In Paris the guilds continued to maintain sway over particular occupations and communities for longer than in London, although such influence was on the decline. Most importantly, of course, each city was distinguished by their political system: post Glorious Revolution constitutionalism in London, and absolutist monarchy based on a complex and murky network of privileges in Paris. Culturally, censorship dominated Parisian print throughout the period, which, although far from entirely successful, imbued some forms of printed works with a politicised and underground status which was rarer in London where censorship was far less structured and often lay upon the publisher's discretion.⁵⁵ Regulations in Paris also meant that many emerging print forms, such as the newspaper, continued to project themselves as aimed at an upper-class readership with a focus on court activities and foreign policy, despite a rising middle-class consumption of such prints (although outside of the capital a new middling sort culture was emerging within the provincial *Affiches*).⁵⁶ In London, however, the ever-expanding newspaper press could more overtly embrace its middle-class readership and their particular interest in crime reports. These were also two differing religious societies. London was marked by the struggle between Anglicanism and a series of non-conformist groups, alongside a continually problematic Catholic population, while Paris was the setting for theological battles between Jansenists, Jesuits, and Enlightenment proponents of anticlericalism, a difference which, as discussed above, was visible in differing attitudes toward the scaffold ritual. A comparison of London and Parisian perceptions of the murderess is therefore, at its core, a comparison of the ways in which

⁵⁵ G. Rudé, *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century* (Suffolk, 1970).

⁵⁶ Jones, 'The Great Chain of Buying', pp.13-40; Peveri, "'Cette ville est alors comme un bois'", pp. 51-73.

the contrasting political, religious, social, economic and judicial conditions of each city interacted, and how such interactions translated into sites of concern and prejudice.

Yet, despite Rudé, comparative studies of London and Paris are few and far between. London and Paris are commonly brought together in eighteenth-century history, but there is a broad tendency to analyse the cities as one, allowing them to blur into one another, rather than with a specific aim of comparison and contrast. It is assumed that London and Paris were more similar than they were different, particularly in terms of histories of society, household, family and culture.⁵⁷ By keeping a rigidly comparative structure throughout, and bearing in mind the plethora of societal distinctions discussed above, this thesis will demonstrate that differences in the specific contexts of London and Paris played an important role in determining the ways in which murderesses were perceived. A similar comparative approach for the seventeenth century by Joy Wiltenberg, comparing ‘street literature’ on female crime in England and Germany, demonstrated the important influence of the differing religious and political contexts of each country on depictions of female criminals.⁵⁸ By narrowing the approach to the topic of female-perpetrated murder, and to two cities whose similarities and differences specifically highlight the intersections between state and society, this thesis will be able to make more precise suggestions about the ways in which perceptions of the murderess reflected cross-channel similarities and differences.

In this way, this thesis is more a study of London and Paris than it is a study of women who kill. The murderess, and more importantly the imaginative print reaction that her

⁵⁷ See, in particular, K. Newman, *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris* (Princeton, 2007). Other examples of social and cultural histories of Britain and France that group the two countries together include: J. Ardit, *A Genealogy of Manners: Transformations of Social Relations in France and England from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago, 1998); C. Roulston, *Narrating Marriage in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (Surrey, 2010). Franco-British comparative social histories on cities outside of London and Paris have been more fruitful, see: F-J. Ruggiu, *L'Individu et la famille dans les sociétés urbaines anglaise et française (1720-1780)* (Paris, 2007) and M. Pluskota, *Prostitution and Social Control in Eighteenth-Century Ports* (London, 2015).

⁵⁸ J. Wiltenberg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Virginia, 1992).

crimes stimulated, is used as a means of venturing into the interlocking dynamics at play within London and Parisian societies. This thesis will explore and compare what kinds of murderous women and what kinds of murder were seen as particularly threatening to London and Parisian audiences and the ways that such threats were explained and understood within each city. From this, it will be able to suggest similarities and differences in the sources and forms of tension that existed within eighteenth-century London and Parisian societies, particularly (but by no means exclusively) in terms of women's changing roles.

This thesis is structured around ten cases of eleven women (one London case involves two women) accused, and mostly convicted, of murder which stimulated high levels of print commentary during the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These ten cases are not case studies in the strictest definition of the term in that they are not examples carefully selected to represent a wider phenomenon. There was no wider phenomenon: these eleven women represent the vast majority of all writing about real acts of female-perpetrated murder in this period. There was, of course, a whole range of other forms of eighteenth-century imaginative writing that represented female killers. These are also useful for studies of the period, but as the aim of this thesis is primarily to learn more about the societies of eighteenth-century London and Paris, the focus will remain firmly on writings about real murderesses. As the perpetrators of these crimes inhabited, and formed their murderous plots in, London and Parisian society, Londoners and Parisians would have had little choice but to attempt to understand the crimes of such women through recourse to their immediate lived experiences. But within the confines of this subject matter, a variety of different forms of London and Parisian cultural output have been examined. Each of the murderesses analysed in the thesis elicited a cultural response that spanned a wide spectrum of published forms: from formulaic printed trial reports to biographies, pamphlets, poems, plays, paintings, novels, woodcuts, published

letters and ballads as well as non-printed diaries and correspondence and trial records. The differing depictions of these women and their crimes found in varying forms of publication will be compared with one another, as well as with the original judicial records of these women's trials. Where possible, these will be further contrasted with records of individual responses to the crimes to re-construct the textured perception(s) that formed the core of writing about each case.

In order to foreground the comparative aims of this work, each case will be analysed in direct comparison with at least one counterpart case from the other city. Cases have been paired based on similarities in the circumstances of the perpetrator, the circumstances of the crimes and, to a lesser extent, the kinds of response that they stimulated. By comparing the differing London and Parisian perceptions of cases which exposed similar tensions in city living or involved similar kinds of women, the similarities and differences in the ways that these cases played out in the London and Parisian social imagination can be revealed. Paired cases generally coincide in terms of time period, itself reflective of changing concerns in London and Parisian society, but a close focus on the immediate chronological context of each case also allows for comparisons across time as well as across the channel. Analysis starts in 1674, the beginning of the London Old Bailey *Proceedings* and just two years before the shocking scandal of the Parisian trial of the Marquise de Brinvilliers. It ceases in 1789, on the eve of the French Revolution, when the political and social turmoil brought to Paris renders London and Parisian comparisons infinitely more complex. Spanning 115 years, including one revolution and ending upon another, this thesis uses a close focus upon the ways in which specific cases of female-perpetrated murder were perceived by Londoners and Parisians to compare two capital cities at times of dramatic change as well as much continuity.

The opening chapter of the thesis will establish the judicial and print context of the phenomenon of the high-profile print murderess. It will explore how London and

Parisian judicial systems treated women accused of murder and how these trends were adapted within print culture. It will also make suggestions as to how print coverage translated into the more slippery question of 'perception' through analysis of the spaces such texts occupied in London and Parisian societies and the experiences of their readers. Chapter Two will explore print created about the two highest profile murderesses of the period: the above mentioned Parisian mass-poisoneress the Marquise de Brinvilliers and London laundress Sarah Malcolm, convicted of stabbing to death her mistress and two other maids. These women were icons of female murderous agency, and yet in neither case did discussions settle on denunciations of the female sex. Instead, each woman was shown as representative of more specific problematic female figures in the urban environment: the Parisian female aristocrat *de robe* and the London servant maid. The third chapter will compare the cases of Mary Aubry, a French midwife who murdered her husband in London in 1688, and the *affaire des poisons*, a 1680 Parisian scandal involving a series of plots by aristocratic women to poison their husbands with the help of lower class Parisian midwives/sorceresses, to explore the perceived political ramifications of female murder and the specific threats believed to be posed by urban female medical practitioners and midwives during the turbulent decade of the 1680s. Chapter Four will turn to the more 'classic' female homicidal crime of husband murder through analysis of the high-profile cases of Angélique Nicole Carlier (known as Madame Tiquet) and Marie Catherine Taperet in Paris and the case of Catherine Hayes in London. This chapter will compare the differing Parisian and London attitudes to adultery and marriage as revealed through discussion of these women's crimes. It will also explore what the cases reveal about the tensions brought about by dense living spaces in which married couples often lived on intimate terms with other men (and women). Finally, Chapter Five will examine changing perceptions of female-perpetrated murder in the later decades of the eighteenth century through the London cases of Sarah

and Sarah Morgan Metyard (a mother and daughter) and Elizabeth Brownrigg, convicted of murdering their parish apprentices through neglect, and the Parisian case of Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon, a provincial servant maid framed for murder by her mistress. As well as exposing Parisian and London fears about the increasingly isolated nature of urban living, this chapter will explore how newly politicised rhetoric concerning the vulnerability of young women brought to the fore in these cases tapped into late eighteenth-century reformist tendencies: in London a rising number of measures to control the poor and a bureaucratise welfare systems and in Paris the need to reform a corrupt judiciary in the years directly preceding the Revolution.

Throughout the century, therefore, high-profile murderesses, the fears they tapped into, and the social introspection that they stimulated, were perceived by Londoners and Parisians through the lens of a wide range of contemporary concerns, beliefs and fears. Some of these came from European-wide cultural and social trends and classical ideas of gender difference, some were the product of the conditions of population growth and changing social hierarchies common to both cities, and some emanated directly from the specific environments of either London or Paris. The figure of the high-profile print murderess at once transcended economic, political, social and cultural divisions and was deeply rooted within them, rendering her a useful lens through which to view and compare two European capitals at a crucial moment in their history.

Chapter One: Female-Perpetrated Murder in London and Paris: in the Courts and in the Press

It has long been accepted that a particular group of murderous women stimulated the print imaginations of eighteenth-century London and Paris. Some scholars have sought to explain the existence of these figures by arguing that assumptions about the passive nature of femininity, paired with women's biological life-giving role, rendered murders committed by women of particular interest to judicial officials and print readers. Others have argued that it was the *nature* of female murder: much rarer than male-perpetrated murder, taking place within the home, and using poison or smothering to subvert women's traditional domestic roles as a form of rebellion, that rendered female-perpetrated homicide into something inherently problematic within the Parisian and London consciousness.⁵⁹ However, when one begins to quantify the judicial and print treatment of female homicide in London and Paris in the eighteenth century, the picture becomes more complex, in terms of the kinds of murders that London and Parisian women were accused of/committed, the particular cases that stimulated high levels of print reaction, and the forms that such print reaction took. This first chapter will establish the judicial and print world in which women accused of murder were tried and depicted to reveal the complex but distinct space that such figures occupied.

⁵⁹ S. D'Cruze and L. A. Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice in England since 1660* (London, 2009); M. A. Doody, "'Those Eyes Are Made So Killing': Eighteenth-Century Murderesses and the Law', *Princeton Library Chronicle* 46 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 49-81; M. A. Doody, 'Voices of Record, Women as Witnesses and Defendants in the Old Bailey Sessions Papers', in S. S. Heinzelman and Z. Batshaw Wiseman (eds), *Representing Women: Law, Literature and Feminism* (North Carolina, 1994), pp. 287-308; S. S. Heinzelman, 'Women's Petty Treason: Feminism, Narrative and the Law', *Journal of Narrative Technique* 20.2 (Spring, 1990), pp. 89-106; S.S. Heinzelman, 'Guilty in Law, Implausible in Fiction: Jurisprudential and Literary Narratives in the Case of Mary Blandy, Parricide', in S. S. Heinzelman and Z. H. Wiseman (eds), *Representing Woman: Law, Literature and Feminism* (North Carolina, 1994), pp. 307-336; K. T. Saxton, *Narratives of Women and Murder in England 1680-1760* (Surrey, 2009); S. Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 200); C. Gonda, 'Misses, Murderesses and Magdalens: Women in the Public Eye', in E. Eger, C. Grant, C. Ó Gallchoir, P. Warburton (eds), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 53-75 and J. Knelman, *Twisting in the Wind: the Murderess and the English Press* (Toronto, 1998).

The first part of this chapter will explore trends identified through quantitative analysis of the judicial treatment of women accused of murder in London and Paris. While many assertions have been made about the murderess within the eighteenth-century judicial system, such an in-depth analysis has yet to be undertaken for either city.⁶⁰ The second section will examine the specific phenomenon of the high-profile murderess within print culture and the distinct space that this figure occupied within both London and Parisian print imaginations, despite their cross-channel differences. It will be shown that, rather than a general interest in women accused of murder, Parisians and Londoners displayed high levels of interest only in very specific cases. In the final section the question of how such a print phenomenon may have translated from the page into readers' individual perceptions will be approached through analysis of the complex relationships that existed between authors, publishers and readers of print on murderesses and the environments in which such print was accessed.

Murderesses on Trial

The high-profile cases that form the focus of this study were only a very small proportion of murders committed by women in each city and emerged from a much larger and more diverse group. In order to identify which aspects of high-profile cases stimulated widespread print engagement it is therefore first necessary to establish the broader nature of female-perpetrated homicide in each city and its treatment within London and Parisian

⁶⁰ Geoffrey Durston has undertaken a partial analysis for London in *Victims and Viragos: Metropolitan Women, Crime and the Eighteenth-Century Justice System* (London, 2007, pp. 56-59 which finds many similar trends to those identified here with a smaller group of 134 murders and Sabine Juratic has undertaken a survey of women accused of killing their husbands in Paris in: S. Juratic, 'Meurtrière de son mari: un "destin" criminel au XVIII^e siècle? L'affaire Lescombat', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 34.3 (1987), pp. 123-137; S. Juratic, 'Contraintes conjugales et violences féminines: épouses meurtrières au XVIII^e siècle', *Pénélope* 6 (Spring, 1982), pp. 104-108. Garthine Walker has undertaken an excellent survey for Cheshire, and J. A. Sharpe has done some statistical analysis on domestic homicide in seventeenth-century Essex. Deidre Palk has also undertaken an in-depth analysis of female crime, but focusing on non-violent offences. G. Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2003); D. Palk, *Gender, Crime and Judicial Discretion, 1780-1830* (Suffolk, 2006); J. A. Sharpe, 'Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal* 24.1 (March, 1981), p. 33. It must be noted that the analysis undertaken in this thesis is only possible now due to advances in digital humanities.

judiciaries. This first section will examine statistical evidence of the judicial treatment of women accused of murder in eighteenth-century London and Paris. Where relevant, this will be contextualised with analysis of trends in male-perpetrated homicide. In particular, this section will examine the question of how the occupational, class and lifestyle characteristics of London and Parisian women may have affected how likely they were to commit murder (or perceptions of how likely they were to commit murder), and how they were treated by the justice system, to suggest possible sites of tension within London and Parisian society to be explored in greater detail in later chapters.

Historians generally agree that records of homicide are some of the most reliable judicial statistics and the least likely to include a 'dark figure' (the number of crimes which are not reported to the authorities and so go unrecorded) given the inherently transgressive nature of killing acts and the difficulty of concealing dead bodies and sudden disappearances.⁶¹ But even this most extreme of crimes must be treated with caution. Prosecuting someone for a killing act in eighteenth-century London and Paris was not the inevitable result of the finding of a body, although there was undoubtedly a strong desire among Londoners and Parisians to hold perpetrators to account for the socially destructive crime of murder. In both cities, a prosecution relied upon a certain level of community engagement with the case, particularly in the provision of witnesses, as well as the diligence of, often slipshod, officials.⁶² It is to be expected that a certain, if potentially limited, number of homicide cases would have been dealt with outside the courts by communities. Furthermore, as formed one of the central points of the famous Sharpe-Stone debate on the nature of violence in early modern society, some types of murder, such as public stabbing or shooting, were easier to prove than others, such as

⁶¹ Sharpe, 'Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England', p. 33.

⁶² The unreliability of early modern officials investigating murder is documented in J. A. Sharpe, 'The History of Violence in England: Some Observations', *Past & Present* 108 (Aug, 1985), pp. 206-215; see also L. Stone, 'Interpersonal Violence in English society 1390-1980', *Past & Present* 101 (Nov, 1983), pp. 22-33, and L. Stone 'The History of Violence in England: a rejoinder', *Past & Present* 108 (Aug, 1985), pp. 216-224.

hitting and kicking or poisoning, which could have a decisive influence on both the prosecution and conviction of such crimes. But that is not to say that there was no connection between judicial trends and actual criminal activity. Conviction rates must be seen as indicative of the intertwined tri-dynamics of actual guilt, community concern with particular kinds of crime, and the limitations of proof.

Comparing judicial statistics for London and Paris also comes with challenges. These two systems emanated from two different legal bases; common law in London and Roman law in Paris, as defined by the 1670 *Ordonnance Criminelle*. While Richard Mowery Andrews makes a compelling case for nuancing the ‘black legend’ of the eighteenth-century French judiciary as relentlessly cruel, it is undeniable that the Parisian judicial system, plunged into secrecy, was more complex and at times more violent than its cross channel neighbour.⁶³ Torture was still mandated in Paris for much of the period, although in reality it was used less and less. Without the pressure of an overt public presence in the judicial system trials could extend over several years.⁶⁴ Deaths of defendants and even witnesses in prison were not uncommon. In London, where trials took place in public and were rapidly reproduced in the *Proceedings*, justice normally proceeded at a much quicker rate, with indictment, trial and execution all happening within a month to six weeks of the crime’s discovery. In London killing acts were also clearly delineated with close connections between murder verdicts and punishments: defendants were not guilty, guilty of manslaughter, or fully guilty, and received a respective sentence of acquittal, branding or transportation, or death by hanging or burning. The Parisian system, meanwhile, was characterised by a wider range of

⁶³ The ‘black legend’ is compellingly debunked in R. Mowery Andrews, *Law Magistracy and Crime in Old Regime Paris 1735-1789, Vol. 1: The system of criminal justice* (Cambridge, 1994).

⁶⁴ This is somewhat of a generalisation. Peveri has shown that while the events of the judiciary did not appear regularly in Parisian print, there was what could be termed a ‘public opinion’ which did form around judicial events through oral information networks and manuscript circulation: P. Peveri, “‘Cette ville est alors comme un bois...’ criminalité et l’opinion publique à Paris dans les années qui précèdent l’affaire Cartouche (1715-1721)”, *Crime, histoire et sociétés* 1.2 (1997), pp. 51-73.

sentences for different killing acts with differing gradations of punishment. Pre-meditated (assassinat), non-pre-meditated (meurtre) and accidental killing (homicide) were all separate crimes. Within each, punishments were spread across a broad spectrum from two different kinds of acquittal (acquitted without suspicion, acquitted with suspicion), through different degrees of mutilation and incarceration for those found guilty of a lesser form of killing, to executions, which could themselves involve a variety of mutilations and forms of torture, all decided upon by the presiding judge following the *Ordonnance Criminelle*.⁶⁵ Both cities also had different systems for punishing male and female killers. In London, as well as murder, women who killed their husbands could be tried for ‘petty treason’, the only homicidal act to be punished by burning.⁶⁶ In Paris, some punishments, notably execution by being broken on the wheel and serving time on the *galères*, were only applied to men. In both cities, a woman could also have an execution postponed through pleading pregnancy. All these intricacies must be borne in mind when comparing the judicial treatment of women accused of murder within these two cities.

For London, analysis is based upon the London Old Bailey *Proceedings*, a printed publication which first emerged in 1674. The *Proceedings* summarised all cases tried at

⁶⁵ For more on the judicial systems of London and Paris see: Mowery Andrews, *Law Magistracy and Crime*, Vol. 1; P. Bastien, *L'exécution publique à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2006); S. Daubresse, *Le Parlement en exil ou histoire politique et judiciaire des translations du Parlement de Paris: XVe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2007); F. Bluche, *Les magistrats du Parlement de Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1986); P. Payen, *Les arrêts de règlement de Parlement de Paris au XVIIIe siècle: dimension et doctrine* (Paris, 1997); J. H. Shennan, *The Parlement of Paris* (Cornell, 1968); J. Berlière, *Policier Paris au siècle des lumières* (Paris, 2012); D. Garrioch, ‘The People of Paris and their Police in the Eighteenth Century: Reflections on the Introduction of a ‘Modern’ Police Force’, *European History Quarterly* 24.4 (1994), pp. 511-535; P. Petrovitch, ‘Recherches sur la criminalité à Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle’, in F. Billacois (ed.), *Crimes et Criminalité en France sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1971), pp. 187-261; A. Williams, *The Police of Paris* (London, 1979). And for the London judiciary see: J. M. Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London, 1660-1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror* (Oxford, 2001); P. King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* (Oxford, 2000); T. Hitchcock, and R. Shoemaker, *Tales from the Hanging Court* (London, 2006); P. Linebaugh, *The London Hanged* (London, 2003); D. R. Rabin, *Identity, Crime and Legal Responsibility in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 2004); R. B. Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment: Petty Crime and the Law in London and Rural Middlesex* (Cambridge, 1991); A. McKenzie, *Tyburn's Martyrs: Execution in England 1675-1775* (London, 2003).

⁶⁶ Men could also be tried for petty treason but only for servants killing their masters or priests murdering their bishops.

the London court of the Old Bailey and were sold in pamphlet form following each session. Originally trials were reported in short summaries, but from the 1720s onwards cases were printed at increasing length, purporting to be verbatim records. The *Proceedings* are an extremely rich resource, but they do have restrictions. They have only survived in part for the period preceding 1715. Not guilty verdicts and defence pleas, although always recorded, were often reported with minimal details, and *ignoramus* verdicts (where the grand jury found insufficient evidence to justify a trial) were not recorded at all.⁶⁷ For Paris, analysis is based on Catalogue 450 of the Archives Nationales. This catalogue, made in the 1780s, records all cases treated in the appellate court of the Parisian *Parlement Grand Criminel* chamber, known as *la Tournelle*, from 1700 to 1790. All capital offences would be tried at the *Parlement* after having received an initial verdict from a lesser court. The catalogue is almost certainly incomplete in its coverage, but provides the most wide-ranging uninterrupted set of criminal court records for eighteenth-century Paris. The jurisdiction of the Parisian *Parlement* was far larger than that of the London Old Bailey, extending across a large section of northern France⁶⁸ and for over half of female murder trials the origin of the case was not recorded, so it cannot be fully established which accusations came from Paris rather than the surrounding region.⁶⁹ Neither set of records contains the gender of defendants. I have instead inferred gender from Christian names, occupations and punishments, but, due to the sizeable number of non-gender-specific names in eighteenth-century Paris in

⁶⁷ For more on the *Proceedings* see: S. Devereaux, 'From Sessions to Newspaper? Criminal Trial Reporting, the Nature of Crime, and the London Press, 1770-1800', *London Journal* 32 (2007), pp. 1-27; S. Devereaux 'The City and the Sessions Paper: "Public Justice" in London, 1770-1800', *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996), pp. 466-503; R. B. Shoemaker, 'The Old Bailey Proceedings and the Representation of Crime and Criminal Justice in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of British Studies* 47.3 (2008), pp. 559-80; P. Linebaugh, 'The Ordinary of Newgate and His Account', in J. Cockburn (ed.), *Crime in England 1550-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 246-69; A. McKenzie, 'From True Confessions to true reporting? The Decline and Fall of the Ordinary's Account', *The London Journal* 30.1 (2005), pp. 55-70.

⁶⁸ For the last decades of the period, it is estimated that the *Parlement* dealt with a population almost the same size as that of England at 9.75 million: Mowery Andrews, *Law Magistracy and Crime in Old Regime Paris*, Vol. 1, p. 70.

⁶⁹ The limitations of Catalogue 450 are discussed in S. Juratic, 'Contraintes Conjugales', pp. 104-108 and M. San Pedro, 'L'assassinat du conjoint à Paris au XVIIIe siècle 1700-89) d'après les sources judiciaires', Masters Thesis (Paris IV Sorbonne, 1996), pp. 1-3. Thanks to Paris IV Sorbonne Centre Roland Mousnier for library access.

particular, there remain 134 Parisian cases that cannot be classified by gender.⁷⁰ These have not been included within the analysis. Despite these limitations, these two archives constitute a substantial and rich body of evidence. The acts of prosecuting, convicting and even simply recording murder were each the products of wider social and judicial perceptions of threats to social order and concepts of justice. With the exception of the women of the *affaire des poisons*, who were tried in a separate tribunal, all of the high-profile murderesses explored in this thesis went through these judicial processes and form a small proportion of the statistics generated below. This is therefore a crucial first step in understanding what kinds of female-perpetrated murder were seen as the most threatening and problematic in London and Parisian society.

In total, the Old Bailey *Proceedings* record 206 cases of women accused of involvement in a killing act for the period 1674-1790, including one woman tried twice for the same crime, and one woman tried for two different murders.⁷¹ Catalogue 450, dealing with a larger jurisdiction, lists 531 cases of women accused of involvement in killing for the period 1700-1790.⁷² In both cities this excludes women who were tried for infanticide. Infanticide was treated as a separate crime in both judicial systems, and has been heavily studied in previous historiography and so will not be included in this analysis.⁷³ Given

⁷⁰ Thanks to Gabor Gelleri for advice on Christian names. Names of indeterminate gender include: Claude, Stéphane, Dominique, Anne.

⁷¹ Data collected from <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/> [accessed 15th December 2014]. Searched: Defendant Gender: Female, Offence: Killing, All Subcategories (excluding infanticide), between 01/01/1674 and 31/12/1790. These statistics are different from the estimates of Geoffrey Durston or Amy Masciola in Durston, *Victims and Viragos*, pp. 56-59 and A. Masciola, "I Can See By This Woman's Features That She is Capable of Any Wickedness": Representations of Criminal Women in Eighteenth-Century England' PhD Thesis (University of Maryland, 2003), Chapter One and come from the latest version of the oldbaileyonline.org Version 7.2. I have taken crime statistics up to 1790 rather than 1789 because Catalogue 450 is often unclear on whether crimes took place in 1789 or 1790. The woman tried twice for the same crime is Rose Jackson: *OBP*, September 1735, trial of Richard Freeman Richard Bromingham John Franligan Abram Web Rose Jackson (t17350911-54) and October 1735, trial of Abraham Webb Rose Jackson (t17351015-12). The woman twice accused of murder (and twice convicted of manslaughter and branded) was Frances Coats *OBP*, July 1720, trial of Frances Coats (t17200712-1) and July 1723, trial of Frances Coats Elizabeth Richardson (t17230710-37).

⁷² AN, Catalogue 450.

⁷³ The historiography on infanticide in both France and Britain is vast and includes: M. Clayton, 'Changes in Old Bailey Trials for the Murder of New-Born Babies, 1674-1803', *Continuity and Change* 24.2 (2009), pp. 337-359; M. Francus, 'Monstrous Mothers, Monstrous Societies: Infanticide and the Rule of Law in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21.1 (1997), pp. 133-156; P. C.

the difficulty of gaining demographic statistics for London and Paris in this period it is not possible to infer from these statistics whether female-perpetrated murder was more common in London or Paris.⁷⁴ But in both cities it was clearly a rarer crime than male-perpetrated murder: the *Proceedings* lists 1,744 and Catalogue 450 lists 3,406 cases of men accused of killing for the same time period.⁷⁵ This supports the estimates of other historians that female homicide was roughly one-tenth of male homicide in London during this time period, although in Paris this proportion was closer to 15 per cent.⁷⁶

As Figure 1.1 shows, female murder was not only relatively rare but, despite some year by year fluctuations, it was generally on the decline throughout the eighteenth century. This trend is particularly pronounced in London. Taking into account the continued population rise of London during this period (from approximately 500,000 in 1674 to 750,000 in 1760⁷⁷), per capita rates of female murder were declining even faster. While in Paris accusations of women involved in killing appear to be on the rise, again, when

Hoffer and N. E. H. Hull, *Murdering Mothers: Infanticide in England and New England 1558-1803* (New York, 1981); L. Gowing, 'Secret Births and Infanticide in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present* 156 (Aug, 1997), pp.87-115; M. Jackson (ed.), *Infanticide: Historical Perspectives on Child Murder and Concealment, 1550-1800* (Aldershot, 2002); R. W. Malcolmson, 'Infanticide in the Eighteenth Century', in J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Crime in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 187-209; J. McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720-1900* (Cambridge, 2003); R. Muchembled, 'Fils de Cain, enfants de Médée: homicide et infanticide devant le Parlement de Paris (1575-1604)', *Annales* 5 (2007), pp. 1063-1095 ; T. Rizzo, 'Between Dishonour and Death: Infanticides in the *Causes Célèbres* of Eighteenth-Century France', *Women's History Review* 13.1 (2004), pp. 5-21; J. Thorn, *Writing British Infanticide: Child-Murder, Gender and Print, 1722-1859* (Newark, 2003); D. Tinkova, 'Protéger ou Punir? Les voies de la décriminalisation de l'infanticide en France et dans le domaine des Habsbourg (XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles)', *Crime, Histoire et Société* 9.2 (2005), pp. 43-72; G. Walker, 'Just Stories: Telling Tales of Infant Death in Early Modern England', in M. Mikesell and A. Seefe (eds), *Attending to Early Modern Women: Culture and Change* (London, 2003), pp. 98-115; K. Wrightson, 'Infanticide in European History', *Criminal Justice History* 3 (1982), pp. 1-20.

⁷⁴ Estimates of population do imply fairly similar sizes, so it could be that Paris was the more violent city for both women and men, but the data is too limited to definitively conclude this, see footnotes 77 and 78.

⁷⁵ Data for London collected from <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/> Version 7.2 [accessed 20th February 2015]. Searched: Defendant Gender: Male, Offence: Killing, All Subcategories (excluding infanticide), between 01/01/1674 and 31/12/1790. Data for Paris from AN Catalogue 450.

⁷⁶ Spierenburg, *A History of Murder*, p. 117; Durston, *Victims and Viragos*, p. 61; Walker, *Gender, Crime*, pp. 135-136. Sharpe estimates that women formed seven per cent of perpetrators of non-domestic homicide and between 42 and 44 per cent of perpetrators of domestic homicide in seventeenth-century Essex: Sharpe, 'Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England', p. 31.

⁷⁷ Population numbers taken from The Old Bailey Online: Tim Hitchcock, Robert Shoemaker, Clive Emsley, Sharon Howard and Jamie McLaughlin, et al., *The Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 1674-1913* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, March 2015). 'London 1674-1715' <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/London-life17th.jsp> [Accessed 30th November 2015] and 'London 1760-1815': <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/London-lifelate18th.jsp> [Accessed 30th November 2015].

examined within the context of population growth, this minor rise is in fact probably indicative of a proportional decline (the population of Paris is estimated at 500,000 in 1674 and 700,000 on the eve of the Revolution).⁷⁸ These declines may be connected to the ‘vanishing female’ in prosecutions identified by Malcolm Feeley and Deborah Little, who argue that the declining presence of women in the judicial system was reflective of increasing restrictions on women’s lives, but such trends must also be placed within the context of the wider decline in violent crime taking place across Western Europe.⁷⁹ Indeed, as Figure 1.2 shows, cases of male homicide in both London and Paris were also declining over the period, again taking into account the population rises of both cities.⁸⁰ It is of note, however, that homicide was declining in a slower and less even fashion in Paris than in London, probably reflecting the rising instability of Paris over the century.

⁷⁸ D.Roche, *The People of Paris: an Essay in Popular Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (California, 1981), p. 20.

⁷⁹ M. Feeley and D. Little, ‘The Vanishing Female: The Decline of Women in the Criminal Process, 1687–1912’, *Law and Society Review* 25 (1991), pp. 719–57 see also M. Wiener, ‘Alice Arden to Bill Sikes: Changing Nightmares of Intimate Violence in England, 1558-1869’, *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001), pp. 184-212.

⁸⁰ Such a trend is difficult to gauge for cases of Parisian men because, as the dramatic peaks and troughs imply, prosecution of male violence seems to have been closely connected to political change, marked by a dramatic rise in capital conviction rates for male killers from 13 per cent in the 1710s, to 40 per cent in the years preceding the Revolution.



Figure 1.1: Distribution of trials of women accused of killing per decade (excluding infanticide) at the London Old Bailey and Parisian *Parlement* 1700-1790.⁸¹

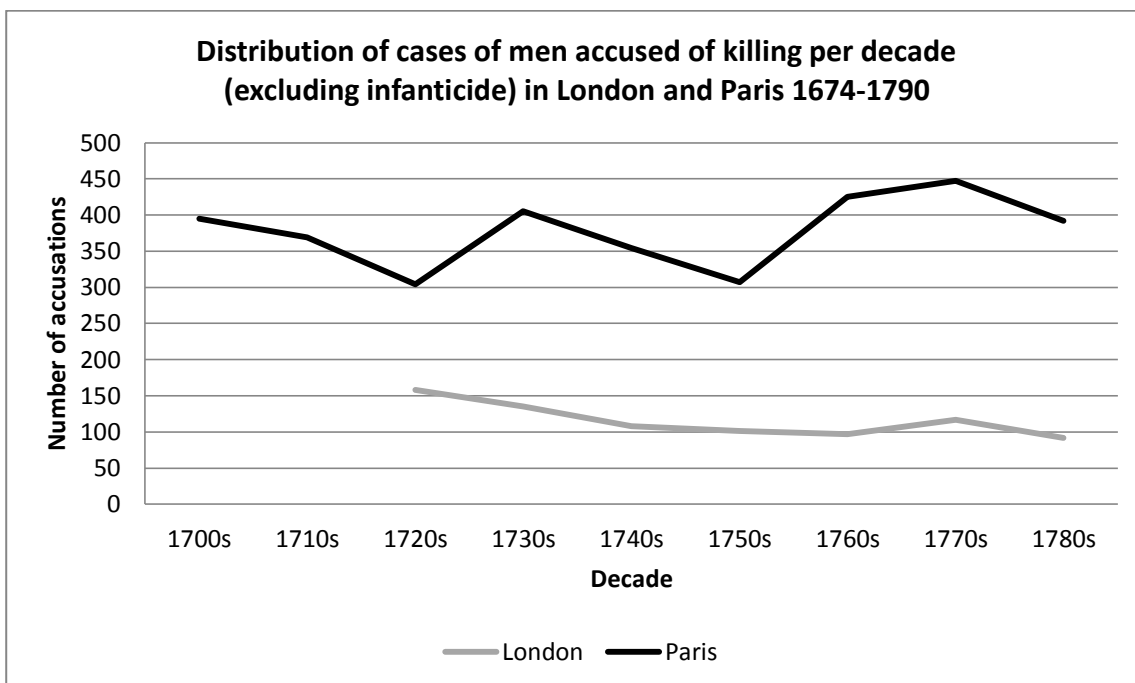


Figure 1.2: Distribution of trials of men accused of killing per decade (excluding infanticide) at the London Old Bailey and Parisian *Parlement* 1700-1790.

We can therefore infer that the decline in the number of women being accused of murder in the eighteenth century was not (or at least not solely) the product of restrictions on

⁸¹ Statistics for London only begin in 1720 as records are incomplete before this date.

female activity, but was also connected to a general lessening of violent crime within society. The reasons for this decline are complex, and subject to a substantial historiography, but are generally seen as part of the ‘civilising process’ which led to a widespread stigmatisation of public violence in the long eighteenth century. While such dynamics have been viewed principally within the context of changing masculine identities, the findings above indicate that such developments may also have affected female violent behaviour.⁸² Although female concepts of honour and hierarchy were not so codified as male ones (except perhaps sexually), and often led to less ritualised forms of violence, women would still, at least in the earlier part of the period, defend their reputations violently when challenged.⁸³ The decline in public violence was therefore not an exclusively male domain.

Sentence	Old Bailey	Old Bailey %	Parlement	Parlement %
Not convicted/Not Guilty	130	63.1 %	311	58.6%
Guilty lesser offence	31	15%	111	20.9%
Guilty	44	21.4%	84	15.8%
Unknown	1	0.5%	25	4.7%
Total	206	100%	531	100%

Table 1.1: Verdicts for women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) at the Old Bailey and Parisian *Parlement*.

⁸² On the decline of violence and the ‘civilising process’ see: D. D. Gray, ‘The Regulation of Violence in the Metropolis; the Prosecution of Assault in the Summary Courts, c. 1780-1820’, *The London Journal* 32.1 (2007), pp. 75-87; R. B. Shoemaker, ‘Male Honour and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth-Century London’, *Social History* 26.2 (May, 2001), pp. 190-208; R. B. Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 2004); S. Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 2006); M. Greenshields, *An Economy of Violence in Early Modern France* (Penn State, 1995); R. Muchembled, *A History of Violence* (London, 2012); J. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800* (Cambridge, 2001).

⁸³ J. Warner, K. Graham and E. Adlaf, ‘Women Behaving Badly: Gender and Aggression in a Military Town 1653-1781’, *Sex Roles* 52 (March, 2005), pp. 289-298; G. Walker, ‘Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996), pp. 235-245.

Any separation of the spheres or increasing stigmatisation of female public violence, whatever its impact on the declining number of cases, does not appear to have impacted on conviction rates in either city. This is in contrast to the trends demonstrated within studies of infanticide which have revealed a dramatic fall in convictions over the course of the century.⁸⁴ In both cities conviction rates for female-perpetrated homicide remained stable throughout the period and displayed cross channel similarities. As Table 1.1 demonstrates, in both London and Paris roughly 60 per cent of women accused of murder were not convicted of any crime.⁸⁵ Parisian women were more likely to be given a lesser sentence (branding, imprisonment, banishment) than London women, which could be reflective of the more sophisticated nature of the punitive infrastructure in Paris, in particular the women's penal institution of *La Salpêtrière*. However, once conviction had been handed down London women were more likely to receive a last minute pardon (this was in theory impossible for Parisian convictions of pre-meditated murder). In both cities, therefore, capital conviction rates of 21.4 per cent in London and 15.8 per cent in Paris must be seen as the very maximum proportions of women who might have been executed.

The 63 per cent acquittal rate for London women was higher than the general acquittal rate for the London Old Bailey in this period at just 41.8 per cent, although this overall rate included many crimes which did not carry the death penalty for which conviction may have been more likely (such statistics cannot be gauged for Paris). More importantly, the acquittal rate for women was higher than that for men accused of murder in both cities. In London, where male conviction rates also remained fairly stable, only

⁸⁴ Clayton, 'Changes in Old Bailey Trials', pp. 337-359; Rizzo, 'Between Dishonour and Death', pp. 5-21; Tinkova, 'Protéger ou Punir?' pp. 43-74; Francus, 'Monstrous mothers', pp. 133-156.

⁸⁵ It must be noted that the Parisian category of 'Not Convicted' includes those who were sentenced to *plus amplement informé*-where a defendant was either remanded in prison for up to a year while further evidence was found, or released into the community with the case left open indefinitely. Those carrying this sentence may not have been convicted, but were not fully acquitted either and continued to hold some stigma were barred from holding public office (obviously not an option for women anyway).

44 per cent of accused male killers were acquitted. But a higher percentage of men were found guilty of manslaughter (33 per cent) meaning that 22 per cent of men were actually sentenced to death, a very similar rate to that for women. In Paris male acquittal rates were also lower than female ones (46 per cent) and Parisian men were also more likely to receive a lesser sentence (25 per cent), however, unlike women accused of murder, these rates altered over the century with death sentences for male killers rising dramatically in the 1770s and 1780s. The higher number of men receiving lesser sentences in both cities reflected the fact that men were often accused of murders committed in the street and after heavy bouts of drinking, situations where responsibility was seen as diminished. This mirrors findings elsewhere that sentencing against women tended to be more polarised than against men: women tended to be seen as either entirely innocent or wholly guilty.⁸⁶ Yet the substantial number of women convicted of manslaughter in both cities demonstrates that gender differences in murder sentencing might not have been as dramatic in capital cities as in other areas. This may have been because city women were more likely to find themselves within the supposedly ‘masculine’ environments of tavern and street and in contact with strong liquors, or that violent female behaviour was more familiar in the intense and precarious living environments of London and Paris.

While overall rates of conviction reveal continuity and similarities across the channel, and, to a lesser extent, across gender, this is complicated when the kinds of women accused of murder in each city are compared. In exploring the age, marital status, occupation, relationship to victim and murder methods of women accused of murder in eighteenth-century London and Paris we return to the conflict between the ‘true’ nature of female homicide and the influence of the community and forensic technologies on trends in prosecution and conviction. Women at particular moments in their lives and in certain environments may have been more likely to commit homicide. Concern about

⁸⁶ Sharpe, ‘Domestic Homicide’, p. 39; Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order*, pp. 135-140.

particular kinds of women may also have led to a higher incidence of reporting of crimes associated with specific groups. Certain kinds of killing committed in particular environments may also have been easier to prove. The trends identified below, therefore, show in part that some groups of women were more likely to commit murder, and in part that communities were more willing to see women from certain groups as murderers, and/or that they were equipped with the judicial and forensic tools to prove their guilt.

In Paris the age of defendants was recorded in 85 per cent of cases of female murder, but in London it can only be identified in eight per cent of cases (17 cases), often from the *Ordinary's Account* (a record of criminals condemned to death) rather than the *Proceedings*, biasing the data toward women who were executed. Despite severe limitations in the London data it seems that, in both cities, women accused of murder tended to be older than women accused of other crimes. The median age of female homicide defendants in Paris was 36 and in London was 30. This is in contrast to the generally young populace that made up London and Parisian defendants accused of murder: Peter King has shown, for example, that over half of all female defendants accused of theft in the London Old Bailey were under 24.⁸⁷ Yet when younger women were indicted for murder in the Parisian *Parlement* (where enough age information exists to undertake further analysis), they were less likely to be acquitted (51 per cent acquittal rate for women aged 20 to 29) and were more likely to be given a death sentence (22 per cent) than older women. This probably reflects the fact that the majority of women who were charged in this age group were accused of the more heinous crime of poison, a particular concern in Paris, due to their work in domestic service or as cooks. It might also reflect increased concern with a new form of independent woman: often working in domestic service and outside of the control of a male relative.

⁸⁷ P. King, 'Female offenders, work and life-cycle change in late-eighteenth-century London', *Continuity and Change*, 11.1 (1996), p. 62.

Concern with women living outside of male authority (although not always in their early twenties) can also be detected in analysis of the marital status of women indicted for killing in both cities. Generally it appears that marital status was only recorded when women were married or widows, in order to denote the men who were (or had been) responsible for them. 35 per cent of indicted London women were married, and six per cent were widows, while in Paris 31 per cent of defendants were married and 12 per cent were widows. This implies that 59 per cent of defendants in London and 57 per cent of defendants in Paris were probably single women. Following the methods of Peter King, these can be compared with Laslett and Wall's estimates that, in eighteenth-century Europe, 12 per cent of women over nine were widows, 44 per cent were married and 44 per cent were single.⁸⁸ This implies that married women were underrepresented and single women were overrepresented in murder accusations in both London and Paris. However, this is also probably reflective of the fact that London and Paris had higher proportions of single women than national rates because of the rising urban demand for female labour, particularly in domestic service.⁸⁹

While similar proportions of married and single women were accused of murder in London and Paris, differences emerge between the two cities when marital status is cross-referenced with conviction rates. Table 1.2 shows that in London single women were more likely to be acquitted than married women or widows. This could reflect emerging eighteenth-century understandings of single women as passive vulnerable victims rather than subversive threats within the urban space.⁹⁰ While married women could also appropriate narratives of female passivity and victimisation, such motifs took

⁸⁸ King, 'Female offenders', p. 67; P. Laslett and R. Wall, *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 145.

⁸⁹ A. Fauve-Chamoux, 'Le surplus urbain des femmes en France préindustrielle et le rôle de la domesticité', *Population* 53 (1998), pp. 359-377.

⁹⁰ Such changing identifications can be seen in Wiener, 'Alice Arden to Bill Sikes', pp. 184-212 and T. Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London: Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis* (London, 1999), Chapter Seven; Gonda, 'Misses, Murderesses and Magdalens', pp. 53-75.

on a particular power in cases of single women at a time when understandings of the responsibility of authorities to protect their most vulnerable were gaining currency, seen in the creation of new Foundling and Magdalen hospitals. Such understandings were in direct contradiction to fears about the threat posed by independent young women living outside of male control as documented by Amy Masciola.⁹¹ This unresolved contradiction can be seen in both the judicial treatment and print coverage of single women accused of murder, leading to complex and often contradictory arguments in the court and on the page. The London tendency to favour single women was in contrast to Paris, where conviction and acquittal rates differed much less according to marital status, but where married women were slightly more likely to be acquitted than their single counterparts, as shown in Table 1.3. Petrovitch has shown that, in Paris, trials of single women would often proceed more slowly than those against women with a family, allowing more time to secure a conviction.⁹² As domestic service became primarily a female occupation later in Paris than in London, where it had become almost fully feminised by the beginning of the century, it may also be that associated narratives of the vulnerability of the young urban woman took longer to influence conviction rates.⁹³

Marital Status	Not Guilty	Guilty Manslaughter	Guilty	Unknown	Total
Single/ unknown	70.8%	12.5%	16.7%	0	120(100%)
Married	52.1%	21.9%	26%	0	73 (100%)
Widow	53.8%	0.0%	38.5%	7.7%	13(100%)

Table 1.2: Distribution of verdict by marital status for women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in the London Old Bailey.

⁹¹ Masciola, “I Can See By This Woman’s Features...”.

⁹² Petrovitch, ‘Recherches sur la Criminalité à Paris’, p. 204.

⁹³ The broader definitions of servants, and their slower feminisation, in France can be seen in C. Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and their Masters in Old Regime France* (London, 1984); S. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth Century France: the Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, 1983); J-P. Gutton, *Domestiques et Serviteurs dans la France de l’Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1981).

Marital Status	Not convicted	Guilty lesser offence	Guilty	Unknown	Total
Single/ unknown	58.5%	21.7%	15.4%	4.3%	299 (100%)
Wife	61.7%	19.2%	13.2%	6%	167 (100%)
Widow	50.8%	21.5%	24.6%	3.1%	65(100%)

Table 1.3: Distribution of verdict by marital status for women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in the Parisian *Parlement*.

While they may have disagreed on the threat posed by single women, both Londoners and Parisians seemed to identify widows as particularly dangerous, reflected in the inordinately high rate of death sentences given to widows in London and low acquittal rate of widows in Paris (Tables 1.2 and 1.3). Older women, no longer biologically useful and perhaps in positions of power through inheritance of their husbands' businesses, could be resented figures. Widows may also have attracted particular suspicion because accusations of murder could lead to suspicions that they had also killed their husbands. In Paris, low acquittal rates may reflect the fact that, alongside young maids, widows were particularly associated with the crime of poison. Widows' elderly status might also have meant that they were less likely to receive manslaughter verdicts as they would be seen as less likely to accidentally kill someone in a rage. As Scarlett Beauvalet-Boutouyrie has shown, widowhood was a turbulent time in a woman's life where desperate and intense living situations may also have led to more actual homicidal acts.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ S. Beauvalet- Boutouyrie, *Être Veuve Sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2001).

Occupation	Number	Percentage (where occupation known)
Brothel Keeper/ prostitute	8	10.4%
Apprentice	1	1.3%
Charwoman	5	6.5%
Servant	10	13.0%
Manufacturer	18	23.4%
Nurse/Midwife	10	13.0%
Retailer	6	7.8%
Victualler/landlady	15	19.5%
Gentlewoman	4	5.2%
Unknown	129	-
Total	206	100%

Table 1.4: Distribution of occupations of women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in the London Old Bailey.⁹⁵

Occupation	Number	Percentage (where occupation known)
Beggar	2	1.0%
Charwoman	12	6.1 %
Labourer	40	20.4%
Servant	48	24.5%
Manufacturer	57	29.1%
Nurse/midwife	3	1.5%
Retailer	22	11.2%
Victualler/Landlady	9	4.6%
Gentlewoman	3	1.5%
Unknown	335	-
Total	531	100%

Table 1.5: Distribution of occupations of women indicted for killing (excluding infanticide) in the Parisian *Parlement*.

An overrepresentation of certain groups of women in murder accusations, perhaps reflecting a real tendency present among particular groups of women to commit murder, can also be seen in analysis of the occupations of those accused. Occupation was recorded in only one third of London cases and two fifths of Parisian cases, therefore any conclusions drawn from these statistics must be tentative. In both cities, however, clear

⁹⁵ Occupational categories have been determined by the phrases used by defendants and witnesses themselves to describe their work. 'Manufacturer' is used to designate all occupations involving the production of goods for sale that were not food. 'Retailer' is used to designate those involved in the selling of goods which were not food who did not also produce the goods.

differences emerge between the occupation patterns of women accused of murder and wider patterns of female employment, implying that specific groups were seen as (or were) particularly likely to commit murder. In London, the occupations of accused women (Table 1.4) can be compared to the findings of Peter Earle for general patterns of female employment in the capital, with striking results. While Earle's survey finds only seven per cent of eighteenth-century London women working in victualling, for example, the occupation accounted for 19.5 per cent of women accused of murder (where occupation is known). There were also a disproportionate number of accused women working in nursing or midwifery (13 per cent of known occupations of murder accused compared to Earle's estimate of nine per cent), perhaps following the seventeenth-century concern with murderous midwives identified by Garthine Walker and further explored in Chapter Three.⁹⁶ Occupations such as midwifery and victualling which took place at night, involved moving around the city unsupervised, and, in the case of victualling, put women into contact with alcohol may have been seen as particularly threatening, and may really have created opportunities for, and encouraged, murder. Yet while 'service industry' jobs were overrepresented in London women's murder indictments, servants were underrepresented. Earle estimates that at least 25 per cent of women in London worked in domestic service, with this statistic rising throughout the century, but servants accounted for only 13 per cent of known occupations of women accused of murder.⁹⁷ While Earle's statistics, drawn from consistory court depositions, may overestimate the proportion of London women working in service, an underrepresentation of servants in murder indictments could also reflect the skill of accused servants in concealing their occupations from judicial authorities to save their

⁹⁶ G. Walker, "'Demons in Female Form': Representations of Women and Gender in Murder Pamphlets of the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in W. Trill and S. Trill (eds), *Writing and the English Renaissance* (London, 1996), p. 126.

⁹⁷ P. Earle, 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review* 42 (1989), pp. 328–47. See also A. Erickson, 'Married Women's Occupations in Eighteenth-Century London', *Continuity and Change* 23.2 (2008), pp. 267–307.

reputations, or the tight household control that some servants lived under, giving them fewer opportunities to commit murder.⁹⁸

For Paris, Sabine Juratic's survey of the occupations of women either arrested by the *Maréchaussée* or registered as passing through the *Hôtel Dieu* for relief during the 1780s is more limited than Earle's in that it concentrates on one particular social group, the very poorest and most vulnerable. Yet here also, comparison with Catalogue 450 reveals clear differences between the general occupational patterns of women who found themselves in contact with the authorities and those accused of murder. Unlike London, in Paris servants were an overrepresented group within murder accusations, with the 24 per cent of women accused of murder who identified themselves as servants outweighing the 12 per cent of women working as servants arrested by the *Maréchaussée* and 20 per cent of women registered at the *Hôtel Dieu* (Table 1.5). This is surprising given that, in terms of high-profile murderesses, London print displayed a greater concern with murderous female servants than Paris. As Juratic's statistics concentrate on the poorest members of society, this could be indicative of the occupational differences between such women and the broader social backgrounds of women accused of murder. The association of domestic service with women came later to Paris than to London, so this difference could also reflect a newer concern with the domestic servant. But it could also represent the wider definition of the occupation 'servant' in Paris than in London; servants in Paris often worked in trades that in London would be more readily associated with victualling. This is supported by the fact that, unlike London, Parisian female victuallers appear underrepresented in murder accusations, accounting for approximately 13 per cent of the female population in Juratic's study, in contrast to just 4.6 per cent of those arrested for murder. The occupation of unskilled labourer or *ouvrière sans spécialité* (an occupation that no London women accused of murder were recorded as undertaking, perhaps

⁹⁸ This is also found for servant thieves in King, 'Female offenders', *Continuity and Change*, p. 68.

reflecting the wider rural spread of the *Parlement* jurisdiction) was heavily overrepresented in Parisian female murder accusations accounting for, according to Juratic, just nine per cent of women listed in the *Hôtel Dieu* and *Maréchaussée* but 20 per cent of those accused of murder. This is in contrast to women involved in the manufacture of goods who made up 50 per cent of the Parisian female workforce (according to Juratic), but just 30 per cent of murder accusations.⁹⁹ The underrepresentation of women involved in manufacturing was reflected, albeit much less dramatically, in London, where Earle identifies 26 per cent of London women working in manufacturing or clothes making, compared to 23 per cent of women accused of murder. In short, women involved in service industries were overrepresented in murder accusations in both cities, alongside, in Paris, women working as unskilled labourers. In London this trend focused on more tangential forms of service while in Paris servants were the most disproportionately likely to be accused of murder. Women working in manufacturing were proportionally underrepresented in murder accusations in both cities, although they still represented the largest group of murder accused, possibly reflecting the easy access that such women had to pokers and work tools that served as some of the most common murder weapons (see below) or simply the fact that manufacturing remained the most common form of urban female occupation.

Certain kinds of women were therefore more likely to either be accused of, or commit, murder in eighteenth-century London and Paris, in particular older, single women working in service industries. These trends can be further complicated by analysis of the kinds of murders, both in terms of victims and methods, that were most often prosecuted in both cities. Unfortunately, except in cases of husband murder, details about the victims

⁹⁹ S. Juratic, 'Solitude féminine et travail des femmes à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle', *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes* 99.2 (1987), pp. 879-900. A more extensive survey of occupations of women in eighteenth-century Chalon-sur-Saône can be seen in J.B. Collins, 'Women and the Birth of Modern Consumer Capitalism', in D. M. Hafter and N. Kushner (eds), *Women and Work in Eighteenth-Century France* (Louisiana, 2015), pp. 152-176.

were rarely recorded in Catalogue 450, so this information can only be extensively compiled for London. In London, two-thirds of cases of female-perpetrated murder were the murders of men, which supports Garthine Walker findings for Cheshire in disputing Spierenberg and McLynn's characterisation of female murderous violence as primarily targeted towards other women.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, as Table 1.6 shows, London women were almost equally likely to be sentenced to death for killing both genders which would seem to deny the possibility that the act of a woman killing a man was seen as a particularly horrifying form of subversion. Moreover, the fact that women were more likely to be found guilty of manslaughter of a man than a woman disputes arguments that, due to male superior strength, women were seen as having to use pre-meditated methods to dispatch them.¹⁰¹ Like women, London men were much more likely to be indicted for murder of men than women: 81 per cent of men accused of murder were accused of the murder of a man. But, unlike women, men were much more likely to be sentenced to death for murder of a woman (31 per cent of accusations) than of a man (20 per cent). This may reflect the fact that a man killing a woman was less likely to be seen as self defence but also the rising stigmatisation of violence against women that was taking place across Europe, detailed by Margaret Hunt, Joanne Bailey and Garthine Walker, among others.¹⁰² Gender of the victim, therefore, would seem to have had more influence on cases of male-perpetrated homicide than female ones.

¹⁰⁰ Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order*, Chapter Four. This traditional image of female murder as exclusively characterised by female-on female-killing can be found in P. Spierenburg, *A History of Murder: Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 117-120 and F. McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1989), pp. 116-131.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² M. Hunt, 'Wife Beating, Domesticity and Women's Independence in Eighteenth-Century London', *Gender & History* 4.1 (1992), pp.10-33; E. Foyster, 'Creating a Veil of Silence? Politeness and Marital Violence in the English Household', *Transactions of the Royal History Society* 12 (2002), pp. 395-415; J. Bailey "'I Dye [sic] by Inches": Locating Wife Beating in the Concept of a Privatisation of Marriage and Violence in Eighteenth-Century England', *Social History* 31.3 (2006), pp. 273-294.

Victim Gender	Not Guilty	Guilty Manslaughter	Guilty	Total
Female	59.6%	14.5%	25.8%	66 (100%)
Male	54.2%	21.9%	24%	136 (100%)
Victims of both sexes	100%	0%	0%	1 (100%)
Unknown	100%	0%	0%	3 (100%)

Table 1.6: Distribution of conviction rates cross referenced with victim gender in cases of women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) at the London Old Bailey.

These findings become even more pronounced within analysis of spousal murder. While the relationship between perpetrator and victim is rarely stated in Catalogue 450, an exception is made for husbands. In both cities spousal murder formed a sizeable number of murder charges against women (11-13 % of cases including unknown relationships¹⁰³), but, it must be noted, this is a much smaller proportion than has been found for rural areas.¹⁰⁴ Husband murder was undoubtedly a heinous offence in both cities, carrying a capital conviction rate of 31.9 per cent in Paris and 33.3 per cent in London. Sabine Juratic has argued that in Paris these higher-than-average conviction rates reflect the fact that the murder methods that wives used against husbands were those which specified pre-mediation, notably poisoning, while husbands killing wives, often the product of domestic violence gone out of control, could more plausibly be seen as an accident. This seems possible for Paris where just under half of women accused of killing their husbands reportedly used poison, but such a trend cannot apply to London where wives were most likely to be charged for killing their husbands by stabbing.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, while husband murder was seen as a particularly serious crime, treatment actually appears mild when compared with the conviction rates for men killing their

¹⁰³ My statistics for husband murder in Catalogue 450 differ from Juratic's in 'Contraintes conjugales' p. 104, because, although I have identified the same number of cases of husband murder, I have identified a larger overall number of cases of female-perpetrated homicide, meaning that husband murder forms a smaller proportion of my data.

¹⁰⁴ Rural statistics displaying much higher percentages of husband murder as a proportion of female-perpetrated murder can be seen in Sharpe, 'Domestic Homicide', p. 36.

¹⁰⁵ Juratic, 'Contraintes conjugales', p. 105.

wives. In both cities wife murder formed a smaller proportions of murder accusations against men: five per cent of male murder accusations in London, and in Paris just two per cent. Yet conviction rates were extremely high: 53 per cent of men accused of killing their wives in London were sentenced to death, and 44 per cent in Paris. This may reflect the possibility that wife murder was only prosecuted in particularly extreme circumstances, but it does demonstrate that courts were by no means lenient on wife killers. The murder of husbands by wives was therefore a transgressive crime in both London and Paris, and received high conviction rates as a result, but this was connected to a wider concern with spousal murder and condemnation of domestic violence.

Although spousal murder formed an important part of female-perpetrated murder, in the metropolises of London and Paris women's murder was not restricted to the domestic space nor the nuclear family. Husbands were the most common victims of female homicide in both cities, but the richer London records demonstrate that women were also accused of murdering people with whom they shared a wide variety of relationships. While relationship to victim is unknown in 32 per cent of cases in the *Proceedings*, the most common victims of female homicide after husbands (19.1 per cent of all cases excluding unknowns) were tenants (14.2 per cent of cases), employees (9.9 per cent) and acquaintances (9.9 per cent) with children, the other stereotypical victim of women, coming in joint fifth alongside strangers (8.5 per cent). This follows John Beattie's findings for Surrey and Sussex that women generally murdered neighbours, acquaintances or members of their household, although here the definition of household member is extended to those on short-term rents in lodging houses.¹⁰⁶ Despite the widespread concern with servants killing their masters, shown in the Sarah Malcolm case, this only accounted for four per cent of cases: employees were much more likely to be murdered by their mistresses than mistresses by their employees. This demonstrates

¹⁰⁶ J. M. Beattie, 'The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Social History* 8.4 (1994), pp. 108-109.

that female-perpetrated urban murders were often the product of difficulties of domestic or neighbourhood life in dense communities, and that in urban centres women could form intense relationships with individuals outside of the nuclear household.

In the same way that urban women did not kill exclusively within the nuclear family, they also did not kill using only the so-called female methods of poison and smothering. Here, however, there is a clear Parisian/London divide based upon the Parisian obsession with poisoning. Indeed, Catalogue 450 only records murder methods when they involved poison. Poison cases accounted for 21 per cent of all accusations against Parisian women, compared to just three per cent of London women. While Parisian men were less likely to be accused of poisoning than women, with 112 cases or three per cent of accusations against Parisian male killers involving poison, far more men were accused of poisoning in Paris than in London, where only 12 men were accused (and only one convicted) for the entire period. Perhaps there really were more poisoners in Paris. But there was also a team of *commissaires* who were briefed to submit any individual who had died of a mysterious stomach complaint for an autopsy. No such infrastructure existed in London. Although poisoning has often been posited as a Parisian women's crime, the capital conviction rates for men and women accused of poisoning in Paris were the same, at 30 per cent. This was double the overall capital conviction rates for both male and female killers, indicating that poisoning was seen as a particularly threatening crime regardless of gender. Contrary to wider trends, Parisian women were much more likely to receive a lesser sentence for accidental killing through poison than men. This probably reflects the higher proportion of food preparation work being undertaken by women: men, further away from the day-to-day kitchen, would have been much less likely to poison by accident.

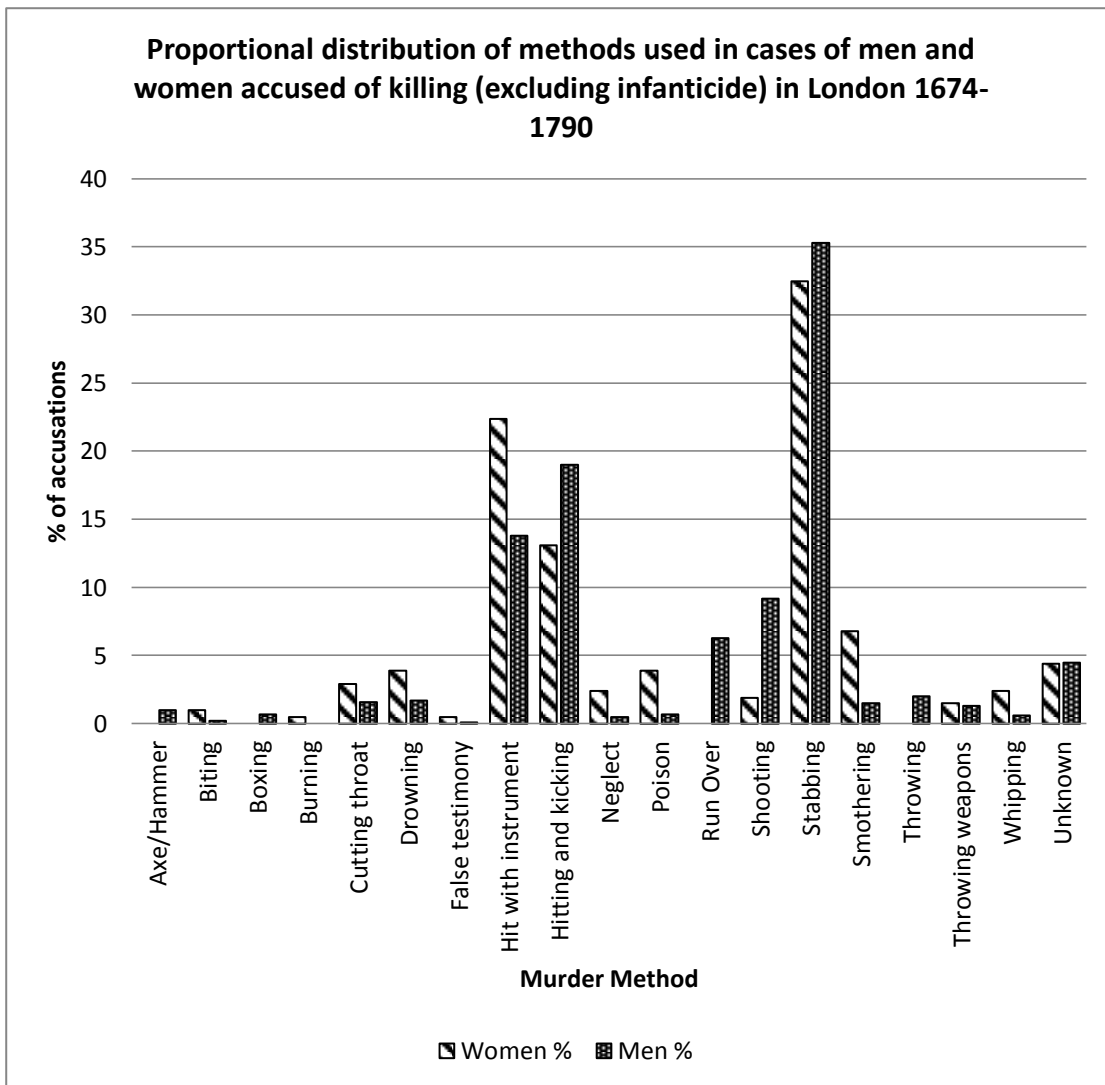


Figure 1.3: Proportional distribution of methods used in cases of men and women accused of killing (excluding infanticide) in London 1674-1790.

Although the records for Paris cannot give us details on the ways in which the 79 per cent of women accused of killing in ways other than poison were alleged to have committed murder, in London the *Proceedings* show that men and women were accused of killing in a variety of ways, as shown in Figure 1.3. This graph is striking for its similarities rather than its differences: both men and women were primarily accused of killing by stabbing, hitting and kicking and hitting with an instrument, with women more

likely to use a weapon in their murderous beatings than men.¹⁰⁷ Men and women both used weapons at hand to beat their victims: for men these were often work tools, and for women pokers or quart pots. This follows the findings of Jennine Hurl-Eamon and Jessica Warner in demonstrating the intensely physical nature of urban women's violence, although, unlike Warner's findings for Portsmouth, there seems to be no distinction in women's murder methods depending on the victim's sex: women were not more likely to use weapons to kill a man than a woman.¹⁰⁸ For both men and women, the highest conviction rates resulted from the most violent of murder methods: cutting throats, attacking with an axe, and whipping, and the lowest conviction rates came from the traditional (and difficult to prove) 'manslaughter' crimes of hitting and kicking, indicating that there was no extra concern given to women murdering in supposedly 'masculine' ways. While previous historians have argued that women tended to kill within the home, 42 per cent of London female-perpetrated murders were alleged to have taken place in public yards, in the street or in a public drinking house (this is a minimum estimate as the site of the crime is not known 14 per cent of London cases).¹⁰⁹ Although a similar analysis cannot be undertaken for Parisian murder methods, it can be established that the majority of Parisian women did not commit murder through poison, nor did they kill their husbands, suggesting that here also female murder was at once more violent and perhaps more public than previously believed.

In this initial review of the judicial treatment of women (and men) accused of murder at the courts of the London Old Bailey and Parisian *Parlement* what emerges is more a

¹⁰⁷ Men were more likely to hit their victims over the head with the instrument, while women were more likely to beat them all over. I can think of few reasons for this, except perhaps that men may have been taller than women, and their greater strength may have meant that one hard blow on the head could achieve the same result as multiple blows administered by a woman all over. It is more likely, however, that this was simply a lexical difference in the way that murders by men and women were described which could imply the more sudden, but much quicker, nature of male aggression compared to women.

¹⁰⁸ J. Hurl-Eamon, *Gender and Petty Violence in London, 1680-1720* (Ohio, 2005); J. Warner, K. Graham and E. Adlaf, 'Women Behaving Badly: Gender and Aggression in a Military Town 1653-1781', *Sex Roles* 52 (March, 2005), pp. 289-298.

¹⁰⁹ Arguments for the private nature of female killing can be found in Sharpe, 'Domestic Homicide', p. 36 and Beattie, 'The Criminality of Women', pp. 107-108.

story of continuity and similarity than contrast and change. Despite their institutional judicial differences, London and Parisian statistics for female-perpetrated murder are strikingly similar. Cases of female homicide were roughly one tenth of cases of male homicide in both cities. In each, roughly one fifth of women accused of murder were sentenced to death, a statistic mirrored in conviction rates for men, with per capita rates of murder accusations for both men and women declining over the century. In both London and Paris women who were unmarried, in the later decades of their lives or working in the service industry were overrepresented in accusations. Female-perpetrated murder was a crime that was not restricted to the poisoning of immediate family members in the home and often took place in similar ways to murders committed by men. Both courts' particularly heavy treatment of cases of husband murder formed part of a wider concern with spousal murder by both husbands and wives. Yet within this background of continuity and similarity, it is clear that particular kinds of women were more likely to be accused of/commit murder than others in each city. The London judiciary displayed more leniency towards single women accused of murder, while the Parisian judiciary dealt particularly harshly with women in their twenties. The Parisian *Parlement* also displayed a heightened concern with poisonings, which formed a much higher proportion of accusations in Paris than in London. This concentration of concern around particular groups of women in London and Parisian society would, in part, inform the selection of particular cases for high-profile treatment, as explored in the next section.

The High-Profile Murderess in Print Culture

As well as establishing the judicial background within which the murderesses analysed within this thesis were tried, it is also important to understand the nature of the London and Parisian print cultures in which the high-profile status of these cases was forged, and its cross-channel differences. This section will explore the types of publication in which

stories about murderesses were featured, how such publications differed on either side of the channel, and demonstrate how the coverage of particular cases in both cities can be defined as ‘high-profile’ as distinguished from both other female killers and male killers within the print imagination of London and Paris.

In London, a substantial historiography has shown the eighteenth century to have been the crucial period in the development of a modern print culture in which writings about crime played an important role. Following the lapsing of the licensing act in 1695, print proliferated in London on an unprecedented scale, and for the middling-sort urban populace who were its central consumers crime was a subject of considerable interest. Through this, three major genres of crime reporting became increasingly prevalent: the judicial pamphlets of the *Old Bailey Proceedings* and *Ordinary’s Account*, collected volumes of criminal biographies and trials, and criminal reports in the newspaper press. Although ever-expanding publication lengths and increased competition from Grub Street hacks reduced the circulation of the *Proceedings* and *Ordinary’s Account* by the late eighteenth century (with the *Ordinary’s Account* disappearing altogether), these publications performed an important role across the eighteenth century by making the workings of the justice system visible to Londoners, bringing an awareness of the crimes being committed and punished in the capital. The criminal biography was also a popular genre among the London reading public. These biographies were at once scandalous romps and solemn fables about the fragility of human virtue and the slippery slope from small delinquencies to severe crimes. From the second quarter of the century popular biographies and trials from the *Proceedings* were assembled into compendia in which cases of female-perpetrated murder were a popular topic. Such compendia often reproduced the same stories over and over again, altering reports only by omission and rarely adding in new cases. But Andrea McKeznie has shown that in the latter half of the century new editions of these compendia increasingly shifted the depiction of condemned

criminals from everymen from whose fate the reader had been saved but by the grace of God to members of an exceptional criminal class born in the shadow of the gallows.¹¹⁰ Such ‘othering’ of criminals can also be seen in newspaper representations of crime. The eighteenth century saw the emergence of numerous printed daily and weekly journals in London for which crime was a major source of copy. Where biographies traced connections between a crime’s initial causes and its inevitable detection and punishment, newspapers reeled off reports of criminal acts in short, terse fragments; often unresolved, uneradicated, uncontrollable. For the newspaper reader the criminal geography of London was opened up in meticulous detail, its perpetrators no longer exemplars or exceptions but a regular feature of London life.¹¹¹

Scholars have shown that these evolutions in criminal print were central to eighteenth-century Londoners’ experience of city life. But counterparts to such publications in Paris were limited. Censorship and a secretive judicial system meant that lengthy representations of criminal investigations and trials in print were more unusual. But there was one exception, in the form of the ‘factum’ (also known as the *Mémoire Judiciaire*). Despite being printed, factums were entirely private documents which were written by

¹¹⁰ A. McKenzie, ‘Useful and Entertaining to the Generality of Readers:’ Selecting the *Select Trials*, 1718-1764’, in D. Lemmings (ed.), *Crime, Courtrooms and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1700-1750* (Surrey, 2012), pp. 43-69. On criminal biography see: L. Faller, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987); H. Gladfelder, *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore, 2001); M. Harris, ‘Trials and Criminal Biographies: A Case Study in Distribution’, in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds), *Sale and Distribution of Books from 1700* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 6-15; A. McKenzie, ‘The Real Macheath: Social Satire, Appropriation, and Eighteenth-Century Criminal Biography’, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69 (2006), pp. 581-605; P. Rawlings, *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices: Criminal Biographies of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1992); J. Rietz, ‘Criminal Misrepresentation: Moll Flanders and Female Criminal Biography’, *Studies in the Novel* 23.2 (1991), pp. 183-195.

¹¹¹ On the press see S. Devereaux, ‘From Sessions to Newspaper? Criminal Trial Reporting, the Nature of Crime, and the London Press, 1770-1800’, *London Journal* 32 (2007), pp. 1-27; P. King, ‘Making Crime News: Newspapers, Violent Crime and the Selective Reporting of Old Bailey Trials in the Late Eighteenth Century’, *Crime Histoire et Sociétés* 13.1 (2009), pp. 91-116; P. King, ‘Newspaper Reporting and Attitudes to Crime and Justice in Late Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Century London’, *Continuity and Change* 22 (2007), pp. 73-112; Lemmings (ed.), *Crime, Courtrooms and the Public Sphere*; E. Snell, ‘Discourses of Criminality in the Eighteenth-Century Press: The Presentation of Crime in *The Kentish Post*, 1717-1768’, *Continuity and Change* 22 (2007), pp. 13-47; R. Ward, ‘Print Culture, Moral Panic, and the Administration of the Law : The London Crime Wave of 1744’, *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés* 16.1 (2012), pp. 5-24; R. Ward, *Print Culture, Crime and Justice in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2014).

lawyers and which presented the case for a defendant to be either convicted or acquitted to presiding judges. As such, factums remained one of the few publications that could be printed without permission. In the 1770s and 1780s the potential power of this loophole was realised and factums were transformed from dry legal argumentations into emotive accounts of scandalous crimes written for a wider public readership. Sara Maza has estimated that print-runs of factums in the 1780s went to 20,000, with reports of riots outside print shops, and the *Affiches* (commercial, primarily non-Parisian, advertising papers) printed excerpts from the most popular factums for their readers.¹¹² While a small number of criminal biographies were produced in Paris, the closest counterpart to the large London compendia of criminal biographies or trials were the *Causes Célèbres*. First published in 1734 by Gayot de Pitaval, the remit of the *Causes Célèbres* was much broader than that of London collections, including cases from ancient times and from across Europe, and was more concerned with cases involving adultery or inheritance disputes than murder.¹¹³ But perhaps the greatest chasm in the print coverage of crime in

¹¹² This is shown in C. Jones, 'The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution', *The American Historical Review* 101.1 (Feb, 1996), p. 38; S. Maza, 'Le tribunal de la nation: les Mémoires Judiciaires et l'opinion publique à la fin de l'Ancien Régime', *Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 42.1 (Jan, 1987), pp. 73-90. *Mémoires Judiciaires* remain an understudied source for historians. Some excellent work has been done in: P. Bastien, 'Les arrêts criminels et leurs enjeux sur l'opinion publique à Paris au XVIII^e siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 53 (2006), pp. 34-62; P. Bastien, R. Lévy and A. G. Srebnick, 'Private Crimes and Public Executions: Discourses on Guilt in the Arrêts Criminels of the Eighteenth-Century Parliament of Paris', *Texts and Contexts: International Essays on the History of Crime and Culture* (New York, 2005), pp. 141-162; D. Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: the Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France* (New York, 1994); N. Bérenquier, 'Victorious Victims: Women and Publicity in *Mémoires Judiciaires*', in E. C. Goldsmith and D. Goodman (eds), *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France* (Ithaca, 1995), pp. 62-78; S. Maza, 'The Theatre of Punishment: Melodrama and Judicial Reform in pre-Revolutionary France', in S. E. Melzer and K. Norberg (eds), *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1998), pp. 182-198; S. Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: the Causes Célèbres of Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (California, 1993).

¹¹³ The difficulty of comparing *Causes Célèbres* and criminal biography is explored in L. Andriès, 'Histoires criminelles anglaises', in L. Andriès (ed.), *Cartouche, Mandrin et autres brigands du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 2010), pp. 245-268; L. Lebourg-Leportier, "'Slippery Eel': Escape Episodes and Ideological Ambiguity in Eighteenth-Century Criminal Biographies. The Cases of Louis-Dominique Cartouche and John Sheppard', in D. Grelé and M. Mulryan (eds), *Caught Between Fact and Fiction: Eighteenth-Century Escape Tales* (Bucknell, Forthcoming); L. Lebourg-LePortier, 'Les biographies de criminels et la culture savante à l'époque moderne. L'exemple de la gloire du brigand au XVIII^e siècle en Angleterre et en France', *Revue des Études Culturelles* (Forthcoming). See also H. Lusebrink, 'Les crimes sexuelles dans les Causes Célèbres', *Dix Huitième Siècle* 12 (1980), pp. 153-162; T. Rizzo, *A Certain Emancipation of Women: Gender, Citizenship and the Causes Célèbres of Eighteenth-Century France* (Cranbury, 2004); J.

eighteenth-century London and Paris can be found within the newspaper and periodical press. While crime formed a large part of middling-sort facing London newsprint, Parisian journals and periodicals focused upon the pointedly upper-class interests of foreign policy, military campaigns, and court events. The *Affiches* played an important role in the creation of a bourgeois culture outside of Paris, as shown by Colin Jones, of which crime reports formed a part.¹¹⁴ However the *Affiches de Paris* remained strictly in the sphere of short, small advertisements. Crime was not always specifically censored, but rarely formed part of the topics deemed relevant for Parisian periodical discussion. The aristocratic readers who formed the designated (although almost certainly not actual) audience for such publications were not believed to be particularly interested in the everyday criminal occurrences of the capital.¹¹⁵

Yet an exclusive focus on the emerging genres of eighteenth-century print culture exaggerates the differences between London and Paris. After all, both cities shared a European culture of ‘rogue literature’ through song, inexpensive print and image dating back to at least the sixteenth century. Cheap pamphlets illustrated with crude woodcuts and printed on poor quality paper featured stories on murderesses throughout the period.¹¹⁶ A genre often associated with women, who sang and hawked them on street

Sgard, ‘La littérature des Causes Célèbres’, in B. Guyon (ed.), *Approches des lumières: mélanges offerts à Jean Fabre* (Paris, 1974), pp 459-470.

¹¹⁴ Jones, ‘The Great Chain of Buying’, pp. 13-40.

¹¹⁵ C. Boulard (ed.) ‘Presse et transferts culturels’, Special edition, *Epistème* 26 (2014); J. Censer and J. D. Popkin (eds), *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France* (California, 1987); S. Botein, J. Censer, and H. Ritvo, ‘La presse périodique et la société anglaise et française au XVIIIe siècle: une approche comparative,’ *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 32. 2 (1985), pp. 209- 236; J. R. Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 1994); J. Sgard, *Lumières et leurs du XVIIIe siècle, 1715-1789: histoire de France à travers les journaux du temps passé* (Paris, 1986); V. Rowan, ‘La Citoyenne Bien Renseignée: Women, the Newspaper Press and Urban Literary Culture in Paris, Rennes and Lyon 1780-1800’, PhD thesis (University of Warwick, 1999).

¹¹⁶ On pamphlets and ballads: L. Bertelsen, ‘Popular Entertainment and Instruction, Literary and Dramatic: Chapbooks, Advice books, Almanacs, Ballads, Farces, Pantomimes, Prints and Shows’, in John Richetti (ed.), *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660-1780* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 61-86 ; G. Bolleme, *La Bibliothèque Bleue, littérature de colportage* (Paris, 2003); Clark, *Women and Crime*; P. Lake, ‘Deeds against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, in K. Sharpe and P. Lake (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (London, 1994), pp. 257–83; M. Harris ‘Murder in Print: Representations of Crime and the Law c 1660-1760’, in R. Lorelli and R. De Romanis (eds), *Narrating Transgression: Representations of the Criminal in Early Modern*

corners, many high-profile murderesses were also immortalised through ballads.¹¹⁷

Visual culture continued to play an important role in both cities, and prints of murderesses and their crimes formed part of the décor of shops, coffeehouses and taverns.¹¹⁸ Some of the newer imaginative genres evolving in the eighteenth century also shared cross-channel similarities, in particular the novel. Five of the murderesses analysed within this thesis had had their cases transformed into novel form by the late-nineteenth century.¹¹⁹ It is also of note that all of the high-profile cases of Parisian female-perpetrated murder appeared in London print, though I have not been able to trace any sign of London murderesses being reported in Paris. This may be because of the limitations of modern access to Parisian materials, which do not facilitate widespread text search, or it may be because, as discussed above, Parisian print was primarily concerned with aristocrats and court life: the crimes of lower middle-class London women may have held little interest.

However, despite some crucial differences in the nature of London and Parisian print, the phenomenon of the high-profile murderess was strikingly similar in both cities. The

England (Frankfurt, 1999), pp. 13-27; J. A. Sharpe, "'Last Dying speeches': Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present* 107 (1985), pp. 144-167.

¹¹⁷S. Clark, 'The Broadside Ballad and the Woman's Voice', in Cristina Malcolmson and Mihoko Suzuki (eds), *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (London, 2002), pp. 103-120; S. A. Kane, 'Wives with Knives: Early Modern Murder Ballads and the Transgressive Commodity', *Criticism* 38.2 (Spring, 1996), pp. 219-237; C. Marsh, 'The Sound of Print in Early Modern England: the Broadside Ballad as Song', in J. C. Crick and A. Walsham (eds), *The Uses of Script and Print 1300-1700* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 171-90; U. McIlvenna, 'Singing of Executions: Ballads as News Media in Early Modern Europe', in J. Davidson and R. Prince (eds), *Singing Emotions: Voices from History* (Adelaide, 2012), pp. 13-16; S. A. Todd, 'The Representation of Aggression in the Seventeenth-Century English Broadside Ballad' PhD Thesis (University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1998).

¹¹⁸M. Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference, Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (London, 1999); S. O'Connell, *The Popular Print in England 1550-1850* (London, 1999); M. Percival, *The Appearance of Character: Physiognomy and Facial Expression in Eighteenth-Century France* (Leeds, 1999); D. Solkin, *Painting for Money: the Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1993).

¹¹⁹The most written about murderess in fiction is undoubtedly the Marquise de Brinvilliers with novels including: A. Conan Doyle, *The Leather Funnel* (London, 1922); A. Dumas, 'The Marquise de Brinvilliers' in *Crimes Célèbres* (Paris, 1839); W. Field, *The Devil's Marchioness* (London, 1957); E. Gaboriau, *Amours d'une Empoisonneuse* (Paris, 1881); R. Browning, *The Laboratory* (London, 1846). There are two novels on Marie Catherine Taperet: Anon. *Les lettres amoureuses de Mme Lescombat* (Troyes, 1755) and R. De Beauvoir, *La Lescombat* (Paris, 1859). Madame Tiquet features in C. Rabou, *Le auvre de Montlhéry* (Paris, 1841). Victoire Salmon features in a Wilkie Collins short story: 'The Poisoned Meal' which appears in *Cases Worth Looking At* (London, 1875). Perhaps the most famous is the novel on Catherine Hayes: W. Makepeace Thackeray, *Catherine* (London, 1840).

female killers who received high-profile print coverage in London and Paris were a small but clearly defined group. In identifying the cases for this thesis, it was decided that the ‘high-profile’ print murderess had to meet two conditions. Firstly, and most importantly, discussions of the crime had to feature within multiple kinds of publications of different genres and prices, indicating that the women’s stories would have been available to a wide cross section of Parisian and London society. Secondly, publication on the case had to continue for several decades after the crime. In fact only one case, Mary Aubry, met one condition without the other in that, for reasons discussed in Chapter Three, all print on her case ceased after 1689. Interest in female-perpetrated murder in eighteenth-century and London and Paris did not occur along a spectrum; cases were either published upon in high volume across multiple genres over a long period of time, or were reported (if at all) in a handful of references at the time of trial.¹²⁰ As will be shown below, gender played a role in determining the print reaction to these cases, in that almost no male killers received a similar print reaction, and yet the small but disparate nature of the group of women and murders which received such coverage seems to dispute any simplistic equation between a woman committing murder and a high-profile reaction.

Such distinction in coverage can be seen in Figure 1.4, which shows the level of print interest in cases of women accused of murder in the years surrounding the high profile cases of Sarah Malcolm and Marie Catherine Taperet. These two graphs record every piece of print material that I have been able to identify about murderesses for these time periods both in the years of their crime, and the decades after it (indicated by the ‘post-crime’ group). They demonstrate that Malcolm and Taperet were unique among their cohorts in terms of both the volume and the variety of publications in which stories about them were featured. The only other woman who received any substantial print coverage

¹²⁰ All London cases were, of course, reported in the *Proceedings*.

during these time periods was Elizabeth Armstrong, who, with an accomplice friend, stabbed a man to death in a brandy shop. Yet coverage on Armstrong was restricted to the press, only featured in the weeks directly before and after her trial, and was still of a much lower volume, making the coverage of her case markedly different from that given to Sarah Malcolm. The dramatic difference in such coverage implies that this was not a question of text survival, as suggested by Frances Dolan for seventeenth-century petty treason ballads.¹²¹ In fact, this pattern can be found for all of the high-profile crimes featured in this study, as seen in Appendix One (although for Paris this can only be gauged for trials taking place after 1700). All ten of these cases were therefore unique among female killers in terms of the coverage they received.¹²²

¹²¹ F. E. Dolan, 'Tracking the Petty Traitor across Genres', in P. Fumerton, A. Guerrini and K. McAbee (eds), *Ballads and Broadides in Britain, 1500-1800* (Surrey, 2010), pp. 164.

¹²² Data collected by searching for the names of all London murderesses accused 1731-35 listed in <http://oldbaileyonline.org>, (Searched: Defendant Gender, Female, Offence: Killing, All Subcategories (excluding infanticide) 01/01/1731-31/12/1735 [Data Collected 24th Feb 2015]) and all Parisian murderesses accused 1753-58 listed in AN Catalogue 450 in: the English Short Title Catalogue, <http://estc.bl.uk/>; the Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Burney Newspaper Archive, <http://gdc.gale.com/products/17th-and-18th-century-burney-collection-newspapers/>; Early English Books Online <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>; Eighteenth Century Collections Online <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.asp>; the British Library Catalogue, <http://bl.uk/>; the Bibliothèque Nationale Catalogue, <http://bnf.fr/>; Gallica, <http://gallica.fr/>; Le Gazetteur Universel, <http://gazetier-universel.gazettes18e.fr/>; Google Books, <https://books.google.com/> [accessed 25th February 2015] and AN III 8 Gueulette. The greater number of newspapers in London, especially those now digitally available for text search, means that the numbers of established print forms are much higher for Malcolm than Taperet. Multiple references in one edition of a newspaper or periodical have been counted as one entry but references in different editions of the same newspaper or periodical have been counted separately.

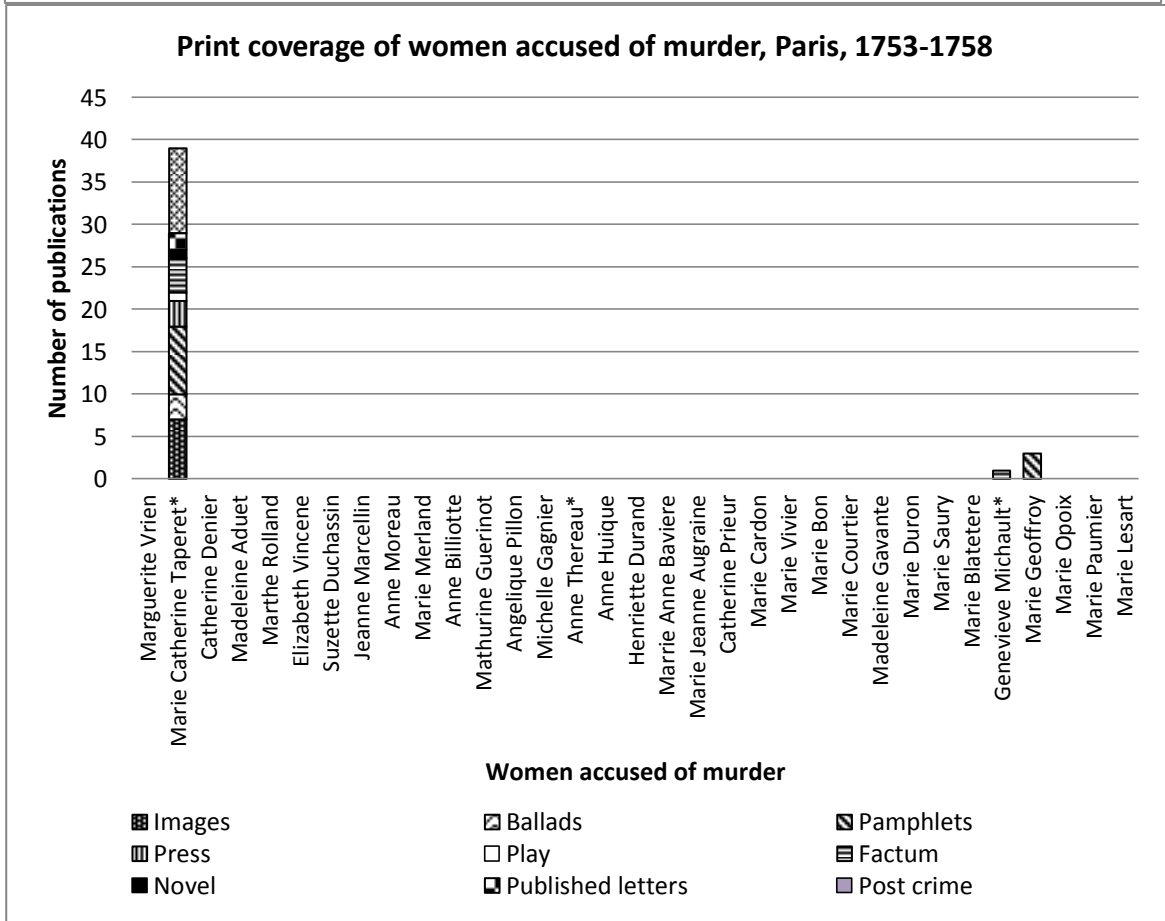
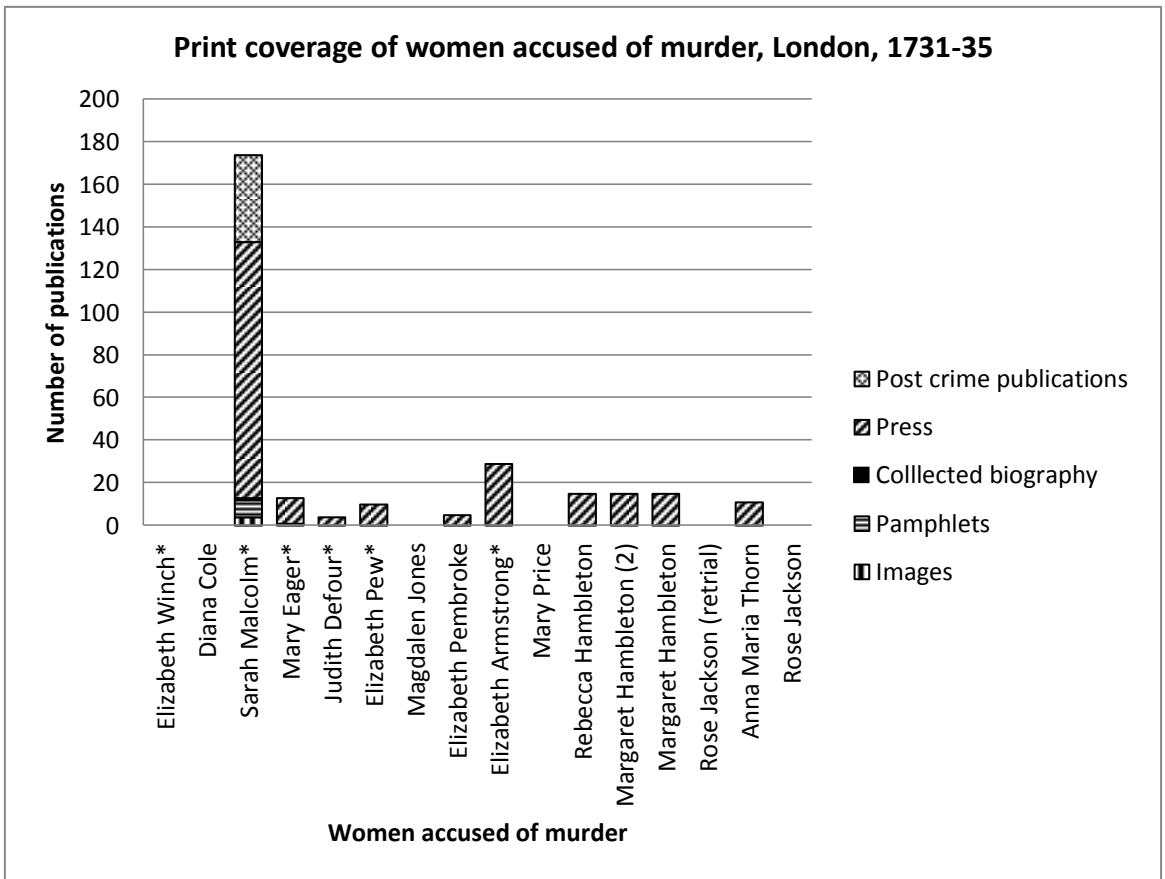


Figure 1.4: Distribution of print coverage of women accused of murder in the years surrounding high-profile female killers Sarah Malcolm and Marie Catherine Taperet. *denotes guilty verdict.

Many of the less-commented-upon crimes that took place alongside these high-profile murderesses were intensely violent and could easily have been characterised as forms of patriarchal subversion if commentators had so desired. In London women such as Elizabeth Battison, who kicked her stepdaughter to death in 1686, Elizabeth Roberts, who stabbed her husband in 1725, and Esther Levingston, who crept up on a watchman and stabbed him to death in 1763 elicited no comment beyond a handful of passing newspaper references, while in Paris Anne Thereau and Marie Chouchou were both burnt to death for poisoning their husbands in 1757 and 1786 respectively without so much as a sentence being printed about them.¹²³ These are but a few examples of a large number of violent and unnerving murders committed by women in eighteenth-century London and Paris which were largely overlooked by print culture. The low and often entirely non-existent print reaction to the majority of cases of female murder is compelling evidence for the argument that female murder *in itself* was not perceived to be a uniquely troubling or transgressive act, beyond the generally troubling and transgressive implications of all homicides, and that it was other aspects of these crimes that triggered print interest.

While this thesis will focus primarily upon ‘high-profile’ murderesses, there was also a lesser, although equally distinct, group of ‘medium-profile’ female killers in both cities who received a smaller but still distinct spate of print interest following their crimes, limited to discussion in one print genre and a short period of time, such as Elizabeth Armstrong discussed above. In Paris, the case of Marie Marguerite Garnier, accused of poisoning her guardian, the Sieur de Vaux, appeared within factums for over twenty years after the accusation had first taken place. Yet discussion of the case, which dwelt on minute reinterpretations of complex Latin terms, never moved outside of this

¹²³ *OBP* July 1686, trial of Elizabeth Battison (t16860707-12); *OBP* June 1725, trial of Elizabeth Roberts, Spinster, alias Bostock (t17250630-6); *OBP*, September 1763, trial of Esther Levingston Archibald, her husband (t17630914-59); AN Catalogue 450.

expensive and exclusive genre.¹²⁴ In 1779 another case looked likely to explode across the Parisian print industry when Sophie Dufayel, famous actress of the *Comédie Italienne*, was accused of having poisoned her younger and more successful actress sister in a fit of sibling jealousy. Yet commentators were to be disappointed as it was found that Dufayel the younger had in fact died of an infectious disease. While the case did make it into the *Causes Célèbres*, following the not guilty verdict the publishers were forced to adhere to Dufayel's own representation of herself as virtue personified, cruelly wronged by a public too ready to think the worst. Although this was a narrative that would gain popularity in the 1786 murder trial of Victoire Salmon, in 1779 such a figure bore little relevance to wider debate, and interest quickly waned.¹²⁵

In London also, a few cases received this lower level of exposure. Jane Griffin's stabbing of her maid in 1720 was reported in three different volumes of criminal biography over the century.¹²⁶ The case of Mary Sherman, contemporary of Catherine Hayes, stimulated print interest despite her being found innocent. Sherman, hearing that her neighbour was ill, had made him a medicinal draft, and when he subsequently died she was accused of

¹²⁴ *Requête de Marguerite Manier, veuve de Nicolas-François Garnier, Nicolas Durand, maître tonnelier, et Marie-Marguerite Garnier, sa femme, accusés* (Paris, 1743); *Mémoire pour les Sieurs Nicolas Duparc, maître d'hôtel de la ville de Paris, et Claude Duparc Duboucher* (Paris, 1746); *Mémoire pour les Sieurs Nicolas Duparc, maître d'hôtel de la ville de Paris, et Claude Duparc Duboucher* (Paris, 1747); *Réplique en forme de sommaire, pour Nicolas Durand et Marie-Marguerite Garnier, sa femme, contre les Sieurs Duparc* (Paris, 1747); *Second mémoire pour les Sieurs Nicolas et Claude Duparc contre Nicolas Durand et Marie-Marguerite Garnier, sa femme* (Paris, 1747); *Mémoire pour Nicolas Durand, maître tonnelier à Paris, et Marie-Marguerite Garnier, sa femme, contre Nicolas et Claude Duparc, frères, se disant héritiers* (Paris, 1748); *Mémoire sur l'appel, pour Nicolas Duparc, et Claude Duparc du Bouchet, contre Marie-Marguerite Garnier, veuve de Nicolas Durand* (Paris, 1765). Extensive study on the Garnier affair can be found in F. Jacquin, *Affaires de poison: les crimes et leurs imaginaires au XVIIIe siècle* (2005) and F. Jacquin, 'Un empoisonnement à Paris: l'empoisonnement du Sieur de Vaux (1742)', *Histoire, Economie et Société* 20.1 (2001), pp. 23-36.

¹²⁵ S. Dufayel, *Mémoire pour la Dlle Dufayel l'aînée, actrice de la Comédie Italienne* (Paris, 1779) and N. Des Essarts, *Causes Célèbres, curieuses et intéressantes*, Vol. 58 (Paris, 1779). Not everyone was convinced of Dufayel's innocence, see: *Correspondance secrètes, politique & littéraire, ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des cours, des sociétés & de la littérature en France*, Vol. 8 (London, 1787), p. 245. For more on attitudes to actresses in late eighteenth-century Paris see C. Jones, 'French Crossings IV: Vagaries of Passion and Power in Enlightenment Paris', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (December, 2013), pp. 3-35.

¹²⁶ *OBP* January 1720, trial of Jane Griffin (t17200115-35); *The Bloody Register, a Select and Judicious Collection of the Most Remarkable Trials*, Vol. 2 (London, 1764) pp. 228-234; *A Compleat Collection of Remarkable Tryals of the Most Notorious Malefactors at the Sessions House*, Vol. 4 (London, 1718), pp. 372-380; *The Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals who have been Condemn'd and Execut'd*, Vol. 1 (London, 1735), pp.25-34; coverage of the Griffin case can also be found in *Weekly Journal* (Dec, 1719-Jan, 1720); *The Post Boy* (Dec 1719- Jan 1720) and *Daily Courant* (Jan, 1720).

murder. She was acquitted as the autopsy revealed no symptoms of poisoning, but this process of investigation was enough to lead to her trial being reproduced in several collected volumes.¹²⁷ This group of ‘medium-profile’ murderesses was a very limited cohort yet even here it is clear that the aspects of the cases that were emphasised in print did not all fit into a simple structure of domestic transgression: some were cases of domestic homicide or the murder of a patriarch, but others were cases that drew attention to women’s role in the urban community as caregivers and employers, in public life as performers, or examined the mechanics of the judicial system. Such variety will be further discerned among the smaller but equally disparate group of women who received high-profile coverage and who will form the central subject of this thesis.

There were also three cases of female-perpetrated murder which gained something akin to ‘high-profile’ status in London and Paris but which took place outside of both cities. In London, the cases of Mary Blandy and Elizabeth Jeffrys, two women convicted of parricide in Oxford and Kingston in 1752 (one the murder of a father, the other of an uncle), stimulated high levels of print coverage. Both cases have received wide (if uneven) attention from scholars, who see them as raising questions about mid eighteenth-century domesticity and understandings of female passivity. Richard Ward has compellingly argued that the cases added momentum to a ‘moral panic’ about murder taking place in 1752 which led to the passing of the Murder Act.¹²⁸ In Paris, the 1699 case of Marguerite Chauvelin, accused of killing her husband in Picardy and acquitted

¹²⁷ *OBP*, August 1726, trial of Mary Sherman (t17260831-34); *Select Trials at the Session House of the Old Bailey*, Vol. 3 (London, 1742), pp. 56-61; *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rape, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds and Other Offences*, Vol. 2 (London, 1734), pp. 222-224. Coverage of the Sherman case can also be found in *Evening Post* (Sep, 1726); *British Journal* (Sep, 1726); *Daily Post* (Sep, 1726) and *Weekly Journal* (Sep, 1726).

¹²⁸ R. Ward, ‘Print Culture and Responses to Crime’, pp. 160-167. Secondary material on both the Blandy and Jeffrys cases has been extensive but uneven, see: C. Brant, ‘Murder she Wrote? The Real and Imagined Letters of Mary Blandy’, *Women’s Writing* 13.1 (2006), pp. 60-72; Doody, ‘“Those Eyes Are Made So Killing”’, pp. 66-75; Gonda, ‘Misses, Murderesses and Magdalens’ pp. 54-68; S. S. Heinzelman, ‘Women’s Petty Treason’, pp. 89-93; S. S. Heinzelman, *Riding the Black Ram: Law, Literature and Gender* (Stanford, 2010); Heinzelman, ‘Guilty in Law, Implausible in Fiction’, pp. 307-336; Saxton, *Narratives of Women*, Chapter Three.

when her bigamous husband was in fact found pretending to be a peasant and living with a second wife, received much print discussion surrounding the question of identity and status, masterfully revealed in Jeffrey Ravel's *The Would be Commoner*.¹²⁹ These three cases formed an important part of Parisian and London print culture. Yet, as crimes which took place away from the immediacy of the city environment, they can tell us less about Londoners' and Parisians' understandings of their own proximity to murderous acts, and the role played by their immediate societies in facilitating them, and so they have not been included in the analysis below. An exception has been made, however, in the case of Victoire Salmon, the final case study in this thesis, which took place in Caen in 1786. While the case itself did take place outside of Paris, the vast majority of print was only produced once Salmon had been transferred to Paris for trial, and was created with a clear focus upon developments in Parisian society.

The lack of general print interest in cases of female-perpetrated murder in London and Paris demonstrates that the mere fact of a woman committing murder (often in intensely violent ways) was not enough to stimulate print interest. However, it is not possible to discount the role played by gender entirely because there was no equivalent high-profile print reaction for male killers. In London, as with cases of female-perpetrated homicide, the majority of cases of male-perpetrated murder passed without print comment outside of the *Proceedings* and perhaps a couple of newspaper references. But 160 out of the 1,748 London men accused of murder between 1674 and 1789 were mentioned in one other print form, usually as part of a ballad or pamphlet.¹³⁰ There was also a series of roughly 40 cases of male-perpetrated murder from the 1710s and 20s which were trotted

¹²⁹ J. S. Ravel, *The Would be Commoner: A Tale of Deception, Murder and Justice in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York, 2008)

¹³⁰ Data taken from English Short Title Catalogue: <http://estc.bl.uk/> [Accessed 25th January 2015]. Searched for the names of each man accused of murder in London from 01/01/1674-31/12/1790 as found in <http://oldbaileyonline.org> Searched: Defendant Gender: Male, Offence: Killing, All Subcategories (except infanticide) between 01/01/1674 and 31/12/1790 [Accessed 21st January 2015].

out in collections of criminal biographies throughout the century.¹³¹ Yet hardly any of these cases moved beyond the genre of collected criminal biography or the confines of one key text repeated over and over again. A few cases went one step further in stimulating one or two dedicated pamphlets: John Hamilton, second in a duel in which both participants, James Duke of Hamilton (his master) and Charles Lord Mohun, were killed; Henry Harrison, who stabbed a fellow coach passenger; Richard Thornhill, who killed a gentleman in a duel; and John Oneby, an army major whose trial for murder in a brawl lasted two years and ended with Oneby's suicide the day before his execution.¹³² Yet again, however, discussion of these cases remained firmly in the genre of pamphlets, stimulating little wider imaginative engagement. Almost the only 'high-profile' print male murderers in eighteenth-century London were the accomplices of high-profile murderesses: Thomas Billings and Thomas Wood (accomplices of Catherine Hayes) and James and John Brownrigg (accomplices of Elizabeth Brownrigg).¹³³

The exception that proves the rule for London is the case of James Hackman. Hackman was convicted in 1779 of shooting dead his lover, Martha Rey, the mistress of the Earl of

¹³¹ The central collections discussed are: *A Compleat Collection of the Remarkable Tryals of the Most Notorious Malefactors at the Sessions House*, 4 vols (London, 1718); *Select Trials for Murder, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds and Other Offences*, 2 vols (London, 1734); C. Johnson, *A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street Robbers ect.* (London, 1734); *The Lives of the most Remarkable Criminals, who have been Condemn'd and Executed; for Murder, Highway, House-Breakers, Street-Robberies, Coining, or other Offences*, 3 vols (London, 1735); *Select Trials at the Sessions-House in the Old Bailey*, 4 vols (London, 1742); Captain MacDonald, *A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street Robbers and Thief Takers* (London, 1758); *A Select and Impartial Account of the Lives, Behaviour, and Dying Words, of the most Remarkable Convicts, from the Year 1700, down to the Present Time*, 2 vols (London, 1760); *Select Trials for Murder, Robbery, Burglary, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Forgery, Pyracry, and Other Offences*, 4 vols (London, 1764); *The Bloody Register, a Select and Judicious Collection of the most Remarkable Trials*, 4 vols (London, 1764); *The Tyburn Chronicle, or Villainy Display'd in all its Branches*, 4 vols (London 1769); *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar, or Villainy Display'd in all its Branches*, 6 vols (London, 1795); *The Annals of Newgate or Malefactor's Register*, 4 vols (London, 1776); *The Malefactor's Register or Newgate and Tyburn Chronicle*, 5 vols (London, 1779); *The Old Bailey Chronicle; Containing a Circumstantial Account of the Lives, Trials and Confessions of the most Notorious Offenders*, 4 vols (London, 1788).

¹³² John Hamilton: *OBP*, December 1712, trial of John Hamilton (t17121210-24); Henry Harrison: *OBP*, April 1692, trial of Henry Harrison (t16920406-1); Richard Thornhill: *OBP*, May 1711, trial of Richard Thornhill (t17110516-39); John Oneby: *OBP*, March 1726, trial of John Oneby (t17260302-36).

¹³³ There are no publications exclusively on either Thomas Wood or Thomas Billings which do not also discuss Catherine Hayes and only one on James and John Brownrigg that does not mention Elizabeth Brownrigg: *The Trials of James Brownrigg and John Brownrigg his Son for Confining and Inhumanly Scourging Mary Mitchel* (London, 1767).

Sandwich, outside Drury Lane theatre. The romantic element of the case, along with the fact that it occurred during the peak period of fashions for sensibility, saw it translated into novels, poems and songs as well as pamphlets and trial commentaries (the most famous coming from James Boswell). It is of note, however, that commentators particularly dwelt upon the ‘feminine’ nature of the crime and of Hackman himself. As Joanne Myers has shown, discussions on the Hackman case were marked by a conflict between ideals of masculine interiority and female sensibility, ultimately failing to salvage Hackman’s masculinity. Hackman was depicted as a man unable to keep his emotions under control and driven to a murderous act through love’s insanity: in short, he was shown as having acted like a woman. Although the Hackman murder was committed by a man, the nature and content of its representations were therefore similar to that of a high-profile female killer.¹³⁴

In Paris, commentaries on male-perpetrated murder were even more unusual. The *Causes Célèbres* and *Procès Fameux* did feature male-perpetrated homicide cases, but these were mostly reports of crimes that had taken place in the countryside or provincial towns. As with London, almost all high-profile Parisian male killers were accomplices to high-profile women (Sainte Croix in the Brinvilliers case, the (acquitted) Duc de Luxembourg in the *affaire des poisons* and Jean Louis DeMongeot in the Lescombat case). There was, however, one case of attempted murder and one of actual murder committed by Parisian men which did receive high levels of coverage. The attempted murder was, of course, the infamous case of attempted regicide by Robert François Damiens, executed by horses in

¹³⁴ *OBP*, April 1779, trial of JAMES HACKMAN (t17790404-3). Secondary material on the case includes: J. E. Myers, ‘A Case of Murderous Sensibility: James Hackman, Interiority and Masculine Agency in Late Eighteenth-Century England’, *Gender & History* 20.2 (August, 2008), pp. 312–331; J. Brewer, ‘Love and Madness’: Sentimental Narratives and the Spectacle of Suffering in late Eighteenth-Century Romance’, in P. De Bolla, N. Leaks, D. Simpson (eds), *Land, Nation and Culture 1740-1840: Thinking the Republic of Taste* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 131-147; J. Brewer, *A Sentimental Murder: Love and Madness in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2004). This exception could arguably also be made for Laurence Shirley, 4th Earl Ferrers, hung for the murder of his servant in 1760 after a high-profile trial in which he pleaded (unsuccessfully) to insanity. But as with Mary Blandy and Elizabeth Jeffrys, I have eliminated the case from analysis because of the crime having taken place outside London.

1755. As the first attempted regicide since the reign of Henri IV and involving an intensely violent method of execution, the appeal of the Damiens case is obvious. The second high-profile case was the more pedestrian crime of Antoine François Desrues, convicted in 1777 of poisoning the Dame de la Motte, an aristocratic woman from whom Desrues had just bought an estate. When the Dame de la Motte came to Paris to claim the money, Desrues poisoned her and her 16 year old son. Desrues was executed on the wheel and then burned to death, while his wife, suspected of assisting him in concealing the murder, was sentenced to life in *La Salpêtrière*. She was killed there in the 1792 September Massacres. As with many of the high-profile cases of female-perpetrated murder in Paris, the Desrues case exposed problematic relations between the *haute bourgeoisie* and the elite, and the possibilities for deception brought about by such relationships, particularly in the domestic space.¹³⁵ As with Hackman, however, Desrues was the exception in a print culture that showed little interest in everyday cases of male homicide committed in the capital.

But that is not to say that Londoners and Parisians were more concerned with female criminality than male. Indeed the highest profile criminals in both cities, with levels of coverage that towered over interest in any of the women discussed in this thesis, were male.¹³⁶ In both cities these ‘criminal celebrities’ were not murderers (or at least not

¹³⁵ Historiography on Damiens is too vast to explore here, but see for example M. Sigaut, *Mourir à l'ombre des lumières: l'enigme Damiens* (Arles, 2010) and B. Thelliez, *L'homme qui poignarda Louis XV: Robert François Damiens* (Paris, 2002). On Desrues see: B. Hauteclouque, *Epices et poisons: la vie d'Antoine Desrues* (Paris, 2009). Desrues is later featured as a miscarriage of justice in Alexandre Dumas' *Crimes Célèbres* (Paris, 1840) and is referred to in V. Hugo, *Les Misérables* (Paris, 1862).

¹³⁶ For example, I have identified 1,030 print references for Jonathan Wild and 155 print references for Catherine Hayes in the year 1726. Data established by searching ‘Catherine/Katherine/Catharine/Katharine Hayes/Hays’ and ‘Jonathan Wild/Wilde’ in the English Short Title Catalogue, <http://estc.bl.uk/>; the Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Burney Newspaper Archive, <http://gdc.gale.com/products/17th-and-18th-century-burney-collection-newspapers/>; Eighteenth Century Collections Online, <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.asp> and Google Books <https://books.google.com/>. In Paris I have identified a minimum of 157 publications on Louis Mandrin (this excludes press coverage that is not available for text search) compared to high-profile Marie Catherine Taperet who recorded a total of 36 publications for the same year (1755). Data found by searching ‘Louis Mandrin’ and ‘Marie Catherine Taperet/Madame Lescombat’ in the Bibliothèque Nationale Catalogue <http://bnf.fr>; Google Books, <https://books.google.com/> and Gallica <http://gallica.fr> [all

primarily murderers, although several were accused of murder in more sensational biographies), but rather highwaymen, brigands, master thieves and forgers. In London obsession coalesced around the figures of Jonathan Wild, the ‘thief-taker general’ who posed as a tracer of stolen goods while in fact organising many of the crimes he solved and sending his accomplices to the gallows; Jack Sheppard, the prolific thief and Newgate escapee; James Maclaine, the ‘gentleman highwayman’; and William Dodd, forger of bonds.¹³⁷ In Paris, similarly, criminal literature was dominated by tales of two brigands: Louis Dominique Garthusen, known as Cartouche, whose arrest and subsequent trial involved over 350 accomplices, and Louis Mandrin, international smuggler and thorn in the side of the *ferme générale*. These men were Robin Hood figures: attacking tax collectors and creating vast criminal networks from Paris that spread across Europe.¹³⁸ There were no female counterparts to such men. In London, despite the ‘female crime wave’ in theft cases traced by Beattie, the only female equivalent to Wild and Sheppard was the fictitious Moll Flanders, and even her crimes were limited in scope.¹³⁹ In Paris *La Salpêtrière* was crammed full of female thieves and prostitutes; women such as Geneviève Guerin and Antoinette Blanquet, who forced a man off his horse, robbed him and cut his throat in 1763.¹⁴⁰ Yet in Paris also no female

data accessed 31st January 2015] as well as print available in the Gueullette Collection AN: AD III Gueullette.

¹³⁷ The primary material on these figures is too vast to list here, but see: J. Van de Kiste, *Jonathan Wild: Conman and Cutpurse* (Stroud, 2009); L. Moore, *The Thieves Opera: the Remarkable Lives of Jonathan Wild, Thief-Taker and Jack Sheppard, House Breaker* (London, 1997); J. Burke, ‘Crime and Punishment in 1777: the Execution of the Reverend William Dodd’, in W. Thesing (ed.), *Executions and the British Experience from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Jefferson, 1990), pp.59-76; G. Howson, *The Macaroni Parson: A life of the Unfortunate Dr Dodd* (London, 1973).

¹³⁸ See: J. E. Singer, *Sur les pas de Cartouche: Brigand à la Cour des Miracles* (Paris, 2012); L. Andries, *Cartouche, Mandrin et autres brigands du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2010); M. Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the making of a global underground* (Massachusetts, 2014); F. Fleuret, *Vies de Mandrin et de Cartouche* (Paris, 2006). Excellent comparisons of representations of Sheppard and Wild with Cartouche and Mandrin can be found in Andriès, ‘Histoires criminelles anglaises’, pp. 245-268; Lebourg-Leportier, ‘“Slippery Eel”: Escape Episodes and Ideological Ambiguity’, (Forthcoming); Lebourg-LePortier, ‘Les biographies de criminels’, (Forthcoming).

¹³⁹ J. Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London 1660-1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror* (Oxford, 2001), pp.63-66; D. Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Miss Moll Flanders* (London, 1722). Moll Flanders may have been based on the seventeenth century case of Mary Frith.

¹⁴⁰ Gueullette notes the case in his personal papers for 1753-55, Archive Nationales AD III Gueullette, 8. A selection of these papers have been edited into T. Gueullette, *Sur l'échafaud, histoires de larrons et d'assassins*, ed. P. Bastien (Paris, 2010), pp. 283-284.

thieves or brigands gained anywhere near the same levels of print coverage as Mandrin or Cartouche.

These differences in the coverage of both male and female killers, and male and female criminals more generally, show that gender was not irrelevant in determining the high levels of coverage given to this particular group of female killers. Female murder was rarer than male murder, so cases were at once more exotic and less grounded in wider understandings of criminal trends, giving authors wider imaginative space within which to explore the crime's ramifications. However, the fact that only a handful of women accused of murder actually gained such coverage suggests that being a murderous woman was merely a necessary condition for such coverage rather than its overriding determinative factor. Instead, specific aspects of each of these women's crimes made them appear particularly relevant to London and Parisian commentators who filled the imaginative space opened up by the topic of female murder with broader assertions about social and political change.

This dynamic is further supported by the fact that those murderesses who did become high-profile were a disparate group whose lifestyles and crimes did not faithfully reflect the wider trends for female murder established in the first section of this chapter. The ten high-profile cases discussed in this thesis involved a total of eleven women (one case of a mother and daughter acting together), six of whom were from London and five from Paris. All but one of them were found fully guilty of their crimes and executed. This bias is unsurprising as women who were found innocent would generally not be expected to receive the same scale of interest as women who were convicted. Of the eleven high-profile murderesses, six were married, a much higher proportion than that recorded in either the Old Bailey or Parisian *Parlement*. This probably reflects the particular print interest in husband murder (especially in Paris), which formed half of all high-profile cases and was obviously a crime that only married women could commit. In terms of

occupation only one high-profile case (Sarah and Sarah Morgan Metyard) involved women who worked as manufacturers, the most common type of occupation for women accused of murder at both the Old Bailey and *Parlement*, while servants and midwives made up half of all high-profile female killers, reflecting the judicial overrepresentation of these two groups in murder indictments. In terms of age, while judicially the most common age of women accused of murder was mid-thirties, high-profile murderesses were in either their twenties or forties.¹⁴¹ Interest was therefore focused on women whose age groups represented the two crucial stages in women's life-cycle of marriage and menopause, rather than the age group who formed the largest section of women accused of murder.

There were some general differences in high-profile murderesses in London and Paris. Parisian high-profile cases were almost exclusively concerned with the murder of men within intimate domestic environments: husbands, lovers, fathers, masters, while in London three out of the five high-profile cases had female victims and were more focused on the relationship between servants and mistresses than husbands and wives. Reflecting broader Parisian judicial concerns, over half of the Parisian high-profile cases involved poisoning, whereas London high-profile murderesses used a range of violent methods to dispatch their victims. Three out of the five high-profile murderesses in Paris were noblewomen, reflecting the overwhelming upper class interest within Parisian print culture, while high-profile murderesses and their victims in London tended to come from the lower middle classes, the central demographic who read criminal print culture. Other events, although seemingly unconnected on first glance, may also have played an important role in determining the high-profile nature of these cases. It is of note that four of these crimes took place during years of political crisis: 1688 (Glorious Revolution), 1733 (Excise Crisis in London), 1755 (Battle of Fort Beauséjour) and 1786 (Diamond

¹⁴¹ Catherine Hayes, at 36 years old, was the only high-profile murderess not in her twenties or forties.

Necklace Affair). At times of crisis, one may expect that the attention of commentators would have shifted away from cases of female-perpetrated homicide, and yet the opposite occurred, reflecting the way in which these cases were perceived to chime with broader political and societal concerns.

In this second section it has been shown that eighteenth-century murderous women stimulated a wider range of imaginative reactions, and made for more powerful icons of social, economic and political disorder, than murderous men. Gender was therefore not irrelevant in determining the ways in which these murderesses were perceived. Yet it was not the whole story. While all cases of female murder may have contained the rhetorical potential brought about by the unusual nature of such crimes, it was only realised in a very few. Cases of high-profile print murderesses demonstrate that there was no one stereotype of the murderess during the eighteenth century, but rather that various types of murder and perpetrator caused concern at specific moments in time. There were, however, some clear biases in terms of the kinds of women and crimes who would become high-profile in each city. Parisians displayed a particular interest in cases involving upper-class women, poisoneresses, and women who murdered men with whom they shared an intimate relationship. In London interest focused on the lower middle classes and on murders taking place within the mistress-servant relationship. In both cities, then, while gender played a role in determining the print reaction stimulated by female killers, wider social, economic and political concerns came into play when determining which female killers would become high-profile.

Printing, Reading and Perceiving the Murderess

The preceding section has shown that particular cases of female-perpetrated murder received high levels of print attention, and that such attention was determined by factors that went beyond the gender of the perpetrator. But this dynamic has so far appeared

without agents. Eighteenth-century societies were made up of individuals with varying concerns and agendas and the transition of particular cases into high-profile print phenomena was the product of individual decisions by authors and publishers as to what stories would sell, and by readers and purchasers as to what stories they found compelling. It was not simply a case of authors and printers creating material that eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians absorbed without question. While we can guess at a framework of mentalities within which Londoners and Parisians were likely to construct their thoughts from the printed word, the exact form that such perceptions took is rarely within grasp of the historian. The relationships between criminal narrative, author, printer and reader are complex, perhaps too complex to be revealed in any systematic or meaningful fashion. But what is clear is that in the dense print maelstroms of London and Parisian societies, the idea that print on female killers could either serve a didactic purpose in stimulating men to force their women into obedience or, alternately, serve as empowering inspirations for an oppressed female readership, appears unlikely. These were complicated texts where any overriding oppressive or empowering message, if it did exist, would have been heavily diluted by the context in which they were accessed and discussed. This final section will make some suggestions towards the ways in which authors' perceptions of which cases were of interest, and what such cases demonstrated about urban life, were further complicated by the reactions of readers to such texts, and will explore how the multifaceted nature of reader reaction reaffirms the less-than straightforward messages of print on the murderess.

High-profile cases of women accused of murder appeared across a wide variety of printed forms, and therefore would have been, at least in theory, available to Londoners and Parisians from a significant cross section of society. Print on the cases varied from short verses, designed to be sung to passers-by on street corners, to 200 page-long legal commentaries, for long-term contemplation. The prices of such publications varied from

3 to 4 pence in London (3 sols 4 d in Paris) for a cheap ballad or pamphlet to 8l (50 livres 13 sols) for a large set of volumes, meaning that most people would have been able to buy print on each of the cases in some form.¹⁴² Such a variety of print forms and prices implies that these cases were seen by printers and publishers to be of interest to many different groups in society, and the continual recurrence of this phenomenon throughout the period implies that they were not wrong in thinking this: print on these women really did sell. Just as there was not one stereotype of the eighteenth-century murderess, it appears that there was no one social group to whom print on these women was specifically marketed.

The history of reading for this period (and of reader reaction more generally) has, to borrow a phrase from Robert Darnton, taught us to ‘distrust our intuition’ when trying to make assumptions about how eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians interacted with the printed word.¹⁴³ Studies of eighteenth-century reading, wide-ranging and rigorous as they have been, have served principally to demonstrate the elusive, intangible and ultimately almost impossible nature of their subject matter.¹⁴⁴ We cannot climb behind the eyes of eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians as they pored carefully over precious volumes in parlours, or as their glance slid to posters pasted up on the tavern

¹⁴² *A True Copy of the Paper Delivered the Night before her Execution by Sarah Malcolm, to the Rv Mr. Piddington* (London, 1733) was priced at 4 pence, full bound copies of *The Gentleman's Magazine* and De Pitaval's *Causes Célèbres* were listed at 8 l/ 50 livres in W. Bathoe, *A New Catalogue of the Curious and Valuable Collection of Books* (London, 1767) and *Catalogue des Livres du feu M Barberie de Saint Contest* (Paris, 1772).

¹⁴³ R. Darnton, *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York, 1996), p. 217.

¹⁴⁴ H. Brayman Heckel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005); R. Chartier (ed.), *Lectures et lecteurs dans la France d'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1989); R. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton, 1987); S. Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities 1695- 1870* (London, 2007); S. Colclough, *Reading Experience 1700-1840* (Reading, 2000); R. Darnton, ‘First Steps Toward a History of Reading’, in R. Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections on Cultural History* (New York, 1996), pp. 154-187; S. Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005); A. Farge, *Dire et mal dire: l'opinion publique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1992); H-J. Martin, ‘Pour une histoire de la lecture’, in H-J Martin (ed.), *Le livre français sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1987), pp. 160-177; J. Raven, ‘New Reading Histories, Print Culture and the Identification of Change: The Case of Eighteenth-Century England’, *Social History* 23 (1998), pp. 268-287; I. Rivers (ed.), *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 2001); D. Roche, ‘Urban Reading Habits during the French Enlightenment: Part 1’, *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies* 2.2 (1979), pp 138-150; D. Roche, ‘Urban reading habits during the French Enlightenment: Part 2’, *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 3.3 (1979), pp. 220-231.

wall, nor trace the transformation made by the words on the page into thoughts in the reader's head, connecting up with an infinite number of personal experiences. But we can establish some of the different ways in which Londoners and Parisians may have engaged with different kinds of publications on murderesses, and try to infer how this may have affected their experience of such texts and their messages.

It must be first remembered that, in the dense worlds of London and Paris, print did not exist in a vacuum, and the circulation of stories about murderesses in print existed alongside a wider network of oral and visual information spread through doorstep, tavern and coffeehouse chatter, street corner songs, and the spectacular executions themselves.¹⁴⁵ Just because a murderess has not survived in print does not mean that contemporaries had no awareness of her. Simeon Prosper Hardy, for example, records six executions of women convicted of murder in Paris in his journal for the time period 1768-1774, none of whom appeared in print.¹⁴⁶ The reaction that high-profile murderesses stimulated within crowds and public spaces may have been different to that found in print. The diary of William Westby, for example, records panic on the streets of London in the days after the body parts of Denis Aubry, murdered by his wife Mary, were found in a toilet in the House of the Savoy, a famous Catholic centre. Westby writes that the following day a man living in the Savoy was being bled near a window, and the blood running down the outside wall 'much frightened people jealousies & the humour of the town was so as if this was but the darrest of a generall massacring'.¹⁴⁷ The combination of body parts and a bloodied wall had been enough in the highly-charged atmosphere of 1688 for Londoners to believe that Catholics were beginning to massacre

¹⁴⁵ Such networks of knowledge are carefully unravelled in Peveri, "Cette Ville est alors comme un bois... ", pp. 51-73.

¹⁴⁶ S. Prosper Hardy, *Mes Loisirs ou journal d'événements*, ed. D. Roche, P. Bastien, S. Juratic, Vols 1-3 (Paris, 2008). Hardy's journal continues until 1789 but is currently in the process of being transcribed from the original manuscript which has been taken out of circulation.

¹⁴⁷ W. Westby, 'A Continuation of my Memories' (1688) Folger MsV.a469 fol.9v, 14v. Thanks to Kate Davison for assistance with the palaeography.

the Protestant populace. Yet none of this initial hysteria made it into the print record.¹⁴⁸ Further differences between crowd reactions and the interpretations promoted in print can be seen in reports from the Marquise de Sévigné that after the execution of mass-poisoneress the Marquise de Brinvilliers by beheading and burning in 1676 the people of Paris ‘searched for her bones in the ashes, believing her to be a saint’.¹⁴⁹ Such beliefs in the supernatural power of the criminal corpse can also be seen in 1726 London reports that a man was nearly decapitated after bending down to pick up a cursed waistcoat said to have been worn by John Hayes on the night of his murder.¹⁵⁰ These brief allusions hint at the possible continued existence of supernatural beliefs and superstitions concerning the crime of murder traced by Malcolm Gaskill for the seventeenth century, despite an increasing tendency in eighteenth-century criminal print culture to depict trials, convictions and punishments as illustrations of the immense and inescapable secular power of the judicial system.¹⁵¹

Even after execution, high-profile murderesses could maintain a presence on the Parisian and London streets outside of print. Jurist Thomas Simon Gueullette records going to see Marie Catherine Taperet’s supposed corpse preserved in varnish and displayed at the house of one M Hérissaut for six months after her death. The dissected corpse of Elizabeth Brownrigg was put on display in the Royal College of Surgeon’s Hall, and, Syllas Neville noted with disgust, many young servant girls flocked to file past it. It was later turned into a skeleton and remained on display in the hall for many years.¹⁵² It is important to bear in mind that this oral and visual culture, much of which is beyond the

¹⁴⁸ *Public Occurrences Truly Stated* (21st Feb 1688) does mention the reaction, but only to mock it.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Le lendemain on cherchait ses os, parce qu’on disoit qu’elle étoit sainte’, Mme de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1979), Letter 529 p. 345.

¹⁵⁰ *London Journal* (3 September 1726).

¹⁵¹ M. Gaskill, ‘Reporting Murder: Fiction in the Archives in Early Modern England’, *Social History* 23.1 (Jan., 1998), pp. 1-30.

¹⁵² T. S. Gueullette papers, AN AD III Gueullette 8; S. Neville, *The Diary of Syllas Neville*, ed. B. Cozens-Hardy (London, 1950), p. 25.

grasp of the historian, may have affected Londoners' and Parisians' perceptions of the cases as much as any print representation did.

Not all groups within London or Parisian society would have had the same relationship with print on the murderess. Literacy rates are difficult to gauge for both cities during this period however it generally seems that London rates were probably higher than Parisian ones (90 per cent of adult men in London were able to sign their name in the late eighteenth century, compared with 60 per cent in Paris and both London and Parisian women were less likely to be literate than men).¹⁵³ This indicates that in both cities a reasonable section of the population would have probably been able to read at least some of the print generated about these crimes. Of course, as Daniel Roche has shown, not everyone who could read would have had access to print.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the environment in which readers accessed texts would have altered how they were read. The cheap and disposable nature of pamphlet ephemera and newspapers, often read in busy public spaces such as taverns or coffeehouses, would seem to imply a dominance of reading practices that Robert Darnton has termed 'extensive' (reading lots of different works once, rather than one text repeatedly).¹⁵⁵ However, it is possible that some texts on the murderess could have been read more intensively, particularly among those groups who could afford to buy longer collected volumes. Readers of the *Causes Célèbres* learned particularly dramatic or moving passages by heart, to be recited in public or at the *salons*.¹⁵⁶ Gueullette supplemented his vast collection of printed material on crime with hand annotations and would copy out particularly important pieces by hand.¹⁵⁷ Gueullette's intensive readings, however, were not always in agreement with his texts, as

¹⁵³ Estimated in Roche, 'Urban Reading Habits...: Part 1', p. 140.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ R. Darnton, 'First Steps Toward a History of Reading', in R. Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections on Cultural History* (New York, 1996), pp. 154-187.

¹⁵⁶ Rizzo, *A Certain Emancipation of Women*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁷ Gueullette papers, AN: AD III 8.

seen in his often angry and sarcastic marginalia. Intensive reading practices did not necessarily imply total acceptance of the texts.

Outside of jurists and *salonnières*, however, extensive reading practices were almost certainly more common than intensive practices in cities where readers accessed print in environments that encouraged the communal sharing of a range of news and ideas. In both London and Paris print was everywhere: engravings posted up on walls, newspapers and periodicals lying about in coffeehouses and taverns, as well as the hand-to-hand circulation of texts through both formal and informal reading societies. The landlord who discovered the murderess Elizabeth Brownrigg hiding in his inn, for example, recognised her description from a three day old newspaper that he had read at his local tavern on his Saturday night off.¹⁵⁸ Urban reading, as Matthew Green has shown, was an inherently social activity across the whole of the class spectrum: from alehouses to *salons*, social interaction was based around the sharing of the latest news, both political and criminal, and such news was increasingly circulated through print. Such social reading spaces at once provided Londoners and Parisians with a variety of print to be read extensively, without necessarily having to pay for it, and made such reading a necessary part of conversation and interaction.¹⁵⁹

The most we can therefore conclude is that readers were more likely to have glanced over texts about murderesses amid a variety of other subjects than to have conscientiously studied them in moments of quiet reflection. Yet the choice to read texts about female killers was not entirely random, but was instead motivated by a desire to appear up-to-date in societies which set a premium on being well-informed. As a case gained popular interest, so more readers would actively seek out the ‘must-read’ publications on it: Louis

¹⁵⁸ Reported in *God's Revenge Against Murder! Or the Tragical History and Horrid Cruelties of Elizabeth Brownrigg, Midwife* (London, 1767), p. 14.

¹⁵⁹ M. Green, ‘Londoners and the News: Responses to the Political Press, 1695-1742’, PhD thesis (University of Oxford, 2009).

de Bachaumont's *Mémoires Secrets*, for example, complains at length of how difficult it was to get hold of factums on the Victoire Salmon case (the author then tries to save face by saying that he'd heard they were terribly written anyway). Pierre LeCauchois, author of the sought-after factums, sent his condolences to a colleague upon the death of his mother, only to receive a reply saying that that was all well and good but what would really alleviate the colleague's grief was to have a copy of the factums.¹⁶⁰ Even before print had been issued on some of the cases there was a sense that they would become high-profile. In London as early as 1688 William Westby records the excited anticipation with which Londoners awaited Roger L'Estrange's publication of depositions from the Mary Aubry trial.¹⁶¹ The publication of Sarah Malcolm's personally authored confession, which she handed to her confessor upon the scaffold, was avidly promoted through advertisements and blow-by-blow reports of the text's preparation.¹⁶² In this way, interest in the high-profile murderess became self-perpetuating. This could go some way to explaining the dramatic difference between levels of coverage that such cases received compared to other cases of female-perpetrated murder: once a case had stimulated interest, such interest would spiral.

Texts about female killers did not simply present information for the reader to spread around, but often sought to stimulate an emotional and/or analytical engagement with the cases. Execution ballads were sometimes accompanied by an exhortation for listeners/readers to weep at the fate of the condemned woman, and some of the more sensational pamphlets began by declaring that the reader should shudder in horror at the crimes discussed.¹⁶³ As well as emotive responses, readers were also invited to engage

¹⁶⁰ L. Petit de Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrètes pour servir à l'histoire de la République des Lettres*, Vol. 16, No. 32 (1786), p. 253; P. N. LeCauchois, *Supplément au Mémoire de la fille Salmon, accusée des crimes de poison & vols domestiques* (Rouen, 1785), p. 132.

¹⁶¹ Westby, 'A Continuation of my Memories' (1688) Folger MsV.a469 fol.9v, 14v.

¹⁶² Reports of the publication's preparation can be found in *St James Chronicle*, *Daily Journal*, *Daily Post*, *Daily Courant*, *Grub St Journal*, *London Evening Post*, *The Bee* (March, 1733).

¹⁶³ Pity and sadness encouraged in *A Cabinet of Grief, or the French Midwife's Miserable Moan* (London, 1688), p. 8; *Genuine and Authentic Account of the Life, Trial and Execution of Elizabeth Brownrigg, who*
87

with the cases analytically. In the factums produced for Victoire Salmon in 1786, for example, the authors consistently encouraged the reader, whom they referred to as ‘justice’, to use the evidence presented to come to their own conclusions on Salmon’s guilt.¹⁶⁴ In the *Proceedings*, although defence testimonies were often underreported, trial reports had to at least acknowledge that there was another side to the story, again inviting the reader to judge the defendant’s guilt for themselves. There was, of course, an intended class bias in this: cheap emotive messages were for the lower classes, and analytical engagement was for the educated middling sort. But we should not take this distinction too seriously. Projected readership was almost certainly not the same as actual readership, and eighteenth-century readers were capable of holding emotion and analytical rigour alongside one another as they formed their perceptions of the cases.

The emergence of a series of alternate accounts and re-interpretations of these women and their crimes was encouraged by the crowded nature of the print market, where new information or a novel depiction of a case could help a text sell. This may have given the murderesses themselves opportunities to share their side of the story. Roger Rabutin records that in 1680 Louis XIV actively intervened to prevent one of the women of the *affaire des poisons* printing a publication stating her innocence, though others were more successful.¹⁶⁵ Marie Catherine Taperet played the part of the heroine in a tragic love story to a gallery of visitors during her stay in prison resulting in the commission of a

was Executed on Monday the 14th of September 1767 (London, 1767), p. 22 and (perhaps not entirely seriously) *Oraison Funèbre de très haut et très pussiante Marie Catherine Taperet* (Paris, 1755). Horror encouraged in: *A Warning Piece to Husbands and Wives* (London, 1688); *The Last Dying Speech (and last Farewell to the World) of Sarah Metyard* (London, 1762); A. Gastaud, *Le triomphe de la Grâce dans la conversion et la mort de Basilisse* (Paris, 1699), p. 3

¹⁶⁴ LeCauchois, P. N. *Mémoire pour Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon* (Rouen, 1784); P. N. LeCauchois, *Justification pour Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon* (Paris, 1786); J. F. Fournel, *Consultation pour une jeune fille condamnée à être brûlée vive* (Paris, 1786).

¹⁶⁵ R. Rabutin, *Correspondance de Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy*, ed. Ludovic Lalanne, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1858), *Roger Rabutin to Henri-François de la Rivière* 1680 p. 55.

sympathetic novel, and a series of glamorous prints.¹⁶⁶ In London, Catherine Hayes and her accomplice Thomas Billings both gave statements of their support to the publication of John Applebee's *The Life of Catherine Hayes*. This was an attempt to pour scorn on rival publication *A Narrative of the Barbarous and Unheard of Murder of John Hayes*, which had been produced by the family of Catherine's husband and victim.

Unfortunately for Hayes and Billings, Applebee's advertisement for *The Life of Catherine Hayes* erroneously named Catherine as 'Margaret' leading to gleeful ridicule by other printers and robbing it of its claims to veracity.¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, the widow of Peter Nutt, one of the booksellers who did stock the maligned *The Life of Catherine Hayes*, was also one of the central booksellers of Sarah Malcolm's defence pamphlet, published seven years later in 1733.¹⁶⁸ In Paris, although Victoire Salmon herself had little role in it, the compelling series of factums declaring her innocence printed in 1786 also all came from the same printer, M Cailleau.¹⁶⁹ It may be that particular printing houses actively sought out counter-narratives to those declared by the court as a means of increasing sales.

There are very few specific records of eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians' experiences of reading about murderesses, and those that do exist are from an almost exclusively male and upper-class audience.¹⁷⁰ Here, the upper-class status of high-profile print murderesses in Paris means that there are far more records on reactions to Parisian

¹⁶⁶ This romanticisation can be seen in engravings such as: *Le véritable portrait de Mme Lescombat* (Paris, 1755) and *Portrait de Marie Catherine Taperet* (Paris, 1755) BnF Estampes série N² Vol. 1047 nos. 190262-190263, and the romantic novel *Lettres amoureuses de Mme Lescombat* (Troyes, 1755).

¹⁶⁷ *The Life of Catherine Hayes* (London, 1726); *A Narrative of the Barbarous and Unheard of Murder of John Hayes* (London, 1726). The faulty advert which named Catherine as Margaret Hayes appeared in the *Daily Journal* (28 April 1726) and the ridiculing response appeared in the *Daily Journal* (29 April 1726).

¹⁶⁸ *The Life of Catherine Hayes* listed as sold by P. Nutt in *Daily Journal* (29th April 1726); *A True Copy of the Paper Delivered the Night before her Execution by Sarah Malcolm, to the Rv Mr. Piddington* (London, 1733) listed as sold by Widow Nutt and a number of other female booksellers in *Daily Journal* (10th March 1733).

¹⁶⁹ Printer Cailleau printed both LeCauchois' *Justification de Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon* (Paris, 1786) and Fournel's *Consultation pour une jeune fille condamnée à être brûlée vive* (Paris, 1786).

¹⁷⁰ There are no records of people reading texts on cases of high-profile murderesses in the *Reading Experience Database*: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/> [accessed 20th February 2015]. Searched for the multiple spellings of the names of all high-profile murderesses, and associated key words for the *affaire des poisons*.

murderesses than London ones. The cases of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, the *affaire des poisons* and Madame Tiquet all featured in the diaries and correspondence of the Parisian upper classes, many of whom knew the women accused, or were personally involved in investigations. Such proximity to the cases means that it is unlikely that the reactions of these diarists and correspondents would have been the same as those of the wider Parisian populace. What is striking, even among this privileged group, however, is the variety of reactions that these crimes stimulated. In the case of Madame Tiquet, diarists divided between those who saw her as an object of pity, and those who saw her as an emblem of evil.¹⁷¹ During the trial of the Marquise de Brinvilliers and the *affaire des poisons* some diarists and letter-writers complained of the heavy toll that such trials had taken on court culture in which people lived in a culture of fear and shock at the crimes of their acquaintances, but others used the cases for a bit of fun. Henri-François de la Rivière, for example, quipped that if the Princess de Tingry was guilty of adultery and poisonings ‘it must have been with blind men’.¹⁷² Madame de Sévigné at another point jibed that the *affaire des poisons* gave one of the suspects, the Maréchale de Ferté ‘a bit of novelty, to be found innocent of something for once’.¹⁷³ Even in the highly-charged and high-stakes world of murder, aristocrats did not always adhere to messages of the terrifying and inevitable nature of absolutist justice in their private reflections.

These collections of letters and diaries can tell us little about wider reactions to murderesses except the high level of attendance of the lower classes at executions.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ P. De Courcillon, *Journal du Marquis de Dangeau, publié en entier pour la première fois*, ed. M. Soulié, Vol. 7 (Paris, 1856), pp. 61-2, 70-1, 93-4, 99-100; Chevalier de Quincy, *Mémoires du Chevalier de Quincy*, ed. L. Lecestre, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1848), pp. 115-117; Duc de Saint Simon, *Mémoires du Duc de Saint Simon*, ed. A. Boisisle, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1879), pp. 433-437.

¹⁷² ‘Je n’aurois jamais soupçonné la princesse de Tingri de galanterie... et si j’avois eu une maîtresse comme elle, je n’aurois jamais craint pour rivaux que les aveugles’, Henri-François de la Rivière to Roger Rabutin 1680 in Rabutin, *Correspondance de Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy*, Vol. 5, p. 50.

¹⁷³ ‘Cette affaire lui donne un plaisir qu’elle n’a pas ordinairement, c’est d’entendre dire qu’elle est innocente’, Madame de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, ed. R. Duchêne (Paris, 1974), Letter 830 p. 820.

¹⁷⁴ Execution descriptions in: Mme de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 529 p. 345; P. De Courcillon, *Journal du Marquis de Dangeau*, Vol. 7, pp. 99-100; Chevalier de Quincy, *Mémoires du Chevalier de Quincy*, Vol. 1, pp. 115-116; E. J. F. Barbier, *Journal historique et anecdotique du règne de*

However, the 1755 case of Marie Catherine Taperet, a member of the *haute bourgeoisie*, surfaced in the diaries of men of a slightly lower status: the jurists Thomas Simon Gueullette and Edouard Barbier, and glass-blower Jacques Louis Ménétra. As one of the only surviving pieces of lower-class personal writing for the period, it is hard to know how representative Ménétra's diary is. Moreover, Ménétra seems to have only recorded the case because he had met Taperet's accomplice, Jean Louis DeMongeot, just weeks before the crime. It is of note, however, that Ménétra, who at another point unashamedly wrote of his participation in a gang rape, was anxious to demonstrate his disgust at the crimes of DeMongeot and his separation from all the following events, indicating the horror that such crimes may have stimulated.¹⁷⁵ But Barbier and Gueullette, both of whom would have had more than usual knowledge of the case through their roles at the *Parlement*, demonstrate more ambiguous reactions to the case. Barbier records how even on the day of the execution there were many who believed that Marie Catherine Taperet would be pardoned, and Gueullette's collection of notes on the case combines texts on Taperet and DeMongeot's guilt with publications on their innocence.¹⁷⁶ While they could stimulate high levels of horror, then, the condemnation of high-profile murderesses was not always accepted unquestioningly, and there was a place for ambiguity and cynicism within the Parisian social imagination.

In London, the lower-class status of women who became high-profile murderesses in this period mean that they are less commonly found discussed at length within surviving diaries and letters (excepting the aforementioned brief excerpts from the diaries of William Westby and Sylas Neville).¹⁷⁷ But London high-profile murderesses still had a place in private correspondence, often as watchwords for evil. David Garrick, for

Louis XV, Paris, ed. A. de la Villegille, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1856) p. 74. It may well be however that this was just a motif- commentators almost never recorded an execution as having been poorly attended.

¹⁷⁵ J. L. Ménétra, *Journal de ma vie*, ed. D. Roche (Paris, 1982), p. 110.

¹⁷⁶ Barbier, *Journal historique*, Vol. 4, pp. 66, 74, 88; AN AD III Gueullette 8.

¹⁷⁷ Westby, 'A Continuation of my Memories' (1688) Folger MsV.a469 fol.9v, 14v; Neville, *The Diary of Sylas Neville*, p. 25.

example, recalls in his biography that he nicknamed two of his leading actresses after murderesses Sarah Malcolm and Catherine Hayes to demonstrate his disdain for them.¹⁷⁸ A critic of Horace Walpole's biography of Richard III, meanwhile, destroyed the work's premise with the sarcastic claim that 'The Emperor Nero's character wants a little whitewashing, and so does Mrs Brownrigg's, who was hanged for murdering her apprentices the other day. I hope he will undertake them next'.¹⁷⁹ Engagement with the London cases can also be traced through newspaper letters to the editor which were published on all but one of the London high-profile murderesses. Of course, such letters were themselves a form of print, and it is often impossible to verify their authors, who may have been the editors themselves, but they do demonstrate that readers were at least expected to comment upon such crimes.¹⁸⁰ Such letter writers, as will be explored in detail in Chapter Five, often sought to appropriate the emotive and rhetorical power of particular cases to support their own political campaigns, such as Hanway's Second Act during the Elizabeth Brownrigg trial. In all these letters and flippant references the guilt and evil nature of the murderesses involved was never questioned. But this was probably due to the nature of such records (short and reliant on a simple motif) rather than because Londoners were less cynical or critical than Parisians.

Based on the scant evidence that survives on contemporary readings in both cities, it would appear that print on the murderess was a male world; written by men for men. All the diarists, authors of letters to editors, and manuscript correspondents who recorded their thoughts on cases of high-profile murderesses were male (with the exception of Madame de Sévigné). It is difficult to know how women engaged with print on murderesses and if they did so in a different way to men. The history of eighteenth-century female reading has shown that literacy rates among women were lower, book

¹⁷⁸ T. Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq* (London, 1780), p. 128.

¹⁷⁹ Lord Carlisle to George Selwyn, 5 March 1768, in *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, Vol. 30 (Yale, 1983), p. 231. Accessed via <http://images.library.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/> [accessed 2nd March 2015].

¹⁸⁰ For more on letters to the editor and crime writing see Ward, 'Print Culture, Moral Panic', pp. 5-24.

ownership was often restricted to religious tomes, and that women would have not had the same access to print in public institutions such as the coffeehouse and tavern where customers were often (but by no means not always) male.¹⁸¹ But there are signs that women, or at least some upper-class women, could have accessed some of the sources analysed in this thesis. Matthew Green has shown that, while taking place in the drawing room, at the pump or on the doorstep rather than in the coffeehouse or tavern, female news circulation networks operated in a similar fashion to those of men, with extensive reading practices playing a crucial role in social interaction.¹⁸² For the very end of the period, Victoria Rowan has shown that female readers of periodicals in French urban centres continued to interact with, and contribute to, the newspaper press, a dynamic that would drastically expand with the Revolution.¹⁸³ The *Causes Célèbres* openly celebrated its female readership and started out many of the more shocking phrases (though not, it must be noted, the shocking violence) to meet feminine sensibilities.¹⁸⁴ Balladry, as noted above, was a genre associated with women who often sang and sold them on street corners. Moreover, in Paris in particular, publications which posed as intimate letters between women, therefore with an implied female readership, were gaining much popularity as a print form in the early years of the eighteenth century, with several of them featuring discussions on high-profile murderesses. It is difficult to know how many of these were actually authored by women, although a small number almost certainly were.¹⁸⁵ Interestingly, several of the printers of more sympathetic publications discussed above, such as the printer of Sarah Malcolm's paper and the printer of the *Lettres amoureuses de Madame Lescombat* (a sentimental epistolary novel

¹⁸¹ Roche, 'Urban reading habits... Part 2', p. 222; Green, 'Londoners and the News'; B. Cowan, 'What was Masculine about the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England', *History Workshop Journal* 51 (2001), pp. 127-157.

¹⁸² Green, 'Londoners and the News', Chapter Two.

¹⁸³ Rowan, 'La Citoyenne Bien Renseignée'.

¹⁸⁴ Rizzo, *A Certain Emancipation of Women*, p. 27.

¹⁸⁵ A. Petit Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes de deux dames de condition*, Vol. 1 (Cologne, 1713) had a female author, but other works such as *Amusemens de la toilette* (Paris, 1755) are more ambiguous.

on the Taperet case) were women, although it would be impossible to prove any actual correlation in this as printing information survives for so few texts.¹⁸⁶

While clear evidence of female readership is rare, there are signs that female engagement with the cases was not unthinkable. Abbé Gastaud, for example, justified writing his defence of Madame Tiquet by framing it as a response to a request by a female parishioner.¹⁸⁷ There is one example of a woman, ‘Lucy Grant’, writing to the *Gazetteer* about the Elizabeth Brownrigg case, although she was quickly revealed to be the pseudonym of a clergyman who had come under criticism for his treatment of Brownrigg in prison.¹⁸⁸ Despite this, Lucy Grant’s fellow writers did not mock the concept of a woman having an opinion on such a case in and of itself, which may imply that it was at least plausible that women could have published their opinions on such a case in the *Gazetteer*.¹⁸⁹ It is harder to know in what ways lower-class women would have engaged with these cases. The case of Marie Catherine Taperet was printed in the *Bibliothèque Bleue*, which was often written for a lower-class female audience. The presence of lower-class women at the execution of Madame Tiquet drew disapproval from the Chevalier de Quincy and, as cited above, Syllas Neville viewed the young servant girls who went to see the dissected corpse of Elizabeth Brownrigg in a similar fashion.¹⁹⁰ Reports that in the week after the Brownrigg murder young beggar girls began posing as victims of evil abusive mistresses to better elicit the sympathy and credulity of passers-by shows that

¹⁸⁶ The *Lettres Amoureuses* were printed by ‘the widow of Troyes- a very ambiguous title. The multiple female printers who sold works on the Malcolm case are listed in *Daily Journal* (10th March 1733). For women’s work in the printing industry see E. C. Goldsmith and D. Goodman (eds), *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France* (Ithaca, 1995) and P. McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* (New York, 1998).

¹⁸⁷ Abbé Gastaud, *Oraison Funébre de Madame Tiquet* (Paris, 1699).

¹⁸⁸ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (19 September 1767).

¹⁸⁹ Anon, *Poème: Rencontre de Madame Lescombat et Mandrin aux enfers* (Troyes Bibliothèque Bleue, 1755). On female readership of the *Bibliothèque Bleue* see G. Bolleme, *La Bibliothèque Bleue, littérature de colportage* (Paris, 2003) and R. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton, 1987), Chapter Seven.

¹⁹⁰ Quincy, *Mémoires du Chevalier de Quincy*, Vol. 1, p. 115; Neville, *The Diary of Syllas Neville*, p. 25.

stories of these women's crimes penetrated the lowest levels in society.¹⁹¹ Even the very lowest class of women, therefore, had ways of hearing about these women's stories.

There is little evidence to support any didactic effect of publications on murderesses. Although some texts presented themselves as 'warning pieces' to disobedient wives and servants in their titles, in their actual content they appeared to be addressed to a broader group of readers with more complex messages. There is no evidence that women who read these texts felt either self-loathing stimulated by declarations of female evil or empowerment through descriptions of anti-patriarchal acts, as Joy Wiltenberg has claimed.¹⁹² This was because, as Garthine Walker has already shown for murder pamphlets of the early seventeenth century, the women depicted in such texts were rarely intended to be read as symbolic of all womankind, but rather were depicted as commentaries on certain kinds of women in certain kinds of situations.¹⁹³ While they may have made the connections for themselves (although there is little record of this), readers were never encouraged to view such cases as a cumulative exposure of the murderous danger inherent in the female sex. This is shown in the lack of referencing between high-profile cases. Discussions of the *affaire des poisons* often referred to the crimes of the Marquise de Brinvilliers just four years earlier, and the murder of an apprentice by Elizabeth Brownrigg stirred up memories of Sarah and Sarah Morgan Metyard's similar crimes. Yet such references were the exception. When cases were presented side by side it was most often within collections such as the *Newgate Calendar* or *Amusemens de la toilette* which sought to conjure up the spectre of widespread criminality and social immorality within both genders, rather than the specific dangers of female transgression.

¹⁹¹ *Public Advertiser* (10 September 1767). Also discussed in T. Hitchcock and R. Shoemaker, *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of a Modern City* (Cambridge, 2015), Chapter Six.

¹⁹² J. Wiltenberg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Virginia, 1992), p. 217.

¹⁹³ Walker, "Demons in Female Form", pp. 123–39.

The final aspect of the question of reactions to high-profile print murderesses in Paris and London is the possible impact of such print phenomena on the judicial treatment of women accused of murder. Scholars have shown that ‘moral panics’ about particular criminals which often took place in print were sometimes followed by increases in prosecution and conviction of similar crimes.¹⁹⁴ Yet none of the high-profile murderesses discussed in this thesis stimulated either a surge in prosecutions or an increased conviction rate for women accused of murder. Amy Masciola has argued that the case of Sarah Malcolm directly led to the introduction of defence lawyers as a reaction against Malcolm’s outspoken courtroom behaviour. However, there is little evidence to support such a connection, and Hitchcock and Shoemaker have shown that lawyers were present in the Old Bailey before the Malcolm case.¹⁹⁵ It seems that neither jurists nor the wider public saw these women as representative of the inherent murderous nature of all women, but rather of more specific (but less overtly criminal) sources of disorder among certain groups of women believed to be present in the urban London and Parisian environment. Londoners and Parisians interacted with print on the murderess in environments that encouraged extensive reading practices and, through such practices, the formation of a multiplicity of interpretations connected to wider current events and debates. This is reflected in the eclectic nature of the sources themselves, in which understandings of individual murderesses’ guilt and the causes of her crimes altered not only from case to case but from print to print. Readers could construct no simple message from such texts; instead they would have been left to draw their own conclusions from varied and often contradictory coverage. Reading about female killers in both cities took place alongside

¹⁹⁴ J. Bonderson, ‘Monsters and Moral Panic in London’, *History Today* 51 (2001), pp. 30-35; P. King, ‘Moral Panics and Violent Street Crime 1750-2000: A Comparative Perspective’, in B. Godfrey, C. Emsley, and G. Dunstall (eds), *Comparative Histories of Crime* (Cullompton, 2003), pp. 53-71; D. Lemmings, and C. Walker (eds), *Moral Panics, the Media and the Law in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2009); Ward, ‘Print Culture, Moral Panic’, pp. 5-24; Ward, *Print Culture, Crime and Justice*.

¹⁹⁵ Masciola, “‘I Can See By This Woman’s Features...’”, Chapter Two; Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, p. 180.

reading on a variety of other subjects and within social environments where different topics would have led onto one another in convivial conversation. This may explain why these cases were perceived to have relevance for such a diverse array of contemporary debates. Despite the unique nature of coverage of the female killer among criminal subjects, such figures held no special place within the reading practices of either London or Paris, in which they were just one topic of conversation among many.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the high-profile print murderess in eighteenth-century London and Paris was a distinct and complex phenomenon. Judicial analysis has demonstrated that, despite political and judicial differences, there were marked similarities in the London and Parisian judicial treatment of women accused of murder, as well as similarities with trends in accusations against men (although female-perpetrated murder was undeniably a much rarer crime). Both cities displayed low conviction rates for women accused of murder with declining numbers of cases per capita over the century (a trend matched by male cases of homicide). Women were more likely to be acquitted and less likely to receive a manslaughter sentence than men, but this polarisation was less pronounced than in rural areas. The traditional characterisation of female murder as perpetrated through poisoning or smothering against immediate family members and other women does not hold in either city, although poisonings were much more common in Paris than in London, with women killing in similar ways to men. Particular kinds of women were more likely to be accused of murder, however, with single women, servants, midwives and those in the later decades of their life disproportionately represented in accusations.

Against this background of similitude, the high-profile murderess, as defined by a high volume of coverage across a range of genres, appears as a clearly defined figure within

the print cultures of both London and Paris. Gender did have a role to play in this, in that the act of female murder facilitated a kind of social commentary and imaginative engagement not stimulated by male killers. But not all murderesses gained this coverage. Instead, only specific crimes at particular moments in time stimulated such a reaction. A glance at the high-profile murderesses themselves confirms this; they were a disparate group of women and crimes who reflected neither judicial trends nor one particular social concern. Moreover, texts about murderesses were accessed in environments which encouraged the formation of connections between different contemporary affairs, and alongside an oral and visual culture which would also have further affected how such women were perceived. In eighteenth-century London and Paris murders committed by women were just another interesting story to be shared: worthy of debate and discussion but not a powerful tool for reinforcing gender hierarchies.

While there was no overriding stereotype of the high-profile murderess in either London or Paris, it appears that there were some cross-channel differences in the kinds of women who stimulated high-level print reactions. In a Parisian print culture ostensibly aimed at the upper classes the cases which became high-profile were often the crimes of the aristocracy, and murders committed using the Parisian obsession *par excellence*: poison. The limited scope for overt political discussion within Parisian print may have contributed to the particular Parisian interest in murders which involved narratives of intimate betrayal and rebellion, often against patriarchs. In London, print aimed at a readership stemming from the middling sort appeared to focus on female-perpetrated murders involving the lower to middling classes, and in particular murders which highlighted tensions within these groups in the urban environment. These early hints at differences in Parisian and London society and print culture as reflected in print on the high-profile murderess will be further examined as this thesis now turns to the high-profile cases themselves.

Chapter Two: Malcolm and the Marquise: Mass Homicides and the Murderess in Extremis

This chapter explores print representations of the two most extreme examples of female-perpetrated homicide in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The crimes of the Marquise de Brinvilliers and Sarah Malcolm were at once the most violent, in terms of number of victims, and the highest profile, in terms of volume and longevity of print coverage, female-perpetrated murders of the period. Both murders involved multiple victims, killed at moments when they were at their most vulnerable. Yet although these murders were exceptional both in terms of scale and print coverage, commentators perceived them to be (and depicted them as) indicative of broader sources of disorder. In this way, the crimes of these women were used to explore and rationalise certain types of problematic behaviour associated with certain kinds of women, and so expose a myriad of tensions at play within London and Parisian societies. These cases also reflect broader differences in London and Parisian concerns with female-perpetrated murder, stemming from an upwards-facing Parisian print culture focused upon the nature of city governance and corruption and a downwards-facing London print culture primarily concerned by the implications of the socially promiscuous city space for security and power structures on a local scale.

The case of the Marquise de Brinvilliers is the earliest and most dramatic of the homicides that will be dealt with in this thesis. In 1672, the *commissaires* of Paris were alerted to the death of an alchemist, Godin de Sainte Croix. As he left no will, the laboratory in which Sainte Croix had died (possibly from the effects of inhaling his chemicals) was sealed up, including a large chest or *cassette*. Soon afterwards, a servant of noblewoman Marie Madeleine Marguerite d'Aubray, the Marquise de Brinvilliers, arrived at the laboratory demanding that the *cassette* be handed over. This piqued the *commissaires*' interest and so they opened it. Inside they found packets of poisons,

alongside a bundle of love letters between the Marquise and Sainte Croix. The *commissaires* arrested one La Chaussée, servant of Marie's two deceased brothers, both of whom had died of a mysterious illness in 1670. When they came for Marie, however, she had fled. She went to London, and then, when Charles II moved to extradite her, fled onto Liège where she hid in a convent. During La Chaussée's trial it was revealed that the Marquise had been involved in a long affair with Sainte Croix, whom her husband had befriended in the army. In 1665 Marie's father, *Lieutenant Civil* Antoine d'Aubray, had had Sainte Croix put in the Bastille for a year in an attempt to stop the relationship. Upon his release, Sainte Croix and Marie decided to poison Marie's family as revenge and to secure her inheritance (both were bankrupt from lives of gambling). In 1669 Marie went with her father to the family seat at Offremont, where he fell ill and died, despite Marie's administering of rejuvenating drafts. Months later, Marie's two brothers fell ill at a feast served by La Chaussée. Both died soon after. Sickness plagued the entirety of Marie's household: servants died in quick succession, as did at least one of Marie's children, while Marie's husband Antoine Gobelin spent months oscillating between health and severe illness, but survived. The exact number of people Marie and Sainte Croix poisoned, or tested their poisons and antidotes on, remains unknown. La Chaussée was executed on the wheel, and Marie was sentenced to death *in absentia*. It was only in 1676, four years later, that Marie was tracked down in Liège and arrested. She was brought back to Paris and finally executed by decapitation followed by burning in July 1676.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ The principal judicial documents of the case can be found in: BnF: Livres Rares Z-THOISY-382-1; Ms Français 7610; Collection Dupuy 11634; Collection Delamare 'Affaires criminelles. Documents et imprimés et mss relatifs à divers affaires criminelles, la plupart au temps de Louis XIV'. There are a series of biographies of varying quality on the Marquise including: R. Burnand, *Vie et mort de la Marquise de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1931); C. Hermary-Vielle, *La Marquise des ombres* (Paris, 2004); J. Huas, *Madame de Brinvilliers: la Marquise empoisonneuse* (Paris, 2004); W. Perkins, 'Perceptions of Women Criminals: the Case of the Marquise de Brinvilliers', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 17 (1995), pp. 99-111; J. Saint-Germain, *Madame de Brinvilliers, la Marquise aux poisons* (Paris, 1971); H. Stokes, *Madame de Brinvilliers and her Times* (London, 1924); A. Smith, *The Marchioness of Brinvilliers* (London, 1887); V.

In London, the case of Sarah Malcolm rocked society at a time when tensions were already running high. In February 1733, in the midst of the Excise Crisis, three women: an elderly widow named Lydia Duncombe, her elderly maid/companion Elizabeth Harrison and a young maid Ann Price, were found murdered behind a door locked from the inside in a small apartment high up in the Inner Temple, a residence for the lawyers of the nearby Inns of Court, just off Fleet Street. The two older women had been garrotted, the younger maid had had her throat cut, and the box in which Duncombe stored her valuables had been emptied. The evening after the murder was discovered, John Keroll,¹⁹⁷ a resident of the Temple, came home late to find his laundress, Sarah Malcolm, hiding out in his rooms, which raised his suspicions. Keroll knew that Sarah also worked for the Duncombe household and so ordered her to leave until the murder had been solved. In searching his rooms he found two sets of linen, one clean and one bloody, hidden under the bed and a bloodied tankard engraved 'LD'. He had Sarah arrested. When she arrived at Newgate the turnkey discovered fifty pounds worth of money hidden in her hair, and Sarah quickly admitted to her involvement in the crime. Sarah's confession, however, complicated matters. She claimed that she had been persuaded by three acquaintances: an army wife named Mary Tracey, and two known petty thieves, Thomas and James Alexander, to assist them in robbing the Duncombe household. Under their orders, Sarah said, she had smuggled James Alexander into the apartment when she called by to collect laundry, and he had hidden under a bed until 2 in the morning and then let in Tracey and Thomas. The three had committed the burglary while Sarah acted as lookout, ignorant of the bloodbath inside. She was therefore guilty of the robbery but innocent of the murder. In the court Sarah fought her case ferociously, cross-questioning witnesses and assessing evidence. The bloodied linen she explained

Vernon, *Enchanting Little Lady: the Criminal Life of the Marquise de Brinvilliers* (London, 1964); A. Walch, *La Marquise de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 2010).

¹⁹⁷ Also spelled Kerroll, Caroll, Carroll, Cerril and Kerril, also referred to as O'Connell.

away by claiming she was on her period. Even after she had been sentenced to death she refused to change her story. Upon the gallows she gave her confessor a paper which was opened with great ceremony following her death. Yet those who hoped for a final confession were disappointed, the paper merely reaffirmed her previous claims. Tracey and the Alexanders were arrested but a lack of any further evidence led to their release, although there is no sign that any investigation was undertaken.¹⁹⁸ Even the subsequent rearrests of the Alexanders in July and again in September of the same year for highway robbery failed to re-open investigations.¹⁹⁹

The case sat uneasily with London commentators. On the one hand, according to her executrix, Lydia Duncombe had only fifty-three pounds in savings, the amount in Malcolm's hair, which seemed to imply that there had been no accomplices. On the other hand, it was hard to come up with an equally plausible explanation for how Malcolm had broken into the Duncombe residence as that ventured by Malcolm herself. Moreover, Sarah's half confession, which alone was enough to merit the death penalty, proved hard to discount - why would anyone willingly confess to a capital crime unless they were telling the truth?²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ No records appear of either Tracey or the Alexanders in the Newgate Gaol Calendars at the London Metropolitan Archives. James Alexander only appears in September of the same year for a different offence. LMA MJ/SP/1733/01/058.

¹⁹⁹ *OBP*, September 1733, trial of George Sutton William Simonds (t17330912-36).

²⁰⁰ Judicial documents appear at *OBP* February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm, alias Mallcombe (t17330221-52); *OBP*, *Ordinary of Newgate's Account*, March 1733 (OA17330305). See also LMA London Sessions Papers 1733 February sessions 19th and 21st Feb 1733 JH/ 23/5/2001. The principal secondary material on Malcolm appears in M. A. Doody, "'Those Eyes Are Made So Killing': Eighteenth-Century Murderesses and the Law", *Princeton Library Chronicle* 46 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 49-81; M. A. Doody, 'The Law, The Page, and The Body of Woman: Murder and Murderesses in the Age of Johnson', *Age of Johnson* 1 (1987), pp. 127-60; T. Hitchcock, and R. Shoemaker, *Tales from the Hanging Court* (London, 2006), pp. 122-129; J. Magrath, '(Mis)reading the Bloody Body: the Case of Sarah Malcolm', in J. Peakman (ed.), *Women's Writing: the Elizabethan to Victorian Period* 11.2 (2004), pp. 223-236; A. Masciola, "'I Can See By This Woman's Features That She is Capable of Any Wickedness": Representations of Criminal Women in Eighteenth-Century England' PhD Thesis (University of Maryland, 2003), Chapter Two;); K. T. Saxton, *Narratives of Women and Murder in England 1680-1760* (Surrey, 2009), pp. 56-85; R. B. Shoemaker, 'Print and the Female Voice: Representations of Women's Crime in London, 1690-1735', *Gender & History* 22 (2010), pp. 75-91.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, both cases have received substantial attention from scholars. For each, however, there has been a focus on the most unusual and salacious parts of the crimes. In the case of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, most historians have concentrated on the exotic nature of her lifestyle and the scale of her crimes, with little thought to their place within wider seventeenth-century French history. Taking place just four years before the *affaire des poisons*, explored in the following chapter, the case of the Marquise has often been seen as a prologue to these events, rather than a phenomenon in its own right, despite the fact that print on the Marquise both at the time of the crimes and throughout the eighteenth century outnumbered that produced on the *affaire*.²⁰¹ Historians of Sarah Malcolm have often been seduced by her atypical agency, in particular her voice within trial reports and her published confession. Malcolm has been seen by some scholars to be a kind of proto-feminist icon, condemned for daring to discuss the taboo of menstruation in the courtroom setting.²⁰² As will be shown below, such an assessment fails to take into account other evidence against Malcolm, and the fact that representations of Malcolm's agency were themselves a product of the writers and publishers who chose to depict her in this way. For both cases then, assumptions about the exceptionalism of these women and their crimes within London and Parisian print culture have restricted analysis of perceptions of two figures in fact heavily embedded within contemporary culture and wider events.

Historians of Malcolm and the Marquise have argued that perceptions of both were primarily dictated by their sex. But this chapter will show that, in print discussions of their crimes, Malcolm and the Marquise were not seen as merely women, but as

²⁰¹ Key *affaire des poisons* works have an opening chapter or section on Brinvilliers, for example B. Faedi Duramy, 'Women and Poisons in Seventeenth-Century France', *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 87.2 (2012), pp. 348-370; A. Le Bigre, *Affaire des poisons* (Paris, 2006); J-C. Petitfils, *L'affaire des poisons* (Paris, 2010); C. Quétel, *Un ombre sur le Roi Soleil* (Paris, 2006); L. Wood Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France* (Pennsylvania, 2007).

²⁰² This interpretation is particularly seen in Magrath, '(Mis)reading the Bloody Body', pp. 223-236 and can also be seen to a lesser extent in Saxton, *Narratives of Women and Murder*, pp. 74-80 and Doody "'Those Eyes Are Made so Killing'", pp. 53-60.

particular kinds of women. This chapter will begin by assessing the nature of print coverage of the cases, and its change over time. It will then examine representations of both cases within the context of the supposed stereotypes of the female killer, and finally it will explore what each case suggests about broader London and Parisian societal and political concerns during the period.

Marketing the Mass-Murderess

As has already been established in Chapter One, particular cases of female homicide had a substantial and long-lasting presence within late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century print, and Malcolm and the Marquise were the most extreme examples of this phenomenon. Both women appeared in a wide range of print forms: from one penny ballad sheets to large gold-edged legal encyclopaedias. Indeed, in Paris it seems that two journals, the *Journal des affaires et des avis de Paris* and the *Journal de la ville de Paris*, were inspired into being specifically by the Marquise's execution, discussed at length in the initial issues, only for both publications to falter and quickly disappear after her death.²⁰³ The variety of publications and prices implies that both cases were available to a wide cross section of Londoners and Parisians, literate and not, as they were also represented in songs and images.²⁰⁴ Both women were depicted by leading artists shortly before their deaths. William Hogarth painted Sarah Malcolm in her cell in Newgate (Figure 2.1) and this image was reproduced in a variety of engravings (catalogues list the print as costing between one and seven shillings, but prices probably varied much more).²⁰⁵ The Marquise was sketched by the President of the Royal Academy, Charles

²⁰³ *Journal de la ville de Paris* (30 June 1676); *Journal des avis et des affaires de Paris* (16 July 1676).

²⁰⁴ The ballad of Brinvilliers exists in two versions: *L'exécution remarquable de Mme de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676) BnF estampes QE-21; and in *Le trésor des plus belles chansons* (Paris, 1699) pp. 162-164. Verses on Malcolm appear in *The Bee or, Universal Weekly Pamphlet. Containing Something to Hit Every Man's Taste and Principles* (March, 1733), p. 215; *Grub Street Journal* (8 March 1733).

²⁰⁵ W. Hogarth, *Sarah Malcolm* (London, 1733). Prices have been taken from *Thane's Catalogue for 1773, of Curious and Valuable Collection of Prints, Drawings and Books of Prints* (London, 1733); *Magazin des Estampes* (London, 1777).

LeBrun, as she travelled to the scaffold (Figure 2.2). For LeBrun, master of the art of expression, this was his chance to capture an expression so rarely seen and yet so often required in history painting, that of a soul descending into hell.²⁰⁶ This image was engraved and reproduced in lithograph, and would have been a more expensive alternative to the crude woodcut (a recycled older image) which accompanied the ballads produced following the Marquise's execution.²⁰⁷ These images focused on the women themselves with their criminality only hinted at through their expressions (Malcolm as hardened, and the Marquise as delirious). At the same time, however, the prison cell and execution cart which formed the background of the pieces reminded the viewer of the sticky ends that came from committing crime. As well as viewing them in popular print, a sizeable number of Londoners and Parisians also attended the women's executions. Madame de Sévigné wrote that the execution of the Marquise was one of the largest gatherings of people that Paris had ever seen²⁰⁸ and Sarah Malcolm's crowded Fleet Street execution was reportedly so popular that 'a Mrs Strangways, who lived in Fleet Street, near Serjeant's Inn, crossed the street, from her own house to Mrs Coulthurst's on the opposite side of the way, over the heads and shoulders of the mob'.²⁰⁹ Even outside of the written word, then, both women would have been familiar figures within London and Parisian consciousnesses.

²⁰⁶ C. LeBrun, *La Marquise de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676). See C. Le Brun, *L'expression générale et particulier*, ed. J. Philippe (Paris, 1994).

²⁰⁷ The woodcut appears in *L'exécution remarquable de Mme de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676) BnF estampes QE-21. It is later reproduced in the 1789 publication ; *Le lanterne magique* (Unknown, 1789), p. i.

²⁰⁸ Madame de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, ed. R. Duchêne (Paris, 1974), Letter 528 p. 34.

²⁰⁹ J. Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth, with a Catalogue of his Works Chronologically Arranged* (London, 1782), p. 150.



Figure 2.1: C. Le Brun, *La Marquise de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676) (Lithograph reproduction).²¹⁰



Figure 2.2: W. Hogarth, *Sarah Malcolm in her Prison Cell in Newgate* (London, 1733).²¹¹

²¹⁰ Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE FOL-QB-201 (55). Image Source : Gallica.fr ark:/12148/btv1b8405328q [Accessed 21st March 2014].

²¹¹ Image source: BBC Your Paintings: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/> [Accessed 24th March 2014]. William Hogarth. Sarah Malcolm (died 1733). Scottish National Gallery. Bequest of Lady Jane Dundas 1897.

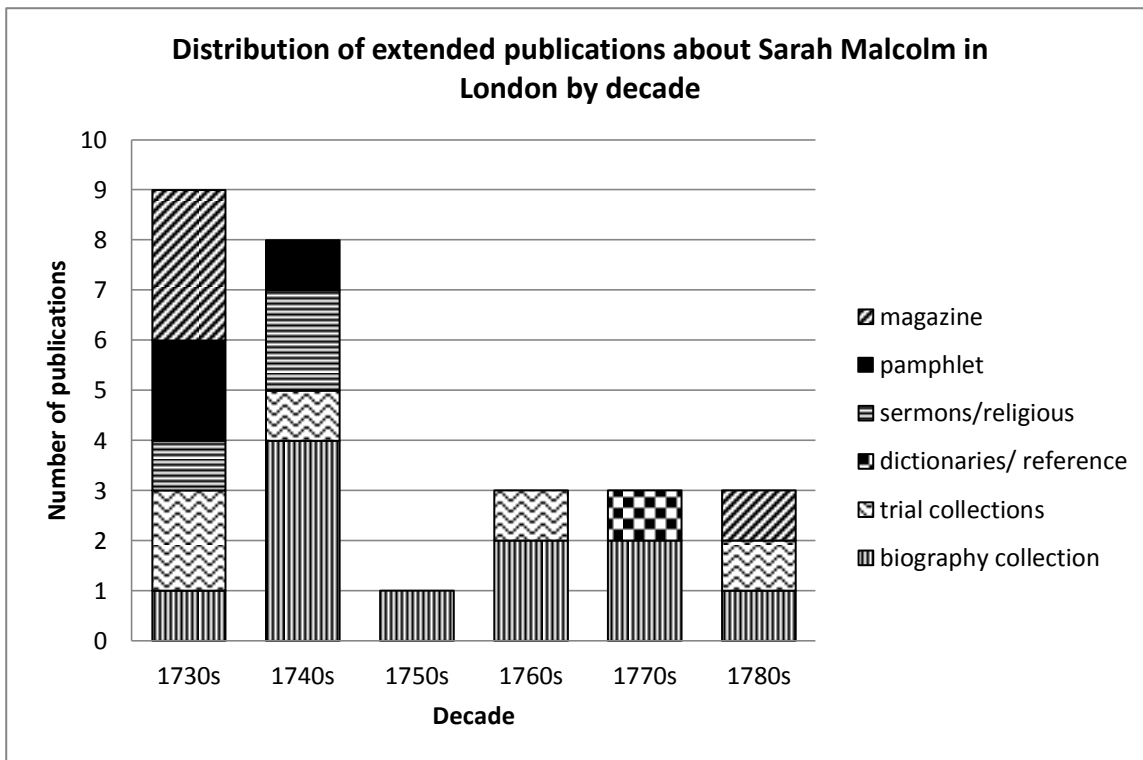


Figure 2.3: Distribution of extended print publications about Sarah Malcolm in London by decade.

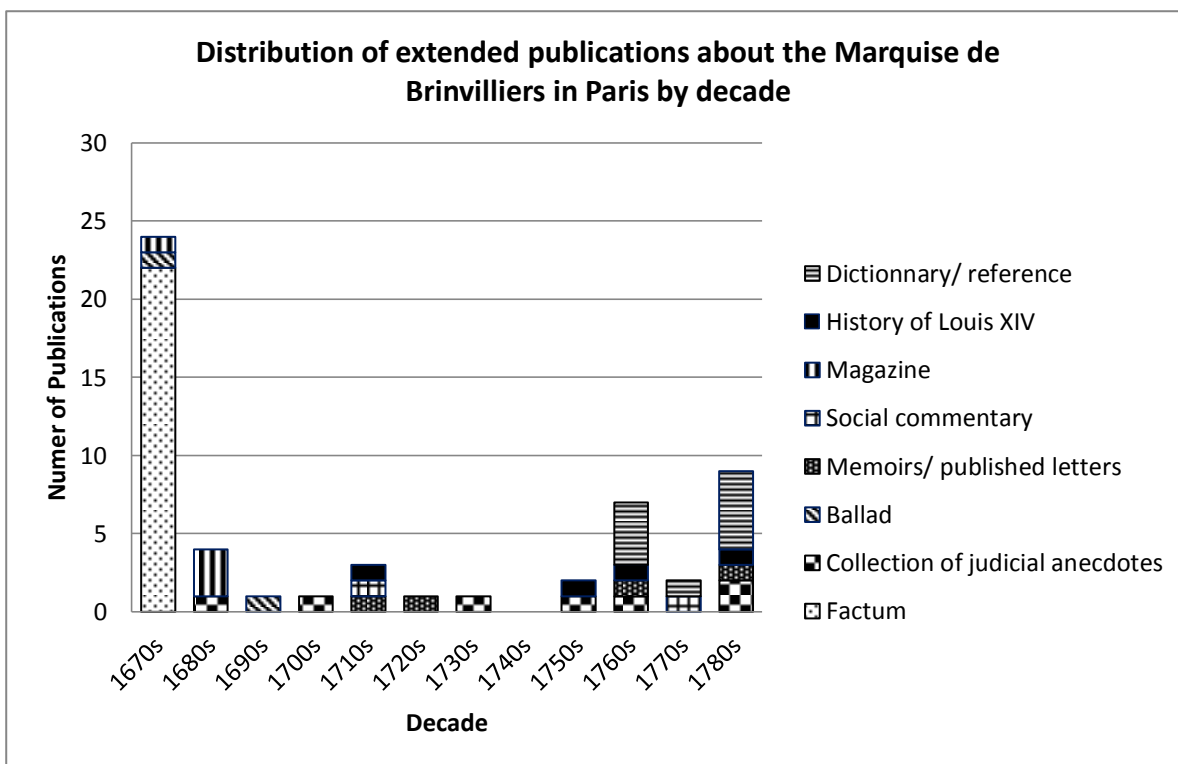


Figure 2.4: Distribution of extended publications about the Marquise de Brinvilliers in Paris by decade.²¹²

²¹² Extended publications are defined as publications which discuss the case over more than a paragraph of text outside of the weekly or daily press (monthly or fortnightly periodicals have been included). Publications for Figure 2.3 were identified using the English Short Title Catalogue, <http://estc.bl.uk>; Eighteenth Century Collections Online: <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx>; the British Library Catalogue, <http://bl.uk>; Google Books,

As Figures 2.3 and 2.4 reveal, print interest in these two women continued across the period with both cases featuring at length in publications in every decade of the eighteenth century. The graphs represent only those texts in which the cases are named in titles or discussed over at least a paragraph of text outside the press. Beyond these, many passing allusions to the cases were also made across the period in a wide range of publications. Sarah Malcolm was used as late as 1781 in a letter to a newspaper as an example of those who went to the scaffold impenitent²¹³ and the story of ‘the famous French lady (who) intended only to poison her father, husband, brother and some more of her nearest relations, but rather than they should escape destroyed many other persons of quality’ became a popular analogy to discuss those so bent on achieving a particular goal that they caused widespread destruction.²¹⁴

As is to be expected, Figures 2.3 and 2.4 demonstrate that print interest in the cases peaked in the years immediately following the crimes. In the wake of the Marquise’s arrest a staggering 24 different texts were published, as well as press coverage. Many of these were factums. These were originally intended for a legal readership, but were increasingly made available for a wider group of readers, indicated by the fact that some factums were translated into English. The case also featured in a series of cheaper and more accessible ballads and woodcuts.²¹⁵ In the 1680s, however, the number of

<https://books.google.com/>. Searched for ‘Sarah Malcolm’. Publications for Figure 2.4 were identified using the Bibliothèque Nationale de France Catalogue, <http://bnf.fr> ; Gallica, <http://gallica.fr> ; Google Books, <https://books.google.com/>. Searched for ‘Marquise de Brinvilliers’.

²¹³ *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle* (11 Sep 1781); other references of this kind include *A Supplement to the Sermon preached at Lincoln’s Inn on January 30th 1733/4 by a Layman* (London, 1732), p. 34 and *Heaven’s Vengeance: or Remarkable Judgments upon the Transgressors of each of the Ten Commandments* (London, 1747), p. 234.

²¹⁴ See for example A. Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government* (Edinburgh, 1750), p.16; *L’ombre de Charles-Quint aparue à Volcart* (Paris, 1710), p. 134; J. LeBeuf, *Histoire de la ville et de tout le Diocèse de Paris*, p. 139.

²¹⁵ *L’execution remarquable de Mme de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676); *Factum pour la Dame de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676); *Factum du procez extraordinairement fait à La Chaussée* (‘Amsterdam’, 1676); *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire contre la Dame de Brinvilliers* (‘Amsterdam’, 1676); *Arrest de la cour de Parlement, les chambres assemblées, contre Dame Marie Marguerite d’Aubray espouse du Sieur Marquis de Brinvilliers, 16 Juillet, 1676* (Paris, 1676); *Factum pour Dame Marie Magdeleine d’Aubray, Marquise de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676); *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire, d’entre Dame Marie Thérèse Mangot* (Paris, 1676); *Factum pour Alexandre Belleguise* (Paris, 1676); *Factum pour Dame Marie Vossier, veuve de*

publications appears to drop sharply. This is almost certainly due to the difficulties of undertaking text searches for late-seventeenth century publications: the Marquise probably did continue to be featured in print, but ceased to be the titular subject, making such texts difficult to identify. But it could also be that the scandal of the *affaire des poisons*, and the top-secret nature of many investigations into poison and sorcery that took place during this decade, dwarfed, at least in the short term, interest in the Marquise's crimes. Interest in the case rose again after Louis XIV's death when, as with the *affaire des poisons*, it became a classic example of the now much criticised *galanterie* of Louis' court.²¹⁶ In the 1760s Voltaire resurrected the case in his writings on the case of the Chevalier de la Barre. De la Barre was sentenced to death for spitting on a crucifix and was executed using the same method as that used on Brinvilliers: decapitation followed by burning. Voltaire therefore used the extremities of Brinvilliers' crime to reinforce the harmlessness of those of de la Barre.²¹⁷ A century on from Louis XIV' reign, Brinvilliers' story was featured in a series of dictionaries remembering the sun king, as well as, perhaps more controversially, in dictionaries of love.²¹⁸ This brief

Messiere Pierre de Hannyvel Sieur de Saint Laurens (Paris, 1676); *Factum pour la Dame de Saint Laurens* (Paris, 1676); *Etat du procès verbal* (Paris, 1676); *Procès de La Chaussée* (Paris, 1676); *Deux requestes presentées à nosseigneurs de Parlement par Madame de S Laurent* (Paris, 1676); *Response aux deux requestes de la Dame de S Laurent* (Paris, 1676); *Observations pour Messier Pierre Louis de Reich de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Lettre qui a esté trouvée déchirée dans le cabinet du Sieur Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Factum pour Messier Pierre Louis de Reich de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Extraits des principaux pièces du procez criminel pour le Sieur de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Pour faire voire que le Sieur de Saint Laurens n'est pas mort de poison* (Paris, 1676); *Mercurie Hollandois* (April-July, 1676); *Mémoire pour justifier l'innocence du Sieur de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Mémoire fidelle pour justifier l'innocence du Sieur de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Faux faits avancés par la Dame de Saint Laurens* (Paris, 1676); *Pour faire voir la fausseté de l'accusation de la Dame de Saint Laurens* (Paris, 1676). The English translation was *A Narrative of the Process against Madam Brinvilliers* (London, 1676).

²¹⁶ Marquis de la Fare, *Mémoires et réflexions sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis XIV* (Rotterdam, 1716), pp. 209-211; Henri de Limiers, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV*, Vol. 4 (Paris 1717), p. 379; J. Lebeuf, *Histoire de la ville et de tout le diocèse de Paris* (Paris, 1757), p.139. Some underground works even appeared during Louis XIV's reign, notably *L'ombre de Charles-Quint aparue à Volcart* (Paris, 1710) p. 134 in which Brinvilliers' crimes are used to advocate poisoning the Pope.

²¹⁷ Voltaire, *Mélanges philosophiques, littéraires, historiques* Vol. 4 (Paris, 1767), p. 356; reproduced in C. Beccaria, *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments, Translated from the Italian; with a Commentary, Attributed to Mons de Voltaire* (Dublin, 1767) p. xv.

²¹⁸ N. Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux, extraits de l'essai sur l'histoire générale, des tribunaux des peuples tant anciens que modernes*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1786), pp. 139-147; Buisson, *Dictionnaire portatif, contenant les anecdotes historiques de l'amour*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1788), pp. 216-221; J. Du Castre d'Auvigny, *Les vies des hommes illustres de la France, depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusqu'à présent* (Paris, 1769), pp. 103-108; C. Panckoucke, *Le grand Vocabulaire françois*, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1768), p. 299; J. Aublet de

foray into sentimentality did not last, however, and by the 1780s the rising number of publications featuring the Marquise used her as an example of the poisonous aristocracy supposedly driving France into ruin, with connections being drawn to the hated queen Marie-Antoinette, also accused of a number of poisonings.²¹⁹ In this way the Brinvilliers story was adapted at various points to remain relevant throughout the period.

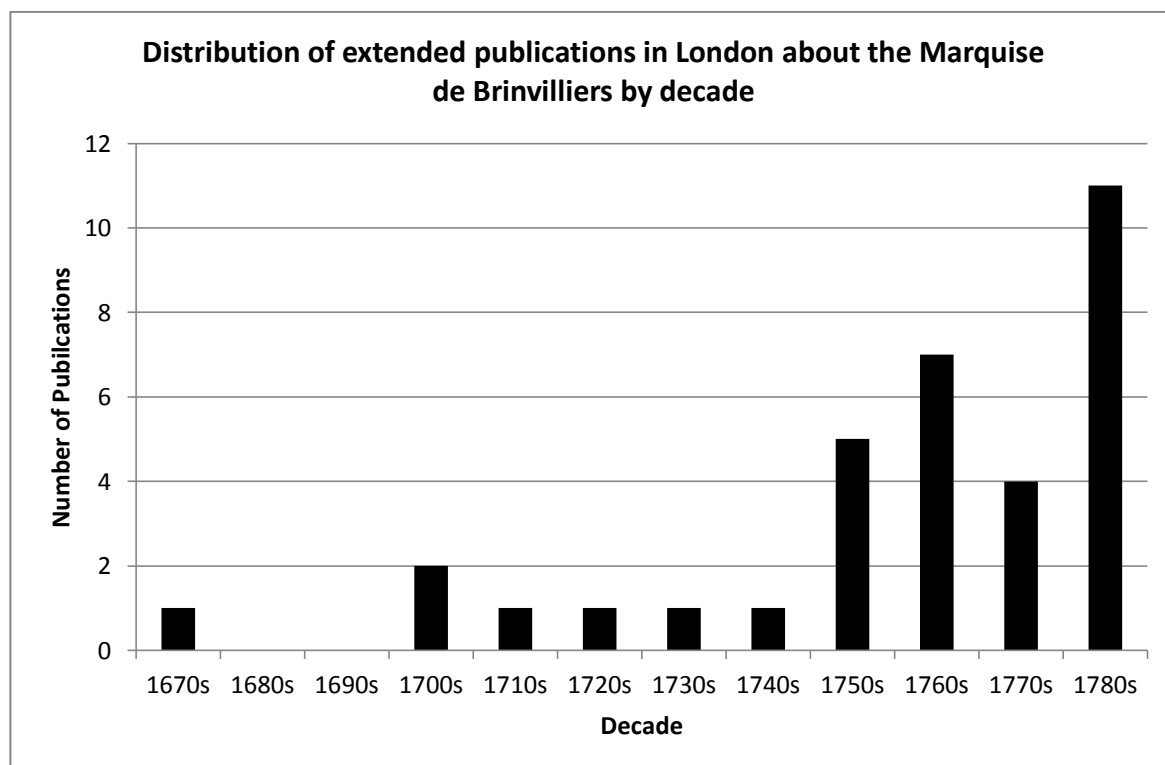


Figure 2.5: Distribution about extended publications on the Marquise de Brinvilliers in London by decade.²²⁰

Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres de la France*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1762), pp.1-34; J-F. de La Croix, *Dictionnaire portative des faits et dits mémorables de l'histoire ancienne et moderne*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1768), p. 152; *Encyclopédie méthodique* (Paris, 1784) pp.699-700; *Galérie de l'ancienne cour*, Vol. 2 (Unknown publication place, 1786), pp. 318-322; Pierre Louis Manuel, *L'année française ou vies des hommes qui ont honorés la France* (Paris, 1789), p. 31.

²¹⁹ The association between poisoning and the aristocracy in the late eighteenth century can be seen in *Le contre-poison ou la nation vengée* (Unknown, 1759); *L'antidote du poison aristocratique* (Unknown, 1770); *Le déclin du sang royal* (Unknown, 1791); *Correspondance secrètes, politique & littéraire, ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des cours, des sociétés & de la littérature en France*, Vol. 8 (London, 1787), p. 245; *Lettres à Monsieur le Comte de B***, sur la révolution arrivée en 1789, sous le règne de Louis XVI* (London, 1789), p. 41. Derogatory publications on Marie Antoinette are too numerous to be listed here, but those that feature direct reports of her performing poisonings include: *Les fureurs utérins de Marie Antoinette* (Unknown, 1791) BnF ENFER 654; *Le lanterne magique* (Unknown, 1789); L. Prudhomme, *Les crimes des reines de France depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusqu'à Marie Antoinette* (Unknown, 1792); *Essai historique sur la vie de Marie Antoinette* (Unknown, 1789).

²²⁰ Extended publications are again defined as those of over one paragraph. Press references have been excluded. Data established using English Short Title Catalogue, <http://estc.bl.uk>; Early English Books Online <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>; Eighteenth-Century Collections Online

Although all Parisian murderesses received some mention in London print, the Marquise was undoubtedly the one who received the highest and most sustained level of interest, as Figure 2.5 shows. While it is likely that more publications on Brinvilliers emerged in London in the late seventeenth century than appear in catalogue searches, Figure 2.5 reveals a definite rise in print interest in the case in London in the second half of the eighteenth century, mirroring that in Paris. The rise in the 1750s can almost certainly be attributed to the 1752 publication of *The Female Parricide*, a full reproduction of the 1676 *Narrative of the Process Against Madame de Brinvilliers* (itself a translation of *Mémoire du Procez Extraordinaire contre la Dame de Brinvilliers*). This brought the case into direct comparison with the high-profile murder trial of Oxford murderess Mary Blandy for poisoning her father which was taking place in spring of 1752. In the lead up to Blandy's trial, press commentators accentuated Blandy's guilt by drawing parallels to Brinvilliers, although in so doing they reduced the crimes of Brinvilliers to only the murder of her father and implied that she had intended to marry Sainte Croix (as Blandy had intended to marry her accomplice).²²¹ The late eighteenth-century surge was probably a more general reflection of the rising English unease with that which Donna Andrew has termed 'Aristocratic Vice', in particular adultery, further discussed in Chapter Four. As France appeared to be becoming increasingly unstable, the decline of the French aristocracy was attributed by London commentators to their moral corruption, for which Marquise's crimes proved a fertile example.²²²

Like the Marquise, Figure 2.3 shows that Sarah Malcolm also remained present in print throughout the eighteenth century (though only in London). Of particular interest is the

<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx>; Google Books, <https://books.google.com/>. Searched for 'Brinvilliers'.

²²¹ *The Female Parricide: or the History of Mary-Margaret d'Aubray, Marchioness of Brinvillier* (Reading, 1752) based on *A Narrative of the Process against Madam Brinvilliers* (London, 1676). This was itself a translation of *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire, d'entre Dame Marie Therese Mangot, veuve de Feu Messire Antoine d'Aubray, vivant Lieutenant Civil, demanderesse, accusatrice, & appellante* (Paris, 1676).

²²² D. T. Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice* (Yale, 2013). See, for example, *Recueil de poésies fugitives, et contes nouveaux* (London, 1781), p. 260.

sustained high number of publications on Malcolm which emerged throughout the whole of the first two decades following the murders. This was in no small part thanks to the sudden surge in collections of criminal biographies and select trials published in the early 1740s, itself a result of the introduction of much more in-depth trial reports from the *Old Bailey Proceedings*. Malcolm's case was absorbed into the steady cycle of criminal commentary brought forth with each new collection of biographies and trials, and in sets of sermons on repentance throughout the second half of the century.²²³ I have been unable to identify any publications that discuss the Malcolm case in eighteenth-century Paris, nor any reports of the murder in the French press. Given that the murder occurred at the same moment as the Excise Crisis, and the overwhelmingly political bent of French newspapers, this is perhaps to be expected. More importantly, as demonstrated in Chapter One, there was a clear class bias in coverage of female homicide in Paris; no lower-class Parisian murderess piqued the interest of Parisian print commentators until the case of Victoire Salmon in 1786. It is therefore not surprising that Malcolm, lower-class and a laundress, did not receive the same cross-channel coverage as the Marquise. Unlike the Marquise, London coverage of Malcolm received no sudden surges in publications in the decades after the crime. But if the volume of publications about Malcolm underwent no particular change aside from a general dwindling after 1750, the content of such publications did change. As Figure 2.6 demonstrates, early publications about Malcolm were generally formed from reproductions of Malcolm's trial report originally published in the *Proceedings* or Malcolm's own paper. In both of these texts

²²³ C. Johnson, *A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street Robbers* (Birmingham, 1734), pp. 522-523 reprinted 1742; D. Defoe, *A General and True History of the Lives and Actions of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street-Robbers*, Vol. 2 (London, 1742), pp. 293-306; *The World Display'd or Mankind Painted in their Proper Colours* (London, 1742), p. 203; *Select Trials at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey for Murder, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining Frauds, Bigamy and other Offences*, Vol. 4 (London, 1742), pp. 8-43; *A Select and Impartial Account of the Lives, Behaviour and Dying Words of the Most Remarkable Convicts*, Vol. 2 (London, 1764), pp. 308-310; *The Bloody Register* Vol. 3 (London, 1764), pp. 89-126; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1768), pp. 359-393; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 2 (London, 1776), pp. 152-189; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2 (London, 1779), pp. 254-266; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1788), pp. 147-189; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 2 (London, 1795), pp. 254-266

Malcolm's voice and the possibilities of her innocence are prominent. Over time, however, reproductions of Malcolm's paper ceased all together, with later print making far fewer references to her claims for innocence. Publishers also increasingly chose to reproduce the *Ordinary's Account* over the *Proceedings*, a text which showed Malcolm to be more overtly evil and put less emphasis on her version of events.²²⁴ The narrative was simplified, Malcolm moved from being a judicial riddle to a classic example of London criminality.²²⁵

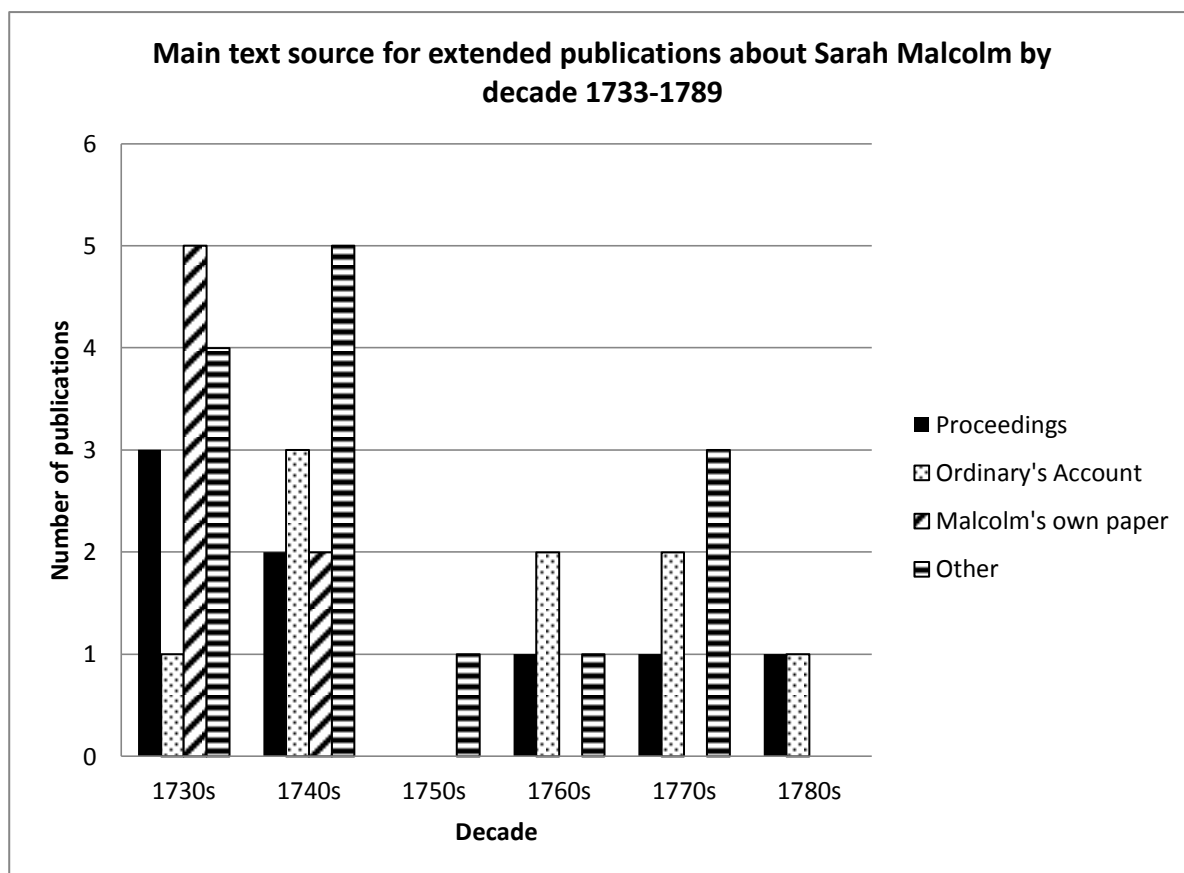


Figure 2.6: Main text source for extended publications about Sarah Malcolm by decade 1733-1789.²²⁶

²²⁴ *OBP* February 1733, Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *OBP, Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305); *A True Copy of the Paper Delivered the Night before her Execution by Sarah Malcolm*.

²²⁵ *A Select and Impartial Account of the Lives, Behaviour and Dying Words of the Most Remarkable Convicts*, Vol. 2 (London, 1764), pp. 308-310; *The Bloody Register* Vol. 3 (London, 1764), pp. 89-126; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1768), pp. 359-393; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 2 (London, 1776), pp. 152-189; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2 (London, 1779), pp. 254-266; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1788), pp. 147-189; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 2 (London, 1795), pp. 254-266

²²⁶ Original texts are: *OBP* February 1733, Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *OBP, Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305) or *A True Copy of the Paper Delivered the Night before her Execution by Sarah Malcolm*.

Also of interest is the substantial number of ‘other’ text sources on Malcolm: that is, publications which did not directly reproduce any other text but were instead original compositions. This preponderance of original writing was also a feature of writing on Brinvilliers. Indeed, aside from the reproduction of *A Narrative of the Process of Mme Brinvilliers* as *The Female Parricide*, and reprints of *Histoires Tragiques* and *Causes Célèbres*, every publication on Brinvilliers on both sides of the Channel was a new work.²²⁷ This high number of original compositions is unique to these two cases. All of the other high-profile murderesses discussed in this thesis elicited a maximum of three or four original texts which were then chopped up and manipulated to form all other publications. That Malcolm and the Marquise were not treated this way is testimony to the diversity of publications in which their stories were told, and the variety of arguments and debates with which their crimes were perceived to resonate.

In both cases, print coverage throughout the period was focused entirely upon the figures of Malcolm and the Marquise themselves, overlooking others who may have been involved in the crimes. Amy Masciola has shown that the London press were exclusively interested in the figure of Malcolm, ignoring her possible accomplices.²²⁸ When the Alexanders were featured in the press, which was rare, it was as young men who voluntarily turned themselves in.²²⁹ Mary Tracey received even less print coverage, aside from a few references to the possibility that she was a corrupted army wife, a figure more powerfully evoked in the trial of Catherine Hayes discussed in Chapter Four. In late eighteenth-century publications they were erased entirely. Such an exclusive focus

²²⁷ The only text repetitions in publications on the Marquise de Brinvilliers are the reprinting of *A Narrative of the Process of Mme de Brinvilliers* as *The Female Parricide*, reprints of F. de Rosset, *Les histoires tragiques de notre temps* (Paris, 1685), pp. 581-606 in 1701 and 1721 and the reproducing of *Fait des causes célèbres* (Amsterdam, 1757), pp. 91-101 in Des Essarts, *Procès fameux, extraits de l'essai sur l'histoire générale, des tribunaux des peuples tant anciens que modernes*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1786), pp. 139-147.

²²⁸ Masciola, “I Can See By This Woman’s Features...”, p. 86.

²²⁹ *OBP, Ordinary’s Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305); *The London Magazine* (March, 1733), p. 84; *London Evening Post* (8-10 Feb 1733); *St James’s Evening Post* (10 Feb 1733); *Weekly Miscellany* (3 March 1733).

probably reflects the fact that Malcolm was a more compelling figure for a middle class readership. Army wives and petty thieves were just not as frightening as immigrant laundresses, as will be further explored in the final section of this chapter. In a common law system, finding and punishing a culprit who had confessed to at least part of the crime was often enough, it was not always seen as necessary to solve the entire crime. By simplifying the crime and writing out the accomplices, the Malcolm case was concentrated into a specific example of one particular kind of worrying female figure.

In the Brinvilliers case also, both the court and the print industry showed much more interest in Brinvilliers than in any of her accomplices. As well as the servant La Chaussée, convicted and executed in 1673, a powerful *robe* noble named Louis Reich de Pennautier was also implicated in the poisonings by a series of bills of payment found in the notorious *cassette*. While factums on Brinvilliers focused on her debauched lifestyle and relationship with Sainte Croix, factums on Pennautier dealt exclusively with the lack of clear evidence which proved his involvement in the poisonings.²³⁰ This exclusive emphasis on judicial evidence echoed a trend in spousal murder trials identified by Manuel San Pedro and Dorothea Nolde in which men built defences on a lack of evidence while female defences rested on their good character. Such an emphasis led to Pennautier being acquitted.²³¹ Yet the relentless focus on the evidence was not enough to prove his innocence beyond the court: as Madame de Sévigné wrote ‘Pennautier is

²³⁰ *Factum pour dame Marie Vosser ; Factum pour la Dame de Saint Laurens ;Etat du procès verbal* (Paris, 1676); *Procès de La Chaussée* (Paris, 1676); *Deux requestes presentées a nosseigneurs de parlement par Madame de S Laurent* (Paris, 1676); *Response aux deux requestes de la Dame de S Laurent* (Paris, 1676); *Observations pour Messier Pierre Louis de Reich de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Lettre qui a esté trouvée déchirée dans le cabinet du Sieur Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Factum pour Messier Pierre Louis de Reich de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Extraits des principaux pièces du procez criminel contre Louis de Reich de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Pour faire voire que le Sieur de Saint Laurens n'est pas mort de poison* (Paris, 1676); *Mémoire pour justifier l'innocence du Sieur de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Mémoire fidelle pour justifier l'innocence du Sieur de Pennautier* (Paris, 1676); *Faux faits avancés par la Dame de Saint Laurens* (Paris, 1676); *Pour faire voir la fausseté de l'accusation de la Dame de Saint Laurens* (Paris, 1676).

²³¹ D. Nolde, 'Le meurtre du conjoint devant le Parlement de Paris, (fin XVIIe-début XVIIIe siècle): le 'verdict' de l'entourage', in B. Garnot (ed.), *L'infrajudiciare du moyen âge à l'époque moderne* (Dijon, 1996), pp. 143-53; M. San Pedro, 'L'Assassinat du conjoint à Paris au XVIIIe siècle 1700-89) d'après les sources judiciaires', Masters Thesis (Paris IV Sorbonne, 1996), pp. 4-10.

fortunate... but he is not acquitted in the minds of the public'.²³² Like Pennautier, there was no evidence that categorically proved Brinvilliers' guilt excepting her manuscript confession, which she claimed she wrote while insane. But while Brinvilliers' defence lawyer tried to bring a similar focus onto the flaws in the evidence, reports generally situated evidence of her guilt in her adulterous affairs and gambling.²³³ As with Malcolm, in later publications all mention of these two male accomplices was written out, with the murders committed by La Chaussée added to Brinvilliers' own and Pennautier's involvement entirely forgotten.²³⁴

At the same time, the shortcomings of these investigations and the overlooking and acquittal of accomplices were glossed over in print through superlative assertions of the extraordinary scale of the crimes of both women. The flaws of the judicial system in failing to detect the Marquise's crimes for three years, and in not being able to definitively disprove Malcolm's defence, were explained away through representations of both women as beyond human justice. In both cases repeated references were made to the fact that each woman was denied spiritual exhortation before they died: their crimes were too extreme for any human judge and jury to investigate or punish properly.²³⁵

The variety of publications featuring these women, and the length of time during which they continued to appear in print, were larger and longer than for any other high-profile murderess of this period. In both cases, moreover, these women became exclusive and extreme representatives of crimes that were almost certainly more complex. But this seemingly unsatisfactory conclusion was a sacrifice worth making, as far as printers and

²³² 'Pennautier est heureux. Jamais il n'y eut un homme si bien protégé; vous le verrez sortir, mais sans être justifié dans l'esprit de tout le monde', Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 530 p. 350.

²³³ Nivelles, *Factum pour Dame Marie Magdeleine d'Aubray*.

²³⁴ *Fait des causes célèbres* (Amsterdam, 1757), pp. 91-101; Des Essarts, *Procès fameux*, Vol. 2, pp. 139-147; Buisson, *Dictionnaire portatif*, Vol. , pp. 216-221; DuCaste d'Auvigny, *Les vies des hommes illustres*, pp. 103-107; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-35; *Encyclopédie méthodique*, pp. 699-700.

²³⁵ *The World Display'd or Mankind Painted in their Proper Colours* (London, 1742), p.203; *The History and Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster Borough of Southwark* (London, 1753), p. 21; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes*, Vol. 2, p. 27.

publishers were concerned, in order to create two figures through whom a whole plethora of societal fears could be explored and rationalised over a long period of time.

“Voilà une Femme Perdue”:²³⁶ Exposing and Exceptionalising the Murderess

Several scholars have argued that representations of female homicide in both the early modern and modern period were defined by a number of gendered stereotypes, determined by a struggle within European (and global) culture to amalgamate women’s perceived inherent passivity with the agency of murder, and to integrate the role of women in giving life with the role of the murderer in taking it away. Through this, it has been argued, female killers were depicted through a series of tropes: in possession of a secretive and subversive female physiognomy, defined by an unnatural sexual appetite, a heavily masculinised persona and a threatening active voice and committing crimes that involved the subversion of traditional female domestic roles.²³⁷ But, as will be shown, the reality is more complex. This section will explore the extent to which both Malcolm and the Marquise were perceived within each of stereotypes of female deviance. Focusing in particular on representations (or the lack of representations) of both women *as women*, their bodies, their sexualities and their feminine passivities, it will highlight the dominant role played by specific cultural and social circumstances in determining perceptions of female killers, over understandings of their gender.

It is true that both Malcolm and the Marquise were shown, to a certain extent, as using their female bodies to conceal and disrupt judicial proceedings. Malcolm’s hiding of

²³⁶ This was apparently the response of one of the Marquise’s lovers when La Chaussée told him that he was going to reveal everything at his trial: *Factum du proces extraordinairement fait à La Chaussée*, p. 49.

²³⁷ These identifiers can be seen in: A. Jones, *Women Who Kill* (New York, 1980, re-released 2009); H. Birch, *Moving Targets : Women, Murder and Representation* (California, 1993); A. Burfoot, and S. Lord (eds), *Killing Women: The Visual Culture of Gender and Violence* (Ontario, 2006); M. Hallissy, *Venomous Woman: Fear of the Female in Literature* (London, 1987); Doody, “Those Eyes Are Made so Killing”, pp. 49-81; S. S. Heintzelman, ‘Women’s Petty Treason: Feminism, Narrative and the Law’, *Journal of Narrative Technique* 20.2 (Spring, 1990), pp. 89-106; M. D. Kelleher, and C. L. Kelleher, *Murder Most Rare: the Female Serial Killer* (Westport, 1998); J. Knelman, *Twisting in the Wind: the Murderess and the English Press* (Toronto, 1998); and L. Seal, *Women, Murder and Femininity: Gender Representations of Women who Kill* (Kent, 2010) (though Seal later discounts and complicates these categories).

Duncombe's money in her hair in particular was shown to be indicative of the potentially subversive nature of the hidden female body in concealing secrets. It has been argued that Malcolm's seditious body could also be seen in her claims that the blood found on the linen in Keroll's apartment was 'the free gift of nature': her menstrual blood.²³⁸ Jenny Magrath in particular has argued that Malcolm's transgression in discussing the taboo subject of menstruation in the male space of the courtroom directly contributed to her conviction.²³⁹ Studies of eighteenth-century menstruation discount this, however, demonstrating that in a densely-populated city such as London it is likely that men were neither ignorant nor afraid of the mechanics of the menstrual cycle. Sara Read goes as far as to argue that Malcolm was in fact drawing on positive images of menstruation as a woman at her most hospitable and gentle: the period being a 'free gift' that a uterus gave to an incoming embryo.²⁴⁰ It was undeniably a clever defence, and did derail a certain part of the prosecution. Yet the silence in press discussions on the bloodied linen may not have been due to eighteenth-century collective menophobia, but rather because other, more damaging, evidence existed, for which Malcolm had less compelling explanations, such as the money in her hair and the bloodied tankard. While the female body was present in discussions of Malcolm, it was not so prevalent nor so deviant as sometimes believed.

The Marquise was also shown as in possession of a subversive body that could conceal secrets, in particular in her attempts to evade justice. A favourite anecdote associated with the Marquise was that, when presented with eight pitchers of water to be tortured by *question extraordinaire*,²⁴¹ she joked 'surely they're trying to drown me'. The Marquise

²³⁸ *OBP*, February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52).

²³⁹ Magrath, '(Mis)reading the Bloody Body: the case of Sarah Malcolm', pp. 223-236.

²⁴⁰ S. Read, *Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England* (Kent, 2013), p. 111. For more on such readings of menstruation see C. McClive and N. Pellegrin (eds), *Femmes en fleurs, femmes en corps, sang, santé, sexualités, du Moyen Age aux Lumières* (Saint-Etienne, 2010); C. McClive, *Menstruation and Procreation in Early Modern France* (London, 2015).

²⁴¹ The *question ordinaire* was highest form of judicial torture in which the accused was stretched over a bench and forced to imbibe large amounts of water, dramatically distending the abdomen.

was famously petite and Parisian torture systems were just not suitable to be used on her.²⁴² Another popular story which pervaded in the wake of the crime was that the Marquise had attempted to commit suicide while in confinement by swallowing earth, thorns, needles, or even by inserting a stake up her vagina (this last attempt is often left out of eighteenth-century works).²⁴³ Such stories depicted the Marquise's body as a weapon that she could use to deny her victims justice. Concerns about suicide were also seen in coverage of Malcolm, with repeated press reports that she was being closely watched in prison, and that she had taken poison. While suicides in Parisian prisons were not uncommon due to the extended length of trials, and were certainly not limited to women, Malcolm appears to be almost unique in London print in appearing to pose this threat.²⁴⁴ In coverage of both women, therefore, it was shown that the female body could potentially be used to disrupt and ultimately evade masculine systems of investigation and execution. But, unlike the *affaire des poisons*, where the secretive world of knowledge about the female body was shown covering up murders for up to twenty years, the secret-keeping attempts of Malcolm and the Marquise were failures, implying that the female body was not actually all that subversive and could be controlled, exposed and, eventually, destroyed by the judiciary.

Woman's supposedly deceptive nature was more powerfully evoked in discussions of both women's appearances rather than their internal physiology. Given the wide

²⁴² 'C'est assurément pour me noyer', reported in *Galérie de l'ancienne cour*, Vol. 2, p. 320; Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Lettre 529 p. 350; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 26; De la Croix, *Dictionnaire portative des faits et dits mémorables* (Paris, 1788), p. 152.

²⁴³ The stake story emerges in Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 503 p. 278; and is reproduced in Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 25. Other suicide stories are found in De Rosset, *histoire tragiques*, p. 597; *Fait des Causes célèbres*, p. 101; *Mémoire du procès de la Dame Brinvilliers*, p. 46; *Gazette d'Amsterdam* (7 May 1676). Nivelles tries to use her suicide attempts to argue for her innocence in *Factum pour Marie Magdeleine d'Aubray*, p. 106.

²⁴⁴ *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 258; *St James' Evening Post* (6-8 Feb 1733); *London Evening Post* (8 Feb 1733); *Read's Weekly Journal* (10 Feb 1733); *Country Journal* (10 Feb 1733). The only cases of actual suicide in Newgate that I have been able to find are Francis David Stirn *OBP, Ordinary of Newgate's Account*, September 1760 (OA17600915) and John Oneby, *OBP*, March 1726, trial of John Oneby (t17260302-36); *A True and Faithful Narrative of one John Oneby Esq* (London, 1727). Newgate prison registers very rarely record prison suicides, but this may be due to a desire to cover them up rather than because they did not occur.

distribution of images of both women created by Charles Le Brun and William Hogarth, appearance and dress were clearly at the forefront of many commentators' minds. In the case of the Marquise, authors often juxtaposed her beauty with the scale of her crimes to hint at the hidden nature of evil within society, a trope also seen in the Taperet case discussed in Chapter Four. The Marquise was 42 years old when she was executed, but many late seventeenth-century accounts depicted her as still full of youthful beauty, apparently able to transcend the ageing process. Later eighteenth-century accounts, however, argued that instead of covering up her evil, her looks provided clues to her corrupted core. In 1789, for example, the theologian and physiognomist J. C. Lavater used LeBrun's portrait of the Marquise as an example of how to identify criminal facial features on women.²⁴⁵ Interestingly, for a city so obsessed with dress, there were almost no descriptions of the Marquise's clothing aside from reports that she had gone to the scaffold 'naked in a white blouse', while LeBrun's image showed her wearing a simple cap.²⁴⁶ As with 1755 murderess Marie Catherine Taperet, who was executed in a face-covering hood, this simple dress removed focus from her status as fashionable noblewoman and demonstrated that every sinner, no matter how beautiful or powerful, would meet justice in the same way.

Representations of Malcolm's appearance were more confused. Newspaper reports in the lead up to, and following, Malcolm's execution reveal a high interest in the clothing she might be wearing, or did wear, to be hanged. This was spurred on by court discussions of Malcolm's clothing on the night of the murder, in particular the question of whether she had worn her bloodied apron on top of her clothes, implying that the blood was from the murders, or underneath her clothes for sanitary protection, implying that the blood was

²⁴⁵ J. C. Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy, Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, Vol. 2 (London, 1789), pp. 60-61

²⁴⁶ 'Nue en chemise', *Mercurie Hollandois* ('Amsterdam', 1676), p. 335; Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 528 p. 328; Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 2, p. 147; De la Croix, *Dictionnaire portative des faits et dits*, p. 152.

menstrual. Malcolm's fashionable clothing on the scaffold of 'a black Silk Crape Gown, a white Sarcenet Hood, white Apron, and black Gloves' was far more glamorous than the shroud that she had declared that she would wear while in Newgate.²⁴⁷ This perhaps reflects a wider unease at the dress of urban servants, and the difficulties of distinguishing their station. Defoe, for example, wrote of the embarrassment of greeting a group of women and accidentally embracing 'the chamber jade' due to her being dressed in a similar style to her mistresses.²⁴⁸ In Hogarth's portrait (Figure 2.2.), Malcolm is shown dressed simply but in a sumptuous skirt, again suggesting an ambiguous social status. Yet while Malcolm's dress could indicate the dangers of the anonymous city where people dressed above their station, Hogarth's portrait more specifically depicted a woman whose criminal nature was etched on her face. In direct contrast to the Marquise, often shown and described as younger than she was, Hogarth painted Malcolm as far more than her 22 years. Scholars have emphasised Malcolm's pointed features and 'muscular arms' in the painting.²⁴⁹ Yet while Hogarth's aim was to show the physical embodiment of a woman 'capable of any wickedness',²⁵⁰ later reproductions of the print softened and feminised Malcolm's features, and made her appear younger (Figure 2.7). The illustration that appeared in *The Tyburn Chronicle* in 1768 also showed Malcolm as younger and prettier (Figure 2.8). Malcolm was therefore not exclusively shown as the 'masculine woman'²⁵¹ stereotype put forward by previous scholars. Instead, representations of Malcolm emphasised and altered various aspects of her appearance at

²⁴⁷ Malcolm's clothes are described in this way in *The Bee* (April, 1733) p. 241; Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes*, p. 150; *The London Magazine* (March, 1733), p. 156; *London Evening Post* (6 March 1733); *Daily Journal* (8 March 1733). *St James Evening Post* (24 Feb 1733) reports her planning to wear a shroud.

²⁴⁸ J. Munns, "'With Nosegays and Gloves.../So Trim and so Gay': Clothing and Public Execution in the Eighteenth Century", in J. Munns and P. Richards (eds), *The Clothes that Wear Us: Essays on Dressing and Transgressing in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (London, 1999), pp. 271-300; A Buck, 'The Dress of Domestic Servants in the Eighteenth Century', *Strata of Society, Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conference of the Costume Society* April 6-8 1973 (London, 1974), pp. 10-17; D. Defoe, *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business* (London, 1725), p. 5.

²⁴⁹ Doody, "'Those Eyes are Made so Killing'", p. 53.

²⁵⁰ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 155 (London, 1785), p.345; Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes*, p. 150.

²⁵¹ This specific phrase appears in Seal, *Women, Murder and Femininity*, pp. 24-38 but hers is the most nuanced version of a much wider stereotype. Readings of the Hogarth image in this way appear in Saxton, *Narratives of Women and Murder*, p. 78; Doody, "'Those Eyes are Made so Killing'", p. 53; Masciola, "'I Can See by This Woman's Features...'", p. 74.

different moments in time, depending on whether they were showing her as a born member of the criminal class, a disguised threat on the London streets or an icon of the tragic urban female vulnerability that drove servants to crime.



Figure 2.7: *Sarah Malcom: No Recompense but Love* (London, 1735).²⁵²



Figure 2.8: 'The Apprehending of Sarah Malcom', *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1768), p. 368.²⁵³

²⁵² Image source: London Metropolitan Archive, Special collections, SC/GL/POR/C/021/M0027487CL.

²⁵³ Image source: Eighteenth Century Collections Online:

<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx>
CW3324316987 [Accessed 24th May 2014]. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection 1131.e.1-4.)

Scholars of print representations of female killers have argued that a focus on the murderess's overtly masculine or deceptively feminine appearance was paired with images of their deviant sexuality.²⁵⁴ Yet what is striking in representations of both women is the *lack* of writing on their sexuality. This is particularly important in discussions of the Marquise. Despite the fact that her handwritten confession in Liège included claims that she had 'stopped being a girl' at seven years old,²⁵⁵ and had engaged in mutual sexual touching with her brother from a much younger age (given that her eldest brother was at least three years her junior this is unlikely to be true), print references to her sexuality are few and far between. While there was much condemnation of the Marquise's love affair with Sainte Croix, the sexual element of this relationship was very rarely dwelt upon: it was love not lust that was shown as driving her to ruin.²⁵⁶ Although a couple of very late eighteenth-century accounts quoted Madame de Sévigné's assertion that the Marquise's sexual activity from a young age showed her to be 'born for crime', most eighteenth-century reproductions of (or citations from) the Sévigné letters removed any reference to her sexuality. This is unlikely to be due to late eighteenth-century prudishness, as evidenced by contemporaneous representations of Marie Antoinette involving graphic descriptions and visual depictions of homosexual, multi-partner and even bestial liaisons.²⁵⁷ No publication made mention of the Marquise's incest, perhaps because this would have detracted sympathy from the brothers as victims,

²⁵⁴ Seal, *Women, Murder and Femininity*; Birch, *Moving Targets*; Jones, *Women Who Kill*; Doody, "'Those Eyes are Made so Killing'", pp. 49-81; Clark, *Women and Crime*; Burfoot, *Killing Women*; Hallissy, *Venomous Woman*; Kelleher and Kelleher, *Murder Most Rare*.

²⁵⁵ There is much ambiguity over how to interpret reports of this event. The original phrase in Brinvilliers' confession is 'j'ai cessé d'être fille à sept ans' -BnF Ms Fr 7610. Some have seen this as her reporting being raped and some as her having engaged in willing sexual activity; Walch, *La Marquise de Brinvilliers*, p. 128; F. Funck-Brentano, *Le Drame des Poisons* (Paris, 1928), p. 3.

²⁵⁶ 'Née pour le crime', Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 503 p. 278. Texts that quoted the Sévigné letters usually only reproduced her letter on the execution, rather than this letter on her general character, in the early decades of the eighteenth century. The quote is however found in Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 2, (Paris, 1786), p. 139; Buisson, *Dictionnaire portatif*, p. 220; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 17.

²⁵⁷ As with poisonings, the list of publications depicting Marie Antoinette's debaucheries is very large, but particularly scandalous representations are found in: *Les fureurs utérins de Marie Antoinette* (Unknown, 1791) BnF ENFER 654; *Essai historique sur la vie de Marie Antoinette* (Unknown, 1789) ; Prudhomme, *Les crimes des reines de France* ; and the 'Royal Orgy' opera *L'Autrichienne en Gouquettes* (Paris, 1789).

or perhaps because the implausibility of the statement might have added support to the Marquise's claims that she wrote the confession while insane.²⁵⁸ Some reports of the Marquise's arrest claimed that DesGrais lured her out of the convent while dressed as an abbot with the promise of an amorous liaison, but these claims again emerged only in the more sensational publications of the late eighteenth-century.²⁵⁹ The Marquise was instead more commonly shown to be the embodiment of the *galante femme* for whom sexual promiscuity was only one aspect of a series of dangerous activities. She was not shown as motivated by lust but rather 'greed and vengeance', of which sexual gratification formed only a small part.²⁶⁰

Malcolm's sexuality, meanwhile, played almost no part in representations. Aside from one suggestion that Malcolm may have committed the murder to get James Alexander to marry her, the ambiguous epitaph of 'no recompense but love' seen in Figure 2.7, and some more implicit allusions to a relationship between her and Mr Keroll, no reference was ever made to Malcolm's sexual urges.²⁶¹ Indeed, unlike reports of murderess Catherine Hayes' romantic embraces in Newgate, Malcolm was shown as living very chastely in prison and leading prayers with the male prisoners.²⁶² It is therefore clear that writings on female killers were not universally concerned with the patriarchal control of female sexuality. This in turn supports arguments that eighteenth-century female reputation more generally was not exclusively based upon sexual chastity (or lack

²⁵⁸ This underreporting of the confession might also be, as argued in Chapter Four, because of a general lack of concern with incest as argued in S. Denbo, 'Speaking Relatively, a History of Incest and the Family in Eighteenth-Century England', PhD Thesis (University of Warwick, 2001).

²⁵⁹ *Fait des Causes Célèbres* (Amsterdam, 1757), p. 100; Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 2, p. 145; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres de la France*, Vol. 2, p. 17.

²⁶⁰ 'Intérêt et vengeance', *Histoires tragiques*, p. 583; *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 93; Voltaire, *Siècle de Louis XIV*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1751), p. 314; *Factum du procez extraordinairement fait à La Chaussée*, p. 5; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire*, pp. 29-30; Du Castre d'Auvigny, *Les vies des hommes illustres*, p. 107; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, p. 6.

²⁶¹ *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 253. The possibility of a romantic relationship between Sarah and Carrol is implied in reports of her anxiety to see him before death: *OBP, Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305); *The Bloody Register*, Vol. 2, p. 88; *The London Magazine* (March, 1733), p. 156; *St James's Evening Post* (8 March 1733); *Daily Journal* (8 March 1733).

²⁶² *OBP, Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305); *Select Trials* (London, 1742), p. 38; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2, p. 262; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 262.

thereof).²⁶³ Women's economic and social roles could also play an equally important role in the assessment of their characters, even in discussion of these most exceptional figures.

Another aspect of such stereotypes, that murderesses were shown as subverting naturally female domestic roles, is also notably absent. While Malcolm had no children, the Marquise was the mother of between four and six sons and daughters. Yet allusions to the Marquise as mother were almost never made, despite some reports that she may have killed one of her daughters. Her subversion lay entirely elsewhere. More attention was paid to her role as daughter, and a small number of accounts showed her taking advantage of the task of caring for her father when he was sick in order to administer regular doses of poison: as Madame de Sévigné writes 'she was eight months poisoning her father, responding to his love and affection by doubling the dose'.²⁶⁴ Yet in the majority of representations Brinvilliers was reported to have given her father just one dose of poison like a 'gunshot in the soup', creating a more frightening image of poison that could kill in one sip, but also removing images of Brinvilliers as subverting the natural female role of nursing.²⁶⁵

Representations of Malcolm and the Marquise were therefore more complex than the 'traditional' collection of monstrous, masculine, sexually voracious symbols of female subversion. Moreover, tensions in representations of these two women cannot be reduced to a simple conflict between positive passive womanhood and active negative murderous

²⁶³ G. Walker, 'Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996), pp. 235-245; F. Dabhoiwala, 'The Construction of Honour, Reputation and Status in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996), pp. 201-213.

²⁶⁴ 'D'être huit mois à tuer son père, à recevoir toutes ses caresses & ses douceurs, à quoi elle ne répondoit qu'en toujours doublant la dose', Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 531 p. 351, reproduced in Buisson, *Dictionnaire portatif*, p. 217.

²⁶⁵ 'Un coup de pistolet dans le bouillon', *Histoires tragiques*, p. 583; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire contre la Dame Brinvilliers*, p. 29; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 7; *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 93; De la Croix, *Dictionnaire portatif*, p. 151.

subjectivity.²⁶⁶ While it has been compellingly shown that many female defendants sought to emphasise images of female passivity within the courtroom,²⁶⁷ as was indeed true of the judicial defences put forward by both Malcolm and the Marquise (albeit, in the case of Malcolm, in an impressively aggressive manner), analysis of representations of both cases demonstrates that feminine agency was not always portrayed as a negative or deviant force, nor was passivity always positive.

In both cases, reproduction of the murderess' active voice in print and in the court was a complex issue. In the trial of Brinvilliers, much debate focused upon whether or not her written confession could be accepted as evidence. Brinvilliers' defence lawyer, Nivelles, argued that it had been written when Brinvilliers had been subject to a feminine wave of mental instability and so was invalid.²⁶⁸ Although this argument did not hold, and the confession was used in court, few details from it were ever printed, and it was never published in full, nor indeed were many of the other declarations made by Brinvilliers during interrogations. Brinvilliers' other confession, made to the priest Pirot just before the execution, was also never printed, although it was circulated in manuscript.²⁶⁹ Here we see Parisians shrinking from reproducing the Marquise's voice in the act of claiming active responsibility for her crimes. Print was instead filled with depictions of the Marquise as 'Sainte Croix's slave',²⁷⁰ overwhelmed by the immense power of love. Yet such descriptions of the Marquise's passivity and helplessness continued to be

²⁶⁶ Conflicts between active and passive roles in representations of criminal women have been explored most effectively in F. Dolan, "'Gentlemen, I have One Thing More to Say'" Women on Scaffolds in England 1563-1680', *Modern Philology* 92.2 (Nov. 1994), pp.157-17. See also S. Chess, "'And I my Vowe did Keepe": Oath Making, Subjectivity and Husband Murder in 'Murderous Wife' Ballads', in P. Fumerton, A. Guerrini and K. McAbee (eds), *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500-1800* (Surrey, 2010), pp. 131-149.

²⁶⁷ M. Clayton, 'Changes in Old Bailey Trials for the Murder of New-Born Babies, 1674-1803', *Continuity and Change* 24.2 (2009), pp. 337-359; M. Francus, 'Monstrous Mothers, Monstrous Societies: Infanticide and the Rule of Law in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21.1 (1997), pp. 133-156.

²⁶⁸ Nivelles, *Factum pour Marie Magdeleine d'Aubray*.

²⁶⁹ E. Pirot, 'Relation de la Mort de Brinvilliers', BnF Ms Fr10982 and Ms Fr 7610 record the full interrogations.

²⁷⁰ 'Cette passion prit un tel empire sur l'esprit & sur le cœur de la Marquise, qu'elle devint l'esclave de son amant', Buisson, *Dictionnaire portatif*, p. 216.

accompanied by superlative descriptions of a ‘crime so black’ and perpetrators so evil that ‘if necessary, they would have poisoned the whole universe’.²⁷¹ In this way print authors emphasised the Marquise’s passivity, yet still showed her to be supremely criminal.

When Brinvilliers’ voice was reproduced it was often to reinforce the power and wisdom of the justice system. The ballad produced for Brinvilliers’ execution, for example, was written entirely in the first person and acted as a clear assertion of the universal power of the law even against aristocrats, with lines such as ‘contemplate my illustrious noblesse/ my arrest has reduced me to weakness’.²⁷² However, even these reproductions were rare, and in later publications Brinvilliers was quoted far less than the dead men of the story: her murdered brothers and Sainte Croix. It was only from the nineteenth century and beyond, when her story was transformed into theatre and literature, that the Marquise was shown as an active commentator on her own crimes.²⁷³ Brinvilliers’ active voice was not always threatening and her passivity and silence were certainly not always seen as signs of her innocence.

If Brinvilliers’ silence was not always exculpatory, Malcolm’s vociferousness was not always deviant. Her vocal presence in the *Proceedings*, continually cross-examining and questioning witnesses, was unusual and remarkable, and was made even more remarkable by the fact that her interjections were printed not only in the original trial record but continued to feature in all reproductions of the *Proceedings* in collections

²⁷¹ ‘D’un crime si noir, commis sous la faveur de l’amitié la plus naturelle’, Rosset, *Histoires tragiques*, p. 581; ‘Ils eussent empoisonné tout l’univers’ Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 6; *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 91; Des Essarts, *Procès fameux*, Vol. 2, p. 144; *Mémoire du procès fait contre la Dame de Brinvilliers*, p. 29.

²⁷² ‘Contemplez moy tres-illustre noblesse/ Mon arrest va me reduite en foiblesse’, *L’Exécution remarquable de Mme de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676) BnF Estampes QE-21; *Le trésor des plus belles chansons* (Paris, 1699), pp. 162-164.

²⁷³ Literary versions of the case include: A. Conan Doyle, *The Leather Funnel* (London, 1922); A. Dumas, ‘The Marquise de Brinvilliers’ in *Crimes Célèbres* (Paris, 1839); W. Ffield, *The Devil’s Marchioness* (London, 1957); E. Gaboriau, *Amours d’une empoisonneuse* (Paris, 1881); R. Browning, *The Laboratory* (London, 1846). The opera *The Marquise de Brinvilliers*, an ensemble composition, debuted in Paris in 1831.

throughout the century.²⁷⁴ Even more striking is the coverage accorded to her paper confession; indeed she was the only female criminal of the eighteenth century to secure the publication of her own version of events. The paper was reprinted, often unabridged, in newspapers, as well as the *Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Bee* and the *London Magazine*.²⁷⁵ Perhaps most impressive of all was the reproduction of Malcolm's paper in Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street Robbers ect.* This collection of criminal biographies, first published in 1734, drew almost exclusively from the *Ordinary's Account* in reproducing a series of stories guided by traditional narratives of the slippery slope towards crime and scaffold repentance. Yet for Malcolm Johnson chose to simply reproduce the paper, giving the case an ambiguity and first person assertiveness that stood out dramatically from the other cases, including 1726 high-profile murderess Catherine Hayes.²⁷⁶

Such coverage was, as previous historians have shown, undoubtedly due in part to the extraordinary character of Malcolm herself, and her ability to manipulate the print industry. But it must be remembered that the *Proceedings*, the main source for Malcolm's active voice in the courtroom, were selective in the details of trials that they included.²⁷⁷ The evocation of Malcolm's voice within court was therefore an editorial decision as much as the product of her assertiveness. This was probably in part due to the fact that Malcolm had confessed to some kind of crime, if not murder, and so could still be slotted into the prevailing crime literature genre of the penitent sinner without

²⁷⁴ *OBP* February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *Proceedings* reproduced in: *The Bee* (March, 1733), pp. 190-214; *Select Trials*, Vol. 2 (London, 1742), pp. 8-43; *The Bloody Register*, Vol. 3, pp. 89-126; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2, pp. 359-393; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 2, pp. 152-189; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 2, pp. 147-189; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1733), pp. 97-137; *The London Magazine* (March, 1733), pp. 139-157.

²⁷⁵ *St James Evening Post* (8-10 March 1733); *London Evening Post* (10-12 March 1733); *St James' Evening Post* (10-12 March 1733); *Daily Journal* (10 March 1733); *Daily Post* (10 March 1733); *London Evening Post* (10 March 1733); *St James Evening Post* (15 March 1733); *Reads Weekly Journal* (17 March 1733); *The Bee* (March, 1733), pp. 190-214; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1733), pp. 97-137; *The London Magazine* (March, 1733) pp. 139-157 all reproduced the paper in full.

²⁷⁶ C. Johnson, *A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street Robbers* (London, 1734), pp. 522-523.

²⁷⁷ As argued in S. Devereaux, 'From Sessions to Newspaper? Criminal Trial Reporting, the Nature of Crime, and the London Press, 1770-1800', *London Journal* 32 (2007), pp. 1-27.

seeming too incongruous.²⁷⁸ Yet the continued interest in Malcolm's aggressive defence, and its sustained reproduction in printed collections, often without any accompanying criticism, seems to imply that the London reading public was also open to this alternative narrative of events. As will be further explored in the next section, this probably reflects the fact that Malcolm's story of smuggling criminals into households, and men hiding under beds, was more compelling than the prosecution's unexplained alternative, but also implies that the murderess's active voice was not always seen as inherently untrustworthy or threatening.

This is strikingly demonstrated in the publication in July of 1733, three months after Malcolm's execution, of a pamphlet entitled *The Friendly Apparition*. This was published at the moment of the re-arrest of the Alexander brothers on suspicion of highway robbery, although it made no mention of either the Alexanders or Tracey, and it describes the appearance of Malcolm's ghost in a gin shop. Malcolm's ghost, it is declared, has returned for two principal reasons: firstly, to rail against those who burned her effigy during the Excise Bill riots, and secondly to warn the populace of the dangers of gin. As with many of the murders in this thesis, Malcolm's crime occurred at a moment of political crisis. Walpole's attempt to impose an Excise Bill to tax intoxicants made him hugely unpopular. Upon the repeal of this bill, rioters in Fleet Street burnt effigies of Walpole, Queen Caroline and Sarah Malcolm. In a beautiful piece of political satire, Malcolm's ghost is shown as outraged that she would be grouped alongside the villains of the Excise Bill: she may have been bad, but she wasn't that bad. This illustrates the eighteenth-century practice, further explored in Chapter Three, of appropriating cases of female murder to enact wider political critique. More intriguing, however, is that the vast majority of the pamphlet is given over to a long exhortation to the populace to give up gin-drinking. Given that the campaign against gin would not gain

²⁷⁸ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *Tales from the Hanging Court*, pp. 122-129; Masciola, "'I Can See By This Woman's Features...'", Chapter Two; Shoemaker, 'Print and the Female Voice', pp. 85-86.

real momentum for another three years, this implies that the author, who had some affiliation to Malcolm's confessor the Reverend Peddington (implied by the very favourable representation of Peddington in the pamphlet), was almost certainly exploiting interest in the Malcolm case to spread the less titillating and still unusual message of moderation. Yet what is crucial is that the author does so *through* Malcolm's voice, rather than trying to argue that Malcolm's crimes were somehow connected to gin (which would not have been hard given that Malcolm claimed she met Mary Tracey in an alehouse, and that gin was seen as a lower-class woman's drink). Malcolm in ghost form was shown as having the authority to lecture the London populace and so Malcolm was transformed from murderess to moral mouthpiece.²⁷⁹

Analysis of both Malcolm and the Marquise demonstrates that a simple binary of female passivity = good/female agency = bad did not fully permeate eighteenth-century criminal print culture in terms of high-profile murderous women. Emphasis on Brinvilliers' passivity did not prevent her vilification, while depictions of her agency were used to reinforce the power of the justice system. At the same time, Malcolm's powerful agency in court and print was not always seen as subversive or destructive, and was even appropriated for moral messages. This section has shown that depictions of Malcolm and the Marquise were more complex than stereotypes built around concern with women's sexuality and agency. Indeed, what analysis of print on Malcolm and the Marquise suggests is that there were no set pre-defined frameworks through which representations of female killers were constructed, giving commentators much greater freedom in terms of the ways in which the crimes of these women could be explored and understood.

²⁷⁹ *The Friendly Apparition: Being an Account of the Most Surprising Appearance of Sarah Malcom's Ghost, to a Great Assembly of her Acquaintance at a Noted Gin Shop* (July, 1733). Thanks to Honor Wilkinson of Harvard University for research assistance in finding and transcribing this text.

Figures of Urban Fear

Rather than expose the inherent murderous nature of womankind or serve as monstrous exceptions for prurient consumers, the cases of Malcolm and the Marquise were used by Londoners and Parisians to discuss concerns about the behaviour of particular kinds of women and social phenomena within the city environment. More than other cases analysed in this thesis, it is clear that both of these cases received the high levels of coverage that they did in large part due to the particularly violent nature of the murders themselves: mass murder was always big news.²⁸⁰ But in the reconstruction of these women's motivations and methods, wider fears and prejudices about their societal roles were revealed. Malcolm and the Marquise were very different kinds of women from opposite ends of the social spectrum. Both cases, however, provided an outlet for discussion of the impact of changes brought about through urbanisation and the diversification of the city space on the roles and lifestyles of certain groups of women, as well as the perceived intensification in the lawlessness of both capitals brought about by a perceived break-down in status divisions.

The Marquise de Brinvilliers, daughter of the *Lieutenant Civil* and married to a member of the Gobelin family, owner of the famous Gobelin tapestry factories, was an archetypal member of the *noblesse de robe*. Unlike the older *noblesse de l'épée* whose powers and privileges were based on ancient lineages, this set of aristocrats had bought their way into power in the sixteenth century through purchase of government offices. Both the Marquise's father and husband had recently purchased their titles. The *robe* was responsible for much of the administration of Paris, notably the Parisian *Parlement*. In the late seventeenth century, although debates continued to rage about how to define and prove noble heritage, *épée* and *robe* nobility had reached a form of hostile peace,

²⁸⁰ The only exception is the 1759 Parisian trial of Barbe Leleu for poisoning several members of her family which received very little print coverage. *Arrêt de la cour de Parlement qui condamne Barbe Leleu* (Paris, 1759).

intermarrying and forming alliances within the complex environment of the Versailles court. Alongside both nobilities was a rising group of wealthy and literate bourgeois Parisians who resented the power of the *robe* over Parisian institutions.²⁸¹ It is undeniable that coverage of the case of the Marquise, especially the precise lists of her family's wealth and titles which opened many of the publications and the emphasis that was placed on the fact that her father had purchased his title, along with her father-in-law, constituted a form of *schadenfreude* for both the *épée* nobility and middling-sort Parisians, the latter of whom increasingly formed the major readership of urban print.

The arrest of the Marquise proved an excellent opportunity to implicitly criticise the corruption of the *robe* judiciary. Almost immediately following Brinvilliers' arrest in Liège rumours spread that she would not get a fair trial because 'all of the *robe* is allied to that unfortunate crook'.²⁸² It was reported that an interrogator had been sent to meet the arrest party en route from Liège, so that the Marquise could be interrogated before she reached Paris and her powerful relatives, the implication being that the *robe* were incapable of properly interrogating one of their own.²⁸³ The acquittal of Pennautier was greeted with mutterings of corruption and bribery.²⁸⁴ These mutterings had a high impact; Louis XIV, aware of the discontent with the judicial system that the Marquise's arrest had stimulated, personally wrote to Colbert to urge him to ensure that she was given no lenient treatment.²⁸⁵ Colbert failed: the Marquise was given a lesser sentence in that her hand was not severed prior to her decapitation, the usual punishment for

²⁸¹ For the development of these groups see, for example : D. Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: the Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France* (New ment de Paris au XVIIIe siècle (Paris, 1986); G. K. Brunelle, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Mésaillance and Early Modern French Noblewomen', *French Historical Studies* 19.1 (Spring, 1995), pp. 75-103; J. Dewald, 'Deadly Parents: Family and Aristocratic Culture in Early Modern France', in B. Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (eds), *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800* (Michigan, 1993), pp. 223-237; D. Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie 1690-1830* (Harvard, 1996); I. Leferme- Falguières, *Les Courtisanes: une société de spectacle sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2007).

²⁸² 'Tout la robe est alliée à cette pauvre scélérate', Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 499 p. 271.

²⁸³ Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 499 p. 271.

²⁸⁴ Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 530 p. 350.

²⁸⁵ Louis XIV to Colbert, 1676, P. Grouvelle and P. de Grimoard (eds) *Œuvres de Louis XIV*, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1806), p. 524.

parricide. Louis' concern with eradicating aspersions of judicial corruption in the case was shown most powerfully in the fact that when crimes of this nature re-emerged in the *affaire des poisons* four years later he commissioned an entirely new court separate from the *Parlement* to hold the trials.

Yet, at the same time, the case also provided an opportunity to demonstrate that a new judicial order was emerging where privilege would no longer play a role. Particular attention was given to the Marquise's failed attempts to order, bribe or seduce the guards of the *cassette* into handing it over and her betrayal by a group of bandits who she had paid to rescue her from DesGrais' capture.²⁸⁶ It is notable that many commentators, even in the formal legal briefs, referred to her as 'Dame Brinvilliers', deliberately dropping her title. Nivelles' defence assertions that her 'education and rank are powerful signs of her innocence' appeared out-of-synch with all other publications, and were not embraced by any other author.²⁸⁷ This was a changing society in which aristocrats were held up to (and held each other up to) the same legal systems as the rest of the population. The case is therefore an early example of the rising criticism of the Versailles court and *galanterie*, emerging from a Parisian middling sort readership who increasingly defined themselves by their virtue and morals, and who saw characters such as the Marquise as indicative of a corrupt aristocracy who needed to be reformed. In this way, the Brinvilliers case formed part of the wider practice, identified by Sara Maza and Robert Darnton for the

²⁸⁶ Rosset, *Histoires tragiques*, p. 587; *Galérie de l'ancienne cour*, Vol. 2, p. 317; *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 98; Marquis de la Fare, *Mémoires et réflexions*, p. 209; Des Essarts, *Procès fameux*, Vol. 2, p. 144; *Factum du procez extraordinairement fait à La Chaussée*, p. 11; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire contre la Dame de Brinvilliers*, p. 34; *Encyclopédie méthodique*, p. 699; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire, d'entre Dame Marie Thérèse Mangot*, p. 3. It is only Aublet de Maubuy's *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 10 which blames La Chaussée rather than Brinvilliers for trying to steal evidence.

²⁸⁷ 'L'éducation & la qualité sont des présomptions puissantes pour l'innocence', Nivelles, *Factum pour Marie Magdeleine d'Aubray*, p. 62.

later eighteenth century, of the appropriation of private cases into a means of criticising the governing elite.²⁸⁸

Paris was seen by commentators to be a central facilitator behind the Marquise's crimes and debauched lifestyle. It was a space in which the *galant* culture of the Versailles court ran unchecked, corrupting, in particular, aristocratic women. The freedom and diversity of the Parisian streets were shown as facilitating the Marquise's crimes, in particular providing the means through which she could travel about the city unchallenged in her coach. The report that one could always 'tell when the Marquise was working on her poisons...because her coach could be seen in the Foire Saint Germain' was reproduced in several versions of the crime.²⁸⁹ The Marquise's coach, in which she and Sainte Croix flaunted their love affair, and in which the Marquise fled following Sainte Croix's death was made into a powerful symbol of the unchallenged mobility of noblewomen in the urban environment. Through travel in the coach, an ostentatious status symbol and central to women's networks of sociability, the Marquise brought the criminality of the hovels of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, where Sainte Croix had his laboratory, into the powerful house of d'Aubray.²⁹⁰ This was part of wider concerns resulting from the centralization of Paris so compellingly documented by David Garrioch: local boundaries were breaking down and networks were extending across the urban landscape. While this was crucial to the development of business and industry, it was also believed to have led to a blurring of communities and social groups on an unprecedented scale,

²⁸⁸ S. Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: the Causes Célèbres of Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (California, 1993); R. Darnton, *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York, 1996), Part Three; R. Darnton, 'The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France', *Past & Present* 51 (Mary, 1971), pp. 81-115.

²⁸⁹ 'C'étoit du poison qu'il venoient faire faire à Glazer: quand ils lassoient leur carrosse à la Foire Saint Germain', Rosset, *Histoires tragiques*, p. 595; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire contre la Dame de Brinvilliers*, p. 48.

²⁹⁰ For more on the social iconography of the carriage see S. E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England* (Oxford, 1999).

empowering, in particular, aristocratic women for whom the city was transformed into a playground of intrigue.²⁹¹

Beyond the streets of Paris, the second major facilitator of the Marquise's crimes was shown to be her husband, the Marquis de Brinvilliers. While he was never accused of having been involved in the murders by the judicial investigation, he was widely criticised by commentators for his debauched and feckless lifestyle, and for allowing his wife to descend into criminality. The Marquis was shown as the increasingly hated stereotype of a traditional Parisian aristocrat: 'totally corrupt but also corrupting',²⁹² spending his days frittering away his fortune at gaming tables and utterly emasculated by Louis' *galant* court culture. The poor state of his finances allowed the Marquise to secure a *séparation de biens* from him, further limiting his control over her. He was also criticised for his toleration of his wife's adultery, and was blamed for having introduced Sainte Croix into their household.²⁹³ Sainte Croix met the Marquis in the army, which, as also seen in brief allusions in the coverage of Mary Tracey in Malcolm's case, was believed to be a place of dangerous social mixing. The arrival of Sainte Croix into the Brinvilliers household was shown as an inevitable step towards their love affair, as Voltaire wrote: 'that which was bound to happen happened, they fell in love'.²⁹⁴ As is further explored in Chapter Four, the introduction of male acquaintances into urban marital homes was often seen to have devastating consequences for wifely fidelity. In the case of Brinvilliers this was compounded by the fact that the Marquise was a *femme galante* who lived a life of luxury and gambling, even playing cards as she awaited her

²⁹¹ D. Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (California, 2004), Chapter Ten.

²⁹² 'M de Brinvilliers étoit fort dissipé, & en même temps dissipateur', *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 91.

²⁹³ *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 91; Voltaire, *Siècle*, Vol. 2, p. 314; *Factum du procez extraordinairement fait à La Chaussée*, p. 10; Buisson, *Dictionnaire portatif*, p. 221; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 4.

²⁹⁴ 'Ce qui devait arriver arriva: ils s'aimèrent', Voltaire, *Siècle*, Vol. 2, p. 314.

execution.²⁹⁵ The disorderly implications of aristocratic *galanterie* were further shown in the figure of Sainte Croix, who was often described as the bastard son of a noble family. Bastard sons, the heroes of stories reproduced in the *Mercure Galant*, were here shown as able to infiltrate and destroy household order.²⁹⁶ The Marquise's story was held up as a counterbalance to the *galant* tales of the periodicals in which romantic intrigue with married women and dramatic love affairs were frivolous entertainments; real-life *galanterie* on the streets of Paris was much more dangerous. At a time when, as family historians have shown, nuclear family structures based around co-operative and supportive relations between husband and wife were becoming central to the lives of most middling sort readers, the dysfunction of the upper classes and their inability to sustain healthy marriages was yet another sign of their distance from the majority of the population.²⁹⁷

While the Marquis was shown as powerless to contain his wife due to the corruption of Louis' court culture, the Marquise's father, Antoine d'Aubray, was seen as unable to control his daughter due to the corruption of city institutions. A detail which was universally reproduced in publications was that Sainte Croix had first learned about the poisoning arts in the Bastille, where he was put into a cell with the famous Italian poisoner Exili. 'Exili' was itself a symbolic name for a man who represented the dangers of infiltration of Paris by migrants. His Italian nationality also recalled the popular stories of the fall of Rome being brought about by poisoners: as England saw France as a

²⁹⁵ Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 503 p. 278. *The Female Parricide* placed particular emphasis on Brinvilliers' card playing as it likened her to Mary Blandy who was also reported to have played cards while awaiting execution.

²⁹⁶ *Mercure Galant* (Paris, 1676).

²⁹⁷ J-L. Flandrin, *Familles: parenté, maison, sexualité dans l'ancienne société* (Paris, 1976); F-J. Ruggiu, *L'individu et la famille dans les sociétés urbaines anglaise et française (1720-1780)* (Paris, 2007); J. F. Traer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cornell, 1980); M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Gender, Commerce and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (California, 1996); Garrioch, *The Formation*; C. Jones, 'Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and Social Change', in C. Lucas (ed.) *Rewriting the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 71-100; S. Maza, 'Luxury, Morality and Social Change: Why there was no Middle-Class Consciousness in Pre-Revolutionary France', *Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997), pp. 199-229; S. Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: an Essay on the Social Imaginary 1750-1850* (Harvard, 2003); R. Rand (ed.), *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1997).

nation of poisoners, so France bestowed the same mantle on Italy.²⁹⁸ In bringing these two men together the Bastille was recast as a site of corruption and criminal proliferation rather than of judicial force. Many commentators drew particular attention to the irony of the fact that it was d'Aubray's 'severe and imprudent'²⁹⁹ attempt to clamp down on his daughter's behaviour using a much hated *lettre de cachet* which brought about his own murder.³⁰⁰ Despite the continuity of parallels between the father-daughter and king-citizen relationship in late seventeenth-century culture exposed by Sarah Hanley and André Burguière, commentators eschewed directly regicidal comparisons in discussing the Brinvilliers case.³⁰¹ Rather than cast Brinvilliers in the role of ungrateful rebellious subject, commentators depicted Brinvilliers' father as a bumbling governor whose clumsy management forced his subjects, or his children, into crime. Such anti-governance messages gained traction in the later decades of the eighteenth century when the case was made to symbolise the wider corruption of Louis XIV's reign by appearing alongside lists of his military defeats as a sign of his weakness.³⁰² In a city in which, due to the nature of absolutist regulation, the political was often voiced in the personal, the exceptional crimes of individuals could come to symbolise the corruption and weakness

²⁹⁸ Rosset, *Histoires tragiques*, p. 583; *Gazette d'Amsterdam* (6 May 1676); *Mercure Hollandois* ('Amsterdam', 1680); *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 92; Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 2, p. 139; Voltaire, *Siècle*, Vol. 2, pp.313-315; *Factum du procez extraordinairement fait à La Chaussée*, p. 2; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire contre la Dame de Brinvilliers*, p. 28; Buisson, *Dictionnaire portatif*, p. 217; DuCaste d'Auigny, *Les vies des hommes illustres*, p. 107; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 4; de la Croix, *Dictionnaire portative*, p. 151; *Encyclopédie méthodique*, p. 699; *Factum pour Dame Marie Vossier*, p. 6.

²⁹⁹ 'Le lieutenant civil, père de la marquise, fut assez sévère et assez imprudent pour solliciter une lettre de cachet', Voltaire, *Siècle*, Vol. 2, p. 314.

³⁰⁰ Rosset, *Histoires tragiques*, p. 583; *Mercure Hollandois* ('Amsterdam', 1676), p. 68; *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 92; Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 2, p. 139; *Factum du procez extraordinairement fait à La Chaussée*, p.4; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire*, p. 29; *Dictionnaire portatif*, p. 217; *Encyclopédie méthodique*, p. 699.

³⁰¹ A. Burguière, 'L'état monarchique et la famille (XVIe-XVIIIe Siècle)', *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 56 (2001), pp. 313-335; S. Hanley, 'Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France', *French Historical Studies* 16.1 (1989), pp. 4-27. The sometimes ambiguous political message of seventeenth-century parricide, not so prominent in the Marquise's case, has been demonstrated in: J. Doyon, 'Des secrets de famille aux archives de l'effraction', in A. Follan, B. Lemesle, M. Naissiet, E. Pierre and P. Quincy-Lefebvre (eds), *La violence et le judiciaire du Moyen Age à nos jours, discours, perceptions, pratiques* (Rennes, 2008), pp. 209-222.

³⁰² De Limiers, *Histoire du règne*, Vol. 4, p. 379; Voltaire, *Siècle*, Vol. 2, p. 314.

of the entire government. This would be used to even greater effect four years later in the *affaire des poisons*.

It was not merely the aristocratic classes who were shown to be corrupt within the Brinvilliers case, however. The trial also gave commentators opportunity to rail against that most unnerving of urban phenomena: the male domestic servant. The Marquise's accomplice La Chaussée was shown as a prime example of the dangers of employing male servants at a moment when concerns were being raised about the effects of the service industry on manhood, and the inherent ambition and violent nature of such men.³⁰³ La Chaussée was shown to be a typical lower-class man with ambitions above his station, persuaded into the plots of Sainte Croix and Brinvilliers by the promise of money. His ability to play the part of the devoted servant while quietly poisoning his masters was particularly emphasised with the oft-reported fact that Antoine D'Aubray Jr left La Chaussée 300 livres in his will.³⁰⁴ Another popular anecdote was that, during one poisoning attempt, the younger d'Aubray brother tasted vitriol in his drink, but that La Chaussée was easily able to explain it away as medicine.³⁰⁵ As would be much more dramatically exposed in the *affaire des poisons* four years later, the heavy reliance of aristocrats on their servants was believed to render them particularly vulnerable to servant crime: François de Rosset, for example, wrote of the case that it was 'all because of this irritating necessity of having valets [of whom] the most faithful in appearance is often the most feckless in practice'.³⁰⁶ Unlike the Malcolm case, as will be shown below, however, La Chaussée was not believed to be acting for himself but was instead a pawn

³⁰³ C. Fairchild, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and their Masters in Old Regime France* (London, 1984), pp. 15-16; T. Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender, 1600-1750* (Essex, 2000), p. 20-24.

³⁰⁴ Rosset, *Histoire Tragiques*, p. 587; *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 95; Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 2, p. 143; *Factum du Procez Extraordinairement Fait à La Chaussée*, p. 17.

³⁰⁵ *Factum du procez extraordinairement fait à La Chaussée*, p. 7; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire, d'entre Dame Marie Thérèse Mangot*, p. 5; Rosset, *Histoire tragiques*, p. 585; *Mémoire du procès extraordinaire fait contre la Dame de Brinvilliers*, p. 31; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 2, p. 7.

³⁰⁶ 'Ainsi dans cette fâcheuse nécessité d'avoir des Valets, le plus fidelle en apparence est quelquefois le plus traître en effet', Rosset, *Histoires tragiques*, p. 585.

in the wider machinations of other aristocrats through the close proximity of urban networks. Rather than the anonymous servant with no references who was so terrifying to London readers (as we shall see), the Brinvilliers case showed the threat posed by those recommended by one's closest friends and family (La Chaussée was recommended to the two d'Aubray brothers by the Marquise). It was the familiar, rather than the unknown, that was seen to be terrifying in the Brinvilliers case.

Alongside criticisms of the Marquise's luxurious and corrupt lifestyle came criticisms of her feigned virtue and public philanthropy. This was seen in reports that she killed hundreds of paupers at the *Hôpital Général* through poisons concealed in pastries as a means of experimenting with the dosage to be used upon her male relatives. This report did not emerge in print until the publication of *Causes Célèbres* in the 1730s, but Primi Visconti recorded rumours of it in his 1676 journal, so it would seem that such reports had been circulating at the time of the Marquise's execution.³⁰⁷ The story was used to problematize another source of power and influence for aristocratic women within the city: philanthropic work. This was an area in which upper-class women were becoming increasingly influential in both London and Paris and which was difficult, on the surface, to criticise. But in a city beset by tensions between Jansenist and Jesuit beliefs, visible and ceremonial acts of good works were looked down upon as being out of touch with the spiritual leanings of substantial sections of the populace. Such suspicions would come to the fore in discussions of Louis XIV's overtly pious soon-to-be civil-law wife, Madame de Maintenon.³⁰⁸ Even Voltaire, who thought that the *Hôpital Général* story was false, emphasised the Marquise's outward signs of devotion in the lead up to the murders in his memorable couplet 'In France, Brinvilliers constant still at prayers/

³⁰⁷ P. Visconti, *Mémoire sur la cour de Louis XIV 1673-1688*, ed. Jean- François Solnon (Paris, 1988), p. 155; the story properly came out in *Fait des Causes Célèbres*, p. 93.

³⁰⁸ There are many works on Madame de Maintenon but see, for example J-P. Desprat, *Madame de Maintenon ou le prix de la réputation* (Paris, 2015). Problematic depictions of Maintenon were, of course, extremely underground during Louis' reign but can be seen in, for example, *L'esprit familier de Trianon* (Paris, 1695) and H. De Limiers, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV*, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1712).

Poisons her fire, and to confess repairs'.³⁰⁹ The Marquise's reported use of religion and charity as a smoke-screen for mass murder was used to make overtly pious and philanthropic women appear as inherently suspicious. In this way the Marquise could be used to condemn *robe* women at both extremes: those who were charitable and god-fearing and those who were dissipated and extravagant. When it came to the case of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, then, *robe* women could not win.

On the other side of the channel, the case of Sarah Malcolm tapped into a very different group of fears, concerning the penetration of intimate household spaces by the casually-employed non-residential servant, the vulnerabilities of such households to burglary, particularly in isolated and temporary living environments, and the corruption and mobility of female migrants in London. Malcolm represented that most problematic category of servant: the casual laundress who had close access to the household but was not resident within it. She was also an Irish Catholic. She therefore brought together a series of groups that were already being identified by contemporaries as criminally inclined. Furthermore, the case, and Malcolm's defence, exposed the vulnerabilities and disorder of the residential space of the Temple. The Temple was home to lawyers of the nearby Inns of Court and was characterised by a high level of single (mostly male) residents and a fast turnover of occupants. Such spaces were unusual in 1730s London, but served as a troubling new form of isolated urban living. The case also opened up broader questions about the best way to secure household perimeters and the vulnerability of middling sort homes. Therefore it was not, as Amy Masciola has argued, that Malcolm represented all independent women, but a very specific kind of independent woman who was deemed as having a tendency towards, and opportunities

³⁰⁹ *Miscellaneous poems by Mr de Voltaire, Translated from the French by T Smollet, MDT Francklin MA and others*, Vol. 23 (London, 1770), p. 175; *Galérie de l'ancienne cour*, Vol. 2, p.314; Marquis de la Fare, *Mémoires et reflexions*, p. 209; *Encyclopédie méthodique*, p. 699; *Troisième lettre d'un particulier, à Monsieur Misson, l'honnête homme, contenant quelques obsevations & reflexions* (London, 1707), p. 8.

for, violent property crime in a particular form of residential space.³¹⁰ This was a crime in which the very worst and most extreme effects of city growth were brought together and the results, as the Malcolm murders compellingly demonstrated, were catastrophic.

The central focus of representations of the Malcolm murders was Sarah's occupation as laundress, a fact repeated in almost every single press article produced between her arrest and execution, and in all biographies of her. Laundresses were women employed on short-term and casual contracts who did not live within the household but instead came and went when necessary, entirely outside of their employers' authority. That the laundress was seen as a particularly problematic and threatening presence in the Temple was shown in the fact that, following the murders, it was quickly announced that 'a strict examination will soon be made into the Characters of the several laundresses who assist in the Temple'.³¹¹ Indeed, rather than female violence being perceived as a rare, almost impossible occurrence by eighteenth-century commentators, suspicion in print immediately fell onto the Temple laundresses, with early reports claiming that up to four laundresses had been arrested for the murder.³¹² This may not have been mere prejudice: laundering has been identified by Peter King as one of the most common occupations for female criminals.³¹³ Such casual labour attracted women who were particularly vulnerable and desperate to gain money, reflected in the fact that such women were usually older, and so unable to support themselves through prostitution or more formal domestic service. The spectre of the older laundress may be another reason why Malcolm was shown as more than her 22 years in her Hogarth portrait. The laundress, like the midwife explored in the next chapter, was often found on the streets at odd hours of the day, working through the night to clean clothes to be ready for the morning. The night-

³¹⁰ Masciola, "I Can See by this Woman's Features...", Chapter Two.

³¹¹ *London Evening Post* (10-13 Feb 1733); *Daily Post* (12 Feb 1733); *Country Journal* (17 Feb 1733); *Universal Spectator* (17 Feb 1733).

³¹² *Daily Courant* (6 Feb 1733).

³¹³ P. King, 'Female offenders, work and life-cycle change in late-eighteenth-century London', *Continuity and Change*, 11.1 (1996), p. 74.

time city, infinitely harder to control than the day-time city, was a space in which the laundress moved with ease and acceptance, as shown in Sarah's easy movements during both the night of the murder and the following night of her arrest, in particular (paradoxically) adopting watch houses as places of protection.³¹⁴ As Cissie Fairchilds and Carolyn Steedman, among others, have shown, this kind of casual, mobile, night-time work was the dominant form of domestic service being undertaken by women in urban environments.³¹⁵ This is reflected in the emergence of a great number of works voicing fears against the evolution of this kind of uncontrollable and spatially emancipating female work.³¹⁶ Malcolm therefore provided an extreme example of a much more widespread concern.

Fears about the work of the laundress were compounded by the familiar trope of the thieving and plotting servant in a city where wealth was increasingly visible and, it was believed, a likely temptation for ambitious young migrants. Concerns about the possibilities for servant theft ran deep in eighteenth-century London, reflected most powerfully in the passing in 1713 of a statute making 'theft from a dwelling house' into a capital offence.³¹⁷ Bridget Hill's study of the diaries and personal correspondence of London women shows that many mistresses were continually troubled by the possibility that their servants were stealing from them³¹⁸ and domestic manuals and commentaries

³¹⁴ *OBP*, February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305).

³¹⁵ Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*; C. Steedman, 'Service and Servitude in the World of Labor, Servants in England 1750-1820', in C. Jones and D. Wahrman (eds), *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France 1750-1820* (California, 2002), pp. 124-136.

³¹⁶ Defoe, *Everybody's Business; A Present for Servants* (London, 1768); T. Broughton, *Serious Advice and Warning to Servants* (London, 1764); E. Haywood, *A Present for a Servant-Maid* (Dublin, 1743); J. Townley, *High Life below Stairs; a Farce* (London, 1775); J. Swift, *Directions to Servants in General* (London, 1745).

³¹⁷ On tensions in servant relations see P. Humfrey 'Female Servants and Women's Criminality in Early Eighteenth-Century London,' in G. T. Smith, A. N. May and S. Devereaux (eds), *Criminal Justice in the Old World and the New: Essays in Honour of J. M. Beattie* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 58-85; J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1956); B. Hill, *Servants, English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1996); D. A. Kent 'Ubiquitous but Invisible: Female Domestic Servants in Mid-Eighteenth Century London, *History Workshop* 28 (Autumn 1989), pp. 111-12.

³¹⁸ Hill, *Servants*, pp. 93-114.

on servants specifically and repeatedly warned against servant theft.³¹⁹ The criminality of servants was believed to be encouraged by employers passing their old clothes onto their servants, giving them a taste for luxury, and by servants' own inflated sense of self-worth created by labour shortages and high demand. Just eight years before the Malcolm case Defoe had complained of the high number of servant girls appearing in the Old Bailey on theft charges which, he claimed 'can be only attributed to their devilish pride; for their whole inquiry nowadays is, how little they shall do, how much they shall have'.³²⁰ Moreover, seven years previously the dangerous capacities of servant girls to bring disorder to middling-sort households had already been opened up by the case of Catherine Hayes, explored in Chapter Four. That such tropes were critical to perceptions of the Malcolm case is shown in the fact that, throughout the century, commentators displayed very little interest in exploring Malcolm's motives for the murder: the fact that she was a lower class servant was seen as motivation enough.

Malcolm's non-residential laundress status rendered her a liminal figure, at once able to move easily within the households of the Temple and yet, as reported in the Ordinary's *Account*, also in the alehouses and alleyways of the East End.³²¹ Biographies of Malcolm, often inspired by the Ordinary's *Account*, centred on her background, in particular her move into casual employment from full-time service following her father's departure from London.³²² Born in Durham to an Irish family, then moving onto Ireland before finally ending up in London, Malcolm was shown as a capable and reliable servant as well as a devoted daughter right up until the death of her mother and the return of her

³¹⁹ For example: R. Lucas, *The Duty of Servants* (London, 1710); Defoe, *Everybody's Business...*; A. Barker, *The Complete Serving Maid* (London, 1770); H. Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (London, 1750).

³²⁰ Defoe, *Everybody's Business*, p. 1.

³²¹ *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305).

³²² *OBP* February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 251, 254; *The London Magazine* (March, 1733), pp. 139-157.; *St James Evening Post* (6 Feb 1733); *Daily Journal* (24 Feb 1733); *OBP, Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305).

father to Ireland.³²³ Left to her own shifts, she fell into charring in the Temple, after having worked at an alehouse where she cultivated the majority of her criminal associations. Malcolm's non-linear career path (from middle class household, to alehouse, to the Temple) mirrored that of many young women in the metropolis who, as traced by Peter Earle, moved between a variety of different environments in pursuit of employment, and so were open to all the corrupting possibilities that such paths opened up.³²⁴ The ad hoc and varied nature of female employment, especially of women suddenly devoid of support networks and the guidance of a father, was shown as driving Malcolm into her path of crime after a virtuous life and excellent work history. Just like Moll Flanders, eponymous protagonist of Defoe's novel published ten years earlier, Malcolm was shown by the Ordinary to have disdained the confinement of a regular service job, and so making her both more prone to, and in a better position to undertake, the committing of criminal acts.³²⁵ Concern about the vulnerability of young migrant girls in the capital towards criminal corruption had been powerfully evoked in Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* just a year before.³²⁶ In this way Malcolm represented the perceived dual sides of migration: those young women who arrived in London with a support network and prospered, and those who arrived without a support network and failed who were increasingly seen as central contributors to perceived rising crime rates.

The Ordinary's *Account* also raised the possibility that Malcolm was involved in several other crimes, though these allegations were rarely repeated in later publications. As well as having stolen Keroll's waistcoats and put them into pawn, Malcolm was reported to have been involved a plot to blackmail her master with a story of adultery and poison,

³²³ *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 251.

³²⁴ P. Earle, 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review* 42 (1989), pp. 328–47. See also, Humfrey, 'Female Servants and Women's Criminality', pp. 58-85.

³²⁵ D. Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (London, 1722); J. Rietz, 'Criminal Mis-representation: 'Moll Flanders' and Female Criminal Biography', *Studies in the Novel* 23.2 (Summer, 1991), pp. 183-195.

³²⁶ W. Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress* (London, 1732). Now on display at the Tate Britain.

demonstrating the power that servant maids were believed to have to ruin the reputation of the men that they worked for (though given the relative unpopularity of this story, it is unlikely that this was a very widespread concern).³²⁷ That these criminal allegations were not reproduced more widely is probably due to a lack of evidence, but may also reflect a broader desire to show Malcolm as a victim of the corruption of the London environment, rather than a born criminal.

While details of Malcolm's alleged criminal past were rarely reproduced beyond the *Account*, the Ordinary's emphasis on Malcolm's Irish Catholic heritage continued to re-emerge in some later publications. Malcolm's Catholicism was particularly emphasised in the Hogarth painting in which she is shown sitting in front of a rosary. Biographies of Malcolm from 1742 also included the reproduction of a letter supposedly written to Malcolm in prison from a Catholic 'sister in God' which depicted the Catholic community as proud of Malcolm's crime and scornful of Protestant systems of justice.³²⁸ Such representations drew from a wider reservoir of anti-Catholic feeling evident in London throughout the 1730s and 40s. Yet this was not a continuous thread throughout depictions of her. Masciola has shown that Malcolm's rosary was drawn out of later engravings of the Hogarth painting.³²⁹ In the same way, although Malcolm was often referred to as the 'Irish laundress', commentators rarely drew from the widespread hostility against Irish workers in discussing the case. While some Irish and lower-class defendants were recorded in the *Proceedings* with their accents comically reconstructed, or through orthographical error, Malcolm's voice was recorded without gimmick in the *Proceedings*, her own paper, and in a series of papers she was supposed to have written

³²⁷ *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305).

³²⁸ *Select Trials*, Vol. 2 (1742), p. 40; *The Bloody Register*, Vol. 3, p. 88; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2, p. 374; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 2, p. 128.

³²⁹ Masciola, "I Can See by This Woman's Features..." p. 127.

from prison.³³⁰ No publication made clear inferences about the criminality of either Catholics or the Irish from her crimes. In all representations, then, Malcolm was first and foremost a laundress, which was portrayed as the central factor behind both her motivation for the crime, and how she was able to commit it.

The criminal opportunities opened up by Malcolm's occupation were shown to be exacerbated by the vulnerability of the Duncombe household and the dislocation of the Temple community. Initial reports of the crime were closely focused on the spatial sequence of the murders. While some papers depicted each woman as having been murdered separately in their beds, most created a much more frightening narrative of each woman in turn attempting to fight off the intruders. Particular emphasis was given to the fact that Lydia Duncombe was found 'across the bed with a Gown on', implying that she had awoken and dressed at the sound of the break-in and then waited helplessly to be murdered.³³¹ This was paired with graphic detail of the throat slitting of the younger maid, who lay 'weltering in her own blood', and the older maid who, for unclear reasons, was stabbed in the neck with a nail.³³² The frightening nature of such violence was reinforced through a focus upon the ages of the victims. Accounts often reported the younger maid to be younger than she was, while the ages of Duncombe and the older maid were drastically exaggerated.³³³ This had the dual effect of making the household appear at once more extraordinary and more vulnerable. The implication was that these were the very worst kinds of deaths; that these women died in extreme fear and violence and were powerless to prevent it.

³³⁰ See for example the 1725 testimony of James Fitzgerald, *OBP*, April 1725, trial of Susan Grimes (t17250407-66).

³³¹ *St James' Evening Post* (3-6 Feb 1733); *London Evening Post* (6 Feb 1733).

³³² *St James' Evening Post* (3-6 Feb 1733); *Daily Courant* (5 Feb 1733) reports that all three were laundresses and all three had their throats cut; *London Evening Post* (6 Feb 1733); *Grub St Journal* (8 Feb 1733).

³³³ *London Evening Post* (6 Feb 1733); *Daily Journal* (6 Feb 1733); *Grub St Journal* (8 Feb 1733); *The Weekly Miscellany* (6 Feb 1733) has her age at 98 when it was closer to 60.

Such vulnerability was paired in representations of the Duncombe household with a focus on its isolated nature within the unusual Temple community: mostly made up of single men living alone and with a high turnover of inhabitants. That an elderly woman and her maids were living in such a residence without the support of family or neighbours indicated, as would be more dramatically highlighted in the Brownrigg case discussed in Chapter Five, a failure in community systems of care. Particular and repeated emphasis was given in press coverage to the fact that Duncombe lived up ‘four pairs of stairs next to the Inner Temple Library’.³³⁴ This was an isolated space that was difficult to access, and yet which Malcolm had been able to break into it with ease, perhaps with the assistance of a group of criminals that she had smuggled in unchallenged. That the Temple was an environment in which people feared their neighbours was shown in the Temple committee’s announcement after the murder that ‘Enquiry will also be made into the characters of divers people inhabiting the garrets in the several staircases, it being suspected that People of bad repute live therein’.³³⁵ It was seen as plausible that neighbours could have been themselves responsible for the murders, demonstrated by an initial acceptance of Malcolm’s allegations that the murder was committed by a ‘Gentleman who had Chambers under her (who) has been absent two or three Days’.³³⁶ The crucial role perceived to have been played by the Temple environment in facilitating the murders is most powerfully reflected in the fact that the authorities chose to have Malcolm executed at the Temple’s entry gate rather than in Tyburn, and so to send a powerful message to other inhabitants of the community. Such forms of residence were still unusual in a city where community networks still ran deep, but were clearly identified as spaces of instability and threat.

³³⁴ *OBP*, February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *Heaven’s Vengeance*, p. 235; *St James’ Evening Post* (3-6 Feb 1733); *London Evening Post* (6 Feb 1733); *Daily Journal* (6 Feb 1733); *Grub Street Journal* (8 Feb 1733); *Weekly Miscellany* (10 Feb 1733).

³³⁵ *London Evening Post* (10-13 Feb 1733); *Daily Post* (12 Feb 1733); *Country Journal* (17 Feb 1733); *Universal Spectator* (17 Feb 1733).

³³⁶ *OBP* February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *The Malefactor’s Register*, Vol. 2, p. 252.

Alongside specific concerns about the Temple environment, the case also suggested wider concerns about the security of locking systems and the vulnerability of urban households more generally to break-ins. The Malcolm murders were particularly unnerving because the three victims were found behind a door that appeared to have been locked from the inside. Such circumstances hinted at an extra frisson of mystery and the supernatural. Malcolm claimed she had achieved this feat by tying a piece of thread to the door's bolt which she used to pull the bolt across from the outside. Print discussion also sought to identify other weak points that could have been exploited to facilitate the break in: from climbing down the chimney to smashing the windows.³³⁷ We see here the London press spatially assessing the vulnerabilities of the Duncombe residence, and so providing readers with suggestions of ways to control their own household perimeters. This may also help to explain the appeal of Malcolm's own testimony. Unlike the prosecution's version of events, in which Sarah is depicted as bursting into the household in an unexplained fashion and mysteriously evaporating through a locked door, Sarah's defence provided a clear explanation that gave readers clear ways to protect their own households from such crimes: replacing spring bolts and checking under beds for intruders.

But it was not merely the Temple and its imperfect locking systems that were seen to be spatial facilitators of the crime: as with Brinvilliers, the judicial space itself was seen as infected by criminality. Like the Bastille, Newgate prison was shown in coverage of the Malcolm case to be an environment in which criminal connections could flourish. This reflected wider fears about the infiltration of prisons by criminal networks as demonstrated by the proliferation of publications claiming the existence of secret gangs of thieves and smugglers that operated across the Newgate boundary during this

³³⁷ This latter suggestion seems unlikely given that the windows were four floors up. *OBP* February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *London Evening Post* (6 Feb 1733); *Grub St Journal* (8 Feb 1733).

period.³³⁸ Malcolm was depicted as easily finding contacts within Newgate who would not only find people to swear false witness for her, but, in some reports, who would also assassinate Mr Keroll.³³⁹ Yet, more so than the Marquise, these alliances were exposed only to revel in their failure: Malcolm handed over money to these men but no witnesses were forthcoming and Mr Kerroll went unassassinated. Malcolm's case exposed the ways in which Newgate was encouraging criminal alliances, but also added the comfort that such alliances were instable and bound for failure.

The crimes of Malcolm and the Marquise, exceptionally violent and shocking as they were, were appropriated by commentators to explore and denounce specific concerns in London and Parisian societies. In Paris they met a demand for critiques of the domination of Parisian government by the *robe* nobility and for attacks on the aristocratic culture of *galanterie*. In London they responded to concerns surrounding an increasingly anonymous and casual market for domestic service and the vulnerabilities of all female households, especially in the disjointed community of the Temple. In part, such discussions were, as Masciola has argued, an attack on the opportunities for independent

³³⁸ The supposed hidden criminal networks of London, both in and out of Newgate were reported in, for example: *A New Dictionary of the Canting Crew* (London, 1699); *The Scoundrel's Dictionary* (London, 1754); H. Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (London, 1750); *The Life, Voyages and Adventures of Bampfylde-Moore Carew... to which is Added a Dictionary of the Cant Language* (London, 1785). The case of Jonathan Wild, supposed thief taker but actual criminal overlord had added particular fuel to these rumours: *The History of the Lives and Actions of Jonathan Wild, Thief Taker, Joseph Blake, Alias Blue-Skin, Footpad, and John Sheppard, Housebreaker* (London, 1725); *The Life of Jonathan Wild, Thief-Taker General* (London, 1725); *The Life and Glorious Actions of the Magnanimous Jonathan Wild* (London, 1725); H. Fielding, *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* (London, 1743); *Memoirs of the Life and Times of the Famous Jonathan Wild* (London, 1726). These beliefs are analysed in: J. L. McMullan, *The Canting Crew, London's Criminal Underworld* (London, 1984); D. J. Cox, *A Certain Share of Low Cunning: a History of the Bow Street Runners* (London, 2012); L. Faller, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987).

³³⁹ *OBP*, February 1733, trial of Sarah Malcolm (t17330221-52); *OBP, Ordinary's Account*, 5th March 1733 (OA17330305); *A True Copy of the Paper*, p. 10; *The Bee* (March, 1733), pp. 190-214; Johnson, *A General History of the Lives and Adventures*, p. 483; *Select Trials*, Vol. 2 (London, 1742), p. 38; *A Full and Particular Account of the Life and Notorious Transactions of Roger Johnson* (London, 1740), p. 26; Defoe, *A History of the Lives and Actions of the Most Remarkable Pirates, Highwaymen, Murderers, Street Robbers*, Vol. 2 (Birmingham, 1742), p. 355; *A Select and Impartial Account of the Lives, Behaviour and Dying Words of the Most Remarkable Convicts*, Vol. 2 (London, 1760) p. 156; *The Bloody Register*, Vol. 3, p. 88; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2, p. 369; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 2, p. 126; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 258; Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth*, p. 150; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 2, p. 147; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March, 1733), pp. 97-137; *The London Magazine* (March, 1733), pp. 139-157.

living that the city opened up to women.³⁴⁰ But the story is more complex. It was not simply that both Malcolm and the Marquise led lives unchecked by men, it was that this independence took place within specific social roles and particular environments perceived to be facilitating and encouraging crime and wider disorder which lay at the core of their representations in print.

Conclusion

This initial analysis of print on the murderess in her most extreme form has demonstrated that perceptions of female murderous agency in the eighteenth century were determined by more than gendered stereotypes. Print publications on Malcolm and the Marquise were explorations of specific kinds of women who were causing unease within each city and certain aspects of the city environment that were seen as particularly empowering and corrupting to such women. Over the century their cases were appropriated to add gravitas to a wide number of campaigns, and commentators felt free to alter details of the original crimes to better fit such debates. Far from being exceptional, these two figures became familiar tropes within a wide range of eighteenth-century print.

The cases of Malcolm and the Marquise reveal the overriding role played by social and cultural context in determining perceptions of even the most extreme forms of female violence. The Marquise de Brinvilliers was seen to represent the dangers of *galant* culture within the urban setting, where aristocratic women could traverse the city and mix with all levels of society in pursuit of their romantic intrigues. In this way, the case illustrated the increasingly visible disconnect between Parisian and Versailles culture. When the *galanterie* of the French court combined with the socially promiscuous environment of Paris, her case demonstrated, the result was mass homicide. The crimes of Sarah Malcolm exposed the vulnerability of London middle-class households to the

³⁴⁰ Masciola, “I Can See by This Woman’s Features...”, Chapter Two.

perceived criminality of lower-class migrant women through casual labour structures. In a city where it was becoming increasingly hard to verify the reputation of one's servants, Sarah Malcolm appeared as an extreme example of a much wider threat. This threat became particularly acute, it was shown, in the dislocated environment of the Temple. The differences between these two sets of concerns principally reflect the actual social status of these two extremely violent women who, more so than any of the other women studied in this thesis, earned notoriety primarily for the exceptional nature of their murderous acts. But such divisions also tied into the wider differences in Parisian and London coverage of high-profile murderesses hinted at in Chapter One. In a space where overt political criticism was difficult, Parisians saw cases female murder as indicative of the insufficiencies of the ruling authorities, while London print, dominated by middle-class concerns with local social conditions and security, focused on the effects of urbanisation on immediate lived experiences.

Chapter Three: Poisoneresses and Petty Tyrants: Narratives of Female Expertise and Governance in 1680s London and Paris

The connection seen in print discussion of the figures of Sarah Malcolm and the Marquise de Brinvilliers between the lifestyles and behaviour of certain kinds of city women and wider forms of political and social instability in the urban environment can be further traced within the two late seventeenth-century high-profile cases of Mary Aubry in London and the *affaire des poisons* in Paris. While the cases of Malcolm and the Marquise allowed for criticisms of the service industry and the *noblesse de robe* in London and Paris respectively, the cases of Mary Aubry and the *affaire des poisons* were both used to explore the problematic figure of the urban midwife, and to expose the powerful networks that such practitioners were believed to be able to forge in the metropolis. Moreover, these two cases are also the only examples of high-profile female-perpetrated murders which took place within the same decade in both London and Paris during the period under study. Comparison of these two cases therefore allows for close analysis of perceptions of the murderess during a specific moment in time, and a crucial decade in the history of both cities. 1680s Paris saw the development and installation of Louis XIV's personal reign and his aristocratic court at Versailles and Trianon which marked the beginning of a separation between monarchy and capital that would last over a century. Over the channel, 1680s London was swept up in a decade of political unrest that culminated with the Glorious Revolution of 1688. London became the battlefield in a war of changing conceptions of government; a battle fought in large part with the printing press and the pamphlet. As this chapter will show, the changes occurring within these cities had wide-ranging influences on depictions of female killers and, more so than in any of the other crimes explored in this thesis, these two cases became a means of voicing political dissent and critique from a safe distance, alongside more familiar criticisms of spaces of female power within urbanised and feminised environments.

Centring on spheres of female expertise, these cases reveal how city living was perceived to create opportunities for women to produce burgeoning businesses based on their knowledge of the female body, bringing independence to practitioners and creating economic and social sources of power separate from men, and how such practices were increasingly problematized with the rise of male midwife. In this way, attacks on female medical practitioners and attempts to either eradicate or colonise such practices by male organisations became conflated with political unrest.

The *affaire de poisons* centred on the discovery of a series of plots and poisoning networks within Paris in the late 1670s: plots to dispatch husbands and lovers made by aristocratic women in collaboration with the city's midwives, fortune-tellers, sorceresses and peddlers of poisons, known by the umbrella term of *dévineresses*. The most scandalous of all was the (much hushed-up) discovery of a possible plot by Louis XIV's mistress Athénaïs de Montespan to poison the king himself. While the crimes of those arrested in the *affaire* were numerous (abortions, enchantments, black masses), it was the possible poisonings that stimulated the most interest. Attention quickly focused on the figure of Catherine Montvoisin or 'La Voisin', the supposed ringleader of the group, who delivered children, told fortunes, and sold a variety of potions and poisons from a small house on the outskirts of Paris. Among her many crimes La Voisin was reported to have murdered her own husband, burned over two thousand unwanted children, and performed many sacrilegious and debauched ceremonies at the request of her aristocratic clients. Little is known about her own life, with the exception of one unreliable nineteenth-century biography,³⁴¹ but it is likely that she was in her forties at the time of the *affaire* and was a reasonably well-known figure on the Parisian streets: a 1677 play by Thomas Corneille, for example, makes a joke about her.³⁴² During her year-long interrogation by the Parisian authorities, La Voisin and her colleagues claimed connections to many of the

³⁴¹ The only existing biography, of very dubious academic merit, is N. Blanpain, *La Voisin* (Paris, 1885).

³⁴² T. Corneille, *L'Inconnu* (Paris, 1677), Act 2 Scene 3.

most powerful aristocrats in the land. Faced with the prospect of months of torture followed by a long and painful death involving branding, dismemberment and finally burning, she and her fellow prisoners were undoubtedly not the first to have attempted to put off their executions this way. But then the unthinkable happened: some of the aristocratic women accused fled, and the Maréchal de Luxembourg, decorated war hero and Montmorency heir, voluntarily entered the Bastille to be put on trial. With the shocking revelations of the 1676 conviction of the Marquise de Brinvilliers still ringing in the ears of the Parisian people, it suddenly appeared that a vast web of poison, sorcery and deception had been uncovered. After months of investigation, La Voisin was eventually executed in February of 1680. The exact crime of which she had been convicted was never announced.³⁴³

Bringing together the richest and most powerful women (and one man) in the land with the most base and debauched of female peddlers, the *affaire* continued to grip both upper- and lower-class Parisians throughout the early 1680s as hundreds were put on trial. Investigations took place in the specially created tribunal known as the *Chambre Ardente* under total secrecy. As interrogations began to edge towards uncovering the possible involvement of Athénaïs de Montespan, Louis closed the *Chambre*, but reopened it again months later with strict controls on what questions could be asked in interrogations. The *Chambre* finally closed in 1682, with Louis passing an edict making fortune-telling or ‘false sorcery’ illegal, and instituting rigorous controls on the sale and use of poisons. Those prisoners whose testimony was deemed too dangerous to be revealed even within the highly secure environment of the *Chambre Ardente* were left to

³⁴³ In the Archives de la Préfecture de Police La Voisin is recorded as having been convicted of ‘empoisonnements, d’avortements, de seductions, d’impiétés, et profanations’, APP : AA-4 vols 304-5.

see out their days in solitary confinement in fortresses along the French border, with the last prisoner dying as late as 1720.³⁴⁴

This was absolutist justice at its most extreme, yet it is possible to take the top-secret nature of the *affaire*'s proceedings too seriously. Too much historical focus on the possible involvement of the Marquise de Montespan and the, admittedly scintillating, manuscript notes of the *Chambre* officials have given the *affaire des poisons* a reputation for secrecy that it does not deserve. Historical study has too often veered into scandalous biography, continuing a tradition from the nineteenth century which saw the *affaire* as a unique and hidden part of late seventeenth-century society, rather than a political, social and cultural event with wide ramifications.³⁴⁵ For, despite the investigation being carried out in secret, and all the principal documents being personally burned by Louis XIV, there remains an extremely rich range of judicial sources documenting the *affaire*.³⁴⁶ Moreover, far from being hidden from view, the events of the *Chambre Ardente* were reported on a regular basis in both official and unofficial press publications, as well as featuring in correspondence written for circulation and eventually print. In fact, the press

³⁴⁴ See L. Wood Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France* (Pennsylvania, 2007), pp. 51-52; G. Gazier, 'Les prisonniers d'état sous Louis XIV, l'épilogue du drame des poisons', *Mémoires de la Société d'Emulation du Doubs* 4 (1924), pp. 30-47; J-M. Fontenay, 'L'affaire des poisons: les douze prisonnières de Belle-Ile', *Bulletin mensuel de la Société Polymathique du Morbihan* 126 (1994), pp. 115-129.

³⁴⁵ The seminal work is J-C. Petitfils, *L'affaire des poisons: crimes et sorcellerie au temps du Roi-Soleil* (Paris, 2010). Historiography on the *affaire* is extremely varied in quality and depth, key publications include: C. Bertin, *Les assassins célèbres*, Vol. 3 (Paris, 1966); N. Blanpain, *La Voisin* (Paris, 1885); G. Chautant, *Croyances et conduites magiques dans la France du XVIIe siècle d'après l'affaire des poisons* (Paris, 1997); M. Decker, *Madame de Montespan* (Paris, 2000); P. Émard and S. Fournier, *Les années criminelles de Madame Montespan* (Paris, 1938); F. Funck-Bretano, *La drame des poisons* (Paris, 1920); T. Iung, *La vérité sur le masque de fer* (Paris, 1873); A. Lebigre, *L'affaire des poisons* (Paris, 1989); J. Lemoine, *Madame de Montespan et la légende des poisons* (Paris, 1908); G. Mongredin, *Madame de Montespan et l'affaire des poisons* (Paris, 1953); M. Montigaud, *Racine et la Voisin* (Paris, 1878); L. Nass, *Les empoisonnements sous Louis XIV* (Paris, 1898); C. Olivier and J. Solé, 'Affaire des poisons et mentalité magique', *Revue Marseille*, 3.95 (1973) pp. 167-171; A. Praviel, *Madame de Montespan, empoisonneuse* (Paris, 1934); C. Quétel, *Une ombre sur le Roi-Soleil, l'affaire des poisons* (Paris, 2007); A. Somerset, *The Affaire of the Poisons, Murder, Infanticide and Satanism at the Court of Louis XIV* (London, 2003); Wood Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations*. See also the 1955 film *L'affaire des poisons* by Henri Decoin.

³⁴⁶ These are primarily: BnF Arsenal: Archives de la Bastille, Mss. 10338 -10359 (published in F. Ravaisson Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille*, vols 4-7 (Paris, 1866)). BnF: Ms Fr. 1192, 6944, 7608, 7610, 7630, 21591; Ms Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises 5247-5249; Collection Clairambault 983-986; Collection Baluze 212-213; Collection Joly de Fleury 2498-2501, 2505, 2531; Mélanges Colbert 302. AN: C 207-208, Papiers du Rosoy; E 1948 f 35, X2A 1033. APP: AA 4-6.

were inundated with stories to cover, with one newspaper in 1682 complaining that they were still having to report on investigations.³⁴⁷ While public coverage of the *affaire* was not always accurate, and certainly not exhaustive, perceptions of the *affaire* in press and popular publications tell their own story.³⁴⁸ It is a story focused upon the power of women such as La Voisin, purveyors of female-specific knowledge, peddlers of beauty remedies and occasional midwives, within the spatial environment of the city, and the judicial environment of the Châtelet. Representations of the *affaire* demonstrated the opportunities for the exploitation of gullible and vulnerable aristocrats by lower-class women believed to be opening up by city living and the decadent lifestyles of Louis' court. Moreover, in discussing the *affaire*, commentators found a space in which they could cast doubt on the king himself. The lives and crimes of Parisian women were therefore perceived to be not merely socially but also politically subversive.

Mary Aubry, a French midwife, was burned to death in Leicester Fields, London on the 2nd March 1688.³⁴⁹ On the 27th January of the same year, her husband Denis had returned home from a night of drinking at five o'clock in the morning and subjected Mary to a heavy beating, before committing a brutal sodomitical rape upon her. This had been the tipping point in a four year marriage of seemingly endless abuse and extortion, and so, after he had fallen asleep, Mary strangled him with his garter. After days of deliberation, Mary eventually decided to dispose of the body by dismembering it and scattering the pieces in a series of public privies across the city, possibly with the assistance of her son

³⁴⁷ *Nouvelles Extraordinaires* (26 Feb 1682).

³⁴⁸ The central contemporary press publications drawn upon in this chapter will be: *Mercure Hollandois* ('Amsterdam', 1680-2); *Gazette* (1680-1682); *Gazette d'Amsterdam* (1676-1682); *Nouvelles Extraordinaires* (1676-1682); *Mercure Galant* (1678-1682). Aristocratic correspondence and memoirs on the *affaire*: P. Visconti, *Mémoire sur la cour de Louis XIV 1673-1688*, ed. Jean-François Solnon (Paris, 1988); A. Petit Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes de deux dames de condition*, Vol. 1 (Cologne, 1713); Marquis de la Fare, *Mémoires et Réflexions sur les Principaux Evénemens du Règne de Louis XIV* (Rotterdam, 1716); R. Rabutin, *Correspondance de Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy*, ed. Ludovic Lalanne, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1858); Marquis de Feuquières, *Lettres inédites du Marquis de Feuquières*, ed. Étienne Gallois, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1846); Duc de Saint Simon, *Mémoires du Duc de Saint Simon*, ed. A. Boisisle, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1879); Madame de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, ed. R. Duchêne (Paris, 1974).

³⁴⁹ Otherwise Aubrey, Hobry, Desermeau or Des Ormeaux. It seems that no one at the time picked up on the similarities between Mary's name and that of Marie d'Aubray, Marquise de Brinvilliers.

or other friends or relatives. Members of a close-knit French community, Denis' absence was quickly spotted, and, with the discovery of the body parts, Mary was arrested and immediately confessed in full. Her decision to plead guilty made her trial swift, and denied the court the chance to investigate the possibility of her having had accomplices. Mary, who spoke no English, spent her final days quietly and full of sorrow.

London purveyors of print were quick to leap upon the case. The violence aside, it was a surprising case to have received the level of print attention that it did, unprecedented for a seventeenth-century London murderess, in that it centred on a woman who was in many ways an outsider in London communities and a crime which, while particularly violent, was by no means exceptionally unusual. In a year such as 1688, it might be expected that Londoners would have loftier things on their mind. However, this was not the case. Roger L'Estrange, the prosecutor, felt that the lack of a trial due to Mary's confession had denied the public a chance to learn about the case and so published the witness statements in full, with his own comment on the likelihood of Mary having had accomplices. L'Estrange, the famous 'bloodhound of the press'³⁵⁰ censor under Charles II, was a Tory Anglican MP but by 1688 was increasingly struggling with James' tolerance of Catholicism, struggles which, as will be shown below, may have marked his reading of the case. His pamphlet *A Hellish Murder* was distributed the day after Mary's trial and appears to have had quite a high circulation, featuring in a significant list of library catalogues into the eighteenth century.³⁵¹ Mary's crime was reported in a series of other pamphlets, ballads and press articles, at least two woodcuts were made, and the

³⁵⁰ A. Dunan-Page and B. Lynch (eds), *Roger L'Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture* (Hampshire, 2008), p. 1.

³⁵¹ For example the pamphlet is listed in: T. Osborne, *Catalogus Bibliothecae Harleinae, in Locis Communes Distribuites Cum Indicis Autorum* (London, 1741), p. 499; J. Brigstock, *A Catalogue of the Libraries of Dr Simon Burton, the Rev Dr Franks and Counsellor Reynolds* (London, 1744), p. 99; A. Jackson, *Jackson's Catalogue of Books for the Year 1765 to 1766* (London, 1766), p. 62; T. Egerton, *A Catalogue of Books including the Libraries of Rev Francis Blackburne, the Rev Richard Ward and Several other Collections* (London, 1789), p. 83.

murder was also featured in a 1689 pack of playing-cards.³⁵² Yet despite the flurry of publications created in the wake of the murder itself, Mary disappeared from print culture almost as soon as she emerged, making her an exception among high-profile print murderesses. After 1689, I have identified only one extended discussion of the case in print for the next hundred years, in a 1736 *Universal Spectator* debate about domestic homicide, and her story only returned to public consciousness in 1798 when James Caulfield reproduced an engraving of her.³⁵³

The Aubry case, like the *affaire*, has received some previous scholarly attention. This has been primarily focused upon Mary's role as husband killer and the wider implications of her case for understandings of late seventeenth-century marriage. Randall Martin, Frances Dolan, Susan Staub, Susan Amussen and Rebecca Livingstone have all explored the particularly sympathetic representations of Aubry found in print discussion on the case. They argue that such sympathy was the product of a long-term shift in attitudes throughout the seventeenth century that saw wife-beating as increasingly condemned, and interest in domestic homicide shift from murderous wives onto murderous husbands, and, in the case of Livingstone, from murders motivated by adultery to murders motivated by battles for household control (although the cases of adulterous murder

³⁵² Core texts: R. L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder Committed by a French Midwife on the Body of her Husband, Jan 27 1688 and Pleaded Guilty* (London, 1688); E. Settle, *An Epilogue to the French Midwife's Tragedy, who was Burnt in Leicester-Fields, March 2 1688 for the Barbarous Murder of her Husband Denis Hobry* (London, 1688); *A Warning Piece To All Married Men and Women Being the Full Confession of Mary Hobry, the French Midwife* (London, 1688); *A Cabinet of Grief or, The French Midwife's Miserable Moan for the Barbarous Murther Committed upon the Body of her Husband* (London, 1688); *A True and Full Relation of a Most Barbarous and Inhuman Murder, Committed upon the Body of a Man found in Parkers lane* (London, 1688). The judicial proceedings were officially reported in *An Account of the Manner, Behaviour and Execution of Mary Aubry, who was Burnt to Ashes, in Leicester Fields* (London, 1688), see also *OBP*, February 1688, trial of Mary Aubry Dennis Fanet John Fanet John Desermo (t16880222-24). In terms of images, *A Representation of the Bloody Murder Committed by Mary Aubry* (London, 1688) is the only stand-alone engraving, but woodcuts illustrate all of the pamphlets excluding *A Hellish Murder*. The 'Revolution' playing cards are kept at the London Metropolitan archives and are the property of the Most Worshipful Company of Playing Card Makers. Reproductions of some of the cards can be found in J. Whiting, *A Handful of History* (Dursley, 1978), Chapter 9.

³⁵³ H. Stonecastle, *The Universal Spectator*, Vol. 2 (London, 1736), p. 59; J. Caulfield, *A Representation of the Bloody Murder Committed by Mary Aubry* (London, 1798), this is a direct reproduction of the 1688 version LMA, Special Collections: SC/GL/PR/L/42/021/p7500042.

explored in the next chapter would dispute this second shift).³⁵⁴ While a handful of prints had emerged on some early 1680s husband murder cases which displayed awareness of the possibility of wife-beating causing murderous intent, particularly those of Sarah Elestone and Elizabeth Lillyman, cases from the eighteenth century, such as that of Catherine Hayes explored in the next chapter, displayed very little sympathy for the beaten wife.³⁵⁵ Moreover, the evocation of domestic abuse in Aubry's confession in *A Hellish Murder*, in particular the bloody depiction of sodomitical rape, this chapter will argue, was categorically different in its length and its graphic detail to anything that came before or after.³⁵⁶ This was not a gradual change; this was a sudden (and short-lived) shift within the specific context of 1688.

The Aubry case has also featured in several studies of late-seventeenth century midwives, which have established crucial aspects of Aubry's training and life story, most importantly that she was (at least until marriage with Denis) a Huguenot midwife who had come to England following Louis XIV's 1680 *Edit Contre les Sages Femmes*. As yet, however, these two veins of study on Aubry have rarely been brought together: Mary is either seen as wife *or* midwife, never both.³⁵⁷ It will be shown, however, that Aubry's occupation as midwife interacted with her status as beaten wife and tyrant-slayer and

³⁵⁴ S. Amussen, "'Being Stirred to much Unquietness': Violence and Domestic Violence in Early Modern England", *Journal of Women's History* 6.2 (Summer, 1994), pp. 70-89; F. E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1500-1700* (Cornell, 1994), pp. 34-37; *Ibid.*, *Whores of Babylon* (New York, 1999), pp. 212-218; *Ibid.*, 'Tracking the Petty Traitor Across Genres', in P. Fumerton, A. Guerrini and K. McAbee (eds), *Ballads and Broadides in Britain, 1500-1800* (Surrey, 2010), pp. 149-171; R. Livingstone, 'Unsettled Households: Domestic Homicide in Seventeenth-Century England', PhD Thesis (Tulane University 2007), pp. 71-80; V. McMahon, *Murder in Shakespeare's England* (London, 2006), pp. 68-72; R. Martin, *Women, Murder and Equity in Early Modern England* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 70-79; C. F. Otten, *English Women's Voices 1540-1700* (Florida, 1992), pp. 11-13; R. Phillips, *Untying the Knot: A Short History of Divorce* (Ottawa, 1991), p. 82; S. C. Staub, *Nature's Cruel Stepdames: Murderous Women in the Street Literature of Seventeenth-Century England* (Pittsburgh, 2005), pp. 35-38.

³⁵⁵ *The Last Speech and Confession of Sarah Elestone* (London, 1678); *A Compleat Narrative of the Tryal of Elizabeth Lillyman Found Guilty of Petty Treason* (London, 1675); *News from Goodman's Yard or a Full and True Relation of a Most Horrid Murder Committed by One Elizabeth Lillyman* (London, 1675); *OBP*, July 1675, trial of Elizabeth Lylliman (t16750707-4).

³⁵⁶ L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, p. 33.

³⁵⁷ This seems to be based on some confusion between Mary's first married name 'Desermeaux' or 'DesOrmeaux' and her second married name of 'Hobry' or 'Aubry'. See D. Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 93-95 and H. King, 'The Politick Midwife: Models of Midwifery in the Work of Elizabeth Cellier,' in H. Marland (ed.), *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe* (London, 1993), pp. 124-125.

played a crucial role in the changing representations of her story. At the same time, although the case of the *affaire des poisons* has been seen almost exclusively within the context of political scandal, here also the problematic imagery of the midwife had a role to play, particularly following the 1680 *Edit* which brought midwives under the control of the guild of surgeons and enforced strict controls on their religion and lifestyle. With the rise of the man midwife across Europe, these two cases provided opportunities to demonstrate the dangerous social role occupied by female midwives and their insidious influence on women of a higher social status through the space of female medicinal knowledge.

This chapter will explore the ways in which each of these cases was perceived to resonate with both social unease about the role of midwives in the urban environment and more immediate political upheavals. The first section will identify the aspects of 1680s female city living, in particular female medical practice and midwifery, that were depicted and denounced through discussions of Aubry and the women of the *affaire des poisons*. The second section will then place these crimes within the context of the turbulent political landscapes of 1680s London and Paris to explore the role that such cases could play in facilitating political and social critique. Direct comparison of the two cases will further demonstrate the differences in how these two metropolises rationalised and explored the dynamics of political, social and gender turmoil thrown into relief by these crimes, and the differing implications that such murders had in each city.

Murderous Midwives and the City

As with Malcolm and the Marquise, authors of publications on Mary Aubry and the women of the *affaire* saw the murders to have worrying implications for particular urban groups: in this case, female medical practitioners. Over the course of the seventeenth century, in both London and Paris, female medical practices which had existed on a small

scale in rural environments for centuries were placed into more sophisticated networks of exchange in the urban space. These practices gave midwives a place on the city streets, and a life outside of their families and, for a certain few, in the lives of aristocrats. While women had made livelihoods from such practices for centuries if not millennia, in the 1680s, when questions were beginning to be asked about the destabilising effects of city living and rising female populations, and which saw the emergence of a group male practitioners specialising in similar kinds of medicine seeking to break down female monopolies, the prospect of the city nurturing female independence at the cost of such men was deemed particularly threatening. Adrian Wilson and Lynn McTavish have shown that in both Britain and France, the characterisation of childbirth as a feminine space was increasingly contested, at least among the upper classes, with arguments for the superiority of masculine ‘science’ based on anatomy and new inventions such as the forceps over older forms of female knowledge that included childbirth alongside the provision of a variety of other forms of herbal and ritualised remedies. Such cases provided powerful evidence for the dangerous influence that female medical practitioners could have in creating complex networks of connections across the city through their midwifery practices that allowed them to resist the control of men (Aubry) and corrupt powerful women (La Voisin).³⁵⁸

With La Voisin Parisian commentators found a figure through whom widespread unease about the lifestyles and behaviour of lower-class Parisian *dévineresses* could be explored. Visual depictions of La Voisin represented her as symbolising an endemic threat on the Parisian streets, with the two engravings made of her by Antoine Coyppel juxtaposing her own ordinary and unremarkable, if aged, appearance with the demons and snakes which writhed around her image (Figure 3.1). There was little interest in La Voisin’s life story

³⁵⁸ L. McTavish, *Childbirth and the Display of Authority* (Aldershot, 2005); L. McTavish, ‘Blame and Vindication in the Early Modern Birthing Chamber’, *Medical History* 50.4 (2006) pp. 447-464; A. Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict: the Social Relations of Childbirth in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2013); A. Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England 1660-1700* (London, 1995).

(this would come in the nineteenth century³⁵⁹) she was instead shown as representative of a broader social group, often referred to with the construction ‘one of those hardened poisoneresses’.³⁶⁰ The trials of later women in the *affaire* were greeted in both the press and correspondence with descriptions of their crimes and horrors as being ‘more infamous than those of La Voisin’, which again had the effect of normalising La Voisin’s crimes through the prospect of greater horrors, though horrors which never actually came.³⁶¹ Through this process of normalisation, it was implied that La Voisin was just another Parisian woman, that her crimes were simply more extreme versions of those committed across the city on a daily basis. While many women of the *affaire* were referred in the traditional French formation of la + their surname, Catherine Des Hayes or Montvoisin had her surname shortened to ‘la Voisin’: ‘Voisin’ meaning ‘neighbour’, preceded by the ‘La’ definite article that had come to signify notoriety. This normalisation became even more pronounced within eighteenth-century discussions of the crimes. Seeking to differentiate eighteenth-century Paris from that of Louis XIV, the *affaire des poisons* was often used as an example of the iniquity which was once endemic the capital. In De Pitaval’s *Causes Célèbres* (1734) and Du Noyer’s *Lettres historiques et galantes* (1712) La Voisin became a powerful example of the darkest days of Parisian society in which Paris was shown as a second Rome, brought to ruin by the debauchery of its women at the peak of its success.³⁶²

³⁵⁹ Blanpain, *La Voisin*.

³⁶⁰ ‘Une de ces hardies empoisonneuses’, Marquis de Feuquières, *Lettres Inédites*, Vol. 5, Letter from the Marquis de Pas to the Marquis de Feuquières 16 March 1680 p.109; Mme de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 737 p. 842.

³⁶¹ ‘Plus fameuse que La Voisin’ is a phrase used to described the 1681 trial of poisoneress La Joly in *Nouvelles Extraordinaires* (January, 1682) and by the Marquis de Trichateau in Rabutin, *Correspondance*, Vol. 5, Letter 1987, Le Marquis de Trichateau à Bussy 11 June 1681 p. 278.

³⁶² Gayot de Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres, Curieuses et Intéressantes* (La Haye, 1734), Vol. 1, p. 465; *Mercurie Galant* (May, 1679), p. 185-207; Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 173.



Figure 3.1: A. Coppel, *Portrait de La Voisin* (Paris, 1680), two different versions.³⁶³

This everywoman status was closely connected to la Voisin's occupation: a Jill-of-all-trades concerning knowledge associated with women, medicine, cosmetics and magic. Although she was referred to in some sources as 'midwife' it is unlikely that this was her central profession.³⁶⁴ Her midwifery practice was instead shown by commentators as the means through which she could gain access to the children she supposedly burned in an oven for use in flying ointment and love potions. Indeed her own claim that she had killed over twenty five hundred babies through her role as a *faiseur-d'ange* (angel-maker), delivering and disposing of unwanted infants, was one of the few trial details to make it into print.³⁶⁵ She was also reported to be a vendor of a variety of other cosmetics and beauty potions. Madame de Noyer, for example, cited a woman who had been to La Voisin to buy a potion to increase her jawline, while others were reported (and mocked)

³⁶³ Image source: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> [Accessed 24th January 2014] <ark:/12148/btv1b8405425t>.

Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE FOL-QB-201 (57).

³⁶⁴ *Mercurius Hollandicus* ('Amsterdam', 1680), p. 66; H. De Limiers, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV*, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1712), p. 23.

³⁶⁵ *L'Execvion Remarquable de la Voisin* (Unknown date and place of publication) BnF Rothschild 998; Madame de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 731 p. 820. See Ravaisson Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille*, Vol. 6, pp. 37-42, 120, 174-244. On babies and flying ointment see BnF Arsenal Ms 7471 'Recueil de divers auteurs touchant le pouvoir des sorciers' (Unknown date and place) and T. R. Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch* (Yale, 1966).

by Bussy and La Rivière to have purchased potions from her to soften their throats or enlarge their breasts.³⁶⁶ Judicial documents reveal that such women were also purchasing a variety of potions to induce love, hate and impotence as well as, in some cases, poisons.³⁶⁷ La Voisin was therefore shown as a murderous form of the more common Parisian *dévineresse* who drew from an ancient knowledge of herbs, distilling, recipe books and fortune telling to entertain a bored nobility and facilitate their intrigues. Such women, it was implied, were common on the Parisian streets, privy to the secrets of women and the mysterious sphere of magical and subversive practices connected with women's bodies, and, through their upper class clients, to the intimate details of the bedroom activities of some of the most influential members of the second estate. In this way, they served as powerful evidence for the need to remove female midwives' access to the bodies and birthing chambers of the elite.

Concern with such women can be seen in the attempts made to discredit La Voisin and her less murderous colleagues in the first, and perhaps most enduring, publication on the *affaire*: Thomas Corneille and Donneau de Visé's play *La Dévineresse* which opened in November 1679 and enjoyed an unprecedented performance run into March 1680. It was published in print in February 1680.³⁶⁸ This play was advertised in the *Mercure Galant*, which Corneille also edited, as a counterattack to the widespread superstitions concerning fortune telling and enchantments that had supposedly infected Paris and focused entirely upon the figure of the *dévineresse* with almost no allusions to the poisoning allegations. In fact, as Jan Clarke has shown, some of the actors and actresses involved in *La Dévineresse* had themselves been clients of La Voisin and were keen to

³⁶⁶ Du Noyer, *Lettres Historiques et Galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 318; Rabutin, *Correspondance*, ed. Lalanne 5, Letter 1747 *La Rivière à Bussy* p. 52.

³⁶⁷ BnF Arsenal: Archives de la Bastille, Mss. 10338 -10359; *Mercure Galant* (Paris, 1679); Visconti, *Mémoires*, p. 165.

³⁶⁸ T. Corneille and D. De Visé, *La Dévineresse* (Paris, 1680).

expunge their guilt.³⁶⁹ The play tells the story of a fortune teller and trick-monger named Mme ‘Jobin’ and, over the course of five acts, reveals to the audience the trick trap-doors and costumes behind each of the different ‘enchantments’ performed by such *dévineresses*. It ends with the exposure of La Jobin’s tricks by an intrepid Marquis and Mme Jobin’s repentance. The play’s intention was to debase and de-exoticise the *affaire* for a Parisian audience, but, as both Clarke and Julia Prest have pointed out, the effect was the opposite. While La Jobin’s practices are limited to simple fraud, she hints at the possibility of other practitioners using much darker and more frightening tactics, a direct reference to the much more subversive La Voisin. Moreover, while several of the tricks are revealed, others leave the audience guessing, most notably the transferences of a ‘swelling’ from a woman to a poor peasant man (almost certainly a reference to abortion). In the illustrations and almanac produced alongside the publication of the play in February 1680 there was no indication that the tricks were illusions. The spectacle of *La Dévineresse* ultimately eclipsed its didactic message, adding to, rather than detracting from, the notoriety of the *affaire*.³⁷⁰

Although La Voisin and her fellow poisoneresses were not seen, nor did they see themselves, primarily as sorceresses in the vein of La Jobin, the *affaire des poisons* boasts a particularly important role in the history of witchcraft in that it directly led to a 1682 edict which rendered it illegal to claim to have magical powers.³⁷¹ Poisoning and sorcery were continually confused within discussions of the *affaire*. While the secrecy of the *Chambre Ardente* concerning the poisoning plots encouraged print concentration on the less subversive crime of false sorcery, aristocrats, keen to remove themselves from

³⁶⁹ J. Clarke, ‘La Dévineresse and the Affaire des poisons’, *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 28 (2006), pp. 221-234.

³⁷⁰ Advertisements for *La Dévineresse* in the *Mercure Galant* (August, 1679), see also J. Clarke, ‘La Dévineresse and the Affaire des Poisons’, pp. 221-234; J. Prest, ‘Silencing the Supernatural: La Dévineresse and the Affair of the Poisons’, *Forum Modern Language Studies* 43 (2007), pp. 397-409. The illustrations feature in *Almanach de la Devineresse* (Paris, 1680) and *La Dévineresse* (Paris, 1680) as seen in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal.

³⁷¹ *Edict du Roy sur Plusieurs Crimes* (Paris, 1682).

old-fashioned superstitions, steered attention towards poison accusations. This led to confusion within the court itself, with one judge complaining that they had been summoned to try the crime of poison but were being shown nothing but evidence of false sorcery.³⁷² The edict of 1682 was itself a remarkable document for its blurring of poison and sorcery, with no clear identification of the connection between the two. While appearing to be motivated by a desire to rid the land of fraudulent peddlers of fortunes and false sorceresses, in fact much of the published edict was given over to the separation of women and lower-class men from the sale of poisons.³⁷³ Strict new rules placed the purchase and ownership of poisons into the duties of middle-class men; it also ordered stringent book-keeping measures for those who did sell poisons. Ironically, of course, it was La Voisin's conscientious book-keeping that had incriminated so many of the *noblesse*. La Voisin was not merely dealing with substances that should be exclusively under upper class male control, but was following a middling sort masculine bureaucratic eye for detail instigated by the absolutism of the king himself. This tied into wider concern with the nature of female occupations and the development of such occupations into commercial enterprises, in particular within the guilds of seamstresses and midwives, which can be seen across late seventeenth-century regulation.³⁷⁴ The *Edit contre les sages femmes* of 1680, passed at the same time that the *affaire* trials were just beginning and which forced Mary Aubry, then DesOrmeaux, to flee across the channel, had already begun such an encroachment on female occupations in that it rendered midwifery the first occupation for which practitioners had to be Catholic, and made it the first female guild to be brought fully under the control of a male guild (the guild of

³⁷² *Mercurie Galant* (May, 1679), p. 196 ; L. A. La Beaumelle, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Madame de Maintenon et à celle du siècle passé*, Vol. 5 (Amsterdam, 1755), p. 181.

³⁷³ *Edit du Roy sur Plusieurs Crimes*; see also U. Krampl, *Les Secrets des Faux Sorciers: Police, Magie et Escroquerie à Paris au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 2011).

³⁷⁴ See in particular C. H. Crowston, *Fabricating Women: the Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham, 2001); J. Coffin, *The Politics of Women's Work: the Paris Garment Trades 1750-1915* (New Jersey, 1996).

surgeons).³⁷⁵ The *affaire* and the edict of 1682, therefore, formed part of wider attempts to remove or heavily control enterprises based on spheres of female expertise.

The sacrilegious behaviour of the *dévineresse* was shown in discussions of the *affaire* to be a façade for the far more subversive practices of female medical practitioners.

Offering poison for the dispatch of unwanted husbands was merely one facet of La Voisin's threatening practices explored in print discussions. Alongside delivering and disposing of children La Voisin facilitated rebellion in almost every possible way against the gendered, social and marital hierarchy that held Paris together. Particularly damaging, it was argued, were her abilities to make women appear more beautiful than they actually were, and to reconstruct virginities.³⁷⁶ With the diversifying marriage market of Paris already rendering it harder for husbands-to-be to verify the reputations of their brides, the practices of La Voisin and her colleagues made the danger of marrying an ugly bawd pretending to be a beautiful virgin more real. Alongside the direct usurpation of male midwives, therefore, the knowledge of female practitioners was shown as more generally undermining forms of male authority. This is shown in the fact that the character of La Jobin in *La Dévineresse* was played by a man at a time when male actors performing female roles was becoming extremely rare: her agency and knowledge were shown to have empowered her to the point of becoming male. The idea of sexual transition was further highlighted with the play's character of Mme de Troufignac who comes to La Jobin requesting to be turned into a man. The joke is that while La Jobin has no magical power to effect such a transition, her own business and success has done to La Jobin what she is to be unable to do to others.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ *Edit contre les sages-femmes* (Paris, 1680).

³⁷⁶ Mme Gaçon-Dufour, *Mémoires, anecdotes secrètes, galantes, historiques et inédites sur Mesdames de la Vallière, de Montespan, de Fontages, de Maintenon*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1807), p. 80-81; Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 317; Corneille and de Visé, *La Dévineresse*, Act 3 Scene 9.

³⁷⁷ Corneille and De Visé, *La Dévineresse*, Act 5 Scene 3.

These were city crimes, made possible by the conditions of 1680s Paris. In *La Dévineresse* La Jobin is shown as able to be so successful in manipulating the aristocratic women of Paris because she has a wide network of informers of lower-class men and women from the aristocrats' own households. In the same vein, La Voisin and her contemporaries were reported as having been able to commit poisonings by placing their accomplices in service at their victims' homes. This reflected a wider unease about the possible divided loyalty of servants in urban spaces, where former employers or allies could be close at hand, already revealed in the figure of La Chaussée in the previous chapter. It is notable that many of the *affaire*'s servants were male at a time when concerns about the emasculating nature of service work were rising.³⁷⁸ The male servants depicted in *La Dévineresse*, as also seen in the figures of La Chaussée and the servant Mouru discussed in Chapter Four, are shown as entirely subject to their female employer. It is they who bring La Jobin the news of the latest aristocratic gossip to assist her fortune readings and they who take on the roles of demons in her deceptions. The *affaire* demonstrated the ways in which lower-class serving men were believed to be at risk of finding themselves corrupted by unscrupulous city women, serving as important tools in their powerful knowledge-networks. While the Brinvilliers case had revealed the dangers of servants in the thrall of aristocratic rivals, here servants are shown forming their own networks that could be used and exploited by lower-class women to manipulate their superiors.

As with the *affaire des poisons*, much of the print created on the case of Mary Aubry centred on her occupation. It is noticeable that in almost all publications on Mary she is described as 'midwife' rather than as 'wife'. While short-term interest in the case almost certainly stemmed from questions of resistance to tyranny explored in the second section

³⁷⁸ T. Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender* (Essex, 2000), pp. 17-20; C. Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and their Masters in Old Regime France* (London, 1984), pp. 9-17; S. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth Century France: the Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 292-296.

of the chapter, wider fears were awakened in the Aubry case about the power of midwives. Although there was less focus in London discussions on potions and enchantments, here also midwives were seen as particularly powerful figures in that they were given the responsibility of soliciting from unmarried mothers confessions of paternity, they made crucial decisions about when to save the life of the mother or child, and they were responsible for preventing the baby being baptised Catholic (until 1640 they could perform baptisms themselves if the child was about to die).³⁷⁹ Moreover, as in Paris, such women's occupations were beginning to be challenged by a set of male practitioners.³⁸⁰ The Aubry case therefore provided a good opportunity to denounce this problematic urban figure.

Aubry's occupation, it was argued, provided her with a direct source of murderous power. Through midwifery she was able to draw from a network of female alliances in resisting her husband's abuses and spreading knowledge about her ill treatment. In *Hellish Murder*, for example, Aubry was shown as moving easily and unimpeded through a series of households, sometimes to deliver children, but sometimes to escape her husband when he was abusive. More terrifyingly, Aubry was also able to walk down Drury Lane with her husband's torso hidden under her cape unchallenged at eight thirty at night because she was wearing her midwife's mantle. She was also shown as able to appropriate her detailed knowledge of the city earned through her midwifery travels to dispose of Aubry's corpse in a series of houses of office, recalling the use of such public toilets by women to drown unwanted new-born children.³⁸¹ The midwife's control over the city streets is particularly shown in Settle's *An Epilogue to the French Midwife's*

³⁷⁹ C. Bicks, *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* (Hampshire, 2003); Evenden, *The Midwives*; Marland (ed.), *The Art of Midwifery*; C. McClive, *Menstruation and Procreation in Early Modern France* (London, 2015); McTavish, *Childbirth and the Display of Authority*; McTavish, 'Blame and Vindication', pp. 447-464; Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict*; L. Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, 2003), Chapter Five.

³⁸⁰ Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery*; Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict*.

³⁸¹ L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, pp. 8, 35.

Tragedy, the most hostile publication on Aubry, which described her ashes flying across a city which must be purged of her sin.³⁸² In the complex and uncontrolled urban environment, it was implied, female-only spaces of childbirth allowed midwives to create a city-wide collection of contacts that were inaccessible to men and could therefore be used against them.

Depictions of the murderous act itself also drew connections to Aubry's occupation. Before committing the murder Aubry was quoted as saying 'I have no way in the world to deliver myself but by beginning with him'.³⁸³ Alongside the obvious child-birth connotations, the use of the phrase 'deliver' has irresistible echoes of the assertions attributed to Catholic midwife Elizabeth Cellier implicated in the 1680 Meal Tub Plot: 'I must be my own midwife and deliver myself of this damned plot'.³⁸⁴ The occupation of midwifery was therefore shown as giving Aubry the subjectivity and agency to resist her governor and 'deliver' her liberty. Frances Dolan has shown that within the images of Aubry found in Francis Barlow's 'Revolution' playing card pack (Figure 3.2) another connection to Cellier was also formed through the depiction of Aubry wearing Cellier's iconic peaked bonnet.³⁸⁵ As Caroline Bicks argues, descriptions of Denis' dismemberment evoked the dismembering of fetuses that were stuck in the womb that less skilled midwives undertook when they could not deliver the child. In the same way, L'Estrange's choice of words when he described the murder as having 'put more freaks and crochets into the heads of common people' was no coincidence, alluding both to the midwife's crochet (a hook used to drag out the corpse of dead fetuses) and the role of midwives in shaping new-born babies skulls if born with a deformity.³⁸⁶ The two visual depictions of the dismemberment made clear allusions to the birthing process with

³⁸² Settle, *An Epilogue*.

³⁸³ L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, p. 35.

³⁸⁴ King, 'The Politick Midwife', p.116.

³⁸⁵ See Dolan, *Whores*, pp. 212-216.

³⁸⁶ L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, p. 1; Bicks, *Midwiving*, p. 106.

Denis's body depicted upon a table or bed in a traditional birthing pose (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). In the more complex engraving this was reinforced in the depiction of Mary wearing the iconic red midwives' mantle as she raises her knife to remove Aubry's leg (Figure 3.3). The midwife who brought life into the world was shown to be equally capable of using the same tools to bring about death, and, through death, her own personhood.



Figure 3.2: F. Barlow, 'Revolution' Playing Card Pack (London, 1689).³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ Card images reproduced with kind permission of the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards of the City of London.



Figure 3.3: *A Representation of the Bloody Murder Committed by Mary Aubry* (London, 1680).³⁸⁸

In both cases, then, the occupation of urban midwife was shown as at once empowering and corrupting for women. Yet there was a crucial difference in the nature of the city space represented in the two cases. In the Aubry case it was the chaotic and uncontrolled nature of the London streets that facilitated the murder, a space where crimes could go undetected, at least for a short while. Mary was reported as having explained away her husband's disappearance by claiming that she and her acquaintances had got him drunk, and then lured him onto a boat bound for the West Indies; a scheme deemed eminently plausible in the port city of London where men often disappeared off to sea.³⁸⁹ As part of her French community, Mary was also shown as being able to speak openly on the murder to her friends and relatives (whom may indeed have been complicit in the

³⁸⁸ Image Source: London Metropolitan Archives, Special Collections: SC/GL/PR/L/42/021/p7500042.

³⁸⁹ L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, p. 15.

murder) in the street without being challenged, because they spoke in French.³⁹⁰ The impenetrability of private communities was also shown in reports that Aubry's landlady failed to overhear the muffled sound of the violent rape and so missed an opportunity to prevent the murder.³⁹¹ In Paris, it was not the impenetrability but rather the porousness of aristocratic households in the urban space that was shown as facilitating the criminal rise of La Voisin. The streets were the fibres along which her network of poison and betrayal functioned, channelled through networks of servants and informers, and spreading right into the homes of the governing classes. La Voisin, like Brinvilliers, undertook her poisons business by driving through the city streets in her coach. This careless and ostentatious exhibition of La Voisin's wealth, equal to that of the clients she was corrupting, without apparent fear of recrimination was particularly shocking, and served to symbolise La Voisin's ownership of the streets through networks of blackmail and subversive exchange.³⁹²

Despite the differences in the kinds of threat established within discussions of the cases, print on both Aubry and the *affaire des poisons* identified the wider female medical practitioner as a particularly powerful and threatening urban figure. While the parameters of expertise represented by these women were different in London and Paris (Aubry exclusively practised midwifery where La Voisin's work was much more varied) the central emphasis was the same. These were women who had become financially independent through knowledge that was kept off-limits to men, whose practices kept business from those men seeking to contest female monopolies over such knowledge, and who used such occupations to literally get away with murder. Such concern was not new to the 1680s, and had existed throughout the seventeenth century, if not before. But in the 1680s rising pressures brought about by the emergence of male midwifery and the

³⁹⁰ L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, pp. 2-4.

³⁹¹ Croom, *A Warning Piece*; L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, p. 21.

³⁹² Reports of the La Voisin's coach can be found in *Factum sur Plusieurs Crimes* (Paris, 1682), p. 7; Visconti, *Mémoire*, p. 181.

spurt in the urban female population allowed such a figure appear to be depicted as an overt threat. Yet, in Paris in particular, a print reaction that highlighted the power of these women also contributed to movements towards their eradication. The male colonisation of sites of female-specific knowledge in Paris was demonstrated most clearly in the 1680 *Edit contre les sages femmes* which placed female midwives firmly under the control of men and the 1682 *Edit contre plusieurs crimes* which, while posing as a reaction against poisoning and trickery, outlawed the practice of a vast number of practices connected to women concerning healing and magical practices. The shock and horror generated by print on the *affaire des poisons* had not merely been used to voice concern about the activities of La Voisin and her less murderous colleagues but had directly led to the suppression of their practices. In London, the situation was more complex. The Aubry case had no direct judicial effect on longer term unease about midwives, although man-midwives were already becoming the practitioners of choice for the upper classes. Instead, as will be shown in the second section of this chapter, the surge of politicised anti-midwife feeling following the Warming Pan scandal in June of 1688, building on the long-term mistrust of urban midwifery seen here, led to the demise of Aubry's position as a sympathetic political allegorical figure and, more generally, as a high-profile murderess.

Political Subversion and Narratives of Female Homicide

As well as enacting denunciations of the urban female medical practitioner, connections were also formed in print commentaries on the cases between the murders and wider political debates. More so than any other murderesses discussed in this thesis, discussions of the crimes of Mary Aubry and the women of the *affaire des poisons* were imbued with politicised undertones during the highly-charged decade of the 1680s. Representations of Mary Aubry were heavily influenced by the arguments about legitimate resistance

echoing across early 1688 London, leading to the most sympathetic representations of any of the convicted high-profile women studied in this project. While clear parallels to James II's perceived tyranny were never made, the emphasis in coverage on Denis' repeated and exhaustive abuses against Mary, and her long deliberation prior to murdering him, were products of a particular kind of audience interest. It was only in 1688 that the possible motives for committing husband murder could gain more print coverage than his dismemberment. In the *affaire des poisons*, while commentators probably did not know about the more scandalous aspects of the trials taking place under the Parisian streets, particularly the possible involvement of the Marquise de Montespan (though there are indications that at least some individuals did),³⁹³ the cases provided an opportunity, begun with the case of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, to criticise the debauchery of Louis' court, seen as increasingly out-of-step with his capital. They also provided a space to voice an awareness of a changing social order, itself the product of urban living, in which, for the first time, nobles could be held to account for their crimes by commoners, and in which a base false sorceress could bring about the ruin of some of the most powerful people in the land. In both cases then, the crimes of a small group of relatively insignificant women (at least, for the *affaire*, in terms of those whose crimes were known in the public domain) could be used to vocalise broader concerns about political and social change.

The *affaire des poisons*, even in its carefully censored print form, was undoubtedly a crisis for Louis XIV. The discovery of the infiltration of his court with superstitious practices revealed the dark side of Versailles court culture and the deterioration of relations between the monarch and his capital. Louis had successfully weakened aristocratic resistance by concentrating the efforts of his second estate into pointless court

³⁹³ Visconti, *Mémoires*, p. 159, is the only contemporary document outside of the *Chambre Ardente* records (for which documents only exist in the form of officials' notes- the actual court records were burned by Louis himself) which directly refers to Montespan's possible involvement. This was not published until the nineteenth century.

intrigue, but the connections of such intrigue to sacrilegious and homicidal practices exposed in the *affaire* revealed the limits of Louis's power. His lack of control over his capital was exemplified in the murderous alliances developed between La Voisin and aristocratic women in the Parisian environment. La Voisin, representing the wider vice of Paris, was shown to be uncontrollable by the judicial authorities. Unaffected by physical torture, Sévigné reported, La Voisin spent her time in prison having sex with her guards and on the scaffold sang drunken songs, spat on the crowd and, most frighteningly, laughed as she burned to death. Such powerful images of resistance against the most extreme practices of absolutist justice represented the broader weaknesses of the justice system to deal with the vice and corruption of Parisian *dévineresses*.³⁹⁴

While, as shown above, depictions of La Voisin often drew from concerns with the city midwife, it was the revelations of La Voisin's connection to aristocratic women which really stimulated print interest. The arrest of La Voisin in May 1679 was reported in the *Mercure Galant*, an official government publication, in a brief paragraph, but was then quickly forgotten.³⁹⁵ It was not until January 1680 that commentators really began to display interest in the crimes, following the flight of the Comtesse de Soissons and the *embastillement* of the Maréchal de Luxembourg: the point at which La Voisin's wild accusations first appeared to contain a grain of truth. Within the correspondence of Mme de Sévigné, Bussy Rabutin and the Marquis de Feuquières, all later reproduced in print, it was clear that La Voisin had offended two-fold: first in committing poisonings, infanticides and frauds, and second (and more importantly) in besmirching the best and brightest of French society. Yet aristocratic commentators' horror at these revelations was juxtaposed with a cynical comedy, particular citations of which were widely reproduced in printed commentaries on the *affaire* for decades afterwards. Upon the

³⁹⁴ Visconti, *Mémoires*, pp. 71, 165; Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 738 p. 845. This report is paraphrased in *Galérie de l'ancienne cour*, Vol. 2 (Unknown publication place, 1786), p. 381; *Mercure Hollandois* ('Amsterdam', 1680), p. 73.

³⁹⁵ *Mercure Galant* (May, 1679), pp. 185-207.

execution of La Voisin, for example, the Marquis de la Rivière wrote to Roger Rabutin, ‘May God have mercy on Mme Voisin... she had great faults, but she fattened up tits’.³⁹⁶ He also joked that the Duchesse de la Ferté could not be a poisoneress because he (La Rivière) was still alive, and she hated him for refusing her amorous advances.³⁹⁷ Mme de Sévigné wrote flippantly of accusations against the Duchesse de Bouillon that ‘she had gone to la Voisin to get some poison to get rid of an old husband she had, who was making her die of boredom’.³⁹⁸ The coverage of La Voisin’s crimes in the *Mercur* *Galant* was dominated by a series of sonnets which likened the act of poisoning to falling in love.³⁹⁹ Although living in a court atmosphere which was heavy with paranoia and suspicion the reactions of contemporary letter writers and the official press reveal the cynical reflex that the elite took on to distance themselves from, and disparage, the crimes.

But such cynicism is deceptive. Although Bussy, la Rivière and Sévigné tried to denigrate the case through mockery, their sheer act of acknowledging La Voisin’s claims demonstrated how far things had come, with the Marquis de Feuquières in particular forced to make repeated declarations that he had not been involved in any of the alleged poison plots.⁴⁰⁰ Paris was a complex, socially promiscuous space in which rich and poor could be neighbours without also being master and servant, and in which a new emphasis on universal morality, paired with a more effective judicial infrastructure and an expanding print culture, gave the wild stories of the powerless traction to topple the powerful.

³⁹⁶ ‘Dieu fasse miséricorde à feu madame Voisin ! Elle avoit de grans vices, mais... elle grossissoit les tetons’, Rabutin, *Correspondance*, Vol. 5, Letter 1747 *La Rivière* to *Bussy* p. 52.

³⁹⁷ Rabutin, *Correspondance*, Vol. 5, Letter 1747 *La Rivière* to *Bussy* p. 50.

³⁹⁸ ‘La duchesse de Bouillon alla demander à la Voisin un peu de poison pour faire mourir un vieux mari qu’elle avait, qui la faisait mourir d’ennui’, Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 731 p. 820.

³⁹⁹ *Mercur Galant* (May, 1679), p. 207.

⁴⁰⁰ See the full range of Feuquières’ correspondance during the *affaire*; Marquis de Feuquières, *Lettres Inédites*, Vol. 5, pp. 71-189.

While the upper classes sought to minimise the threat of La Voisin's crimes through flippancy and romance, publications aimed at a wider audience used more traditional dissuasive tactics based upon the motif of the penitent sinner. In particular, the ballad produced for La Voisin's execution showed her to be a paragon of Christian repentance.⁴⁰¹ Echoing in both motif and structure the ballad published on the execution of the Marquise de Brinvilliers four years previously, this ballad showed La Voisin, far from being a drunken bawd, as repenting of her sinful existence and exhorting others to live lives of virtuous obedience.⁴⁰² In depicting a very different kind of scaffold behaviour to that reported by Sévigné, the song compellingly reveals Parisian fears that the crimes of La Voisin were widespread and the need to hammer home the message of exemplary justice. It also demonstrates a more binary attitude towards morality among publications for a non-aristocratic audience, devoid of the more complex cynical demonstrations of innocence exhibited by Madame de Sévigné and her circle. Both groups, however different their treatment of the case, saw the *affaire* as a crucial symbol of the inherent instability of Parisian society in need of eradication.

The implicit dangers of aristocratic *galanterie*, present in both the cynicism of aristocratic correspondence and the didacticism of popular print, was a central motivating force behind many representations of the *affaire*. Despite the fact that there were many *haute bourgeoisie* implicated in the *affaire*, none of them found their way into the papers, with the exception of one 1681 man who had killed his wife in an extremely gruesome manner (and therefore, probably should not have been included in a poisoning tribunal at all).⁴⁰³ By instead only pairing together the very richest aristocrats with the most base and debauched *dévineresses* commentators transformed the *affaire* into an exemplar of the levelling effects of urban living. The message of *La Dévineresse*, and surrounding

⁴⁰¹ *L'Execvtion remarquable de la Voisin* (Unknown date and place), BnF Rothschild 998.

⁴⁰² *L'Execvtion remarquable de la Marquise de Brinvilliers* (Paris, 1676), BnF Estampes QE-21.

⁴⁰³ *Nouvelles Extraordinaires* (19 Feb 1682).

press and manuscript correspondence, was that aristocratic women had allowed themselves to be led into the scandal because of the debauched and libertine lives that they were living at court. Such concern had already been ignited with the case of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, but in the *affaire* this concern shifted from the iniquity of aristocratic women onto the opportunities that such iniquities opened up for exploitation by lower-class women. Madame Du Noyer traced a clear line between libertine tendencies in women and the committing of poisonings: *galant* women, she argued, were more gullible, leading them to trust *dévineresses*, who in turn could manipulate them into committing blacker and blacker crimes. She told the comedic anecdote of a silly noblewoman who hysterically confessed to her husband that she had been to see La Voisin when she heard that the brutal police interrogator, Des Grecs, was at the door, only to realise that the Des Grecs who was visiting was in fact her rug maker.⁴⁰⁴ All the most gullible characters in *La Dévineress* are noblewomen. The central plot of the play focuses on the credulous La Comtesse, a widow persuaded by La Jobin not to marry her lover Le Marquis through artful tricks. The naivety of such women, paired with the complexity of their *galant* lifestyles was shown as making them easy prey for the lower classes in terms of blackmail and manipulation.

Such criticisms of *galanterie* and its role in the *affaire* were reproduced in later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century representations as symbolic of the wider corruption of Louis XIV's reign. This criticism was most dramatically shown in *L'esprit familier de Trianon*, a 1695 underground tract, in which Louis is shown being visited by the ghost of Mme de Fontanges, the ex-mistress supposedly poisoned by Mme de Montespan, who urges him to repent of his libertine ways. The phantom depicts a version of hell in which French aristocrats continue to follow the same lives as they did on earth, locked in a continual spiral of pointless conspiracy and intrigue (an image that would be later taken

⁴⁰⁴ Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 315.

up by *Bibliothèque Bleue* writers in the case of Marie Catherine Taperet discussed in Chapter Four). Louis is shown as the cause of this widespread unrest, penning his courtiers into circles of mindless gossip and debauchery that at once distract them from revolt, but also pull France into ruin.⁴⁰⁵ While such a tract would only have attracted a very niche audience, its sentiments were echoed in the more mainstream *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV* by Henri De Limiers, published after Louis' death. De Limiers pieced together a series of press publications from 1680 with excerpts of Madame de Sévigné's correspondence to imply that Louis' governance had directly led to the *affaire*. Louis' attempts to enforce order on his second estate were shown to have been undermined by his own lifestyle and its impact on the women of his court, infecting an entire city with a lust for vice for which they would go to dramatic ends.⁴⁰⁶ Such tropes would be taken up by a number of eighteenth-century authors who saw the *affaire* to be a key indicator of the weaknesses of Louis' reign.⁴⁰⁷

While such explicitly direct attacks were impossible during the 1680s, the subversive and disruptive effect of the *affaire* on the established hierarchy was shown through representations of the Maréchal de Luxembourg. The only high-profile man to be implicated in the *affaire*, Luxembourg had caused scandal when he submitted himself to the Bastille and admitted that he had once sent his servant to visit La Voisin's accomplice the sorcerer Le Sage in order to purchase a curse to be lodged against one of his enemies.⁴⁰⁸ Luxembourg was reported in both press and correspondence in direct contrast to his fellow *poisons*-accused the Comtesse de Soissons, who chose to flee Paris

⁴⁰⁵ *L'esprit familier de Trianon* ('Paris' (Cologne), 1695), this book was also copied out in manuscript and circulated secretly by hand (BnF Arsenal 8-BL-17816).

⁴⁰⁶ De Limiers, *Histoire*, Vol. 4, p. 379.

⁴⁰⁷ *Galérie de l'ancienne cour*, Vol. 1, pp. 338-344 and Vol. 2, pp. 318-319; Des Essarts, *Procès fameux, extraits de l'essai sur l'histoire générale, des tribunaux des peuples tant anciens que modernes*, Vol. 8 (Paris, 1786), pp. 38-46; G. De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes*, Vol. 1 (La Haye, 1734), pp.465-479; De Limiers, *Histoire du règne*, Vol. 4, pp. 379-380; Voltaire, *Siècle de Louis XIV*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1751), pp. 313-317.

⁴⁰⁸ Madame de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 765 p. 937, see also Ravaisson Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille*, Vol. 4, pp. 11-20, 69-74. The gender distinction is interesting here, in that Luxembourg was implicated by the only male practitioner arrested.

(out of fear, she claimed, rather than guilt) making his manly strength shine against her feminine cowardice. But images of his masculine resolve were quickly replaced with reports of him cowering in the corner of a tiny cell, a great hero reduced to a feminine wreck: as Madame de Sévigné wrote, ‘he is no longer a man, even a small man, or even a woman, he is a little girl’.⁴⁰⁹ This was shown by commentators to have been the direct doing of La Voisin, despite her not having accused him (that was Le Sage).⁴¹⁰

Luxembourg was a symbol of the ‘gloire’ of France, with newspapers and correspondents connecting his trial to the supposed fall from grace that France was believed to have suffered in the eyes of Europe following the *affaire*.⁴¹¹ The acts of a small group of women in Paris were therefore shown to have international ramifications in tarnishing France’s reputation .

The *affaire* demonstrated the vulnerability of the most powerful people in the land, suddenly accountable to rules that they had never before had to obey and subject to new scrutiny through an expanding print culture. When the Duchesse de Bouillon stood up in court and mocked it for deigning to have any power over her, her witty lines were reproduced in the press, but she was quickly exiled from Paris for her contempt of court.⁴¹² While the fall of Luxembourg was lamented, commentators suggested that he had brought it upon himself through too many affairs with women.⁴¹³ This was a new world in which lower-class women could denounce men and women exponentially

⁴⁰⁹ ‘Ce n’est pas un homme, ni un petit homme, ce n’est pas même une femme, c’est une petite femmelette’, Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 731 p. 820-823.

⁴¹⁰ Visconti, *Mémoire*, p. 162; Marquis de la Fare, *Mémoires*, p. 211; Rabutin, *Correspondance*, Vol. 5, Letter 1747 *La Rivière* to *Bussy*, Letter 1748 *Bussy* to *La Rivière*, Letter 1786 *Bussy* to the *Marquis de Trichateau*, pp. 50-55, 102-104; La Beaumelle, *Mémoires*, p. 184; Marquis de Feuquières, *Lettres Inédites*, Vol. 5, *M le marquis de Pas* to *M de Feuquières* p. 165 ; Saint Simon, *Mémoire*, Vol. 2, p. 43; Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 731 p. 820-823.

⁴¹¹ Voltaire, *Siècle*, Vol. 2, p. 313; Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letters 730 and 737 p. 817, 824 ; Gaçon-Dufour, *Mémoires*, Vol. 1, p. 84 ; Visconti, *Mémoires*, p. 164 ; Rabutin, *Correspondance*, Vol. 5, Letter 1745 *Le Marquis De Trichateau* to *Bussy* p. 49.

⁴¹² Visconti, *Mémoires*, pp. 160-162; *Mercurie Hollandois* (‘Amsterdam’, 1680), p. 71; Marquis de la Fare, *Mémoires*, p. 213; Rabutin, *Correspondance*, Vol. 5, Letter 1747 *La Rivière* to *Bussy*, Letter 1748 *Bussy* to *La Rivière*, p. 50-52, 55-60; La Beaumelle, *Mémoires*, Vol. 2, p. 182; Voltaire, *Siècle*, Vol. 2, p. 317; De Limiers, *Histoire*, Vol. 4, p. 379; Gaçon Dufour, *Mémoires*, Vol. 1, p. 80; Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letters 731 and 736 p. 821-822, 840.

⁴¹³ Marquis de la Fare, *Mémoires*, p. 211.

socially superior to them and be not only believed but have their allegations reproduced in print. These disorderly implications, however, had to be voiced extremely subtly, through focus on lesser or unpopular nobility and lower-class and abject poisoneresses. Even the most obtuse of allusions, however, were enough to dull the shimmering veneer of the sun king. The *affaire des poisons*, then, demonstrates the powerful political capital that could be garnered by cases of female homicide, and the wide possibilities for social critique that such cases were perceived to open up.

In the Aubry case, also, the turbulence of 1688 imbued perceptions of the crime with political symbolism, which was all the more striking given that Aubry, unlike the women of the *affaire des poisons*, had no connection to the governing classes whatsoever. One of the central determinative factors behind the ways that the Aubry murder was perceived is the fact that it occurred in January 1688. This was the month in which Mary of Modena announced her pregnancy, and with it the possibility of a Catholic succession, cementing the reign of James II. It was a moment in which many Londoners found themselves at odds with an increasingly powerful monarch in terms of their faith, and in which paranoia about an imminent Catholic uprising gripped the city. The news of discovery of Denis Aubry's body parts in the toilet next to the Jesuit section of the Savoy Hospital was seen, as reported in William Westby's diary discussed in Chapter One, to be a sign that the massacre of Protestants had begun.⁴¹⁴ Aubry, a woman forced into the felonious crime and severe sin of sodomy by her autocrat husband proved a useful vehicle for discussions about the feasibility and morality of resistance against a tyrant emanating from Whig unease with James II's rule (and, increasingly, from Anglican Tories such as L'Estrange).

⁴¹⁴ *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated* (21 Feb 1688); William Westby, 'A Continuation of my Memories', Folger MsV.a469 fol.9v, 14v.

On the surface, Aubry was an unlikely figure for such discussions, being herself French, and possibly Catholic. Yet, despite her characterisation in Barlow's playing cards (and later scholarship) as 'the popish midwife', Mary's Catholicism, if it existed, was very new. Mary's midwifery licence, under her previous married name of Des Ormeaux and granted in 1680, reported her to be a member of the Huguenot French Church, but 'in all ways' an Anglican.⁴¹⁵ The fact that Mary arrived in London in 1680 is also indicative of her Protestant roots, as it coincided with the wave of migration of Huguenot midwives from Paris following Louis XIV's edict of February 1680, discussed above, although it is possible that she converted to Catholicism upon her marriage to Aubry in 1684.⁴¹⁶ What was more emphasised, in *A Hellish Murder* and all other publications excluding the playing cards, was Mary's Frenchness. L'Estrange in particular quotes in French and then translates into English at key moments in the text, especially when Mary describes how she murdered Aubry. This Frenchness had two important effects on representations. Firstly, it exoticised and distanced the case from London society. *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated*, for example, used her nationality to minimise the ramifications of her crime: 'it appears to be a poor French man destroyed on private malice or revenge by his wife'.⁴¹⁷ This distance allowed questions of legitimate resistance to be explored through a subject matter safely removed from any directly treasonous ramifications. On the other hand, as Steven Pincus has shown, James II's government by 1688 was bearing increasing similarities to that of Louis XIV's absolutist France.⁴¹⁸ Mary as rebel against Denis, a corrupt French tyrant forcing his subject into sin and poverty, was perhaps a more relevant example than would appear on first glance.

⁴¹⁵ Mary's midwifery licence can be found in Guildhall Library Ms 10, 116/11. Discussions of Mary's midwifery licence can be found in: Evenden, *The Midwives*, pp. 94, 122, and King, 'The Politick Midwife', p.116.

⁴¹⁶ I have found no specific evidence to indicate that Denis Aubry was a Catholic either, he may also have been a Huguenot. However, reports of his regular trips to and from France make it appear more likely that he was Catholic.

⁴¹⁷ *Publick Occurrences Truly Stated* (21 Feb 1688).

⁴¹⁸ S. Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (London, 2009).

That is not to say that the Aubry case contained overt revolutionary messages; indeed, even the most sympathetic representations of Mary continually repeated that no behaviour could excuse the murder of one's husband. Yet the sympathetic focus on Mary's suffering and the difficult decision that she had to make in murdering Denis may be reflective of a contemporary mentality sensitive to questions of abusive governors. This focus can be seen in the striking use of first person monologue in both *A Hellish Murder* and later publications, although Mary herself spoke no English. A substantial amount of text is devoted to Mary's internal torment in her decision to commit the murder, endlessly repeating 'What will become of me? What am I to do?'⁴¹⁹ As scholars of domestic homicide have shown, representations of the petty traitor often struggled with the balance between representing the murderous wife's agency and yet minimising her subjectivity in relation to her husband.⁴²⁰ Here all attempts at the latter appear to have fallen by the wayside, with Mary appearing as a fully cognitive individual reasoning through her situation and rationally coming to the conclusion that murder was the only option open to her. While explorations of bad husbands as tyrants had been found in depictions of previous cases of domestic homicide, the large amount of print space allotted to Denis's abusive and debauched lifestyle indicated that questions of bad government were high up in authors' minds. Of particular note is the repetition of extended graphic descriptions of the pre-murder rape: 'the blood started out her mouth... [he] acted such a violence upon her Body in despite of all the Opposition that she could

⁴¹⁹ L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, p. 34; Mary's subjectivity is discussed in Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, pp. 34-35.

⁴²⁰ S. Chess, 'And I My Vowe Did Keepe': Oath Making, Subjectivity and Husband Murder in 'Murderous Wife' Ballads', in P. Fumerton, A. Guerrini and K. McAbee (eds), *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500-1800* (Surrey, 2010), pp. 131-149; F. E. Dolan, 'Home Rebels and House Traitors: Murderous Wives in Early Modern England', *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 4 (1992), pp. 1-33; S. Chess, 'And I My Vowe Did Keepe': Oath Making, Subjectivity and Husband Murder in 'Murderous Wife' Ballads', in P. Fumerton, A. Guerrini and K. McAbee (eds), *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500-1800* (Surrey, 2010), pp. 131-149; M. Lockwood, 'From Treason to Homicide: Changing Conceptions of the Law of Petty Treason in Early Modern England', *The Journal of Legal History* 34.1 (2013) pp. 31-49; D. Nolde, 'Le meurtre du conjoint devant le Parlement de Paris, (fin XVIIe-début XVIIIe siècle): le 'verdict' de l'entourage', in B. Garnot (ed.), *L'infrajudiciare du moyen âge à l'époque moderne* (Dijon, 1996), pp. 143-53.

make, as forc'd from her a great deal of blood'.⁴²¹ Denis was without doubt the very worst of husbands: graphically abusive, profligate and forcing his wife into ruin, while Mary was shown as embodying model forms of wifely behaviour, that which Manuel San Pedro has termed the 'ideal wife plea': repeatedly greeting Denis' abuses with forgiveness and reconciliation until he himself convinced her that there was no hope for her survival under his governance.⁴²² Mary was therefore shown as that rare thing, a perfect wife turned murderess.

Perhaps the most striking image in terms of the political ramifications of the murder appears in the woodcut that accompanied George Croom's printed ballad *A Warning Piece to all Husbands and Wives*, published following Aubry's execution (Figure 3.4). This ballad was already the most sympathetic depiction of Mary's crime, adding in a claim not present in other reports that Mary, riven with guilt, tried to revive Denis after death. Yet the woodcut seems to go one step further in arguing that Mary was not merely a victim, but a martyr. On first glance the image seems to depict Foxe's Guernsey Martyrs, the execution of three women in Guernsey in 1556 for holding Calvinist views, rendered famous by the supposed leaping from the flames of one of the women's babies from her womb, seen in the bottom right corner of the image. Yet rather than the traditional three women of the Guernsey Martyrs, this image has a fourth burning figure, looking on at the other three from the right. While woodcut recycling was very common in this period, and indeed woodcuts in other publications on Aubry were undoubtedly reproductions,⁴²³ the printer of this ballad, George Croom, was known for featuring new and original artwork in his publications. If this was a new creation, or a purposeful adaptation of a Guernsey martyrs image, and bearing in mind that Mary's Catholicism

⁴²¹ L'Estrange, *A Hellish Murder*, p. 33; Croom, *A Warning Piece*.

⁴²² M. San Pedro, 'L'assassinat du conjoint à Paris au XVIIIe siècle (1700-89) d'après les sources judiciaires', Masters Thesis (Paris IV Sorbonne, 1996), pp. 4-10.

⁴²³ The woodcut that accompanied *A Cabinet of Grief* had already appeared in *The Last Speech and Confession of Sarah Elestone* (London, 1678); Dolan, 'Tracking the Petty Traitor', p. 161.

might not have been as central to her representation as previously argued, it is perhaps not too much of a leap to infer that the fourth figure in the image could be Aubry, martyred in flames rather than submitting to a tyrant who jeopardised her morality and may have forced her from her Protestant faith, like many before her.⁴²⁴



Figure 3.4: Woodcut from G. Croom, *A Warning Piece to all Husbands and Wives* (London, 1680).⁴²⁵

But while publications on Aubry created a space to discuss the possibility of resisting tyranny, the overall figure of Aubry was more complex than martyred victim. Indeed alongside sympathetic representations came Elkanah Settle's *An Epilogue to the French Midwives Tragedy*, a more traditional representation of Mary's crime as a form of petty

⁴²⁴ *A Warning Piece* (London, 1688). I am indebted to Angela McShane for her information on George Croom. It is difficult to gauge the political leanings of Croom himself, who published throughout the 1680s. In the early years of the decade Croom published a number of pro-monarchy tracts, but in 1688, with the exception of a couple of proclamations, Croom seems to have concentrated on reproducing texts on crime and punishment. By 1689, however, he was printing pro-Williamite material.

⁴²⁵ Image source: Early English Books Online: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> Wing / W935. Reproduced with kind permission from the Bodelian Library, (Ashmole. G 15 (134).

treason: a rebellion against a husband and the most subversive and socially destructive of crimes. Although Settle himself had Whiggish sympathies, he clearly did not see the connection between this particular case and wider political events. In *An Epilogue*, Mary was not shown as a wife justifiably resisting husbandly abuse, but as a monster driven to inhuman violence (both morally and physically) by an unnatural and unjustifiable hatred of her husband for which she had earned immortality in print and damnation in the afterlife.⁴²⁶ This undercurrent of older tendencies to vilify the husband killer would re-emerge more powerfully with the case of Catherine Hayes in 1726, discussed in Chapter Four, demonstrating that the disturbing nature of such crimes had not disappeared, as has been argued by previous scholars, but were merely overshadowed in 1688 by the more immediate political context.

The high number of publications on Mary Aubry, and the generally sympathetic representations of a woman who committed an extremely violent murder upon her husband found within them, were the products of a specific moment within the consciousness of the London population. Although Whig supporters in the post- Glorious Revolution period would eschew parallels between monarchical and marital contract models, it is clear that reactions to the Aubry case were influenced by the argument of legitimate resistance to tyranny that was coursing through the London streets. Aubry was by no means a Whig heroine, after all no commentator questioned that she should be burned to death, but the context of 1688 allowed for the traditional framework of the petty- traitor/husband- killer as debauched and avaricious she- devil to be transformed, and for Mary's own testimony to shine through. While it has been argued that the direct relationship between state and household models of governance was breaking down by the late seventeenth century in England, the Aubry case shows that moments of political

⁴²⁶ Settle, *An Epilogue*.

crisis still had some influence on interpretations of marital dynamics, at least within homicide trials.⁴²⁷

This moment, however, did not last. Longer term unease about the spatial and political power of London midwives present in representations of Aubry, as shown in the first section of this chapter, exploded in the summer following Aubry's execution. The delivery of Mary of Modena of a son in June of 1688 and the subsequent 'Warming Pan scandal' highlighted dramatically the power that midwives had to determine the succession, and therefore future religion, of an entire nation. In the scandal it was rumoured that Judith Wilkes, Mary of Modena's Catholic midwife, had smuggled a baby into the royal bed in a warming pan and proclaimed it to be a new heir. There was no way of refuting Wilkes's claims of the baby's right to the throne because of her place within an exclusive space of female knowledge (the only other women present were also Catholic midwives), one with national implications. Midwives were at once empowered, Rachel Weil argues, and yet such empowerment was immediately suspected.⁴²⁸ It is not surprising that the subversive French midwives of Mary of Modena's delivery and the murderous French midwife burned three months previously became conflated, with Count Terreisi writing of rumours that Aubry herself had been involved in the warming-pan plot and that Denis had been murdered because he had found out about it.⁴²⁹ Aubry's nationality and occupation during a peak moment of French midwife suspicion was almost certainly the reason why all print discussion on her case ceased by June 1688. A subversive French midwife could no longer be seen as an object of pity, and so the case

⁴²⁷ See R. Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England 1680-1714* (Manchester, 1999), Chapter Three; A. Burguière, 'L'état monarchique et la famille (XVIe-XVIIIe Siècle)', *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 56 (2001), pp. 313-335; L. Pollock, 'Rethinking Patriarchy and the Family in Seventeenth-Century England,' *Journal of Family History* 23.1 (Jan, 1998) pp. 3-27; J. Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (Penn., 1998).

⁴²⁸ Weil, *Political Passions*, Chapter Three. See also C. Harol, 'Misconceiving the Heir: Mind and Matter in the Warming Pan Propaganda', in H. Deutsch and M. Terrall (eds), *Vital Matters: Eighteenth-Century Views of Conception, Life and Death* (Toronto, 2012), pp. 130-147.

⁴²⁹ The Terreisi letter is reproduced in M. Haile, *Queen Mary of Modena: her Life and Letters* (New York, 1905), p. 175 and is cited in Dolan, *Whores*, p. 216.

lost its interest. The only depiction of Aubry issued after this date, Francis Barlow's 'Revolution' playing cards pack of 1689 (Figure 3.2), reflected Aubry's newly subversive status in presenting the Aubry murder as part of the key political events of the revolution, and Aubry herself as a Catholic. Aubry is shown as the Queen of Clubs while Wilkes, her 'popish midwife' counterpart, is shown as the Queen of Spades. Wilkes is also depicted wearing the same clothes as Aubry, including Cellier's iconic bonnet, directly inferring a connection between different kinds of subversive midwife behaviour, or even conflating the different figures.⁴³⁰ While in January 1688 Mary's problematic midwife status could exist alongside her narrative of resistance, then, by June of the same year, increased mistrust of midwives, especially those who might have been Catholic, rendered her story too subversive for those seeking Whiggish arguments for justified resistance against tyrants.

The politicised representations of the cases of Mary Aubry and the women of the *affaire des poisons* shared a great deal of similarities. Both cases garnered high levels of press attention that focused on particular aspects of the crimes and their perpetrators, and not always those that would be expected. In the Aubry case, rather than vilifying a foreign petty traitor, commentators sympathised with the suffering that Mary had endured, and her continual attempts to reconcile with Denis in the lead up to the murder. In the *affaire*, coming so soon after the Brinvilliers trial of 1676, one would perhaps expect commentators to dwell at length on the iniquity and corruption of aristocratic women. While such women did feature in commentary, they were more often shown as naïve and manipulated fools than evil diableresses, a title reserved solely for La Voisin.⁴³¹ Focus had therefore shifted from the avarice and monetary parasitism of court life displayed in

⁴³⁰ The placing of the cards on the Aubry murders between those on the Warming Pan Scandal may also be indicative of this implication. The order comes from Whiting, *A Handful of History*, Chapter Nine, and is supposedly based on that found in Samuel Pepys' scrapbook. We cannot know, however, if this order was widespread. The numbers hand written on the cards seem to imply a different order. See also Dolan, *Whores*, pp. 212-218.

⁴³¹ 'Cette pauvre diablesse La Voisin', Sévigné, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Letter 737 p. 842.

the Brinvilliers trial onto the wider corrupting atmosphere of Paris itself. As with Malcolm and the Marquise, in both cases, interest was almost exclusively trained on the female perpetrators of the crimes. The magician Le Sage, although a key player in the poison network of the *affaire* and one of the unfortunates who had to endure a lifetime's imprisonment, featured extremely rarely in the coverage.⁴³² Mary Aubry's son, who may have assisted her in dismembering his father, was mentioned only briefly in publications, and in the only print of him (Figure 3.3) he was presented as much younger than he actually was, minimising his agency. Although the connections between the political and the personal were not always clear-cut (and becoming less so, particularly in London) in the late seventeenth century, and despite the starkly different political conditions of 1680s London and Paris, the perceived ramifications of these two cases was the same: a society in which female murder took place was a poorly governed society, a society worthy of introspection, criticism and change.⁴³³ So while neither city was exculpatory in its depictions of Aubry and the women of the *affaire des poisons* in each the blame ultimately fell on the corrupted male governors who had allowed the murders to happen.

Conclusion

In the heightened political climate of the 1680s, print discussions of the crimes of Mary Aubry and the *affaire des poisons* could serve as indicators of broader faultlines believed to be present within London and Parisian political systems. However the connections between personal and political disorder forged in such discussions were much more potent in Paris than they were in London. This was in part due to the greater role played by the female aristocracy within the Parisian print consciousness than in London. More

⁴³² *Mercure Hollandois* ('Amsterdam', 1680), p. 72; Voltaire, *Siècle*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

⁴³³ For questions of personal and political governance see: Burguière, 'L'Etat Monarchique et la Famille', pp. 313-335; E. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England* (London, 1999); S. Hanley, 'Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France', *French Historical Studies* 16.1 (1989), pp. 4-27; S. Hanley, 'Social Sites of Political Practice in France: Lawsuits, Civil Rights and the Separation of Powers in Domestic and State Government, 1500-1800', *The American Historical Review* 102.1 (Feb, 1997), pp. 27-52.

numerous (and, admittedly, more murderous) than their London counterparts, the doings of the female members of the second estate formed a central source of copy for printers, publishers and purveyors of news in late seventeenth-century Paris.⁴³⁴ The possibility that such women were being corrupted within the socially promiscuous space of Paris, even without the information that such plots had reached as far as the king, was seen as a major threat to social order in need of immediate rectification. But while in Paris concerns about the empowerment of the urban lower classes, the debauchery of Louis' court, and the crimes of La Voisin came together in a wider critique of the sun king's government, in London Mary's political status was cancelled out by her socially subversive role. Rather than embodying and exposing social disorder, representations of Mary placed her in the role of the London, and indeed British, population, forced into resistance by an abusive tyrant promising nothing but destruction. When her status as a French midwife came to eclipse this allegory, the story lost its interest. This contradiction reflected the closer ties that the *affaire* had to the governing classes, which gave it more obvious political implications than the Aubry case, but also the different print environments of London and Paris during the 1680s. In London, Mary Aubry could be appropriated as a sympathetic symbol of legitimate resistance at a particular moment in time, but such an interpretation of her story had no longevity in a society where overt political discussion was becoming more possible: it was only in the highly-charged atmosphere of 1688 that political commentators had to hide behind personal analogies. But in 1680s Paris, with heavy censorship, a political system hugely sensitive to any mistake, and an aristocracy who formed a more substantial part of public consciousness than its London counterpart, the *affaire de poisons*, despite (or perhaps because of) Louis' best attempts at concealment, continued to serve as a powerful motif for political critique right up until the revolution.

⁴³⁴ For an excellent review of the lives of aristocrats in the eighteenth-century capital see: M. Marraud, *La Noblesse de Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2000)

Of course, the political power of these women was nothing more than a print motif. In the judicial realities of Paris and London, neither perpetrator was empowered through their crimes. Mary Aubry's brief sympathetic representation in the press would have been little comfort when she approached the stake, a punishment that no one believed she should be exempt from. In Paris, La Voisin's denunciation of every noble she had ever met (or had even heard of) did extend her life by another ten months, but she was still executed in horrific circumstances. Worse still, her daughter was then imprisoned in solitary confinement for the rest of her life. Even La Voisin had underestimated the shift of power within Paris: she believed that she would be able to save herself by blackmailing her noble clients, but found instead that her clients were dragged in to face justice alongside her. At the core of these perceptions, therefore, was a paradox. The subversive behaviour of these women created a welcome means through which to enact political critique, but the women themselves were dismissed through longer-term concerns with the practices of urban female medical practitioners and movements to colonise such practices by man midwives. It was the latter element which ultimately prevailed, with the *affaire* ending with an edict de-legitimizing centuries-old forms of female expertise and the Aubry case disappearing from print for a century.

Husband-murder, it has been argued by scholars of eighteenth-century female-perpetrated homicide, was the ultimate subversive female act: a form of treason (as it was in fact judicially defined in London) in which the wife rose up against her husband who was also her king. The murderous wife was, according to such authors, the ‘archetype of female evil’.⁴³⁶ Debauched, avaricious and heartless, such women exposed a threat that existed at the core of every household. In writing about such cases, it has been argued, eighteenth-century commentators were able to exorcise a widespread social phobia of the agency of wives, and at the same time justify heavy-handed marital discipline. As the household was seen as a miniature version of the state, such murderous acts were used to frame woman’s inherent sinfulness as a constant threat to social order, in need of continual suppression, and to demonstrate that the whole of society had a responsibility to keep women in their place.⁴³⁷ Yet, as already seen in the case of Mary Aubry, representations of high-profile cases of husband murder that appeared in print in both London and Paris were more complex than simple expositions of latent wifely evil. While the conditions of 1688 led to a specific interpretation of the Aubry murder in print culture, other high-profile cases of husband murder were also perceived through more

⁴³⁵ This title is a variation on S. A. Kane, ‘Wives with Knives: Early Modern Murder Ballads and the Transgressive Commodity’, *Criticism* 38.2 (Spring, 1996), pp. 219-237.

⁴³⁶ K. T. Saxton, *Narratives of Women and Murder in England 1680-1760* (Surrey, 2009), p. 60.

⁴³⁷ See, for example, S. Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 58-68; Kane, ‘Wives with Knives’, pp. 219-237; M. A. Doody, ‘“Those Eyes Are Made So Killing”: Eighteenth-Century Murderesses and the Law’, *Princeton Library Chronicle* 46 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 49-81; J. Knelman, *Twisting in the Wind: the Murderess and the English Press* (Toronto, 1998), Chapter Four; S. S. Heinzelman, ‘Women’s Petty Treason: Feminism, Narrative and the Law’, *Journal of Narrative Technique* 20.2 (Spring, 1990), pp. 89-106; S. C. Staub, *Nature’s Cruel Stepdames: Murderous Women in the Street Literature of Seventeenth-Century England* (Pittsburgh, 2005), Chapter Two. Attempts to moderate this approach can be seen in F. E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1500-1700* (Cornell, 1994), Chapter Two; F. E. Dolan, ‘Tracking the Petty Traitor across Genres’, in P. Fumerton, A. Guerrini and K. McAbee (eds), *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500-1800* (Surrey, 2010), pp. 149-171; R. Livingstone, ‘Unsettled Households: Domestic Homicide in Seventeenth-Century England’ PhD Thesis (Tulane University, 2007), Chapter One; R. Martin, *Women, Murder and Equity in Early Modern England* (Abingdon, 2008), Chapter Two; S. Juratic, ‘Meurtrière de son mari: un ‘destin’ criminel au XVIIIe siècle? L’affaire Lescombat’, *Revue d’Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 34.3 (1987), pp. 123-137; S. Juratic, ‘Contraintes conjugales et violences féminines: épouses meurtrières au XVIIIème siècle’, *Pénélope* 6 (Spring, 1982), pp. 104-108.

complex dynamics than simple narratives of oppression and rebellion at less politically fraught moments. In discussing the husband murders of Catherine Hayes, Angélique Nicole Carlier (referred to in all printed material, and so also in this chapter, by her married title of Madame Tiquet) and Marie Catherine Taperet (sometimes known as Madame Lescombat), eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians revealed much more specific tensions about changes in contemporary understandings of the relationship between love and marriage. In particular, such cases were used to explore the specific perceived challenges of securing a happy match and then keeping a marriage stable within the densely populated and socially promiscuous spaces of London and Paris. In so doing, it was not merely the murderous wives who were shown to be at fault, and in examining the circumstances that had led to these three murders, Londoners and Parisians also explored the failings of these women's male accomplices, as well as of the husband-victims themselves. In Paris, where perceived connections between household, social stability and political order continued for longer into the eighteenth century, the murder of husbands by their wives could also be seen to be symbolic of the failings of the judicial system to keep the city under control.

The first high-profile case of husband murder in Paris for this period was in fact not a case of husband murder at all, in that the victim survived the attack. Angélique Nicole Carlier, known almost exclusively as Madame Tiquet, had married *parlementaire* Claude Tiquet at the age of 15. Madame Tiquet's marriage had been beset by financial problems, and her infidelities, particularly with a dashing *Chevalier des Gardes* named Mongeorges, were well known. With the assistance of her porter Mouru and another servant named Cattelain, Madame Tiquet plotted to dispatch her husband once and for all in 1696, after thirty years of marriage. The plot, which involved assassins leaping out at Monsieur Tiquet in an alleyway, failed. A second plot to poison Monsieur Tiquet also failed when the servant carrying the poisoned porridge noticed a suspicious powder and

deliberately tripped, spilling the dish. In 1699, Madame Tiquet and Mouru made a third attempt. This time hired assassins shot Tiquet with a pistol as he returned home from a neighbour. Tiquet yet again survived, but investigation soon revealed Madame Tiquet to have been behind the series of attacks. Cattelain turned evidence, and Madame Tiquet and Mouru were both convicted. Despite her husband's pleas for clemency, Mouru was hung and she (being noble) was beheaded on the 18th of June 1699 in front of an enormous crowd.⁴³⁸

The case of Catherine Hayes in 1726 was met with equal shock and fascination by print commentators on the other side of the channel. 36 year-old Catherine was convicted of having incited her two lodgers, Thomas Wood and Thomas Billings (who was also her son and lover), into murdering her husband. They had lured John into a drunken stupor before the two men had swung an axe into his skull and then dismembered the corpse. To evade capture, and at Catherine's suggestion, Billings and Wood had thrown John's head into the Thames, and had sunk his torso and limbs into a pond. But they were unlucky. The tide failed to carry the head out to sea, and it was fished out and placed upon a pole in the churchyard of St Margaret Westminster. Whisperings that the head resembled John Hayes reached Hayes' friends who, perturbed by John's sudden absence, had Catherine and Billings arrested, with Wood being taken shortly after. The two men quickly capitulated and confessed, although Catherine insisted on her innocence (claiming she had been in the other room when the murder took place) until the end. Wood died in

⁴³⁸ Central narrative taken from AN :Y11126 ; G. de Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres et intéressantes*, Vol. 4 (La Haye, 1750), pp. 1-58; A. Petit Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes de deux dames de condition*, Vol. 1 (Cologne, 1713), pp. 262-295; N. de Gueudeville, *L'Esprit des cours de l'Europe, où l'on voit tout ce qui s'y passe de plus important sur la politique, & en général ce qu'il y a de plus remarquables dans les nouvelles* (Unknown, 1699), pp. 155-67; F. Gastaud, *Oraison funèbre de Madame Tiquet* (Paris, 1699); F. Gastaud, *Le Triomphe de la Grâce dans la conversion et la mort de Basilisse* (Paris, 1699); Marquis de Dagneau, *Journal du Marquis de Dangeau*, ed. Soulié, Dussieux, de Chennevières, Mantz, and de Montaiglon, Vol. 7 (Paris, 1856), pp. 61-2, 70-1, 93-4, 99-100; J-F. de La Croix, *Dictionnaire portative des faits et dits mémorables de l'histoire ancienne et moderne*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1768), pp. 701-704; S. De Goncourt, *Remarques historiques sur l'église et la paroisse de S Sulpice* (Paris, 1773), pp. 266-270 ; J. Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres de la France*, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1762), pp. 11-34.

prison, but Billings and Hayes were executed: Billings by being hung in chains and Hayes by being burnt, the traditional punishment for husband-killers in England.⁴³⁹

The final case of husband murder which captured eighteenth-century imaginations was that of Parisian murderess Marie Catherine Taperet. Taperet had been convicted of inciting her lodger, who was also her lover, one Jean Louis DeMongeot, into murdering her husband, Alexandre Lescombat. In June 1753 DeMongeot stabbed Lescombat ten times in the back, as the men made their way home from a drunken evening at the Jardins de Luxembourg. DeMongeot's plea of self-defence, that Lescombat had threatened him with a pistol and he had stabbed him to save his own life, was not believed and he was sentenced to execution on the wheel in January 1755. Taperet's role in the murder was unclear, although it was suspected that she and DeMongeot had been lovers, until DeMongeot exposed her as instigator and mastermind of the crime in his final confession. Taperet, eight months pregnant, was quickly tried and convicted but had her sentence respited until four weeks after she had given birth, at which point she declared herself pregnant again. It was not until July 1755 that she was confirmed as not with child, and so could be put to torture, during which she finally confessed, and was executed by hanging.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ Central narrative taken from *The Life of Catherine Hayes* (London, 1726); *A Narrative of the Barbarous and Unheard of Murder of John Hayes* (London, 1726); *OBP*, April 1726, trial of Katharine Hays (t17260420-42); *OBP*, *Ordinary of Newgate's Account*, May 1726 (OA17260509); *The Last Speech Confession and Dying Words of Mrs. Catherine Hayes, who was Burn'd Alive at Tyburn, for the Murder of her Husband, on Monday the 9th, of this Instant May 1726* (Dublin, 1726); C. Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals*, Vol. 2 (London, 1734) pp. 214-263; *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds, and Other Offences*, Vol. 2 (London, 1734), pp. 181-197; *Select Trials at the Sessions-House in the Old-Bailey*, Vol. 3 (London, 1742), pp. 1-37; 'Song X: God Prosper Long our Noble King' in *The Vocal Miscellany a Collection of Above Four Hundred Celebrated Songs* (Dublin, 1738), p. 9.

⁴⁴⁰ Central narrative taken from AN: Y 10166; X2a 779, 17 Janvier 1755; AD Gueulette III 8; *Lettre d'un Français à un Anglais, (1er Juillet 1755)* (Paris, 1755); *Lettre d'un Anglais à un Français* (Paris, 1755), and *Lettres amoureuses de la D* Lescombat et du Sieur Mongeot ou l'histoire de leurs criminels amours* (Troyes, 1755); *Amusemens de la toilette ou recueil des faits les plus singuliers, tragiques et comiques de l'amour* (La Haye, 1756), Vol. 1, pp. 1-7, 113-126, 161 and Vol. 2, pp. 81-82; *Oraison funèbre de très haute et très puissante Dame Marie-Catherine Taperet, douairière de Louis-Alexandre Lescombat* (date and publication unknown); *Arrêt de Parlement qui condamne Marie-Catherine Taperet à être pendue et étranglée en Place de Grève, pour crime de complicité dans l'assassinat de Louis-Alexandre Lescombat son mari, commis par Jean-Baptiste de Mongeot* (date and publication unknown); P. Vander, *La mort de*

As shown in Chapter One, husband murder was seen as a particularly heinous crime in both London and Paris during the period and had higher conviction rates than for other kinds of murder committed by women. It was also one of the more common forms of female homicide, forming around 13 per cent of murders committed by women. In England, the crime of husband murder was legally treated as a form of treason in miniature, carrying the punishment of burning, although, as Matthew Lockwood has shown, this was redefined over the course of the century with husband murder coming to be identified as just another form of homicide to be punished by hanging, even before the practice of executing women by burning was abolished in 1790.⁴⁴¹ Catherine Hayes was in fact the last woman in London (though not in England) to be burnt for the crime.⁴⁴² Yet this judicial concern was not matched by a similar concern with husband murder in print. With the exception of the Aubry case discussed in the previous chapter, these three cases were the only instances of London or Parisian husband murder to receive high levels of print attention during the period.⁴⁴³ In the same way that being a female killer was not enough to elicit a strong print reaction, so it was also true that killing one's husband was not enough to earn print notoriety in eighteenth-century London and Paris. That these three women in particular were those who became high-profile cases is all the more remarkable given that not one of the actually delivered the killing blow against their husbands, and in the case of Tiquet there was no murder at all. As legal commentators were quick to emphasise in all three cases, however, both London and Parisian justice systems treated those who could be shown to have played a heavy role in

Lescombat, tragédie (La Haye, 1755); *Mémoire pour Jean Louis DeMongeot* (Paris, 1755). See also P. Figerou, *La belle Madame Lescombat: son amant et son mari* (Paris, 1921).

⁴⁴¹ M. Lockwood, 'From Treason to Homicide: Changing Conceptions of the Law of Petty Treason in Early Modern England', *The Journal of Legal History* 34.1 (2013), pp. 31-49.

⁴⁴² Women did, however, continue to be burned for forging until 1790, see Mary Spencer Williams, *OBP* January 1780, trial of Mary the wife of Spencer Williams (t17800112-34); Catherine Heyland, *OBP* April 1788, trial of William James, alias Levi Ann Allen Catherine Heyland (t17880402-48); Margaret Sullivan, *OBP* May 1788, trial of Jeremiah Grace Margaret Sullivan (t17880507-30).

⁴⁴³ This marked a sharp change from the early seventeenth century, when husband murder was a much more prominent crime in print, see Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, Chapter Two; Martin, *Women, Murder and Equity*, Chapter Two; and Livingstone, 'Unsettled Households', Chapter One.

organising a murder or attempted murder as perpetrators themselves.⁴⁴⁴ Nonetheless, there were plenty of women in both cities who had killed their husbands violently and by their own hand who were passed over by commentators.

Central to the high-profile reactions to these cases, this chapter will argue, was the fact that the specific domestic situations of the households involved chimed with wider perceived challenges to marital relations within the urban environment, and the implications of such challenges for social order. These challenges, which lay within the changing social structures of both cities brought about by their vast expansion, were more complex and more specific than a patriarchal belief in the inherent evil present within all wives: if nothing else, such beliefs did not make sense in a society where marriage continued to be the norm for the vast majority of the population. In this way, each case can reveal the complexities of concerns and beliefs about the married state within the urban environment emerging in the eighteenth century, and of the perceived ramifications of spousal murder, on either side of the channel. Perhaps more so than any of the other murderesses explored in this thesis perceptions of these three women would also have been heavily coloured by individual Parisians and London readers' own experiences of matrimony and affection in the city, given the quasi-ubiquitous nature of marriage in eighteenth century society. In this way, scholarly arguments that husband-killers were universally appropriated into terrifying narratives of extreme subversion are challenged twofold: firstly in terms of the variety and complexity of ways in which these crimes were explained and understood in print, and secondly in terms of the even greater variety of ways in which they would have been read.

⁴⁴⁴ The Ordinary in *OBP, Ordinary of Newgate's Account*, May 1726 (OA17260509); De la Croix in *Dictionnaire portative*, p. 702 and Muyart de Voullans in *Institutes au droit criminel, ou principes généraux de ces matières, suivant le droit civil, canonique et la jurisprudence du Royaume* (Paris, 1757), p. 528 and in *Les lois criminelles de France dans leur ordre naturel* (Paris, 1780), p. 182 all make this point. The classic example is that of Marie Conventance, convicted of organising the murder of her husband despite being in a convent at the time AN Séries Y, Y10040.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first will focus on the ways in which the three crimes resonated with concerns about the marriage market and the dangers of adulterous love in both cities. In the second section the specific threats posed to such marriages by the urban environment will be explored: both the ways that the density of urban living situations was believed to create disorder at the core of the household, and, in Paris, the perceived role played by the urban space in causing and facilitating the murders. Finally, the third section will turn to the ways in which discussions of these crimes were used to explore questions of good governance by husbands, as well as, in Paris in particular, by city and government officials.

Tying the Knot: the Making of a Murderous Adulterous Marriage

Eighteenth-century understandings of marriage were marked by both entrenched continuity and emerging conflict. While legal structures continued to enforce a hierarchical model of marriage (particularly in France where, Sarah Hanley has shown, a surge of new laws were passed in the latter years of the seventeenth century bringing together state and household patriarchal authority⁴⁴⁵), discussions of the need for mutual affection between husband and wife were beginning to gain traction. Among the middle classes in particular, such ideas helped to forge new ideals of ‘domesticity’, further explored in Chapter Five. Yet a number of studies have shown that rising expectations of marital love, to the extent that they did emerge, were not necessarily mutually exclusive from traditions of male authority: patriarchs were expected to govern, but govern with love and self-control, as shown in the high (higher than for wives who killed their husbands) rates of conviction for husbands who killed their wives.⁴⁴⁶ Meanwhile, from

⁴⁴⁵ S. Hanley, ‘Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France’, *French Historical Studies* 16.1 (1989), pp. 4-27.

⁴⁴⁶ Central works to the debate include: J. Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England 1660-1800* (Cambridge, 2003); J-L., Flandrin, *Familles: parenté, maison, sexualité dans l'ancienne société* (Paris, 1976); A. Fletcher, ‘The Protestant Idea of Marriage in Early Modern England’, in P. Collinson, A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 161-180; F. Lebrun, *La vie conjugale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1975); C.

the sixteenth century onwards, the secularisation of the judicial system in both England and France led to a shift in conceptions of adultery from a sin against God to a sin against one's spouse: a form of emotional, rather than spiritual, betrayal.⁴⁴⁷ Such changes, however, had some cross-channel differences. In England, while Faramerz Dabhoiwala has argued for a 'first sexual revolution' taking place among the early eighteenth-century upper classes (particularly the men) leading to a toleration of more adventurous and non-monogamous sexual activities, within the middling and lower classes, to whom the Hayes family belonged, Protestant ideals of marital mutuality formed a central part of the ways in which individuals constructed their identity and exhibited their worth.⁴⁴⁸ Such ideals brought expectations of marital love and fidelity to the fore, and so adultery among these groups was often characterised as sheer lust and weakness. David Turner has shown that although the close connection between adultery and homicide found in pamphlets on female homicide of the pre-Civil War period was becoming less clear-cut, adultery continued to be a popular motif in demonstrating marital disorder within pamphlets on domestic homicide in the early decades of the eighteenth century.⁴⁴⁹ But in France, especially among the *haute bourgeoisie* and upper-classes to whom Tiquet and Taperet belonged, an understanding that one had to marry for necessity, and that adulterous love was an almost an inexorable by-product of such kinds of marriage formation, paired with the emergence of *sensibilité* which sentimentalised adulterous

Roulston, *Narrating Marriage in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (Surrey, 2010); L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1979); J. Traer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cornell, 1980); K. Harvey, *The Little Republic, Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012); J. Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (Pennsylvania, 1998); M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Gender, Commerce and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (California, 1996); A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998).

⁴⁴⁷ This is a long term change taking place long before the eighteenth century, but arguments that adultery took on a particular form within the eighteenth century can be found in D. Turner, *Fashioning Adultery: Gender Sex and Civility in England, 1660-1740* (Cambridge, 2002) and F. Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (London, 2012).

⁴⁴⁸ Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex*; D. T. Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice* (Yale, 2013); Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*. A compelling exploration into the connections between household order and (particularly masculine) identity among the middling sort can be seen in Harvey, *The Little Republic*.

⁴⁴⁹ Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, Chapter Four.

liaisons may have led adultery to be seen as a more emotionally complex and inevitable part of life, if not necessarily less sinful.⁴⁵⁰

Many publications on the crimes of these three women were specifically advertised as commentaries on marriage and adultery either through frontispieces or by concentrating in the opening paragraphs on discussions on marriage and the law.⁴⁵¹ But rather than serve as general discussions on the dangers of subverted gender hierarchies within matrimony, these murderous marriages were held up as powerful examples of the dangers of two of the most troubling marital arrangements for an eighteenth-century audience: clandestine elopement and superficial marriage markets in which girls chose suitors unsupervised.

In London, the case of Catherine Hayes was perceived to be a warning against clandestine elopement. Concern about clandestine marriage in the early decades of the eighteenth century focused upon the (real) possibility that ideals of marital love and marriage ceremonies that did not require parental consent could be exploited by fortune hunters, creating unsuitable matches based only on infatuation that parents were powerless to prevent.⁴⁵² This concern did not merely exist among the rich, nor was it only women who were believed to be the victims of such seduction, as the Hayes case shows. There is some disagreement within the sources as to how exactly John was seduced by Catherine, but all commentators agreed the marriage was below John's status

⁴⁵⁰ Traer, *Marriage and the Family*; Roulston, *Narrating Marriage*. Turner has shown that this was also true, to a lesser extent, for the English upper classes, Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, pp. 45-49. Among the French lower classes, as with the English, attitudes to adultery were equally complex, see for example: F-J. Ruggiu, *L'individu et la famille dans les sociétés urbaines anglaise et française (1720-1780)* (Paris, 2007); C. Blum, *Strength in Numbers: Population, Reproduction and Power in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore, 2002); A. Pasco, *Revolutionary Love in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century France* (London, 2009); R. Rand (ed.), *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1997).

⁴⁵¹ See in particular *Lettres amoureuses*, p. 3; *A Narrative*, pp. 6-7; *The Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals*, Vol. 2 (London, 1735), p. 190; *The Malefactor's Register* (London, 1779), Vol. 2, p. 129; *Mercure de France* (4 Nov. 1780), p. 17; N. Des Essarts, *Procès fameux, extraits de l'essai sur l'histoire générale, des tribunaux des peuples tant anciens que modernes*, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1786), p. 278; *Essais de jurisprudence sur toutes sortes de sujets, questions de droit civil et canonique* (Paris, 1757), p. 148.

⁴⁵² D. Lemmings, 'Marriage and the Law in the Eighteenth Century, Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753', *The Historical Journal* 39.2 (June, 1996), pp. 339-360.

and expressly against his parent's wishes. In probably the first extended account of the crime, and the one over which Catherine may have had some influence, *The Life of Catherine Hayes*, the two are reported to have eloped after Catherine was taken in by John Hayes' mother 'in compassion' when she found her 'raving' about the Worcestershire countryside.⁴⁵³ This version of events was echoed in the Ordinary's *Account*, which claimed that John decided to marry her 'upon eight days acquaintance' after she passed by the house.⁴⁵⁴ However, when John Hayes' family printed *A Narrative of the Barbarous and Unheard of Murder of John Hayes*, Catherine's role was altered from that of passing visitor to servant, a more common and therefore more threatening household presence for middle-class readers.⁴⁵⁵ In the publication of Catherine's *Last Dying Speech*, not only was Catherine represented as using her role of servant to seduce her master's son, but in fact declared that it was her sole reason for going into service.⁴⁵⁶ In later editions of *The Life of Catherine Hayes*, also, Catherine's role was altered to servant, so all publications came to emphasise the threat that servant girls posed to young men, and reinforced calls for masters to keep their children separate from their servants.

The inability of John's parents to prevent such a match was shown in the wide reproduction of two conflicting anecdotes about how the marriage was formed. A *Narrative*, focusing on Catherine's instability, reported that when Hayes family had found out about the engagement and had tried to intervene Catherine had threatened suicide until they had been allowed to wed. Meanwhile, *The Life*, which was more sympathetic towards Catherine, reported that John and Catherine had together carefully planned their escape, each giving conflicting stories to sneak away from John's parents

⁴⁵³ *The Life*, p. 3.

⁴⁵⁴ *OBP, Ordinary's Account*, 9th May 1726 (OA17260509).

⁴⁵⁵ *A Narrative*, p. 22.

⁴⁵⁶ *The Last Speech*.

who did not know about the marriage until after it had already happened.⁴⁵⁷ Whichever story was told, concern with clandestine elopement and the possibility for servant girls to prey up on and manipulate credulous sons and heirs did not dissipate after the passing of Hardwicke's 1753 act, which rendered clandestine marriage illegal. As late as 1779 accounts of Hayes' crime drew clear links to the dangers of elopements with women of a lower status, as *The Malefactor's Register* declared: 'if this youth had so far "honoured his father and his mother" as even to have consulted them on so important a change of life, it is probable they would have advised him against marrying their servant-maid, by which he would have escaped the unnatural death that afterwards befell him'.⁴⁵⁸

The unhappiness that could come from marrying someone unknown to one's family, and from a lower social rank, was exemplified through the series of characters from Catherine's past who were shown as disrupting the marriage. In several accounts it was reported that on Catherine and John's wedding night a group of musqueteers with whom Catherine had had prior relations broke into the newlyweds' bedroom and press-ganged John into the army.⁴⁵⁹ These men presaged the disruption caused by the arrival of Thomas Billings, Catherine's son from before her marriage (though not acknowledged as such). While some press accounts reported Billings to be John's son, the two main biographies, Catherine's *Last Dying Speech* and most subsequent publications identified Billings as Catherine's son from her camp following days: a baby she 'dropped in

⁴⁵⁷ The suicide is depicted in *A Narrative*, p. 26 and the secret elopement is described in *The Life*, p. 5. The suicide is further reproduced in *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds and Other Offences*, Vol. 2 (London, 1734), p. 184; *Select Trials at the Sessions House*, Vol. 2 (London, 1742), p. 3. The smuggling out of the house is reproduced in *The Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals*, Vol. 2, p.192; *A Select and Partial Account of the Lives, Behaviour and Dying Words of the Most Remarkable Convicts*, Vol. 2 (London, 1760), p. 7; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 100; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 2 (London, 1795), p. 100; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1788), p. 10; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 1 (London, 1779), p. 399; D. Defoe, *A History of the Lives and Exploits of the Most Remarkable Pirates, Highwaymen, Murderers, Street-Robbers* (London, 1742), p.60; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1768), p. 254.

⁴⁵⁸ *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 127.

⁴⁵⁹ *A Narrative*, p. 23; *The Life*, p. 5; *The Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals*, Vol. 2, p.192; *A Select and Partial Account*, Vol. 2, p. 7; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 100; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 2, p. 100; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 2, p. 10; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 1, p. 399; Defoe, *A History of the Lives and Exploits*, p.60; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2, p. 254

Worcestershire in a basket'.⁴⁶⁰ The household presence of the son with filial loyalty to the mother but not the stepfather proved catastrophic to the Hayes marriage. The possible apparition of such figures, it was implied, was a risk taken when marrying a girl whose past was unknown and whose reputation could not be verified.

While the case of Catherine Hayes was emblematic of the dangers posed to young men of the lower middle classes by seductive servant girls and clandestine marriage, in Paris concerns revealed in the cases of Madame Tiquet and Marie Catherine Taperet focused upon the marriage markets of the *haute bourgeoisie* and aristocracy, and the dangerous emphasis put upon beauty, money and, consequently, deception in such circles. Madame Tiquet and Marie Catherine Taperet were shown as making poor decisions in choosing a husband because they were orphans, without parents to guide them, reliant only on the advice of silly female relatives and unable to see through their suitors' deceptions. Their suitors were in turn shown to have been deceived by each woman's beauty and wealth, overlooking their more insidious flaws.

In discussing the disastrous forging of the Tiquet marriage, commentators were split over whether the fault lay with Monsieur or Madame Tiquet. But representations universally agreed that a courtship system which did not allow partners to get to know one another before marriage was bound for disaster. In the *Lettres historiques et gallantes*, published by Madame Tiquet's friend Anne Petit Du Noyer, and subsequent publications based upon them, Claude Tiquet appeared as a fortune hunter who seduced Madame Tiquet and

⁴⁶⁰ *The Last Dying Speech*. Billings is reported as John's son in *OBP, Ordinary's Account*, 9th May 1726 (OA17260509); *Evening Post* (7 May 1726); *British Journal* (14 May 1726). The *London Journal* (14 May 1726) claims it is fact John Hayes' own father who is Billings' father after having an affair with Catherine while she worked as a servant. Billings is more generally reported as a pre-wedlock illegitimate child in: *Weekly Journal* (9 April 1726); *A Narrative*, p. 27; *The Life*, p.37; *The Last Dying Speech*; Defoe, *A History of the Lives and Exploits*, pp. 406; *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds and Other Offences*, Vol. 2 (London, 1734), p. 186; *Select Trials at the Sessions House*, Vol. 2 (London, 1742), p. 1; *The Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals*, Vol. 2, p.190; *A Select and Partial Account*, Vol. 2, p. 6; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 99; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 2, p. 99; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 2, p. 9; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 1, p. 397; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1768), p. 252.

her aunt with a bouquet of roses edged with diamonds worth 15,000 livres, so giving the impression that he was her equal in wealth, only to reveal that he was penniless after the wedding.⁴⁶¹ But there was another group of publications, in particular the series of *Causes Célèbres* by Gayot de Pitaval, in which the deception was blamed on Madame Tiquet, who was shown to have hidden her irascible spending habits from Monsieur Tiquet, driving him into ruin.⁴⁶² De Pitaval railed against the blindness caused by arranging marriages in such environments: ‘M Tiquet saw nothing of the fragile virtue of his bride, nor her inclination for spending; she saw none of the strangeness of her suitor, nor his antisocial lifestyle’.⁴⁶³ Whoever may have been at fault for causing the Tiquet marital crisis, the real perpetrator was the system of courtship itself, driven by lust and avarice rather than judgement on suitability for matrimony.

As with Madame Tiquet, Marie Catherine Taperet was shown to have chosen a man wholly unsuitable for her (Lescombat was abusive and almost certainly syphilitic) due to a lack of patriarchal guidance and a lustful courtship, and Lescombat in turn was shown to have been taken in by her beauty, overlooking her vanity and debauchery. Particular emphasis was placed in portraits of Taperet on the dangers of being taken in by a ‘monster’ hidden under a beautiful exterior, emphasised through depictions of her in either classical or seductive poses accompanied by verses hinting at her evil core

⁴⁶¹ Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 284 ; *Histoire des pendus célèbres, des roués, brûlés*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1817), p. 34; Aublet de Maubuy, *Les vies des femmes illustres*, Vol. 4, p. 7; *Gallick Reports: or, an Historical Collection of Criminal Cases, Adjudged in the Supreme Courts of Judicature in France* (London 1737), p. 284. The Du Noyer letters were also published in English *Lettres from a Lady at Paris to a Lady at Avignon, Written by Madam Du Noyer*, Vol. 11 (London, 1717), pp. 29-40 and in Charlotte Smith, *The Romance of Real Life*, Vol. 2 (London, 1787), pp. 73-95.

⁴⁶² A. Duggan, ‘The Tiquet Affair as Recounted in Madame Du Noyer’s *Lettres Historiques et Galantes: The Defiant Galante Femme*’, *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature* 24.46 (1997), pp. 259-276; G. De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes, avec les Jugements qui les ont Décidés*, Vol. 6 (La Haye, 1734), pp. 1-44 reproduced in Vol. 4 (La Haye, 1735), Vols 3, 4, 5 (La Haye, 1743). An extended text can be found in G. De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes*, Vol. 4 (La Haye, 1750), pp. 1-61 which was then reproduced in Vol. 4 (La Haye, 1757), Vol. 4 (La Haye, 1764) ; N. Des Essarts, *Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes*, Vol. 5 (La Haye, 1773), Vol. 4 (La Haye, 1775) and P. Besdel, *Abrégé des Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes* (La Haye, 1784), (La Haye, 1787). Pitaval’s 1734 version appears in English in *Gallick Reports*, pp. 284-305.

⁴⁶³ ‘M Tiquet ne vit point l’extrême fragilité de la vertu de sa Maîtresse, ni son inclination portée à la dépense : elle ne vit aucun vestige de la bizarrerie de son Amant, ni de ses vies contraires à l’esprit de société’, De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 6 (La Haye, 1734), p. 6.

(Figures 4.1, 4.2).⁴⁶⁴ The perilous nature of society-based courtship rituals where life-time commitments were determined in crowded ballrooms were evoked in the two songs published at Taperet's execution, in which she was depicted 'saving her last dance' for the executioner, who invited her to join him in a 'minute and passepied': a high society form of the executioner's jig.⁴⁶⁵ Such artifice was also connected to Taperet's occupation as a *marchande de mode*, a woman who, like those of the *affaire des poisons*, made a business from making women look artificially beautiful.⁴⁶⁶ In a society increasingly based upon appearance rather than pedigree, such women could be seen to pose a real and endemic threat among the upper classes.



Figure 4.1: *Portrait de Marie Catherine Taperet* (Paris, 1755).⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ 'Par la beauté du corps ne jugeons pas de l'âme/ sexe trop séduisant, cette méchante femme/ ce monstre', M. Moraine, *Portrait de Madame Lescombat* (Paris, 1775).

⁴⁶⁵ 'Aujourd'hui il nous faut danser/ Ma salle est déjà préparée', 'C'est pour m'y voir danser/ Chose assurée/Menuet & Passe-pied', Anon., *Chanson nouvelle sur Madame Lescombat* (Paris, 1755) and Anon., *Complainte et epitaphe de Madame Lescombat* (Paris, 1755). Both from AN Gueullette AD III 8.

⁴⁶⁶ On the figure of the *marchande de mode* see J. Jones, *M. Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (London, 2004) and C. H. Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (London, 2013).

⁴⁶⁷ Image Source: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>[Accessed 23rd July 2015] [ark://12148/btv1b84092810](http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84092810). Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE QB-201 (101)-FOL.



Figure 4.2: *Le véritable portrait de Marie Catherine Taperet* (Paris, 1755).⁴⁶⁸

The disappointment that came with marriages based on deception could easily translate into adultery: one defender of Madame Tiquet, for example, exclaimed ‘How could Monsieur Tiquet dare to flatter himself that he could defend his wife’s heart from a gallant [her lover Mongeorges] so adept in giving pleasure, he [Monsieur Tiquet] who united so many vices in his heart?’⁴⁶⁹ Marriage to such a man, it was argued, made resisting adultery all but impossible. In discussions of the case of Madame Tiquet, two different kinds of adultery were present. Her relationship with the Chevalier Mongeorges was heavily romanticised with Mongeorges depicted in romantic anguish following her execution, roaming the gardens of Versailles and pleading with the king for nine months leave to grieve, in stark contrast to the cowardly Monsieur Tiquet who had gone into

⁴⁶⁸ Image Source: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> [Accessed 23rd July 2015] <ark:/12148/btv1b8409279x>. Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE QB-201 (101)-FOL

⁴⁶⁹ Aublet de Maubuy, *Vie des Femmes Illustres*, Vol. 4, p. 12.

hiding.⁴⁷⁰ At the same time, the sexual pleasures that Madame Tiquet discovered with Mongeorges were shown as stimulating an unquenchable appetite which led her to commit debauched sexual acts with all and sundry including, most importantly, the servants who became her accomplices in the murder.⁴⁷¹ This formed part of wider beliefs about the nature of female sexuality: non-existent until aroused when it became unstoppable, as one commentator declared, ‘it is easier to find women who have had no affairs than women who have had only one’.⁴⁷² Madame Tiquet’s salacious appetites were argued to have been sent from God to punish her for her vanity, itself caused by her beauty. ‘Beautiful and chaste’, it was declared, ‘very rarely go together’.⁴⁷³ For commentators such as De Pitaval, this was a sign of Madame Tiquet’s pathologised evil, and yet another reason to steer clear of beautiful wives.⁴⁷⁴ Yet there were others who saw such behaviour as a simple offshoot of the marital state. Jeffry Ravel has demonstrated this most compellingly in his study of Pierre Bayle’s treatment of Madame Tiquet in his *Dictionnaire Historique*, in which Bayle argued that adultery, among the upper classes at least, was part of the necessary liberty that each person must enjoy in order to be happy, and which marriage acted against. According to Bayle, writing just three years after the case, if Monsieur Tiquet had not tried to prevent Madame Tiquet’s adultery, the murder would never have occurred.⁴⁷⁵ Indeed, in all representations of Madame Tiquet, her adulterous activity, even at its most debauched, formed part of her noble subjectivity: we

⁴⁷⁰ De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 6 (La Haye, 1734), p. 33 and subsequent reproductions (see footnote 460); Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 291; Smith, *The Romance of Real Life*, Vol. 2, p. 99.

⁴⁷¹ The clear lines between coquetterie, debauchery and prostitution is traced in De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 6 (La Haye, 1734), p. 33; P. Chaussemer, *Lettre du Père Chaussemer, docteur en théologie, à Mademoiselle ***, sur l’Oraison Funèbre de Madame Tiquet* (Paris, 1699) reproduced in De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres et intéressantes, avec les jugemens qui les ont décidés*, Vol. 5 (1743), p. 488-512; Gastaud, *Le triomphe de la Grâce dans la conversion et la mort de Basilisse* (Paris, 1699); *Ibid.*, *Oraison Funèbre de Madame Tiquet* (Paris, 1699); both reproduced in De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes, avec les Jugemens qui les ont Décidés*, Vol. 5 (1743) pp. 513-541.

⁴⁷² ‘Il est moins rare de trouver des femmes qui n’aient point eu d’intrigue, qu’il ne l’est d’en trouver qui n’en aient qu’une’, Abbé Gastaud, *Lettre à Madame P.* (Paris, 1699), p. 527.

⁴⁷³ ‘Belle et chaste ne vont guères ensemble’ Gastaud, *Lettre à Madame P.*, p. 513.

⁴⁷⁴ De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1750), p. 37 and *Histoire des Pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 37.

⁴⁷⁵ P. Bayle, ‘Egialée’, in P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, 5th edition, Vol. 2 (Amsterdam, 1740), pp. 341–2; J. S. Ravel, ‘Husband-Killer, Christian Heroine, Victim: The Execution of Madame Tiquet, 1699’, *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 32.2 (Dec., 2010), pp. 134-136.

are told repeatedly that she was a woman whose heart combined ‘the most noble and most base of passions’.⁴⁷⁶ Among the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Parisian aristocracy adultery could be shown as a tolerated, if not celebrated, part of life, and not necessarily, in contrast to the murder pamphlets studied by David Turner in England, the first step on an intractable path to murder.⁴⁷⁷ Instead, it was when such activities were stifled, as with Monsieur Tiquet’s attempts to clamp down on his wife’s movements, that murderous urges could stir.

Marie Catherine Taperet’s adulterous affair with DeMongeot was heavily romanticised in the same vein as that between Tiquet and Mongeorges. Sentimental depictions of Taperet’s and DeMongeot’s love as ‘the universe disappearing’ and ‘one of those moments where the world seems nothing’⁴⁷⁸ were reinforced by Taperet’s own actions, in particular the fact that she had chosen to remain in Paris to visit DeMongeot in prison after the police had eliminated her from their enquiries rather than fleeing abroad, ultimately leading to her own arrest and execution.⁴⁷⁹ But such a romanticisation was more contested in commentaries on Taperet than on Tiquet, and was balanced by more cynical readings of the relationship, perhaps reflecting her lower status, or the fact that she, unlike Tiquet, had actually succeeded in organising the murder of her husband. At least one commentator saw Taperet’s visiting of DeMongeot in prison as a sign of her ‘audacity’ and belief that she was above justice, rather than a sign of love.⁴⁸⁰ While Madame Tiquet was shown to be a victim of her sexuality, awakened through her necessary adultery with Mongeorges which then forced her into acts that, in terms of her rank and *esprit* she should have been above, in representations of Taperet adulterous love

⁴⁷⁶ ‘Son cœur étoit un mélange affreux...de passions nobles & indignes’, G. De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 6 (Paris, 1750), p. 8.

⁴⁷⁷ Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, Chapter Four.

⁴⁷⁸ ‘L’univers n’est plus rien’ *Lettre d’un François*, p.1; see also P. Varner, *La mort de Lescombat, tragédie* (Paris, 1755) and *Lettres amoureuses* for particularly eloquent depictions of their love.

⁴⁷⁹ AN: Y 10166.

⁴⁸⁰ Gueullette writes of his shock at her behaviour in his personal notes AN Gueullette AD III 8; also seen in *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 16.

was more often shown to be a tool used by women to bully men into doing their bidding. Two letters from the romantic epistolary novel the *Lettre amoureuses* which depicted Taperet manipulating DeMongéot into committing the murder through the promise of romance and, to a lesser extent, sex were reproduced in publications throughout the second half of the century where they were used to demonstrate the perceived power that love (and lust) could give women over men.⁴⁸¹

The case of Marie Catherine Taperet became a subject through which to evoke criticisms of the cult of *sensibilité* which was rising in potency in 1750s Paris. Most damning was her *Oraison Funèbre*, a type of mock obituary, which ridiculed those who had attempted to romanticise the crime, exaggerating to absurdity all romantic proclamations of her beauty and capacity for love. Love became a comical force for weakness, with the author of the *Oraison* stopping to weep uncontrollably halfway through the page.⁴⁸² Indeed, a warning to readers about the dangers of believing oneself to be in love and/or lust was used as a preliminary gloss on many late eighteenth-century publications on the case.⁴⁸³ Prints of Taperet, particularly *Le véritable portrait de Marie Taperet* (Fig 4.2) which showed her in a seductive pose displaying her chest and ankle and yet locked up in a prison cell, were sold alongside lockets and pendants showing Taperet and DeMongéot in an amorous embrace on one side and her imprisoned on the other to demonstrate the inevitable conclusion to indulging in lust. Even in the exhibition of her varnished corpse by M Hérissaut in the six months following her death, the focus was upon her body as a sexual but deadly object, as shown in Thomas Gueullette's lengthy description of her figure, breasts and face, following a visit to see the body on display.⁴⁸⁴ While upper-class

⁴⁸¹ Letters 26 and 27 in *Lettres amoureuses*. Reproduced in N.-T. Lemoine, *Essai sur l'histoire générale des tribunaux des peuples*, Vol. 6 (Paris, 1780), pp. 312-314; *Mercur de France* (4 Nov. 1780); *L'Esprit des journaux*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1781), pp. 52 – 67; Des Essarts *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1786), pp. 312-325.

⁴⁸² *Oraison Funèbre de très haute et très puissante Dame Marie-Catherine Taperet*, p. 7.

⁴⁸³ *Lettres amoureuses*, p. 3; *Mercur de France* (4 Nov. 1780), p. 17; Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1786), p. 278; *Amusemens de la Toilette*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸⁴ AN: AD Gueullette III 8.

Madame Tiquet's adultery had not appeared as immediately threatening, the romantic and sexual figure of Marie Catherine Taperet was used as a powerful reminder of the dangerous ends of adulterous love among the *haute bourgeoisie*.

Although they disagreed on the inevitable dangerous ramifications of indulging in adultery, commentators on both the Tiquet and Taperet cases agreed that there was little possibility of bringing the kinds of passion found in adulterous relationships into the marital bond. Most notably in Pierre Vander's play *La mort de Lescombat, tragédie*, the character of Madame Lescombat opens the play with a lengthy complaint of her husband's 'froideur', to which her servant maid responds that Lescombat's love must naturally be of a different kind because it occurs within marriage; husbands cannot be lovers also.⁴⁸⁵ The initial 'pagan'⁴⁸⁶ lust that marked both the Tiquet and Taperet courtship and marriages was more generally shown to render the possibility of conjugal regard impossible: these marriages were doomed as they were forged on powerful, but inevitably temporary, feelings of passion which, once dulled, left only hatred rather than milder, but longer-term, feelings of marital affection.⁴⁸⁷

In London, however, Protestant understandings of the conjugal debt (that husband and wives owed one another sex to prevent infidelity) meant that conjugal and passionate love were not seen as antithetical, especially among the lower middle classes. Unlike Tiquet and Taperet, there was little place for sentiment in representations of Catherine Hayes and Thomas Billings' relationship. Although their adulterous affair was represented as an integral and, to some degree, normalising part of the crime (newspapers

⁴⁸⁵ Varner, *La Mort*, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁶ 'Elle l'aima en payenne', Gastaud, *Le Triomphe*, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁷ Discussions of the incompatibility of lust and marriage can be found in: Abbé Gastaud, *Lettre à Madame P.* (Paris, 1699), p. 527; Gastaud, *Le Triomphe*, p. 2; *Oraison Funèbre de très haute et très puissante Dame Marie-Catherine Taperet*, p. 7; *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 37; *Amusemens de la toilette*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-7.

referred to them as ‘the wife and her gallant’)⁴⁸⁸ the relationship was only ever shown as a violation, never as an expression of love. Repeated allusions were made to the fact that when they were arrested Billings and Hayes were found in a darkened room, Hayes in the bed, Billings sat at the end of it without his shoes or stockings on, seen a clear indicator of their sexual relationship.⁴⁸⁹ *The Life of Catherine Hayes* went further in describing their physical closeness in Newgate: ‘when in the Chapel, she would sit with her Hand in his, and lean upon his Breast and Shoulder, and he on hers’,⁴⁹⁰ but with the intention of shocking rather than moving the audience. Moreover, unlike the Parisian cases, Hayes and Billings’ sexual activity was not shown as stemming from natural desire in that Catherine herself was never depicted as being sexually attractive nor as acting on any form of desire. This combined emerging characterisations of women as sexually passive alongside older beliefs in adultery as a clear form of incomprehensible disorder and betrayal to remove any possible romanticisation of the relationship.⁴⁹¹

Yet although Hayes and Billings’ relationship was not shown as a natural form of desire, it was not shown to be as unnatural as it could have been. While many publications printed allusions to their sexual relationship alongside descriptions of their mother/son relationship, very few specified that this made the relationship incestuous. Indeed, the only explicit discussion of incest in conjunction with their case was a letter written to *Mist’s Weekly Journal*, which, while seeming to condemn the relationship, was mostly focused upon a story of a mother who had sex with her son to protect her maid in which incest appeared as a repellent, but ultimately understandable and non-destructive act (the son, never aware that he had had sex with his mother who had been in disguise, went

⁴⁸⁸ *Mist’s Weekly Journal* (26 March 1726); *Daily Post* (29 March 1726); *Mist’s Weekly Journal* (2 April 1726).

⁴⁸⁹ *A Narrative*, p.10; *Select Trials*, Vol. 3 (1742), p. 4; *The Life*, p. 26; *The Malefactor’s Register*, Vol. 2, p. 117.

⁴⁹⁰ *The Life*, p. 39; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2, p. 290.

⁴⁹¹ *A Narrative*, p. 22.

onto live a full and happy life).⁴⁹² Direct allusions to incest in the newspaper press occurred primarily in a short time period around the time of the execution. But in later coverage Catherine and Billings' relationship was always defined as adulterous rather than incestuous. Indeed, later accounts, instead of being shocked by the possibility of incest, accused Catherine of pretending that Billings was her son in order to convince John to take Billings in, so permitting them to indulge in their affair.⁴⁹³ As with the silence surrounding incest in the Brinvilliers case seen in Chapter Two, this seems to support Seth Denbo's hypothesis that incest was problematic in the eighteenth century principally in that it was a violation of marital law rather than natural law.⁴⁹⁴ It may also be that in order to render the Hayes case into a compelling warning piece on the specific dangers of clandestine urban marriage it was necessary to make the case appear less exceptional and so remove overt references to incest. In this way Catherine was not a superlative icon of feminine evil but was made to appear as representative of a much more common marital threat.

Discussions of the marriages of Hayes, Tiquet and Taperet reveal the difficulties experienced by eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians in integrating conceptions of passionate love, sexuality and mutual affection into the framework of marriage.

Discussions of these three cases demonstrate that marriage markets and clandestine marriages were seen as hindering Parisians and Londoners' respective abilities secure a compatible match at a time when, among the lower middle classes in particular, compatible and functioning marriages were becoming the perceived cornerstone to successful living. Parisians and Londoners were preoccupied by different concerns in both the formation of marriages and the expression of adulterous love discussed in these cases, which may be reflective of the different expectations of marital love in each city,

⁴⁹² *Mist's Weekly Journal* (21 May 1726).

⁴⁹³ *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 103; *The Newgate Calendar* (London, 1824), p. 259.

⁴⁹⁴ S. Denbo, 'Speaking Relatively, a History of Incest and the Family in Eighteenth-Century England', PhD Thesis (University of Warwick, 2001), p. 20.

but was almost certainly also reflective of the class differences in the murderesses themselves. The Tiquet case suggests that at the very beginning of the century upper-class Parisians may have seen adultery as an inevitable effect of duplicitous marriage markets and not necessarily as the first step towards the ruin of a household. By the time of the Taperet case, involving individuals of a lower social status, however, adultery was shown as a more insidious force for the corruption and manipulation of men by women, although such liaisons were still seen as the inevitable, and in some ways natural, product of societal courtship rituals and marriages based on lust. In London, the adulterous liaisons of Catherine Hayes were never seen as either an expression of natural lust or sentiment, but only as a signifier of her wider criminality and household disorder, reflecting the closer perceived association between love, lust and marriage, and therefore between adultery and crime, among the London lower-middle classes.

Fatal Bedfellows: Marital Murder in the City

For Londoners and Parisians, cultural expectations and anxieties about marriage were put under pressure by the nature of life in the eighteenth-century metropolis. Any movement toward a new image of marriage as defined by private mutual compatibility ran up against the enforced communality brought about by living in lodging residences or with servants in dense, socially promiscuous communities which was the reality for many in these capital cities. While it has been traditionally argued that the rising anonymity of the city drove Londoners and Parisians into the balm of the nuclear family, such an interpretation does not take into account the practice of lodging which was the norm for many urban inhabitants of the lower and middling sorts, and even some upper classes. It is difficult to know the extent to which lodging practices were unique to the capital, as few studies have been undertaken on lodging in areas outside of London and Paris. Susan Wright's study of seventeenth-century Ludlow, however, suggests that lodging was

common in many urban centres but that in provincial towns such arrangements were likely to last either a couple of days or many years, with little middle ground.⁴⁹⁵ Medium-term arrangements in which strangers lived together for sizeable but not permanent lengths of time, as explored by Joanne McEwan, may therefore have been a specific capital city phenomenon.⁴⁹⁶ Although it may have been relatively unique to the urban area, lodging was not a new practice, and had existed as part of metropolitan life for centuries. The rise in print culture during the eighteenth century, however, gave inhabitants a new outlet to discuss their anxieties about communal living, especially as such practices increasingly clashed with emerging ideas of the need for marital privacy. At the same time, emerging understandings of the importance of marital privacy also conflicted with the sustained, and indeed expanding, practice of keeping servants. In Paris in particular, where male servants continued to be fashionable for longer than in London, the Tiquet case was used to voice concerns that identified such men as problematic and disruptive figures for marital harmony and possible allies for unhappy wives against their husbands.

While statistical estimates on the proportion of London and Parisian households containing lodgers during the eighteenth century vary between about 40 to 70 per cent, it is generally agreed that lodging was a common form of residency in both cities. Vanessa Harding and Joanne McEwan have shown that lodging took a variety of forms, but the problematic lodgers in both the Hayes and Taperet cases maintained similar, highly intimate relations with the couple with whom they lived.⁴⁹⁷ Both Billings and

⁴⁹⁵ S. J. Wright, 'Sojourners and Lodgers in a Provincial Town: the Evidence from Eighteenth-Century Ludlow', *Urban History* 17 (1990), pp. 14-35.

⁴⁹⁶ Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe's edited volume on the living situations of the poor shows lodging to only be a London phenomenon: J. McEwan and P. Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty: the Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c. 1600-1850* (Basingstoke, 2011), in particular J. McEwan, 'The Lodging Exchange: Space, Authority and Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century London', pp. 50-68.

⁴⁹⁷ V. Harding, 'Families and Housing in Seventeenth-Century London,' *Parergon* 24.2 (2007), pp. 115-138; McEwan, 'The Lodging Exchange', pp. 50-68; Merry, M. and P. Baker, "'For the House Her Self and One Servant: Family and Household in Late Seventeenth-Century London', *The London Journal* 34.3 (Nov., 2009), pp. 205-232.

DeMongeot record in their defences having slept in the marital bed, an arrangement which seems to have been viewed as quite normal: Billings, for example, assured John Hayes' friends that the head found in the Thames was not John's by saying that he 'left him [John] well in bed this morning'.⁴⁹⁸ Such intimate arrangements meant that the lodgers were present when the husbands, the heads of the household, were at their most vulnerable; when they were sleeping, ill and drunk. These were men who were not employees or subordinates, over whom the husbands had very limited authority, and who could embody what Alexandra Shepard has termed 'anti-patriarchal' masculinity. Denied their own patriarchal agency in the household, such men, Shepard argues, undermined the authority of the patriarch through their independence and vigour, and their adherence to an alternate lifestyle.⁴⁹⁹ Such problematic hierarchies tied into the reframing of adultery as betrayal within homosocial relationships, as well as between husband and wife, as demonstrated by Turner, giving these cases a particular pertinence for the exploration of masculine identities in the urban environment.⁵⁰⁰

In London the case of Catherine Hayes drew attention to the power conflicts at play in such intimate bedroom arrangements. Angela McShane and Joanne Bailey have shown that the space of the bed was central to understandings of marriage in eighteenth-century England, particularly among the middling sort: it was where marital love was created, and where dynamics of power were enacted.⁵⁰¹ That control over the bed indicated control elsewhere was shown in descriptions of Billings as 'lying in bed with Mr and Mrs Hayes at the husband's back'.⁵⁰² John was the central figure in the bed, keeping the lodger separate from the marital relationship, as he was supposed to do throughout the

⁴⁹⁸ *A Narrative*, p. 27-28; AN Y 10166.

⁴⁹⁹ A. Shepard, 'From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700', *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (April 2005), pp. 281-295. Shepard's claims are for an earlier period, but can be traced into the eighteenth century.

⁵⁰⁰ Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, p. 201.

⁵⁰¹ Angela MacShane and Joanne Bailey, 'The Bed it its Emotional and Domestic Landscape', Paper delivered at the opening V & A *Quilts* exhibition (2010)- thanks to Joanne Bailey for granting me access to this text.

⁵⁰² *A Narrative*, p. 27.

household. One of the most extreme and repeated textual images evoked in print on the Hayes case, both at the time of the trial and in later decades, was that of Catherine having sex with Billings in the marital bed immediately following the murder. One article went as far as to claim that ‘the Son kill’d his Father, and assisted in quartering him, and lay with his Mother when the mangled Limbs were under the Bed’.⁵⁰³ The most popular woodcut from the time of the murder, reproduced in four different editions of *A Narrative of the Barbarous and Unheard of Murder of John Hayes*, clearly situated the murder in the context of the bed, with Billings and Wood leaning through the curtains as they decapitate John (Figure 4.3). Later images of the murder into the nineteenth century also continued to give the bed a central focus (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). After the murder took place Catherine and Billings changed their lodgings, and it was then that they were discovered in bed together. Yet this clearer evidence of their incestuous adultery (reports of them having sex just after the murder were mere supposition) received less commentary. The horror of this case came not from murderous adulterous incest in general but specifically from post-homicide adulterous sex in the marital bed.⁵⁰⁴ The close living conditions of the Hayes household, similar to those experienced by many in the capital, were therefore believed to have brought about the ultimate spatial, marital and, to a lesser extent, familial betrayal.

⁵⁰³ *Evening Post* (7 May 1726).

⁵⁰⁴ Reports of this sexual relationship at the site of the murder can also be found in *A Narrative*, p. 10; *Select Trials*, Vol. 3 (1742), p. 10; *The Life*, p. 26; *The Malefactor’s Register*, Vol. 2, p. 117.



Figure 4.3: Frontispiece, *A Narrative of the Barbarous and Unheard of Murder of John Hayes* (London, 1726).⁵⁰⁵



Figure 4.4: 'Catherine Hayes Assisting Wood and Billings in Cutting Off the Head of her Husband John Hayes', *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 2 (London, 1768), p. 262.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁵ Image source: Eighteenth Century Collections Online:
<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx>
 CB127058507 [accessed 3 July 2015]. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection 1131.h.33.(1.))

⁵⁰⁶ Image source: Eighteenth Century Collections Online:
<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx>
 CW124316986 [accessed 3 July 2015]. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection 1131.e.1-4.)



Figure 4.5: ‘Catherine Hayes and her Accomplices Cutting Off her Husband’s Head’ in A. Knapp and W. Baldwin, *The Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 2 (London, 1824), p. 239.⁵⁰⁷

Adulterous affairs were shown as an inevitable consequence of such living situations in both the Taperet and Hayes cases. The deceptions of the initial marital match combined with the presence of other men in the household and neighbourhood was seen to provide ample motivation and opportunity for adulterous seductions. This is demonstrated as late as 1779 in *The Malefactor’s Register* account of Hayes’ crime in which, after stating that Billings was a lodger, noted ‘it is needless to tell the reader the connection that subsisted between Billings and Mrs. Hayes’.⁵⁰⁸ In discussions on the Taperet case, less focused on spatial subversions and more on emotive narratives of betrayal, the opportune moment for such trysts to occur was shown as being when the husband was temporarily called away from home. In the *Lettres amoureuses*, for example, DeMongeot and Taperet were shown planning in great detail an eight day long liaison when Lescombat went to the country.⁵⁰⁹ Husbands and wives in Paris and London would often spend a great deal of

⁵⁰⁷ Image source: <http://www.exclassics.com/newgate/ngintro.htm> [accessed 3 July 2015]. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection 1132.g.51-54.)

⁵⁰⁸ *The Malefactor’s Register*, Vol. 2, p. 103.

⁵⁰⁹ *Lettres amoureuses*, pp. 22-26.

time apart. For the elite and middling sort this was due to the poor transport links and the rising necessity of travel for business. The precariousness of middle-class finances could also force separations, as seen in the figure of DeMongeot who had to live apart from his wife due to the untenable expense of living together meaning that his wife had to go back to live with her mother and he had to find work which included lodgings. Such separations were shown to be put under yet more pressure by the persistent presence of lodgers and servants, further displacing the marital bond supposedly at the core of such households.

That it was the presence of strangers in the household that was particularly threatening is demonstrated by the fact that Taperet's second accomplice, her brother Alexandre Ruelle, was almost never mentioned in commentary on the case, despite having featured heavily in the original investigation. Ruelle also lived in the Lescombat household, following the orders of his aunt, in order to protect Marie from Lescombat's violent attacks. While DeMongeot was a terrifying enough figure to have become a central character in all print commentary on the case, the presence of other family members within the home, even under explicit instruction to meddle in the marriage, apparently did not present the same kind of fear. This is despite the fact that Ruelle seems to have been an important facilitator of the crime; it was he who obtained the pistol that was planted on Lescombat's body to support DeMongeot's plea of self-defence, and it was he who accompanied Marie to visit DeMongeot once DeMongeot had been evicted from the Lescombat residence. Yet the lack of print commentary on Ruelle, who, unlike Taperet, fled Paris while he had the chance, seems to indicate that Parisians did not feel the need to analyse the threat of such figures; live-in brothers were either extremely uncommon, or were an accepted part of the household in a way that strangers were not.⁵¹⁰

⁵¹⁰ AN: Y11126; Figerou, *La belle Mme Lescombat*, Chapter 11; C. Adams, 'Devoted Companions or Surrogate Spouses? Sibling Relations in Eighteenth-Century France', in C. Adams, J. R. Censer and L. J.

Yet, as far as strangers were concerned, such displacement of household power was not all one way: in the cases of Catherine Hayes and Marie Catherine Taperet lodging was shown as a dangerous and emasculating experience for lodgers as well as for husbands. The biographies of Thomas Wood, Hayes' second accomplice, and DeMongeot both emphasised their vulnerability in the urban space. Both were reported to have been forced into lodgings out of fear of being press-ganged or made homeless, due to their lack of a trade. The figure of Thomas Wood was represented as almost saint-like in both his character prior to the murder ('remarkable for his harmless and sober conduct')⁵¹¹ and his demeanour in Newgate ('uncommonly penitent and devout').⁵¹² Much attention was focused upon the various ways in which Catherine may have persuaded Wood to assist in the murder; in particular by promising him money, or perhaps, as with John, getting him drunk. Late eighteenth-century tracts in particular showed alcohol to be the main cause of the crime.⁵¹³ Through emphasis on his previously virtuous life, Wood became a warning for those who raised their children without a trade, as well as the dangers that could prey upon young men in the big city, with one commentator declaring that Wood's fate should 'inspire us with resolution never to forget the force of that prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation'''.⁵¹⁴

DeMongeot was also shown as an emasculated figure in print on the Taperet case, in particular through his abject and pleading letters in the *Lettres amoureuses*, in which he was depicted kneeling at Taperet's feet with a sword aimed at his heart when she tried to break with him.⁵¹⁵ This emasculation was something Demongeot responded to in his own published *Mémoire Judiciaire*, in which he attempted to put forward an alternate, more

Graham (eds), *Visions and Revisions of Eighteenth-Century France* (Pennsylvania, 1997), pp. 59-76. Flandrin argues in *Familles: parenté, maison, sexualité dans l'ancienne société* (Paris, 1976), p. 73 that live-in siblings were very rare by the eighteenth century, but the demographic research has not been undertaken to support this.

⁵¹¹ *The Life*, p. 268.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*

⁵¹³ *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 128.

⁵¹⁴ *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol.2, p. 129.

⁵¹⁵ *Lettres amoureuses*, in particular p. 18.

masculine, reading of the crime. Here, DeMongeot (or rather lawyers writing on DeMongeot's behalf) reframed the crime as a battle between two male friends over their honour. This version, which denied any adulterous liaison between DeMongeot and Taperet, cast Lescombat rather than DeMongeot as the dishonourable man in that Lescombat chose to fight with a pistol rather than a sword. The reason for such a fight, DeMongeot's *Mémoire* argued, was not that he had been having an affair with Lescombat's wife, but rather that he had suggested to Lescombat, 'as a sign of the most sincere friendship,'⁵¹⁶ that Lescombat had been mistreating Taperet. To render such a narrative plausible, this *Mémoire Judiciaire* rewrote the entirety of DeMongeot's life story, focusing heavily on DeMongeot's supposedly loving and faithful relationship with his own wife and presenting DeMongeot and Lescombat's relationship as that of equals rather than landlord and lodger. Much emphasis was put on DeMongeot's previous manly occupation as a *garde du roi*, and the state's poor treatment of ex-soldiers.⁵¹⁷ But this version of events apparently did not ring true for a readership who viewed DeMongeot in the weak position of lodger and adulterous lover. This is seen particularly in the lawyer Thomas Simon Gueullette's annotations of the DeMongeot *Mémoire* in which he derided the duplicity and dishonourable nature of DeMongeot who had compounded his betrayal of Lescombat by having an affair with his wife with the ultimate unmanly sin of constructing a defence based on accusations against one's victim.⁵¹⁸ It is noticeable that no other publication chose to report any of the claims made in the *Mémoire*. The idea that DeMongeot had deliberately shirked an opportunity to deal with the situation honourably was instead put forward in both the *Lettres amoureuses* and *La mort de Lescombat, tragédie* which depicted DeMongeot pleading with Taperet to

⁵¹⁶ 'Lorsqu'un homme a des défauts, & qu'on les lui fait apercevoir, c'étoit la preuve la plus autentique d'une sincère amitié', *Mémoire pour Jean Louis DeMongeot* (Paris, 1755), p. 3, AN AD Gueullette III 8.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

allow him to challenge Lescombat to a duel rather than attack him from behind, and so maintain his honour, a plea she refused and which he went along with.⁵¹⁹

From DeMongeot lying prostrate at Taperet's feet with a sword aimed at his heart, to Billings shuffled off to prison without his shoes and stockings, these were shown to be men who had lost their masculine subjectivity within the doubly problematic status of lodger and adulterous lover of a married woman.⁵²⁰ Already denied the authority of householder, by giving in to the seduction of older women or, in the case of Wood, to alcohol, these men were shown as having lost any kind of authority over their own existence, culminating in their being persuaded to commit murder. These images of the vulnerable adulterer support arguments that male promiscuity could damage male reputation just as female promiscuity damaged female reputation in the eighteenth century, at least in the context of homicide accusations.⁵²¹ Lodging was therefore a situation which was believed to enfeeble both husbands, who found their authority challenged by the presence of other men, and lodgers, who found themselves seduced and/or manipulated due to their dependency on others for housing. Conversely, lodging was shown as empowering to urban women. But this was not total subversion: these cases also reinforced the idea that women needed men to commit murder for them, despite the myriad of other Old Bailey and *Parlement* cases which could prove the contrary, but which went almost entirely untouched by print commentators.

However, it was not only lodgers that contributed to this blurring of marital hierarchies in the household. Servants, another common presence within the homes of the middling and upper classes, could also pose such a challenge, and were, in turn, shown as embodying

⁵¹⁹ *Lettres amoureuses*, p. 53; Varner, *Mort de Lescombat, tragédie*, p. 30.

⁵²⁰ *Lettres amoureuses*, p. 18; *A Narrative*, p. 10; *Select Trials*, Vol. 3 (London, 1742), p. 3; *The Life*, p. 26; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 117.

⁵²¹ Bailey, *Unquiet*, p. 166; G. Walker, 'Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996), pp. 235-245; F. Dabhoiwala, 'The Construction of Honour, Reputation and Status in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996), pp. 201-213.

weakened and unnatural forms of masculinity within the Tiquet case. Although there were cases in both cities of women dispatching their husbands with the help of their female servants, it is of note that the only case which stimulated print interest was one involving a male servant, perhaps because of the perceived implications this particular figure for masculine identities and domestic power.⁵²² Monsieur Tiquet's decision to dismiss his porter Mouru was reported to have been motivated by a belief that Mouru was favouring the Chevalier Mongeorges over Monsieur Tiquet within Tiquet's own home, demonstrating the way that such male servants could directly undermine their master's authority. Following Mouru's dismissal, reports of Monsieur Tiquet's decision to become 'his own porter, taking care to lock the door before bed and place the key under his bedside table',⁵²³ demonstrated just how important Mouru's role in policing of the household boundary was deemed to be. This was reinforced in a series of reports that, in order to punish Monsieur Tiquet for his tyranny over the front door, Madame Tiquet's friend Madame de Senonville purposefully remained in the Tiquet house until after Monsieur Tiquet had gone to bed so that she could wake him up to let her out.⁵²⁴ Here female networks of sociability and the male servants that facilitated them were shown as openly subverting Monsieur Tiquet's authority over his own household. While Mouru was not as heavily-discussed a figure as DeMongeot or Wood and Billings (or indeed the Marquise de Brinvilliers' servant, La Chaussée, discussed in Chapter Two), depictions of him were also marked by a focus on his inherent weakness. In particular he was shown to be entirely subservient to Madame Tiquet's orders, even as he faced death. Although there was little overt criticism of Mouru, discussions of Madame Tiquet's other servant accomplice, Cattelain, were far more critical in connecting his crimes (both attempting to

⁵²² For example, the case of Charlotte Plaix in Paris, AN: X/2a/1142-47 or the trial of Mary Cole in London *OBP*, September 1771, trial of Susannah Brackstone Mary Cole (t17710911-68).

⁵²³ 'Ne se fiant plus à personne, il étoit devenu lui-même son portier, & prenoit le soin de fermer la porte, & de mettre la clé sous son chevet', De la Croix, *Dictionnaire portative*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1768), p. 701.

⁵²⁴ De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 6 (Paris, 1734), p. 12 and subsequent reproductions (footnote 460); De La Croix, *Dictionnaire portative*, Vol. 2, p. 701; Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques*, Vol. 1, p. 288.

kill Monsieur Tiquet and, more grievously, providing evidence to convict Madame Tiquet) with his spiritual corruption and his base place in society.⁵²⁵ As with lodgers, then, these male servants were shown as weak, yet occupying a powerful space within the household that could be exploited by their mistresses (in both meanings of the term) with powerful results.

While depictions of the Hayes case, as shown above, were principally concerned with the spatial subversion of the household enacted in the murder, commentaries on the cases of Tiquet and Taperet identified connections between these household subversions and broader sites of urban community disorder. That the wider community was to an extent involved in the Tiquet murder was indicated in reports that the Chevalier Mongeorges, who lived in the same *quartier*, was ordered to leave by Louis XIV for fear of becoming embroiled in the ensuing scandal.⁵²⁶ Although Mongeorges had had no part in the murder itself, the amorous liaisons of Madame Tiquet in the same *quartier* in which she killed her husband compounded her crimes and those of a community who had permitted her adulterous behaviour. At the same time, Madame Tiquet's role in Parisian aristocratic society was also shown as facilitating the crimes in that it gave her the opportunity to create an alibi for the murder by ensuring that another woman, the famous fairy-tale writer the Duchesse d'Aulnoy no less, was with her throughout the time when her husband was being killed outside.⁵²⁷

In the Taperet case, Taperet's public role as a *marchande de mode* (clothes retailer) was shown as giving her at once the tools to heighten her beauty and conceal her evil ways,

⁵²⁵ Descriptions of Mouru and Cattelain can be seen in: De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 6 (Paris, 1734), pp. 8, 17, 32; De la Croix, *Dictionnaire portative*, Vol. 2, p. 701; De Goncourt, *Remarques historiques sur l'église et la paroisse de S Sulpice*, p. 266; Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, pp. 288-290; *Histoire Journalière* (20 April-7 May 1699); Smith, *The Romance of Real Life*, Vol. 1, p. 77; *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 39; *Gallick Reports*, p. 289; Maubuy, *Vie des femmes illustres*, Vol. 4, p. 44.

⁵²⁶ *Histoire Journalière* (23 April 1699, La Haye).

⁵²⁷ De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1750), p. 13; De la Croix, *Dictionnaire portative*, Vol. 2, p. 701; Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 284.

and a public space from which to carry on her affairs and to plot the murder.⁵²⁸ Although the adulterous affair began in the household, following DeMongeot's expulsion it was continued outside at DeMongeot's new lodgings and Taperet's shop. By spreading beyond the front door, marital disorder was shown as becoming a neighbourhood concern, policed by DeMongeot's beady-eyed female neighbours depicted in the *Lettres Amoureuses*.⁵²⁹ This was not merely a literary motif: judicial documents show that neighbours really were watching the affair of DeMongeot and Taperet closely.⁵³⁰ Yet the murder itself did not take place in a space of female neighbourly surveillance or commercial power, but in the Jardins de Luxembourg, a place of male sociability. Almost all accounts of the murder dedicated a sizeable proportion of the text to carefully detailing the movements of the two men on the night of the murder, with repeated reference to well-known eating and drinking establishments. DeMongeot's attack on Lescombat while he was urinating, following a night of masculine conviviality, demonstrated the ways in which Taperet's murderous intentions could seep into, and take advantage of, spaces that were supposed to be entirely separate from the household. Taperet's seduction of DeMongeot, therefore, caused Lescombat to lose control of his security not only within his home, but also within the space of the city. In this way, marital subversion was believed to be a source of general public disorder.

In discussions of these three cases practices of urban living which brought the presence of other men in the closest and most intimate of domestic spaces were shown as throwing marital relations into chaos. Yet the power of such men to challenge family ties was paired with representations of their individual weaknesses, their reliance upon their

⁵²⁸ Witnesses report her as being seen in her shop at the time of the murder and having been seen there multiple times before in AN Y 10166. References to her shop keeping in Anon, *Poème: Rencontre de Madame Lescombat et Mandrin aux enfers* (Troyes Bibliothèque Bleue, 1755); *Complainte et epitaphe de Madame Lescombat* (Paris, 1755); *Extrait du Memoire imprimé, fait par en Barbevi Procureur contre Mongeot*, AN AD Gueullette III 8.

⁵²⁹ *Lettres Amoureuses*, p. 29.

⁵³⁰ AN Y 10166; Figerou, *La belle Madame Lescombat*, Chapter 12.

mistresses (both romantic and financial), and their powerlessness within the urban environment. While they set in motion powerful dynamics of marital disorder, they themselves were shown as inherently weakened by their living situations. In London such disorder focused almost exclusively on the household space but in Paris publications on the Tiquet and Taperet cases exposed the perceived fluid connections between household and community disorder, with the wider urban space playing a role in both the circumstances that led to the murders, and serving as the site in which the murders took place. In this way, the disordered households of Tiquet and Taperet were seen to have direct implications for the stability of the capital itself, as will be further explored in the final section.

Husband Murder and Good Governance

As has been shown in the previous section, the capital city environment, and the living practices it encouraged, was shown within these three cases as bringing disorder to marital households, and in Paris to the wider city space. But the ways in which the household disorder at the core of such cases was explained and understood was not restricted to depictions of sexually voracious women appropriating weakened young men into their evil schemes. Discussions focused as much on the weaknesses and failings of husbands as they did on the empowerment of their wives, and in so doing raised important questions about the challenges posed to husbands of maintaining a regime of loving governance within marriage. These challenges were shown as particularly acute within the urban space, where women may have had more opportunities to develop networks outside of their marriages through which they could hold husbands to account for a failure to govern properly. In Paris connections between marital and public order, as seen in the previous section, meant that, in discussions of these cases, it was not merely

husbands but also city governors who were perceived to have failed in their duty to maintain order.

Each of these women's husbands was shown as in part responsible for their own deaths: forcing their wives into committing murder through their poor management of the marital state. In the courts, both Alexandre Lescombat and John Hayes were reported to have taken husbandly discipline too seriously by beating their wives. Catherine alleged throughout her trial that John was 'none the best of husbands', that he had beaten and starved her, and claimed that it was after witnessing one of these drunken assaults that Wood and Billings decided to murder Hayes. While these allegations did not appear in later versions of the trial, the fact that Catherine's claims were reproduced in the *Old Bailey Proceedings*, the *Select Trials* and the *Ordinary's Account* demonstrates the plausibility of such abuse as provoking murderous alliances when other men were present.⁵³¹ In a series of publications on Taperet it was acknowledged that Lescombat was also abusive, although the abuse itself ranged from reports of a certain level of 'froideur' towards his wife, to sustained heavy beatings that made her bedridden.⁵³² In asserting the repeated nature of their ill-treatment, both Catherine Hayes and Marie Catherine Taperet were attempting, like Mary Aubry, to appropriate San Pedro's 'ideal wife' plea in showing themselves as patiently forgiving their husbands for their endless abuse until, finally they were pushed too far.⁵³³

However, unlike Aubry, the 'ideal wife' plea failed to gain currency in discussions of both the Hayes and Taperet cases, seen in the fact that such allegations were

⁵³¹ *OBP*, April 1726, trial of Katharine Hays (t17260420-42); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 9th May 1726 (OA17260509); *The Last Speech; Select Trials*, Vol. 3 (London, 1742), p. 16.

⁵³² *Lettres amoureuses*, p. 12; *Mémoire pour Jean Louis DeMongeot*, AN AD Gueullette III 8; *Extrait du Mémoire imprimé, fait par en Barbevi Procureur contre Mongeot*, AN AD Gueullette III 8; Varner, *La Mort de Lescombat, tragédie*, p. 2.

⁵³³ M. San Pedro, 'L'Assassinat du conjoint à Paris au XVIIIe siècle 1700-89) d'après les sources judiciaires', Masters Thesis (Paris IV Sorbonne, 1996), pp. 4-10 ; D. Nolde, 'Le meurtre du conjoint devant le Parlement de Paris, (fin XVIIe-début XVIIIe siècle): le 'verdict' de l'entourage', in B. Garnot (ed.), *L'infrajudiciare du moyen âge à l'époque moderne* (Dijon, 1996), pp. 143-53.

underreported in the majority of publications. Concern in print was instead focused in both cases on the husbands' indulgence of their wives. Hayes' chief failing was agreed to be his leniency; in almost all representations of him, even in the biography authored by his own family, he was described as being 'too indulgent' of his wife in giving up a reputable trade as a carpenter to follow her desires for a more restless, constantly moving, lifestyle. Despite being referred to as a 'tyrant', indulgence was a sin that Lescombat was also shown to be guilty of in allowing his wife too much freedom in going out into society on her own after they were married and in being persuaded by her to take in DeMongeot as a lodger.⁵³⁴ In these narratives, rather than the sustained campaign of abuse reported in the trials, it was the pairing of indulgence with one sudden act of discipline which was shown to have caused the wives to formulate murderous designs. In Hayes' case it was a slap that John gave her after she had behaved particularly extravagantly in his absence, and in Taperet's case the expulsion of DeMongeot from the house, following which she 'swore... that she would dispense with him'.⁵³⁵ As marriages trod the fine balance between patriarchal authority and mutual affection, eighteenth-century husbands were at once expected to govern their wives and yet govern them within the boundaries of affection and respect. The murders were represented as being a result of husbands' failures to reach this equilibrium, veering too far one way and then the other, and so provided a warning of the dangers of being either too lenient or too harsh on a wife. Generally, however, it would appear that it was the former, that of giving wives' too much freedom in an urban environment filled with opportunities for

⁵³⁴ *A Narrative*, p. 7; *The Life*, p. 7; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 2, p. 99; *Lettre d'un François*, p. 3; AN Y 10166; *Amusemens de la toilette*, Vol. 1, p. 3.

⁵³⁵ 'Jura dès ce moment sa perte', *Lettre d'un François*, p. 3; *The Life*, p. 9; Des Essarts, *Essai*, p. 312. The exception is the Ordinary's *Account*, in which Hayes' abusive behaviour is acknowledged to be far more widespread, *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 9th May 1726 (OA17260509) and in the *Lettres Amoureuses* where Taperet is shown as being violent towards his wife on several occasions. The act of murderous oath taking as being formative in the subjectivity of murderous wives is explored in S. Chess, 'And I My Vowe Did Keepe': Oath Making, Subjectivity and Husband Murder in 'Murderous Wife' Ballads', in P. Fumerton, A. Guerrini and K. McAbee (eds), *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500-1800* (Surrey, 2010), pp. 131-149.

229

developing a life outside of marriage, that was perceived to be particularly dangerous in the Hayes and Taperet cases.

While Monsieur Tiquet was not reported to have been physically abusive he was also shown to have had a number of personal failings, most notably weakness and profligacy, which led directly to his wife plotting murder. Monsieur Tiquet's weakness was, more so than the others, a subject of ridicule: both in reports that Madame Tiquet threw his *lettre de cachet* in the fire when he threatened her with *embastillement*, forcing him to grovel to the King for a second letter while 'everyone mocked him', and in sniggering declarations that the reason he survived the attack was because he was quivering so much with fear that the bullet in his heart was shifted away.⁵³⁶ Monsieur Tiquet's trip to Versailles with his children to beg for his wife's pardon was largely seen as a ploy to ensure he got to keep her fortune rather than as moving act of forgiveness.⁵³⁷ Later publications went so far as to claim that 'never has a man so well deserved what happened to him as Monsieur Tiquet' and that readers should be filled with disdain 'for a man who caused the death of a woman who should have brought him happiness'.⁵³⁸ It was perhaps because of his role in government as a *parlementaire*, along with the fact that he was the only victim involved in a high-profile case of husband murder to have survived, that Monsieur Tiquet was subjected to the most explicit personal attacks of the three as he became a symbol of the personal corruption of the hated governing classes of Paris, continuing a trend seen in the Brinvilliers case. That his personal weakness was indicative of wider weaknesses and inconsistencies in the governing system can be seen in claims, begun by Madame du Noyer, that the reason that Madame Tiquet was not pardoned (despite widespread

⁵³⁶ 'On se moqua de lui' Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 284; De la Croix, *Dictionnaire portative*, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1768), p. 701; also in *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 38.

⁵³⁷ De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 6 (Paris, 1734), p. 24; Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 298; *Nouvelles Extraordinaires* (16 June 1699); *Gallick Reports*, p. 298.

⁵³⁸ 'Ainsi jamais homme ne mérita mieux ce qui lui arrive que M Tiquet', 'des reproches d'avoir causé la mort d'une femme qui pouvoit faire son Bonheur', Aublet de Maubuy, *Vie des femmes illustres*, Vol. 4, pp. 10, 44.

expectations in the press that she would be⁵³⁹) was because the Archbishop of Paris had advised the King that his priests' ears were 'endlessly dinned by women confessing to making attempts on their husband's lives'.⁵⁴⁰ Following the *affaire des poisons*, a cynicism had come to settle over such claims about the plots of poisoning wives, particularly towards those priests who broke the covenant of confession to reveal them. Here it was argued that Madame Tiquet was unjustly convicted because the king was taken in by the hysterical and unfounded concerns of the church, built upon a lack of faith in all husbands' abilities to keep their wives satisfied.

While representations of Catherine Hayes and Marie Catherine Taperet showed each woman as matching the flaws of their husbands in debauchery and greed, in discussions of the Tiquet case, the overt criticisms made against Monsieur Tiquet were exacerbated by the high praise given to his wife. Much of this coalesced around her execution behaviour, in which she was reported to have displayed great courage, not least waiting in the rain in full view of the scaffold before the execution took place, and in bestowing the kiss of forgiveness upon each of the implements of death before she was killed. Madame Tiquet was not alone among convicts who were celebrated for making a good Christian death, indeed some descriptions of Marie Catherine Taperet also gave her some (admittedly more muted) praise for dying peacefully.⁵⁴¹ Yet what is remarkable about descriptions of Tiquet is that her death was shown not as that of a converted sinner finally achieving grace, but of a stoic philosopher whose soul transcended the entire spectacle. This was not a case of the final confessional act legitimating the judicial righteousness of the state, but, as Jeffrey Ravel has shown, rather a display of Madame Tiquet's moral and intellectual superiority over an inefficient judiciary which, if left to

⁵³⁹ *Histoire Journalière* (April-June, 1699); *Gazette d'Amsterdam* (April-June, 1699).

⁵⁴⁰ Originally reported in Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 289; reproduced in De Pitaval, *Causes célèbres*, Vol. 6 (Paris, 1750), p. 25; *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 54; Aublet de Maubuy, *Vie des femmes illustres*, Vol. 4, p. 32; *Gallick Reports*, p. 299.

⁵⁴¹ *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 244; Des Essarts, *Essai sur l'histoire générale des tribunaux*, p. 328.

itself, could not have brought about justice, if ‘justice’ was really what was happening.⁵⁴² Madame Du Noyer stated that Madame Tiquet’s decision to finally confess to the crime was not due to the torture she underwent, but was an active, subjective decision to bring herself to grace.⁵⁴³ Rather than as a powerful force for social order, the justice system was shown as merely an actor in a fate pre-ordained for Madame Tiquet. This was demonstrated in an anecdote, told even in the most hostile depictions of her, that just before the murders took place Madame Tiquet had gone to see a *dévineresse* who had told her that ‘in two months she would be free from pain and toil’. The *dévineresse*, commentators argued (drawing a connection to La Voisin) was proven right in that Madame Tiquet was executed exactly two months after her visit.⁵⁴⁴ In this way, the execution ritual was recast as an event liberating Madame Tiquet from a world that was not worthy of her mighty *ésprit*, rather than as a terrifying exemplar to others. The inefficiency of the justice system was further shown in reports that the *Lieutenant Criminel* himself had been an ex-lover of Madame Tiquet, and that she had had to guide him through the sentencing process when he became too moved by memories of their ‘days of laughter’ to sentence her properly,⁵⁴⁵ alongside depictions of her incompetent executioner, who was so overcome by Madame Tiquet’s behaviour on the scaffold that he missed his target, taking between three and six chops of the axe to separate her head from her body.⁵⁴⁶ Moreover, in Aublet de Maubuy’s 1762 *Vie des femmes illustres*, the

⁵⁴² Ravel, ‘Husband-Killer, Christian Heroine, Victim’, pp. 120-136.

⁵⁴³ Aublet De Maubuy, *Vie des femmes illustres*, Vol. 4, p. 36; *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 290.

⁵⁴⁴ De la Croix, *Dictionnaire portative*, Vol. 2, p. 701; Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 285; *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 42. The connection to La Voisin is made in Maubuy, *Vie des femmes illustres*, Vol. 4, p. 23.

⁵⁴⁵ ‘Ces jours rians’, Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 289; De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 6 (La Haye, 1734), p. 27; *Lettres from a Lady at Paris to a Lady at Avignon*, Vol. 1, p. 35; Smith, *The Romance of Real Life*, Vol. 2, p. 98; *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 47; *Gallick Reports*, p. 299. In Aublet de Maubuy, there are hints that the *Lieutenant Criminel* and Tiquet carry on their affair during her imprisonment, *Vie des femmes illustres*, Vol. 4, p. 31.

⁵⁴⁶ J. S. Quincy, *Mémoires du Chevalier de Quincy*, Vol. 1, p. 115 ; *L’esprit des cours de l’Europe pour le mois de Juillet 1699*, Vol. 6 (Paris, 1699), p. 166 ; Gastaud, *Le Triomphe*, p. 1; De Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 4 (La Haye, 1750), p. 37; Chaussemer, *Lettre du Père Chaussemer* (Paris, 1699), p. 488; S. De Goncourt, *Remarques historiques*, p. 266; Du Noyer, *Lettres historiques et galantes*, Vol. 1, p. 293; *Histoire des pendus*, Vol. 1, p. 54; Aublet de Maubuy, *Vie des femmes illustres*, Vol. 4, p. 29.

Tiquet case was taken up as educative example of mental strength for the *philosophes* themselves, blighted by inconstancy and in need of guidance from a female killer.⁵⁴⁷ In this way, Madame Tiquet became a means through which to critique the supposed weaknesses of some of the most influential men in the land.

Such representations of a murderess were rare: indeed, aside from the acquitted Victoire Salmon and Mary Aubry in London, Madame Tiquet was the only woman in either city to receive such a positive depiction. This may have to do with the fact that many of the initial publications on her, from which others drew heavily, were written either by her friends or by a group of authors adhering to a form of stoic humanism who were seeking a compelling case through which to demonstrate their philosophy. It was almost certainly also due to the fact that Madame Tiquet was only convicted of an attempted murder. Neither Catherine Hayes nor Marie Catherine Taperet received such adulation. When, like Madame Tiquet, Catherine Hayes' execution went wrong, with the rope meant to strangle her before she was burned disintegrating in the flames, it was seen as a sign from Providence that she should suffer the most graphic death possible, not a sign of the failures of the system to execute her properly.⁵⁴⁸

Print on the case of Marie Catherine Taperet, like Madame Tiquet, revealed a lack of faith in the ability of the judiciary to bring Marie to justice, but through criticism of Taperet and her sentimentalised representation in the press, rather than praise. Much debate focused upon Taperet's two postponements of execution due to pregnancy, only one of which turned out to be real. While it is difficult to gauge the exact publication date for many of the sources for the Taperet case, it seems that it was after her second pregnancy plea that interest in the case really gained momentum. The case was

⁵⁴⁷ Aublet de Maubuy, *Vie des femmes illustres*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1762), p. 4.

⁵⁴⁸ *Daily Journal* (10 May 1726); *Mist's Weekly Journal* (14 May 1726); *The Life*, p. 40; H. Fielding, *Examples of the Interposition of Providence in the Detection and Punishment of Murder* (London, 1752), p. 65.

referenced in the second half of the period as an example of the way in which the system could be exploited by women.⁵⁴⁹ That pleading the belly was a subversive ploy by Taperet was shown in reports that, as soon as the second postponement had been ratified, Marie returned to her comfortable cell demanding her daily coffee and croissants. Marie with her coffee became a popular theme for printed portraits of her (Figure 4.2) and Gueullette conveyed his rage at her ordering of the hot drink through angrily scribbled notes (to the point of illegibility) in the margin of his transcription of her *Mémoire*.⁵⁵⁰ Taperet used the extra time allocated to her by this second plea to convert a crowd of aristocratic supporters to her cause through sentimentalised retellings of the crime. Such supporters then petitioned the king for her to be pardoned. Reports of such petitions were almost certainly exaggerated for a bourgeois readership as a means of criticising the amorality of the aristocracy and their *sensibilité* and were published, in both London and Paris, alongside Louis XV's speech reaffirming that Taperet had to die, so demonstrating the king's moral superiority over his second estate.⁵⁵¹ Even following Taperet's execution, however, there were those who refused to believe that justice had finally conquered her, reflected in rumours that another woman had been executed in Taperet's place, with Marie being smuggled off to start a new life in the Antilles.⁵⁵² Such rumours emanated from the fact that Taperet had been executed wearing a handkerchief over her face. Paul Friedland argues that, as with Brinvilliers' simple execution smock, the use of the handkerchief probably came from judicial officials' desire to focus the message of Taperet's execution onto the inescapable power of justice rather than her own famous celebrity and her iconic beautiful face.⁵⁵³ However in this they failed, with Taperet's

⁵⁴⁹ *Collection de décisions nouvelles et de notions relatives à la jurisprudence*, Vol. 9 (Paris, 1790), p. 520.

⁵⁵⁰ *Extrait du Mémoire Imprimé, fait par en Barbevi Procureur contre Mongeot*, AN AD Gueullette III 8.

⁵⁵¹ D'Argenson notes the speech approvingly in his diary for May 17th 1755 R. L. D'Argenson, *Journal et Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, ed. Société de l'histoire de France, Vol. 9 (Paris, 1867), p. 9; *Gazette de Leyde* (11 July 1755). Reported in England in *Whitehall Evening Post* (17 July 1755); *Public Advertiser* (21 July 1755); *Read's Weekly Journal* (26 July 1755).

⁵⁵² AN AD Gueullette III 8.

⁵⁵³ P. Friedland, *Seeing Justice Done: The Age of Spectacular Capital Punishment in France* (Oxford, 2012), p. 174.

execution being marked by a surge in sentimental and romantic publications on her crimes.

The high level of sentimental interest in Taperet was shown to be indicative of the wider perceived corruption of Parisian society. In one of the earliest publications on the crime, written as letters between a Frenchman and an Englishman, Parisian society was mocked for its intense interest in the case: in his letter the Englishman inferred that Parisian society must be very dull indeed for such a woman to have created such a stir. In a similar fashion, songs sung at Taperet's execution criticised and mocked the large crowd presence.⁵⁵⁴ The superficial and overly sentimental interests of Parisian society were seen to be embodied in Taperet herself and her fondness for novel reading, making her silly and unaware of the gravity of her situation.⁵⁵⁵ This criticism of superficial society was expanded in the publication of a poem in the *Bibliothèque Bleue* in which Taperet was shown as the newly crowned queen of the underworld alongside recently executed criminal celebrity smuggler Robert Louis Mandrin. Here the underworld was shown as a mirror to the complex court society of 1750s France, full of intrigue and plotting, yet focused upon the worship of the two utterly unworthy figures of Mandrin and Taperet.⁵⁵⁶ While Taperet herself was not a noblewoman, the criticism of court culture found within the earlier cases of the Marquise de Brinvilliers and the *affaire des poisons* was also present here.

Finally, the Taperet case was used to raise important questions in the controversial divorce debate which was gaining traction in Paris from the mid-eighteenth century, and which would come to its climax with its legalisation in the early years of the Revolution. Sabine Juratic has shown how commentators adapted the Taperet case to be a prime

⁵⁵⁴ *Lettre d'un Anglois/ Lettre d'un Francois* (Paris, 1755), p.2; *Chanson nouvelle sur Madame Lescombat; complainte et epitaphe de Madame Lescombat*, AN AD Gueullette III 8.

⁵⁵⁵ *Lettre d'un Francois* (Paris, 1755) p. 9; Des Essarts, *Essai sur l'histoire générale*, p. 326.

⁵⁵⁶ Anon, *Poëme: rencontre de Madame Lescombat*.

example of the need for divorce, emphasising that divorce could have easily prevented the murder: left without any other options, murder was the only way in which Taperet could escape her marriage.⁵⁵⁷ The impossibility of escape was emphasised in the *Lettres amoureuses*, in which Taperet was shown as being under threat from being confined by Lescombat ('he plans to lock me in a convent, where I will see no one but him') and also without the financial power to escape with DeMongeot: 'I am ready to follow you... but how can we escape? Shall we go abroad without anything to live off even for a few months?'⁵⁵⁸ That Lescombat would have killed Taperet if she had not killed him was reinforced in descriptions of Lescombat as her 'executioner'.⁵⁵⁹ By the 1790s the Taperet case was being used as a central example in a number of pro-divorce tracts as powerful evidence for the need for marital reform to prevent such crimes.⁵⁶⁰ In this way, Bayle's assertions in the Tiquet case on the need for individual liberty even within matrimony found their fruition through discussion of the Lescombat murder.

In discussing the crimes of each of these women, therefore, commentators moved beyond assertions of the need to suppress wives' latent evil. In all three cases the faults which led to murder were seen, to a certain extent, to lie with the husband as well as with the wife. Husbands' failings were particularly situated in their failure to hold the balance between discipline and affection. While Catherine Hayes and Marie Catherine Taperet in particular sought to emphasise their husbands' abuses it was more commonly these men's inconsistent leniency that was seen as having led to their deaths. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, discussions of husbandly governance could also serve as a means of discussing wider weaknesses in the governing system and in social order. But it would

⁵⁵⁷ Juratic, 'Meurtrière de son mari', pp. 123-137.

⁵⁵⁸ *Lettres amoureuses*, p. 30, 40.

⁵⁵⁹ *Lettres amoureuses*, p. 10; *Amusemens de la toilette*, Vol. 1, p. 7; *L'oraison funèbre de très haute et très puissante Madame Marie-Catherine Taperet*, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁰ P.-A. Bouchotte, *Observations sur l'accord de la raison et de la religion pour le rétablissement du divorce* (Paris, 1790), p. 21; P. Juge, *Les mariages heureux ou l'Empire du divorce; examen critique du livre intitulé accord de la révélation & de la raison contre le divorce* (Paris, 1790), p. 16.

appear that by the eighteenth century such a connection had broken down within a London print consciousness where, more generally, connections between the political and the personal were less clear cut and in which print on the murderess tended to concentrate on immediate lived experience. Catherine Hayes' crimes, and the failings of her husband to govern her correctly, were rarely seen to indicate wider disorder. In Paris, however, both the Tiquet and Taperet murders were used to cast doubt on the efficiency of the governing systems of Paris. Madame Tiquet's transformation, admittedly to a probably limited upper-class audience, into a stoic transcendent heroine of myth challenged narratives of justice as bringing about redemption and allowed for heightened criticism of her *Parlementaire* husband. Marie Catherine Taperet's sentimental iconic status, which failed to be quelled by attempts to force a focus back onto narratives of judicial power, was less directly challenging than that of Tiquet, but probably occupied a greater presence among the public readership. It was her case that would be taken up by those seeking a radical re-conceptualisation of marriage with the divorce campaigns of the 1790s.

Conclusion

Husband murder was a common form of female murder in both cities and, alongside wife murder, was a heavily punished crime, reflecting the fact that marriage remained a central cornerstone to understandings of order in London and Paris. But these three high-profile cases were by no means representative of husband murder, not least in the fact that none of these three women actually committed the murder (or attempted murder) herself. The reasons behind the continual interest in these cases (and it is undeniable that such an interest did continue in the repeated publication of these cases throughout the century) must be therefore located beyond the simple fact of husband killing. These crimes were taken up by print commentators because they were seen as representative of particular challenges posed to urban marriages from the ways in which such marriages

were formed, from living conditions that encouraged adultery and put pressure on marital intimacy, from the poor governance of dissolute husbands, and, in Paris, from a judicial system at times incapable of enacting proper justice.

At the same time, clear differences can be discerned within the ways that the crimes of these women were perceived in London and Paris. The London crime of Catherine Hayes was seen to be the product of an unhappy marriage brought about through clandestine elopement and the seductive tactics of servant girls, while in Paris the unhappy marriages of the higher status Marie Catherine Taperet and Madame Tiquet were depicted as the products of a superficial elite and *haute bourgeois* marriage market which encouraged deception and infidelity. In all three cases, close living situations with lodgers or servants, paired with such unhappy marriage formations, were seen as inevitably leading to adultery. But the adulterous relationships at the core of these crimes occupied a more ambiguous place in the Parisian imagination than in London. Madame Tiquet and Marie Catherine Taperet's extra-marital relations were often shown as a necessary facet of upper-class life or a real manifestation of love rather an inevitable indication of murderous disorder where, in the Hayes case, Catherine's sinful adulterous relationship was seen as indicative of the other, more violent, ways in which she would betray her husband. Finally, while the ramifications of the Hayes murders were seen within the immediate context of household order, in Paris the disorderly effects of the Tiquet and Taperet cases were shown as spilling out from the household into the city, transforming the urban space into a site of violence and drawing attention to city governors' inability to enact justice. Husband murders, particularly those of an intensely violent and dramatic nature, were, without question, subversive acts, and struck at the fault lines of the eighteenth-century urban household. Such fault lines, however, were part of networks of tension that went far beyond simple stereotypes of female debauchery or deception, and interlinked with a variety of factors that contributed to the difficulty of creating and

maintaining a stable marriage within the metropolis. When such cracks did form, this was translated in different ways and on a different scale in London, where concern focused on the immediate complexities of urban living, than in Paris, where these women's crimes were believed to raise powerful questions about the stability of the capital.

Chapter Five: “Murder by Inches”.⁵⁶¹ Accusing and Abusing Parish Apprentices and
Servant Girls in Late Eighteenth-Century London and Paris

The final chapter of this thesis turns to the high-profile cases of women accused of murder that took place towards the end of the eighteenth century. Contrary to Martin Wiener’s arguments that interest in murderesses was disappearing in this period, these cases demonstrate that certain murderous women continued to excite the interest of late eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians.⁵⁶² These cases do differ from those that have come before, however, in that all three cases discussed in this chapter involve murders that were probably committed by accident. Moreover, the Parisian case, that of servant maid Victoire Salmon, was particularly unique in that it was the only high-profile case in either London or Paris for the period that involved a woman who was found innocent, and in that the supposed murder had taken place in Caen, with the trial only brought to Paris five years later, where the print surge began. Salmon also differed from her Parisian murderous predecessors in that she was lower class: as discussed in Chapter One all the other high profile cases of female murder in Paris involved perpetrators from the aristocracy or *haute bourgeoisie*. While the cases of Elizabeth Brownrigg and Sarah and Sarah Morgan Metyard continued London tendencies to focus on women of the lower and lower-middle classes, a change can be perceived here as well, with a shift in interest from the murderesses themselves onto their young female victims reflecting the emergence of a late eighteenth-century obsession with images of young female victimhood.⁵⁶³ Where previous high-profile cases of female-perpetrated homicide often

⁵⁶¹ *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4 (London, 1795), p. 317; *The Malefactor’s Register*, Vol. 4 (London, 1779), p. 317; *God’s Revenge against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 28.

⁵⁶² M. Wiener, ‘Alice Arden to Bill Sikes: Changing Nightmares of Intimate Violence in England, 1558-1869’, *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001), pp. 184-212.

⁵⁶³ Wiener, ‘Alice Arden’, pp. 184-212; see also N. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: the Political History of the Novel* (Oxford, 1987), Chapter Two; M. Feeley and D. Little, ‘The Vanishing Female: The Decline of Women in the Criminal Process, 1687–1912’, *Law and Society Review* 25 (1991), pp. 719–57; D. Garrioch, ‘The Everyday Lives of Parisian Women and the October Days of 1789’, *Social History* 24.3 (Oct., 1999), pp. 231-249; C. Gonda, ‘Misses, Murderesses and Magdalens: Women in the Public Eye’, in E. Eger, C. Grant, C. Ó Gallchoir, P. Warburton (eds), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830*

focused upon narratives of intimate betrayal, particularly in terms of male-female relations, these final three cases were instead primarily used to raise questions about proper governance and care both in terms of the treatment of servants/apprentices by mistresses and, more broadly, in terms of government and judicial institutions' treatment of the most vulnerable members of urban society.

In London, the cases of Elizabeth Brownrigg and Sarah Metyard exposed difficulties in the parish apprentice system. The practice of taking in parish apprentices, in which children under the care of the parish (often orphans or abandoned by their parents) were placed with lower-class families who were paid a small sum of money to keep them, was increasingly common in the late eighteenth century. In such situations the provision of training was a minor concern, and those who took in parish apprentices were usually only expected to keep them fed, clothed and at work in the most menial of tasks. Indeed, as Bridget Hill has shown, many parish apprentices were too poorly educated to undertake work other than domestic drudgery. As the practice grew, so did the concern surrounding it, especially arguments, championed by Jonas Hanway, that many families only took such apprentices in for the money, and then treated them with extreme cruelty, unmonitored by the parish.⁵⁶⁴

Possibilities that this system was being exploited were first raised with the 1762 trial of mother and daughter Sarah and Sarah Morgan (Sally) Metyard. The Metyards worked as haberdashers in St George Hanover Square in London, where they kept up to four parish apprentices working long hours in a tiny cramped room. In 1758 one of the girls, Ann Nailor, attempted to run away but was caught by the milkman and brought back. As punishment she was tied to a door frame, starved and beaten. After three days Ann was found to be no longer breathing. Despite attempts to revive her, she was clearly dead.

(Cambridge, 2001), pp. 53-75; T. Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London: Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis* (London, 1999), Chapter Seven.

⁵⁶⁴ B. Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 128-150.

The Metyards concealed Ann's death from the other apprentices by hiding Ann's body in the garret, telling them that she had run away. Sarah the mother disposed of the body by cutting off the arms and legs and throwing the parts into a gully hole in Chick Lane. Shortly afterwards, Sally the daughter left to go and live with Mr Rooker, a previous lodger at the Metyards house. Incensed at her daughter's desertion, Sarah hounded Sally daily, screaming outside Mr Rooker's house and beating her daughter savagely. Eventually Sally confessed the murder to Rooker, who advised her to go to the authorities. Much to her (and his) surprise, however, Sally was also arrested and put on trial. Mother and daughter turned on one another in the courtroom, with Sarah still claiming that Ann had run away and Sally declaring that her mother had been the sole cause of Ann's death. Both were convicted. They were hung in September 1762, and Rooker subsequently committed suicide.⁵⁶⁵

Five years later, a similar case caused an even louder outcry among the London public. In August 1767 a journeyman who worked for a bakery in Fleur de Lys (also known as Flower de Luce) Court in Fetter Lane spied through a skylight a barely human form chained up in the hog sty of the neighbouring house, belonging to the Brownrigg family. The Brownriggs, like the Metyards, had taken in two parish apprentices, Mary Clifford and Mary Mitchell, who were rarely seen. The journeyman's employers, the Deacons, sent for the parish authorities, who came and demanded that the Brownriggs reveal their apprentices. After a lengthy doorstep altercation both girls were brought out, bearing

⁵⁶⁵ Central sources for this case include: LMA: Middlesex Rolls MJ/SP/1762/07; *OBP*, July 1762, trial of Sarah Metyard Sarah Morgan Metyard (t17620714-30); *OBP*, *Ordinary's Account* 19th July 1762 (o17620917-1); *The Last Dying Speech (and Last Farewell to the World) of Sarah Metyard, and her Own Daughter Sarah Morgan Metyard, who were Executed July the 19th 1762, at Tyburn, for the Barbarous Murder, of Two Apprentices Girls* (London, 1762); *God's Revenge Against Murder; Or, the Genuine History of the Life, Trial and Last Dying Words of Sarah Metyard* (London, 1762); *The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politicks and Literature of the Year 1762* (London, 1763), pp. 132-138; *Select Trials for Murder, Robbery, Burglary, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Forgery, Piracy and Other Offences and Misdemeanors at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey*, Vol. 4 (London, 1764), pp. 198-220; *The Annals of Newgate or Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4 (London, 1776), pp. 169-184; *The Malefactor's Register or New Newgate and Tyburn Calendar*, Vol. 4 (London, 1779), pp. 225-232. Rooker's suicide, apparently motivated by Sally's death was reported in the *London Chronicle* (6 and 8 Feb 1763).

extreme signs of physical abuse. The girls were taken to the workhouse, where Mary Clifford subsequently died. James Brownrigg was arrested, but his wife Elizabeth and their 19 year-old son John escaped. After ten days and a widespread press campaign they were found in Wandsworth. On the evidence of Mary Mitchell, Elizabeth was shown to be the main perpetrator of the abuse. She had whipped the girls regularly, tying them up naked to a hook put up in the kitchen for the purpose. She had forced them to sleep in a coal hole, again naked, and had starved them. She was sentenced to hanging and then dissection, while both father and son were each sentenced to six months in Newgate for their complicity in the beating of Mary Mitchell, the surviving apprentice. Such was the fascination of the Brownrigg trial that Elizabeth's skeleton was subsequently hung up in a niche in the Royal College of Surgeons Hall for several decades.⁵⁶⁶

In Paris, the case of Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon (referred to here as Victoire⁵⁶⁷) raised similar questions about the exploitation of young women, but within the more traditional servant/mistress relationship. The case began in August 1781, in Caen, Normandy. Victoire had recently been employed as servant to the Huet Duparc family, and had only worked for them for six days when the grandfather of the family died suddenly after eating his morning porridge.⁵⁶⁸ The following day, at a family luncheon,

⁵⁶⁶ Central sources for the case include: *OBP*, September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *OBP*, *Ordinary of Newgate's Account*, September 1767 (OA17670914); *An Appeal to Humanity in an Account of the Life and Cruel Actions of Elizabeth Brownrigg* (London, 1767); *Genuine and Authentic Account of the Life, Trial and Execution of Elizabeth Brownrigg, who was Executed on Monday the Fourteenth of September 1767* (London, 1767); J. Wingrave, *A Narrative of the Many Horrid Cruelties Inflicted by Elizabeth Brownrigg Upon the Body of Mary Clifford* (London, 1767); *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politicks and Literature for the Year 1767* (London, 1768), pp. 117-129, 140-141, 190-197; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar; or, Villainy Displayed in all its Branches*, Vol. 4 (London, 1795), pp. 324-335; *The London Magazine, or Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* (September, 1767); *The Malefactor's Register or new Newgate and Tyburn Calendar*, Vol. 4 (London, 1779), pp. 316-327; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3 (London, 1788), pp. 365-377; *The Tyburn Chronicle*, Vol. 4 (London, 1768), pp. 236-246; *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 4 (London, 1776), pp. 204-214; *God's Revenge Against Murder! Or the Tragical History and Horrid Cruelties of Elizabeth Brownrigg* (London, 1767); *The Cries of the Afflicted; Being a True and Faithful Account of the Sufferings of Mary Mitchell, Mary Jones and Mary Clifford* (London, 1767); *A New Song: 'In Fetter Lane one Brownrigg liv'd'* (London, 1767).

⁵⁶⁷ The name 'Victoire' came to dominate following her acquittal. She may have originally been named Victoire after the French victory at the Battle of Saint Foy in April of 1768.

⁵⁶⁸ Also referred to as Huet Dupart, Huet, Duparc and Dupart.

all seven family members and guests fell ill after finding a crunchy powder in their soup. Victoire was searched and arsenic was found in her left pocket and upon her bed, while her wardrobe was found to be filled with items pilfered from the house. Justice proceeded quickly (by eighteenth-century French standards) and in February 1782 Victoire was sentenced to death by burning. She managed to get the execution postponed by falsely pleading pregnancy and enlisted the support of her confessors who, in turn, recruited Pierre Noël LeCauchois, a Rouen defence lawyer (the case was being tried in Rouen). This was a time when miscarriages of justice were popular topics, and lawyers such as LeCauchois were keen to take them on for free to raise their profile. LeCauchois found a series of glaring inaccuracies in records of the investigation including contradictory witnesses, long time periods between evidence being found and handed in (the white powder found in Victoire's pocket, for example, was only tested a week after the 'murder') and a substantial number of failures of protocol committed by local officials. LeCauchois found that Salmon had not actually prepared either of the two meals, nor had any of the luncheon victims displayed any real signs of arsenic poisoning. LeCauchois concluded that the entire case had in fact been engineered by Mme Huet Dupart, mother of the household and daughter of the deceased grandfather. Either on purpose or by accident, LeCauchois believed, Mme Huet Duparc had put arsenic in her father's porridge and then tried to cover it up by framing Victoire for a second poisoning and theft. LeCauchois' campaigning led to a second execution postponement in 1784 and eventually, through the intervention of Louis XVI, the case was moved to Paris in April of 1786. In May, Victoire was finally acquitted by the Parisian *Parlement* to widespread rejoicing. Although she was given permission to prosecute Mme Huet Duparc, Salmon instead quickly got married and moved back to her home town of Méautis. She died there in 1827.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Original *Parlement* trial in AN : X2b1079; Central publications include: P. N. LeCauchois, *Mémoire*

These three cases, the Brownrigg and Salmon cases in particular, generated a high level of print coverage. Pamphlets on Brownrigg were published even before her trial or execution and Salmon appeared in the *Causes Célèbres* immediately following her acquittal.⁵⁷⁰ All three cases were also taken up heavily by the press. In London, only the case of Sarah Malcolm had received similar coverage. In Paris, press reporting of the Salmon case was entirely unprecedented in terms of female-perpetrated murder, and references to her case appeared in newspapers and periodicals for a full six months after her acquittal.⁵⁷¹ While previous factums on female killers had been written primarily for a judicial audience, Salmon's factums, despite each being between 100 and 300 pages long, were written to be accessible to non-judicial experts and were sold in large numbers, mirroring a broader shift in judicial writing in the 1780s.⁵⁷² This is particularly striking given that the summer of 1786 formed the backdrop for the salacious Diamond Necklace Affair, a scandal which involved the Queen herself, yet against which the Salmon case continued to hold sway.

While the Metyards have received little previous attention from historians, and are used here primarily to supplement analysis on the Brownrigg case because of the lower (though still distinctly high-profile- see Appendix One) number of texts written about them, both the Salmon and Brownrigg cases have received previous historiographical

pour Marie-Françoise-Victoire Salmon (Rouen, 1784); P. N. LeCauchois, *Supplément au Mémoire de la fille Salmon, accusée des crimes de poison & vols domestiques* (Rouen, 1785); P. N. LeCauchois, *Justification de Marie-Françoise-Victoire Salmon, par M LeCauchois, avocat au Parlement de Rouen* (Paris, 1786); P. N. LeCauchois, *Addition à la Justification de Marie-Françoise Victoire Salmon* (Paris, 1786); M. Fournel, *Consultation pour une jeune fille condamnée à être brûlée vive* (Paris, 1786); *Le Courrier* (May-September, 1786); N. Des Essarts, *Procès fameux extraits de l'essai sur l'histoire générale des états*, Vol. 9 (Paris, 1788), pp. 231-253; *Les lunes du Cousin Jacques* (August, 1786); *Arrêt de la Cour de Parlement qui décharge Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon, fille domestique* (Paris, 1786); P. G. Simon, *Causes Célèbres, curieuses et intéressantes*, Vol. 143 (Paris, 1786), pp. 74-83. See also A. LeCorbeiller, *Le long martyre de Françoise Salmon* (Paris, 1927).

⁵⁷⁰ *An Appeal to Humanity; Genuine and Authentic Account; Wingrave, A Narrative* appeared before Elizabeth Brownrigg's trial. Simon, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 143 appeared straight after Salmon's acquittal.

⁵⁷¹ This is, of course, not an entirely fair comparison in that the newspaper press was much more limited during the time of the highest-profile Parisian female killer, the Marquise de Brinvilliers.

⁵⁷² Sara Maza claims that print runs went up to twenty-thousand, with copies often having multiple readers: S. Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: the Causes Célèbres of Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (California, 1993), p. 3.

interest. Sara Maza's work on the *Mémoires Judiciaires* of 1770s and 1780s France, including the Salmon case, has argued that such cases, and the lawyers behind them, provided one of the bridging points between 'old' Enlightenment ideas of the *philosophes* and Revolutionary rhetoric. This was due, Maza argues, to these *Mémoires'* depiction of the justice system as an abstract entity that existed beyond fallible judges and which the public could understand and even contribute to.⁵⁷³ This chapter will build on Maza's work by incorporating the broader range of publications on Salmon outside of factums, and by tracing the concerns also raised by the case about the middle-class provincial household. Readings of the Brownrigg case have often focused on the two most salacious pamphlets on the murders, giving the case a reputation for sensationalism and sexualisation that is not sustained by the wider print reaction to the case.⁵⁷⁴ In the later eighteenth century, where narratives of penitence were (unevenly) being replaced in criminal print with new voyeuristic depictions that focused on the individual attributes of the criminal classes, and where narratives of female passivity and domesticity (at least among the middling sort) were gaining traction, one may expect gender and sexuality to have played a greater role in depictions. But, as will be shown below, while gender did influence how these women's crimes were explained, gendered motifs were heavily refracted by differences in age, occupation and class, forming a multiplicity of femininities that can be traced in the texts alongside, particularly in London, older, less-gendered, images.

⁵⁷³ S. Maza, 'Le tribunal de la nation: les Mémoires Judiciaires et l'opinion publique à la fin de l'Ancien Régime', *Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 42.1 (Jan, 1987), pp. 73-90; Maza, *Private Lives*, Chapter Five; S. Maza, 'The Theatre of Punishment: Melodrama and Judicial Reform in pre-Revolutionary France', in S. E. Melzer and K. Norberg (eds), *From the Royal to the Republican Body* (Berkeley, 1998), pp. 182-198.

⁵⁷⁴ K. Straub, 'The Tortured Apprentice: Sexual Monstrosity and the Suffering of Poor Children in the Brownrigg Murder Case', in M. Choudhury and L. Rosenthal (eds), *Monstrous Dreams of Reason: Body, Self and Other in the Enlightenment* (Bucknell, 2002), pp. 66-81; K. Straub, *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism and Violence between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (John Hopkins, 2009), Chapter Four; M. A. Doody, "'Those Eyes Are Made So Killing": Eighteenth-Century Murderesses and the Law', *Princeton Library Chronicle* 46 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 77-78; K. T. Saxton, *Narratives of Women and Murder in England* (Surrey, 2009) Chapter Three. The exception is the excellent P. Seleski, 'A Mistress, A Mother and a Murderess too', in K. Kittredge, *Lewd and Notorious: Female transgression in the Eighteenth Century* (Michigan, 2003), pp. 210-238 which makes initial suggestions about the social history ramifications of the crime further explored in this chapter.

As with the preceding chapter, the dangers of the disordered domestic environment continued to be a central theme in discussions of female-perpetrated murder in the late eighteenth century. This chapter will begin by analysing the depictions of the murderous dysfunctional households within each case, and exploring how such dysfunction was frequently blamed on the middle-aged women who ran them. Yet perceptions were also changing, and depictions of the problematic female householder came to be eclipsed in these cases by interest in their young female victims. This narrative of female victimhood had intense emotive power and the second section will assess the ways in which the impassioned rhetoric generated by these cases was harnessed for particular campaigns: in London reform of the parish apprentice system, and in Paris reform of the provincial judiciary. However such rhetorical power came at the cost of representations of the agency of the women at the core of these crimes. The final section of this chapter will demonstrate how the reformist potential of these cases was counteracted, with varying degrees of success, through recourse to, in London, older motifs of the penitent sinner and, in Paris, sentimental depictions of the happy pastoral housewife. In this way, it will be shown that representations of high-profile cases of female murder in the late eighteenth century displayed some continuity with those that had come before, as well as being marked by the rapidly changing societies of London and Paris in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Households of Deviance:

As with the cases of Madame Tiquet, Catherine Hayes and Marie Catherine Taperet explored in the previous chapter, discussions of the Brownrigg, Metyard and Salmon cases often focused upon the domestic setting of the households in which the murders occurred. Yet these households differed from those that came before in that they were shown as exclusively dominated by a middle-aged, middle-class matriarch, with the male members of the household remaining conspicuously absent throughout discussions of the

crimes. The rising association of women with domestic space in the late eighteenth century has long been established by scholars.⁵⁷⁵ These cases provided extreme examples of how such a connection could be subverted for murderous ends, particularly in the absence of a patriarch. As seen in the case of Catherine Hayes, the disordered domestic space had been a long-term motif in representations of murderers in eighteenth-century London, but was newer to Paris. The new focus on domesticity that came with the Salmon case was itself a sign of the times; while previous cases had focused primarily on abstract emotive relationships to endow cases with political significance, by 1786 there was no need for such subterfuge. Overt political critique was now increasingly possible and so the Huet Duparc household was seen as a household and not as a political metaphor. But, it must be noted, in a shift from previous high-profile cases, these depictions of dysfunctional urban matriarchs became incidental to a central focus on young female victimhood. The references and images discussed in this first section, then, were no longer the dominant narratives of the cases, but were conjured in fleeting allusions and brief contemplations.

The rising perception of middle-class women in the late eighteenth century as sentimental centre points of the family, overlooking the economic managerial roles they continued to undertake, meant that criticism of these three women's treatment of their employees was undertaken primarily through criticism of each of them as mothers. A popular quote reproduced in biographies of Brownrigg was that women who kept

⁵⁷⁵ Key works on domesticity and gender include (among many): Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*; L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (Chicago, 1987); A. Fauve-Chamoux, 'Le surplus urbain des femmes en France préindustrielle et le rôle de la domesticité', *Population* 53 (1998), pp. 359-377; C. Flint, *Family Fictions: Narrative and Domestic Relations in Britain, 1688-1798* (Stanford, 1998); M. Francus, *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Ideology of Domesticity* (Baltimore, 2012); K. Harvey, *The Little Republic, Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012); M. McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity* (Baltimore, 2005); A. Pardailhé-Galabrun, *La naissance de l'intime* (Paris, 1988); R. Rand (ed.), *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1997); C. Roulston, *Narrating Marriage in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (Surrey, 2010); L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1979); J. Traer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cornell, 1980); R. B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850* (Essex, 1998); A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998).

apprentices should ‘consider themselves at once as mistresses and as mothers; nor ever permit the strictness of the former character to preponderate over the humanity of the latter’.⁵⁷⁶ The abuse and neglect at the core of these three cases was emphasised through representations of Brownrigg, the Metyards and Mme Huet Duparc (her first name was never recorded) not as employers but as mothers to these ‘girls’ in their late teens and early twenties. In both cities the framing of these crimes as forms of maternal emotional betrayal reflected wider difficulties in reconciling understandings of the female role in the middle class domestic space as both affective and key to economic survival. In London the use of sentimental maternal language to criticise Brownrigg and Metyard’s cruelty reflects wider disconnects in understandings of the practice of taking in apprentices: in theory a form of philanthropic work undertaken by women out of their charitable maternal impulses, but in practice often a means of making a quick bit of money, leaving ignorant children in states of neglect.

Historians have shown that increasing emphasis was put upon the value of motherhood in the late eighteenth century, due in particular to fears about stalling population growth, which led to the development of a maternal ideal defined by self-sacrifice, passive servitude and intense affection.⁵⁷⁷ Yet such ideals could have a darker side. Elizabeth Brownrigg, in particular, was depicted as an ideal mother taken to a dangerous extreme. There were repeated reports that Brownrigg had given birth to between 16 and 19 children, of whom only three survived. This high mortality rate was used to show Brownrigg as an object of pity, a victim of the struggle to have children that many women went through and a determined contributor to the future of Britain’s populace. Brownrigg’s intense love for her children was shown through her much criticism preoccupation during the early days of confinement with ensuring that her children were

⁵⁷⁶ *God’s Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 4; *The Malefactor’s Register*, Vol. 4, p. 38; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, p. 318.

⁵⁷⁷ Francus, *Monstrous Motherhood*, p. 201; also R. Perry, ‘Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2.2 (Oct, 1991), pp. 204-234.

taken care of rather than with her imminent trial.⁵⁷⁸ Such love was particularly emphasised in her close relationship with her eldest son, John. Discussions of John's beatings of the two Marys often linked back to his relationship with his mother, arguing either that he beat them when she had become too tired, or that he delivered beatings to the girls as a way of pleasing his mother.⁵⁷⁹ Such pernicious closeness took on an even more sinister tone in reports that, during their escape from the police, Elizabeth and John had 'lived as man and wife' and had 'slept in the same bed'.⁵⁸⁰ As with the case of Catherine Hayes, however, it must be emphasised that such incest aspersions were not central to the case, and were used to show the corrupted authority of the matriarch rather than as specific depictions of sexual deviance. This idea of unnatural family relations was carried on after Elizabeth's death in (false) newspaper reports from 1768 that James and John Brownrigg were to marry two sisters whom they had met in prison.⁵⁸¹ The Brownrigg case was therefore an example of domesticity gone too far: family love that had become too intense and exclusive, resulting in violence and disorder.

The subversive nature of too close mother/child relations was also shown in the Metyard case. Press and print coverage of the trial was dominated by reports of the relationship between mother and daughter. The discovery of the crime was put down to a cryptic

⁵⁷⁸ Reports of Brownrigg's 19 children are found in. *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 9; *London Evening Post* (6-8 August 1767); *Gazetteer* (10 August 1767); *Public Advertiser* (12 August 1767); *The Universal Magazine* (August, 1767), p. 105. She is reported to have had 16 children in *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 3; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, p. 308; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 481; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 308; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 3. Brownrigg's post arrest concern for her children is reported in Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 27; *Gazetteer* (19 September 1767).

⁵⁷⁹ *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 13; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, p. 312; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 312; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (1767), p. 18; *A Narrative*, p. 29; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3, p. 358; *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 25; *The Annual Register* (London, 1767), pp. 121, 190; *Public Advertiser* (20, 26 August 1767); *Universal Magazine* (August, 1767), pp. 107, 211; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 579; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 537; *London Evening Post* (22-25 August 1767).

⁵⁸⁰ *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 18; *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 12; *The Annual Register* (1768), p. 119; *God's Revenge against murder!* (1767), p. 15; *St James's Chronicle* (15-18 August 1767); *Public Advertiser* (17 August 1767); *The Universal Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 107; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 580.

⁵⁸¹ *St James's Chronicle* (30 July- 2 August 1768); *London Journal* (6 August 1768); *General Evening Post* (5-7 March 1772).

phrase uttered by Sally Metyard during one of her mother's attacks witnessed by Mr Rooker: 'remember the Chick Lane ghost' (referring to the lane in which Sarah Metyard had disposed of Ann Nailor's body parts).⁵⁸² The closed domestic world of mother-daughter knowledge was shown as capable of concealing murder for four years, despite the discovery of a body. Unlike Brownrigg, however, such close relations were shown to be intrinsically unstable and marred by abuse. While Elizabeth Brownrigg's love of her children served as a contrast to her abuse of her apprentices, Sarah Metyard was shown as being both a cruel mistress and a cruel mother; cruelty which inevitably forced her daughter to reveal the crimes. Popular reports that the women had to be kept at opposite sides of Newgate because of their continual quarrels were used as evidence of the inherent instability of the mother-daughter bond.⁵⁸³ As with Elizabeth Brownrigg's control of her son, Sarah the mother was shown as the instigator of the cruelty and abuse, and therefore in part responsible for the crimes of her daughter. Unlike John Brownrigg, however, maternal influence was not seen as enough of a defence to save Sally Metyard from the noose, perhaps because the Metyard crime had the added edge of being an all-female household: the impenetrable (at least for four years) mother/daughter relationship may have been seen as more threatening than that of mother/son.

In the Salmon case, Mme Huet Duparc, like Sarah Metyard, was shown uniting the images of bad mistress and bad mother, treating both her family and servant with coldness and cruelty. Particular emphasis was given to the fact that Mme Huet Duparc had refused her father more wood for his fire, forcing him to sit in the cold.⁵⁸⁴ Indeed, in the early factums, LeCauchois went as far as to hint that she may have poisoned her

⁵⁸² *OBP*, July 1762, trial of Sarah Metyard Sarah Morgan Metyard (t17620714-30); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 19th July 1762 (o17620917-1); *The Annual Register* (London, 1763), p. 138; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 224.

⁵⁸³ *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 19th July, 1762 (o17620917-1); *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1762), p. 2; *The Annual Register* (1763), p. 138.

⁵⁸⁴ LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, pp. 10, 19; LeCauchois, *Supplément*, p. 3; LeCauchois, *Justification*, p. 78.

father on purpose.⁵⁸⁵ Such coldness and cruelty was shown to have spread across the family, through reports that Mlle and Master Huet Duparc declared that they were relieved when their grandfather died for ‘he was a great embarrassment to us’.⁵⁸⁶ That this unnatural callousness was the product of their mother’s influence was further shown in depictions of Mme Huet Duparc’s intense schooling of her youngest son in his accusations against Salmon, forcing him to recite a ‘lesson’ of false testimony which would lead to the sentence of death by burning being imposed upon an innocent young girl.⁵⁸⁷ In this depiction of provincial family life for a Parisian audience, the Huet Duparcs were shown as a disparate and unloving unit, only drawn together through criminal machinations. There is debate in French historiography on whether the ideology of domesticity existed in France before the Revolution, but the Salmon case seems to show that there was at least some mistrust of families who had no affective sentiment for one another.⁵⁸⁸

In all three cases, the domestic space, whether too close or too unfeeling, was governed entirely by a middle-aged woman. In the case of the Metyards there was no male authority figure at all as the husband/father of the Metyards was long dead. In the Brownrigg and Huet Duparc cases husbands were present, but were weak and ignorant of the workings of their own households. James Brownrigg was held under particular scrutiny for allowing his wife to commit such atrocities. Yet, although he and his son were both sentenced to six months in Newgate, print commentators rarely blamed him

⁵⁸⁵ This is only alluded to in LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, p. 45.

⁵⁸⁶ LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, pp. 19, 151, 205; LeCauchois, *Justification*, p. 80

⁵⁸⁷ ‘Mais n’ayant pas bien retenu sa leçon (quoiqu’il eut eu quatre jours pour se recorder)’, Fournel, *Consultation*, p. 41.

⁵⁸⁸ Debates about the development of domesticity in pre-revolution Paris can be seen in C. Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and their Masters in Old Regime France* (London, 1984); Fauve-Chamoux, ‘Le surplus urbain des femmes en France préindustrielle’, pp. 359-377; L. Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (California, 1992); S. Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: an Essay on the Social Imaginary 1750-1850* (Harvard, 2003); S. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth Century France: the Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, 1983); Pardailhé-Galabrun, *La naissance de l’intime*; Rand (ed.), *Intimate Encounters* especially S. Maza, ‘The Bourgeois Family Revisited: Sentimentalism and Social Class in Pre-Revolutionary French Culture’, pp. 39-47.

for the murders. Depictions of James' futile attempts to control Elizabeth's rages by hiding her whips or keeping the apprentices out of sight were seen as examples of Elizabeth's intense control over the household space rather than as signs of James' failings. The problem was not just that James could not control Elizabeth but that he did not have an understanding of, or control over, the domestic space, as shown in reports that he put up the hook on which the girls were whipped without any knowledge of what it was for.⁵⁸⁹ Monsieur Huet Duparc was also shown as an absent figure in the Salmon case in that for the majority of the action he was actually at the family's country house, only returning after the death of his father-in-law. Even then he was given almost no role within description of later events, except as one of the group of those pretending to have been 'poisoned' under the instructions of Mme Huet Duparc.⁵⁹⁰ Associating women with the domestic was here shown to have a downside in the perceived ostracisation of men from the home, and the cases served to demonstrate the extreme consequences of this, reaffirming the need for men to continue to have a role in their households.⁵⁹¹

The dangerous dynamics of the female-run domestic space were shown in a focus, particularly in the Brownrigg and Salmon cases, on the kitchen, supposedly the centre of the home, as the setting for killing acts. In the Brownrigg case this was shown in a prominent depiction of the kitchen as the central site of abuse in all images of the crime (Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4). The kitchen is shown as tidy, clean and ordered and yet also transformed into a space of violence and horror. This emphasis on order is in contrast to depictions of the Huet Duparc's kitchen, which was shown as deeply disordered. This is seen in suggestions hinted at by LeCauchois, but virulently put forward by Fournel

⁵⁸⁹ *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *OBP Ordinary of Newgate's Account*, September 1767 (OA17670914); *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 17; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, p. 311; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 478; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 311; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 21.

⁵⁹⁰ Fournel, *Consultation*, p. 13; LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, p. 17, 29, 219, 252-254.

⁵⁹¹ In reality, as Karen Harvey has shown, men did continue to serve important roles within the domestic space. Harvey, *The Little Republic*.

(Salmon's Parisian lawyer who took over from LeCauchois when the case reached Paris) that Mme Huet Duparc had poisoned her father by mistake. This argument centred on the four pots of white powder kept on the kitchen mantelpiece, some of which contained salt and some of which contained arsenic, which Mme Huet Duparc had confused, leading to the accidental poisoning of her father. Fournel, writing for a Parisian audience, increased the emphasis on this aspect of the murder, drawing from Parisian perceptions of the provinces as dangerous and ignorant places in which salt could easily be mistaken for arsenic by inept Norman mistresses.⁵⁹²

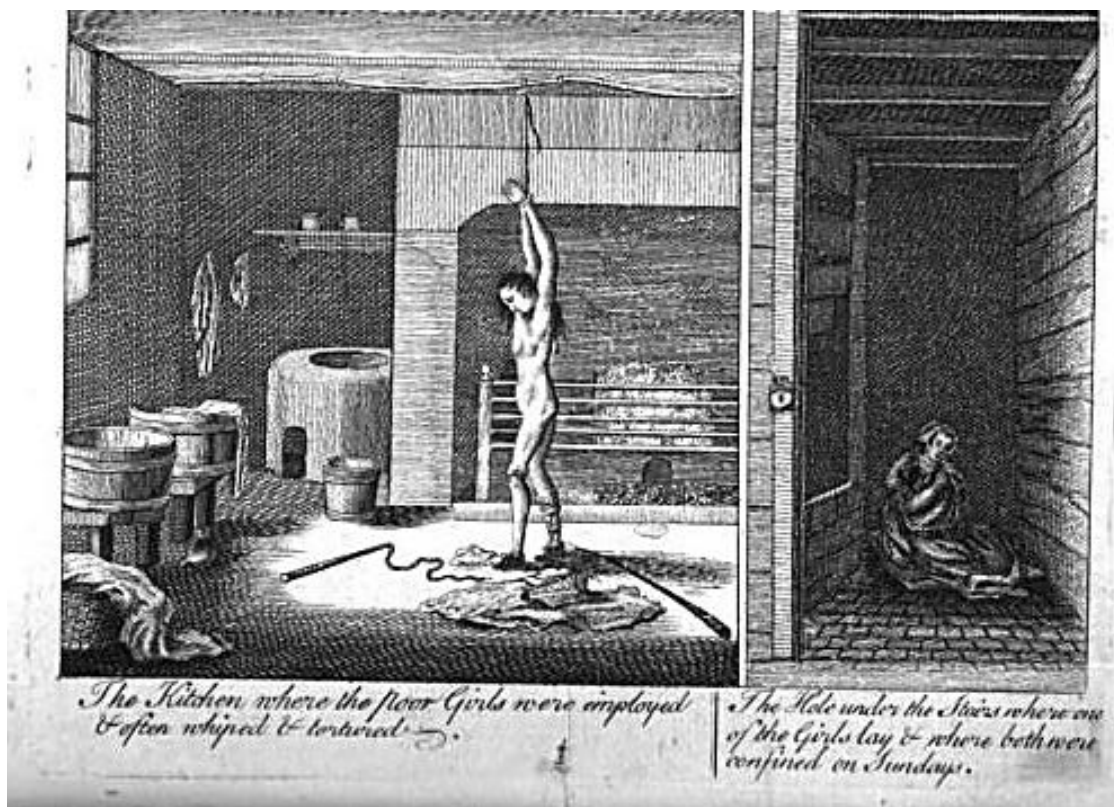


Figure 5.1: Illustrations from *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 578.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹² LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, pp. 14, 87, 114; LeCauchois, *Justification*, p. 53; Fournel, *Consultation*, pp. 91, 121.

⁵⁹³ Reproduced with permission from the University of Sheffield.



Figure 5.2: Frontispiece, *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767).⁵⁹⁴

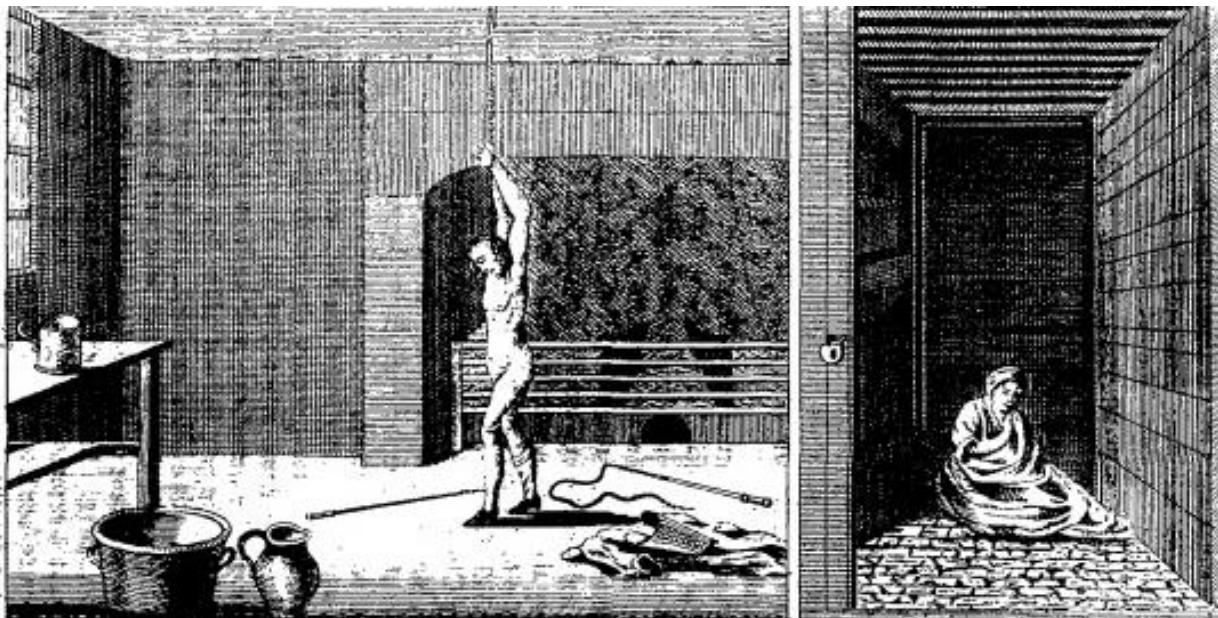


Figure 5.3: Illustration from *The Annals of Newgate*, Vol. 4 (London, 1776), p. 200 (based on Figure 5.1).⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁴ Image Source: the digitised collection of Francis A Countway Library of the History of Medicine: <https://archive.org/details/godsrevengeagain00brow> [Accessed 23rd August 2014]. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection RB.23.a.21154)

⁵⁹⁵ Image Source: Eighteenth Century Collections Online, via <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx> [Accessed 21st August 2014]. CW3324045124. Also in *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3 (London, 1788), p. 348. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection 1131.e.5,6.).



Figure 5.4: Illustrations from *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4 (London, 1779), p. 311.⁵⁹⁶

These were female-run households, but, more specifically, they were female-run middle-class households. Late eighteenth-century urban middle-class households, as shown by Patty Seleski and Margaret Hunt,⁵⁹⁷ functioned unsteadily, constantly on the edge of bankruptcy, and only kept from the precipice by the careful economic management of mistresses. Such careful economic management, the cases suggested, could easily corrupt mistresses' affective role and push them into cruelty. The Brownrigg household was undoubtedly precarious, as seen in the quick loss of the Fleur-de-Lys Court house following the arrests of its inhabitants. The Brownriggs' furniture was immediately sold, and the house re-let to a man who took in and raised the Brownriggs' (now homeless) youngest son.⁵⁹⁸ As Seleski has shown, the arrival of apprentices who had received

⁵⁹⁶ Image Source: Eighteenth Century Collections Online, via <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx> [Accessed 21st August 2014]. CW102966301. The same illustration can be found in *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4 (London, 1795), p. 311. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection C.140.b.65.)

⁵⁹⁷ M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Gender, Commerce and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (California, 1996), Chapter Five; Seleski, 'A Mistress and a Murderess too', pp. 210-238.

⁵⁹⁸ *London Evening Post* (27-28 August 1767); *St James Chronicle* (29 August-1 September 1767); *Public Advertiser* (31 December 1767).

minimal education or discipline, while a short-term source of money, could prove disastrous for family finances. Marys Mitchell and Clifford, for example, were reported to have been lazy, disobedient, dishonest and improperly toilet trained, all of which may have taxed the fragile economy of the Brownrigg household and may go a certain way to explaining the motivations behind Brownrigg's extreme rages.⁵⁹⁹ The precariousness of the Huet Duparc household was similarly shown in repeated emphasis on the fact that they could only afford one servant for a family of seven and Mme Huet Duparc's anger that her father wanted wood for a fire. Economic management was shown as corrupting the affective domestic space, forcing cruelty from mistresses who should have embodied only sympathy and generosity.

The middle-class female matriarch was shown to occupy a dangerous role not only within the home, but also in the wider neighbourhood. Here, clear differences are suggested in the concerns raised in the Brownrigg and Metyard cases in London and the Salmon case in Paris. In London print on the Brownrigg and Metyard cases focused on the dangers of the supposed anonymity of the city environment and the development of increasingly isolated household units. Reports of the cases were filled with assertions that these two cases were just the tip of widespread criminality taking place behind closed doors: as the *Public Advertiser* declared, 'Who knows how many such murders may have been committed, and the bodies of the murdered buried in gardens or cellars without any one being ever the wiser?'⁶⁰⁰ In both the Metyard and Brownrigg cases neighbours testified to the good reputation of the accused within their communities, and the small amount of time that the apprentices were seen outdoors. In the Metyard case repeated emphasis was given to the fact that Sarah Metyard had been able to smuggle Ann Nailor's body parts out of the house and down a gully hole without being challenged, and

⁵⁹⁹ Seleski, 'A Mistress and a Murderess too', pp. 210-238. On the lack of education given to parish apprentices see Hill, *Servants*, Chapter Seven.

⁶⁰⁰ *Public Advertiser* (25 August 1767). Also *Gazetteer* (10, 25 August 1767); *London Evening Post* (1, 15 Sep 1767).

that when the parts were found they were assumed to have been a body dug up from the churchyard and dissected by a surgeon. Unlike the Hayes and Aubry cases where discovery of body parts quickly led to conviction, the Metyard murder went entirely undetected for four years after the crime, and was only discovered when Sally Metyard chose to confess. Similarly, in the Brownrigg case it was claimed that if the girls had died in the house they would have been disposed of by private burial with few questions asked, a claim reinforced by various sensational reports that other apprentices belonging to the Brownriggs had gone missing and that Elizabeth had also murdered several women who she had been supposed to be delivering in her role as parish midwife (a role that, unlike the Aubry case and *affaire des poisons*, was rarely reported).⁶⁰¹ Alongside keeping the abuse of apprentices hidden, city anonymity was also shown as helping Elizabeth and John escape the law for ten days. A popular anecdote was that, during their travels in hiding, Elizabeth and John's coach got held up outside of Fleur de Lys court itself where a crowd was still gathered, but that no one recognised them.⁶⁰² The city was a space into which, more than ever before, corpses and criminals could easily vanish.

Unlike the Metyards, however, in the Brownrigg case the urban domestic interior was not shown to be entirely impenetrable in that the community of Fleur de Lys Court did eventually expose the crimes. Such intrusions came through minor observations and slight incursions: an argument between Mary Clifford's stepmother and James Brownrigg on the street, overhearing of groans, and finally the spying of a broken figure through a skylight. While the original *Proceedings* reported that the spotting of Mary Clifford by a journeyman was entirely by accident, later sources, keen to write back in

⁶⁰¹ *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 3, 9, 24; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, p. 313; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 313; *Public Advertiser* (12 August 1767); *Gazetteer* (10 August 1767); *Public Advertiser* (25 August 1767); *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), p. 135; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 223. Assertions about Brownrigg's murderous midwifery practices can be found in *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 3; *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 4 *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 5.

⁶⁰² *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 19; Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 23; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 471.

the role of the community, reported that Mr Deacon had ordered his apprentice to keep watch as he was suspicious of the Brownriggs, or, drawing from ideas of women's information networks, that Mrs Deacon, alerted by rumours, had herself kept watch and spied the crime.⁶⁰³ The late eighteenth-century urban household was not therefore believed to be entirely isolated, and the community could still continue to have a regulatory role, albeit too late to actually prevent Mary Clifford's death.

The dangerous nature of the isolated Brownrigg and Metyard households within the London environment appeared in stark contrast to depictions of the Huet Duparc household. Here it must be remembered that such depictions were written for a Parisian audience rather than a provincial one, and drew on many stereotypes of provincial life for urban readers. Unlike the anonymity of London, Mme Huet Duparc's framing of Victoire Salmon for murder was shown to have been made possible by her close connections within the community. Mme Huet Duparc was shown as 'unleashing' the women of the community upon the household following the poisoned lunch and allowing them to 'harangue' Victoire Salmon until her arrest.⁶⁰⁴ This was compounded by stories of Mme Huet Duparc's ally Mme Guidelot 'running around town fabricating crimes against me [Salmon]' to galvanise the prosecution.⁶⁰⁵ The morning after the murder Mme Huet Duparc was reported to have held an 'assemblée' with the other matriarchs of the village to plot how to cover up the crimes.⁶⁰⁶ Rather than the closed-off nature of the Brownrigg and Metyard households, it was the fluid nature of the Huet Duparc household which

⁶⁰³ *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 12; *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 19; Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 11; *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), p. 194; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, p. 313; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 479; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p.313; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3, p. 351; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 579.

⁶⁰⁴ 'D'une foule de femmes que la Duparc avoit lâchées contr'elle', Fournel, *Consultation*, p. 47; 'Harcelée par trois ou quatre femmes', LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, p. 19; 'Harcelant perpétuellement cette fille', LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, p. 80.

⁶⁰⁵ 'La Guidelot ayant couru toute la ville pour servir son amie, en me créant des torts', LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, p. 136.

⁶⁰⁶ 'Plutôt l'apparence d'une assemblée... pour aviser aux moyens de sauver la famille', Fournel, *Consultation*, p. 40.

allowed for the fabrication of incriminating evidence. This focused upon Victoire's pockets, in which arsenic was found, which were left lying about on a chair for several hours prior to being searched in a room 'through which everyone came and went'.⁶⁰⁷ While in London the impenetrability of the Brownrigg and Metyard households had allowed for a covering-up of murder (albeit, in the Brownrigg case, only in the short term), in the Huet Duparc household it was the changeable and open nature of the household which facilitated the shifting of blame onto Victoire. For a Parisian audience, such an exposure of the threat of close-knit communities would have served as a welcome panacea to developing city concerns about community breakdown and cut-off cultures of domesticity similar to those emerging in London.⁶⁰⁸

The cruel and murderous designs of these three women were shown to be the product of, and to be facilitated by, the nature of the middle-class, female-run domestic space, both in terms of the fragility of such households and the anonymity or fluidity of the communities that contained them. Finally, these women were problematized through their identity as ageing females. While the exact age of these three women is not known, they are each frequently reported to have been in their late forties. Such images were much more prevalent within London discussions than in Paris where, outside of the factums, Mme Huet Duparc disappeared from print in the weeks following the acquittal. The reasons behind Salmon's accusations were instead summarised simply as 'a set of extraordinary circumstances'.⁶⁰⁹ In London, vilifying descriptions of Sarah Metyard and Elizabeth Brownrigg occasionally recalled motifs of ageing femininity and female spheres of knowledge. The ageing female body was shown as inherently uncontrolled

⁶⁰⁷ 'Où tout le monde de la maison alloit et venoit', LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, pp. 13, 127, 243; LeCauchois, *Justification*, p. 59; Fournel, *Consultation*, p. 13; Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 9 (Paris, 1788), p. 246.

⁶⁰⁸ As argued in D. Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790* (Cambridge, 1986); D. Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (California, 2004) and D. Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie 1690-1830* (Harvard, 1996).

⁶⁰⁹ 'Le dessein le plus bizarre sembloit avoir appellé à des événements aussi singuliers,' *Journal Encyclopédique* (April, 1786), p. 515; *Journal de Bruxelles* (24 June 1786), p. 191; *Gazette des Tribunaux*, (17 May 1786), p. 245.

through reports of both Brownrigg and Sarah Metyard suffering from fits throughout their time in prison, in contrast to Sally Metyard and Victoire Salmon who were shown as healthy and strong.⁶¹⁰ This frightening bodily movement, recalling images of possession, was paired with hints at witchcraft motifs which, as Lynn Botelho has shown, continued to be present in discussions of older women in the late eighteenth century.⁶¹¹ Elizabeth Brownrigg was reported to have evoked such a compelling disguise as she fled from her crimes that her neighbours did not recognise her.⁶¹² Other hints at supernatural elements to the Brownrigg case were shown in reports of a series of people who suffered signs of cursing having crossed her path. These included a little girl who saw Brownrigg's coach and broke her leg, another woman who died a few weeks after attending Brownrigg's execution having been unable to eat, and another report of Fleur de Lys court having been cursed with a sequence of five tragedies, of which the Brownrigg murder was the culmination.⁶¹³ Similarly, in the Metyard case, vivid descriptions showed Sarah Metyard burning the hand of Ann Nailor in the kitchen fire while chanting 'the fire tells no tales'.⁶¹⁴

However, these references were only a small part of print discussions. In fact, what dominated representations was an effacement of the figures of these women. Scholars have shown that the presence of older women in print was becoming increasingly problematic, especially when associated with discussion of the ageing female body.⁶¹⁵ As

⁶¹⁰ *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 21; *Genuine and Authentic*, p. 13; Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 26; *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), p. 118; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 18; *London Evening Post* (22-25 August 1767); *Public Advertiser* (26 August 1767); *The Universal Magazine*, (August, 1767) p. 105.

⁶¹¹ L. A. Botelho, 'Images of Old Age in Early Modern Cheap Print : Women, Witches, and the Poisonous Female Body', in L. A. Botelho and S. Ottoway and K. Kittredge (eds), *Power and Poverty, Old Age in the Pre-Industrial Past* (Westport, 2002), pp. 226-246.

⁶¹² *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 21; *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), p. 119; *London Evening Post* (15-18 August 1767); *Public Advertiser* (8 August 1767); *The Gentleman's Magazine* (Sep., 1767), p. 581.

⁶¹³ *Public Advertiser* (15 September 1767); *London Evening Post* (21-24 November 1767); *London Evening Post* (12-15 September 1767); *Public Advertiser* (10 August 1767).

⁶¹⁴ *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 222; *OBP*, July 1762, trial of Sarah Metyard Sarah Morgan Metyard (t17620714-30).

⁶¹⁵ See A. Vickery, 'Mutton Dressed as Lamb? Fashioning Age in Georgian England', *Journal of British Studies* 52.4 (October, 2013), pp. 858-886; L. Botelho, *Women and Ageing in British Society* (Harlow, 2011), p. 261.

mentioned above, Mme Huet Duparc was entirely written out of Parisian print. While Sally Metyard at 23 and armed with discourses of young female victimhood made a dramatic speech from the scaffold, both Elizabeth Brownrigg and Sarah Metyard were shown as mere passive objects at their executions. Brownrigg was reported to have been unable to speak while Sarah Metyard was unconscious.⁶¹⁶ The display of Brownrigg's skeleton after the fact (Figure 5.5), as Patty Seleski has argued, was a means of further emphasising the eradication of Brownrigg's individuality: by displaying a skeleton rather than a body all humanity (and femininity) was removed.⁶¹⁷

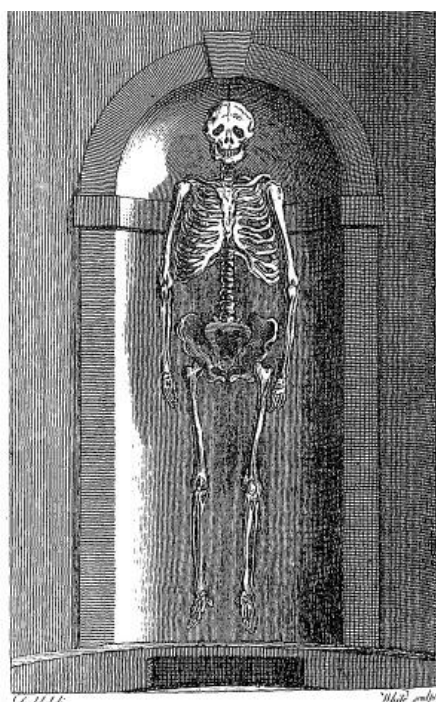


Figure 5.5: ‘The Skeleton of Elizabeth Brownrigg in Surgeon’s Hall’, *The Malefactor’s Register* (London, 1779), p. 316.⁶¹⁸

2001); L. A. Botelho, S. Ottoway and K. Kittredge (eds), *Power and Poverty, Old Age in the Pre-Industrial Past* (Westport, 2002), pp. 247-64.

⁶¹⁶ *OBP Ordinary’s Account*, 19th July 1762 (o17620917-1); *The Last Dying Speech*; *Lloyd’s Evening Post* (16-19 July 1762); *London Chronicle* (17-20 July 1762); *London Evening Post* (17-20 July 1762); *The Malefactor’s Register*, Vol. 4, p. 226.

⁶¹⁷ Seleski, ‘A Mistress and a Murderess too’, p. 211.

⁶¹⁸ Image Source: Eighteenth Century Collections Online, via

<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx> [Accessed 21st August 2014]. CW102966301. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection C.140.b.65.) Following its display at the Royal College of Surgeons, the skeleton may have been moved to Cambridge Botanical Gardens, although there are also reports that this was the skeleton of Sarah Malcolm in *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth* (London, 1784), p. 152 .This seems less likely as there are records of Malcolm being privately interred in the church of St Bartholomew the Great in Snow Hill in *The London Evening Post* (6 March 1733) among others. The skeleton was lost during the gardens’ move in 1846. Thanks to Jenny Sargent of Cambridge University for assistance in establishing this.

In this first section it has been shown that many of the concerns evoked in case of high-profile murderesses of the late seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, in particular in terms of the position of women householders in urban society, continued into the second half of the century. Here, criticisms of such women as domestic managers became conflated with the emerging rhetoric of domestic sensibility, leading to an exposure of the criminal natures of Elizabeth Brownrigg, Sarah Metyard and Mme Huet Duparc primarily through evidence of them being bad (or unnatural) mothers rather than bad employers. All three cases demonstrated the ways in which middle-class economic fragility was believed to encourage cruelty and avarice within female householders. In London the Brownrigg and Metyard cases were further made to exemplify the possibilities for such cruelty to go undetected, opened up by the perceived isolation of the urban domestic space, while in Paris similar concerns were allayed through exposition of the dangerous power of middle-class women in close-knit provincial towns.

Reform, Revolution and the Age of Innocence

However, concerns with urban matriarchs and their disordered households increasingly came second to interest in the victims of the crimes. While originally appearing as the perpetrator of a murder, Victoire Salmon was definitively recast in the role of victim in the print that emerged in the lead up to, and following, her trial. Unlike the majority of cases discussed in this thesis, then, the victims of these cases were all female and young at a time when representations of young female victimhood were gaining rhetorical and political traction through the founding of Foundling and Magdalen hospitals, and the development of wider infrastructures to help vulnerable women and children.⁶¹⁹ In the law courts, narratives of female vulnerability were already gaining momentum, with female defendants often drawing on these perceptions (though not always successfully)

⁶¹⁹ On the connection between female-perpetrated murder and Magdalen hospitals see Gonda, 'Misses, Murderesses and Magdalens: women in the public eye', pp. 53-75.

in their pleas of innocence.⁶²⁰ Within the context of campaigns for social and political reform taking place in London and Paris, these cases therefore took on a new rhetorical power through focus on the young vulnerable female in suffering. Such a focus allowed commentators to make emotive arguments to support a variety of proposed reforms and to demonstrate flaws in existing infrastructures. In London this focused upon the failings of the parish care system, and in Paris the provincial judicial system. While the case of the Metyards was used to make some suggestions toward reform, it only really gained this emotive power when shown as a forerunner for the Brownrigg case. It is for this reason that this section will principally focus on the Brownrigg and Salmon cases, though references to the Metyards will be made where relevant.

In order to cast these three girls (Marys Mitchell and Clifford and Victoire Salmon) within the role of victims some liberties were taken with their representations. The girls were frequently shown to be younger than they actually were. The reported ages of Marys Mitchell and Clifford were often lowered from 17 to 13. Mary Clifford was reported to have been forced to sleep in the coal hole because she wet the bed and prints and frontispieces often showed the girls' naked bodies as underdeveloped and juvenile (Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4), although this could also be linked to a desire not to appear pornographic.⁶²¹ Salmon, despite being 26 by the time of the 1786 trial was frequently infantilised both in her portraits which emphasised her rosy cheeks and youthful face (Figures 5.6 and 5.7) and in descriptions of her relationship with LeCauchois, who called

⁶²⁰ R. B. Shoemaker, 'Print and the Female Voice: Representations of Women's Crime in London, 1690–1735', *Gender & History* 22 (2010), pp. 75–91; M. Clayton, 'Changes in Old Bailey Trials for the Murder of New-Born Babies, 1674-1803', *Continuity and Change* 24.2 (2009), pp. 337-359; M. Francus, 'Monstrous Mothers, Monstrous Societies: Infanticide and the Rule of Law in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21.1 (1997), pp. 133-156.

⁶²¹ Bedwetting reported in: *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), p. 192; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 310; *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 16; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 477; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3, p. 357; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 19. The girl's ages are reported at 17 in *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1) and are lowered to 13 in *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 12; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 247; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (10 August 1767); *Public Advertiser* (12 August, 22 September 1767); *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 579; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 19.

her ‘my good girl’ while she called him ‘Papa’. She was repeatedly shown behaving in a childlike way: crying out in anger at the portrayal of a play and joyfully giggling at the sight of a barge with windmills on it even as she awaited her final sentence.⁶²² Despite the fact that Salmon was older than Marie Catherine Taperet, and Marys Mitchell and Clifford were only four or five years younger than Sarah Malcolm, late eighteenth-century narratives cast them clearly in the role of child.



Figure 5.6: *L'innocence reconnue de Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon* (Paris, 1786).⁶²³



Figure 5.7: *L'innocence reconnue dédié aux âmes sensibles* (Paris, 1786).⁶²⁴

⁶²² *Année Littéraire*, No. 1 (July, 1786), p. 202 and No. 5, p. 116; *Journal Encyclopédique* (August, 1786), p. 520.

⁶²³ Image taken from <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> [Accessed 13th September 2014]. ark:/12148/btv1b84105217 Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE FOL-QB-201 (116)

⁶²⁴ Image taken from <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> [Accessed 13th September 2014]. ark:/12148/btv1b69425484 Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE QB-370 (8)-FT 4

These narratives of victimhood were further constructed through reports which underplayed the girls' failings and sympathised with the heavy work of service. Evidence that Marys Mitchell and Clifford were lazy apprentices who slept on the job and stole from the kitchen were passed over to maintain a focus on the severe and extreme punishment that each girl received for these acts.⁶²⁵ This was most prevalent in the cheapest material, that accessible to apprentices. The ballad *A New Song* in particular showed Clifford as the ideal obedient apprentice hounded by a demanding and merciless mistress.⁶²⁶ In depicting Salmon's time at the Huet Duparcs both LeCauchois and Fournel repeatedly referred to Salmon's diligence and the long hours that she had to work. LeCauchois in particular often broke from the narrative to remind the reader how long it had been since Salmon had slept or changed her clothes. Again, less attention was paid to the fact that Salmon had got drunk when she was supposed to be guarding the corpse of the grandfather, and to claims that she had stolen from previous employers.⁶²⁷ Older fears about servant betrayal awakened so powerfully in the Sarah Malcolm case were overlaid in these cases by a recasting of such figures as young girls rather than deviant women, vulnerable within the city environment and unprotected by city and government infrastructures.

Within the Brownrigg case, this redefinition of the young female poor as victims rather than as potential criminals involved graphic, intense and prolonged attention to the wounded bodies of Marys Clifford and Mitchell following their discovery; their 'putrefied flesh', 'one all over sore' and a neck so swollen that Mary Clifford's jawline had completely disappeared, rendering her speechless. The most common trope of all

⁶²⁵ The girls' failings are suggested in the underreported trial of James and John Brownrigg, *The Trials of James Brownrigg and John Brownrigg his Son for Confining and Inhumanly Scourging Mary Mitchel* (London, 1767) which is only reproduced in *The Universal Magazine* (September, 1786), pp. 210-212.

⁶²⁶ *A New Song; The Cries of the Afflicted*.

⁶²⁷ LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, pp. 24-25, 44, 52, 145, 222, 251; LeCauchois, *Justification*, pp. 46, 104.

was that of their blood running on the ground.⁶²⁸ This was paired with graphic visual reproductions of Mary Clifford chained up and naked in the Brownrigg's kitchen (Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4). Focus on Mary became so intense that later images removed Elizabeth from the scene entirely, with the abuse suggested simply by the whip on the floor (Figures 5.1, 5.3). While Kristina Straub has argued that the girls' nudity in these images and reports implied a sexualisation of the crimes which allowed contemporaries to neglect the deeper problems suggested about the need for reform of the apprentice system, I would argue instead that the girls' nudity, determinedly non-explicit in its exposure of underdeveloped female bodies, was part of an intensification of depictions of their suffering and so helped render calls for reform more compelling.⁶²⁹ Indeed, Mary Mitchell's claims in the trial of James and John Brownrigg that she was 'whipped on her private parts' were noticeably absent from all other descriptions, which focused on the girls' head and shoulder injuries.⁶³⁰ The repeated and detailed expositions of the girls' injuries paired with images of the act of whipping were not meant to sensationalise the case beyond the point of relevance, but to intensify the emotive power of these cases to be adopted by campaigners.

The explicit suffering of the apprentices was, in particular, used to draw attention to the failings of the parish and the wider insufficiencies of a system that was supposed to be based on Christian charity but was too frequently exploited for greed. A widely reproduced report that emerged from the Ordinary's *Account* was that the Brownriggs

⁶²⁸ *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *An Appeal to Humanity*, pp. 7-10; *Genuine and Authentic Account*, pp. 8, 15-19; Wingrave, *A Narrative*, pp. 14-18, 21-22; *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), pp. 117, 190-194; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, pp. 310-313; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), pp. 427-428, 477-481; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, pp. 310-313; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3, pp. 353, 357-358; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), pp. 12-13, 21-23; *The Cries of the Afflicted*, pp. 2-6; *St James's Chronicle* (4-6, 20-22 August, 12-15 September 1767); *London Evening Post* (4-6, 11-13, 20-21 August 1767); *Gazetteer* (10, 24 August 1767); *Public Advertiser* (12 August 1767); *The Universal Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 105; *A New Song*; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1767), pp. 579-581.

⁶²⁹ Straub, 'The Tortured Apprentice', pp. 66-81; Straub, *Domestic Affairs*, Chapter Four; Doody, "'Those Eyes are Made so Killing'", pp. 77-78; Saxton, *Narratives of Women and Murder*, Chapter Three..

⁶³⁰ *The Universal Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 211.

had had a previous apprentice, Mary Jones, who they had abused in a similar manner and who had succeeded in escaping back to the Foundling hospital. While hospital staff recorded that the Brownriggs had been abusive, this information had not been shared with other charitable organisations, allowing the Brownriggs to take on more apprentices.⁶³¹ Further failings of the parish system were shown in repeated claims that the abuse did not start until both girls had passed the trial period, in which they could decide to opt out of the apprenticeship.⁶³² The system was being exploited and the result was extreme abuse and death: changes needed to be made.

At the same time, however, the parish was not shown to be an entirely powerless and irrelevant institution, as demonstrated through representations of St Dunstan's parish overseer William Grundy. A particularly popular story about the Brownriggs' arrest was that James Brownrigg had initially denied the parish access to his house, and threatened Grundy with prosecution if he attempted it. But Grundy was not a man to be cowed by threats and was aware of his overriding authority, which he used to force Brownrigg to reveal the girls.⁶³³ The message here was clear: it was impossible to escape the power of the parish and the law. The parish overseers also clearly demonstrated that they were bringing in safeguards following the crimes by printing a series of warnings to other parish overseers to undertake their own inspections of apprentices. Early pamphlets on the Brownrigg case reported that these increased inspections were happening and were

⁶³¹ Story of Mary Jones found in: *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 5; Wingrave, *A Narrative*, pp. 7-10; *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), p. 191; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, pp. 308-310; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, pp. 308-310; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3, pp. 349-350; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), pp. 6-7; *The Cries of the Afflicted*, pp. 2-3.

⁶³² *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 6; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 480; *St James Chronicle* (12-15 September 1767); *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 16; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 579.

⁶³³ *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 10; Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 15; *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), p. 194; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, p. 314; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, p. 314; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3, p. 351; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), p. 12.

successfully preventing other cases of abuse.⁶³⁴ In one instance, a printed letter to the editor on the Brownrigg case was used as a means of providing an anonymous tip off about another instance of abuse.⁶³⁵ Print commentary therefore revealed a parish system that was flawed but was also active and efficient in the enforcement of justice.

It may have been that these promises for increased inspections would have been enough to assuage concern if the case had not taken place in August of 1767. The reason that the Brownrigg case elicited calls for reform when the Metyard case did not was almost certainly due to the fact that the Brownrigg revelations emerged during a crucial moment in debates that would lead to the passing in 1768 of Jonas Hanway's Second Act. This built upon Hanway's First Act of 1762, which had sought to counteract the mercenary exploitation of systems for taking in parish apprentices by introducing registering systems for parish children. Hanway's Second Act proposed a series of reforms for parish care including the placing of parish infants at least three miles outside of London until their fourth birthday, a limitation on the number of years parish children could undertake apprenticeships and the creation of committees of 'guardians of the poor' to monitor for signs of abuse. For the bill's proponents, particularly among the letter-writing press, the Brownrigg case provided an opportunity to recruit support for to their cause. In a series of letters to the editor the emotive details of the apprentices' suffering were used to distract readers from the exact terms of the somewhat draconian act- central to which was the removal of young children from their families- and to steer focus towards the ways in which it would help prevent similar cases of abuse.⁶³⁶ In these calls for action, letter writers were also feeding off of an emerging awareness among the lower

⁶³⁴ *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 26; *Gazetteer* (8-15 August 1767).

⁶³⁵ *Gazetteer* (26 September 1767).

⁶³⁶ See letters printed in *Gazetteer* (10, 13, 15 August, 18, 21, 23, 26 September 1767); *London Evening Post* (10 August, 1, 29-30 September, 31 October, 3 November 1767); *Public Advertiser* (4 September 1767). Although he did not refer to it in print at the time (at least, not using his own name), Hanway was himself aware of the case, and did later write about it in *The Virtue of Humble Life*, Vol. 2 (London, 1774), p. 53. His reticence on the case at the time of the trial was probably because his chief publications calling for the Act had been published just days before the Brownrigg case.

classes of their rights to decent treatment. This was seen in cheap publications such as *A New Song* which demonstrated to apprentices and servants that they had a right to protection from the parish and to proper treatment from their masters.⁶³⁷ Yet, through their printed letters and emotive rhetoric, Hanway's proponents managed to hijack such awareness and channel it towards measures that increased control of the poor, rather than empowering them.

Once the summer and autumn of 1767 had passed, and with it Hanway's Second Act, print discussion of the case expanded into more diverse debates on the question of good governance. Elizabeth Brownrigg moved from being an indication of the need for parish reform to a wider by-word for cruelty and failure to empathise with the governed.

'Brownrigg-like cruelty'⁶³⁸ became defined as any extreme response to a problem which caused more suffering than it resolved. One anonymous author, for example, described those who insisted on harnessing horses vertically rather than horizontally as 'vaillers of Mrs Brownrigg'.⁶³⁹ On the streets, the cry of 'Mrs Brownrigg' was used when perceived injustices were being carried out, for example when a mother tried to get her son a commission on a ship in order to save him from his criminal activity.⁶⁴⁰ Critics of British foreign policy used the case when they asserted, 'we murmur at the disgrace of being defeated by those from whom we claimed the obedience of vassals, like the unfortunate Mrs Brownrigg who thought it hard to die for the murder of a poor child brought up by the parish; we are surprised too, that the Americans should resent the burning of their towns and the massacre of their people'.⁶⁴¹ Far from being a monstrous and exceptional

⁶³⁷ *A New Song*, in the same genre was *The Cries of the Afflicted* and reports seen in *Public Advertiser* (10 September 1767). Also discussed in T. Hitchcock and R. Shoemaker, *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of a Modern City* (Cambridge, 2015), Chapter 6.

⁶³⁸ *Middlesex Journal* (22-24 February 1780).

⁶³⁹ Horse whipping was also discussed with reference to the Brownrigg cases in *Public Advertiser* (24 August 1767) and *Gazetteer* (7 October 1767).

⁶⁴⁰ Incidents of this nature are reported in *Gazetteer* (10, 14 June 1769). The Brownrigg case was also used in anti-burning arguments, *Gazetteer* (23 December 1779).

⁶⁴¹ *Gazetteer* (16 September 1779); *Gazetteer* (15 August 1767).

icon, then, Elizabeth Brownrigg became a familiar figure in much wider social and political discussion.

As with the Brownrigg case, the case of Victoire Salmon was also appropriated into broader campaigns for reform in the last years of the Ancien Régime. The case benefited from a rising obsession in France with miscarriages of justice begun with the Calas affair. This had been exacerbated by the 1780 reform of the justice system abolishing preliminary torture, and rising concerns with the death penalty. Stories of miscarriages of justice had proliferated throughout the 1770s and 80s. In 1786 Paris was already gripped by the case of three men sentenced to death for theft who were being vociferously defended by M Dupaty, and regular demonstrations for these men were taking place on the Pont Neuf.⁶⁴² The corruption of the establishment had also been scandalously exposed with the diamond necklace affair, which had tarnished the reputation of the Queen herself. Parisian readers were therefore familiar with the politicised messages of such trials. The month before the Salmon case, Catherine Estinès had been acquitted in Cominges for a similar crime. Though the case did not feature heavily in Parisian print, it did set a precedent in terms the increased rhetorical power of miscarriages of justice involving someone who was both lower-class and female on a homicide charge.⁶⁴³ Through discussions of Salmon's young female victimhood, criticisms of the judiciary moved from exposing provincial corruption, as seen in earlier 1780s cases documented by Sarah Maza, to asserting new principles of enlightened justice spearheaded by the Parisian *Parlement*.⁶⁴⁴ At the same time, a rival narrative focusing on the omniscience and omnipotence of the King as protector of his people also coloured reactions to the case.

⁶⁴² *Journal historique et littéraire* (15 May 1786).

⁶⁴³ *Mémoire pour Catherine Estinès* (Unknown, 1786), also linked to the Salmon case in L. P. De Bachaumont, *Mémoires Secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la République des Lettres de France*, Vol. 16, No. 32 ('London', 1789), pp. 3-4 and Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 9 (Paris, 1788), pp. 128-152.

⁶⁴⁴ Maza, *Private Lives*

LeCauchois' original *Mémoire* and *Supplément*, published in Rouen in 1784, were dominated by assertions that Salmon had been failed by investigating judicial officers. Through lengthy detail LeCauchois demonstrated that the investigating *commissaires* had immediately decided that they wanted Salmon prosecuted, and had done all they could in order to facilitate her conviction, neglecting to investigate other avenues. LeCauchois' vitriol was particularly directed towards Commissaire Bertot, the man who had originally undertaken the investigation and who, LeCauchois claimed, had assisted Mme Huet Duparc in fabricating evidence.⁶⁴⁵ Salmon's victimhood played an important role in these representations, with the searching of her pockets and her body by Bertot described using the language of sexual violation.⁶⁴⁶ While factums in the eighteenth century were traditionally written within a rigid framework of facts and arguments, LeCauchois chose a more rambling structure and flippant style for his factums, quoting from depositions at length, and inviting the reader (whom he referred to as 'justice) to draw their own conclusions. As Maza has argued, this marked a shift in the representation of the justice system from an absolutist, closed environment inhabited exclusively by omniscient judges, to a system in which the layman reader was able, and indeed encouraged, to be part of the judiciary, as capable as anyone of judging Salmon's guilt.⁶⁴⁷

These criticisms of the investigation, many of which focused on the evils of Mme Huet Duparc and the inconsistencies of witnesses, were expanded when the case moved from Rouen to Paris in 1786. As LeCauchois was a lawyer of the Rouen *Parlement*, he was not strictly allowed to publish on the case in Paris, and originally appointed a Parisian lawyer, M Fournel, to write on the case for him. Seeing the popularity of Fournel's *Consultation pour une jeune fille condamnée à être brûlée vive*, however, LeCauchois

⁶⁴⁵ LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, pp.78-124, 151-189; LeCauchois, *Supplément*, pp. 22-33.

⁶⁴⁶ While the wife of a *commissaire* probably undertook the search, Bertot was accused by LeCauchois of having undertaken it himself. LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, p. 87; for the sexual undertones of pockets see A. Fennetaux, 'Women's Pockets and the Construction of Privacy in the Long Eighteenth-Century', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 20 (2008), pp. 307-334.

⁶⁴⁷ Maza, *Private Lives*, pp. 230-231.

decided to defy protocol by publishing his own second factum entitled *Justification de Marie-Françoise-Victoire Salmon*. In both of these factums the case was adapted for a much wider Parisian readership. Heavy references to complex laws and lengthy quotes from depositions were replaced with an emotive, journalistic style. Outside of the jurisdiction of Rouen, these factums could be more critical, not just of the investigative officers, but also of those in positions of power. Fournel in particular launched a full attack in his *Consultation* on M Revel, the *Procureur Général* of Caen. Fournel traced all of Salmon's misfortune back to her first meeting with M Revel when she was working as a servant maid in Bayeux for M Revel's cousins. Taken by her beauty, Fournel claimed, Revel had unsuccessfully propositioned Salmon. When she was arrested, Revel had seen his opportunity for revenge, forcing her death sentence. The climax of Revel's campaign of cruelty reportedly came in 1784 when he received notice of the cancellation of Salmon's execution the day before it took place, but chose to withhold the information from Salmon until the execution itself, forcing her to spend a night believing that she was going to die the next morning. While LeCauchois had referred to this episode in his earlier *Mémoire* as Revel simply 'forgetting to open the missive', by the time that the case had reached Paris this episode had been expanded to symbolise the lecherous and cruel nature of judicial elites.⁶⁴⁸ Such criticism of provincial magistrates also spread across the channel as can be seen in gleeful London press reports that 'the French boast much of their police; but the injustice often done in their provincial courts of judicature, through the ignorance and prejudices of their magistrates, is a stain upon any civilized nation'.⁶⁴⁹

LeCauchois and Fournel balanced criticism of provincial judicial officials with lengthy laudatory passages on the mechanics of the judicial system. The factums were filled with depictions of the laws of France as having been 'outraged' and 'wronged' by the

⁶⁴⁸ Fournel, *Consultation*, pp. 4-5; LeCauchois, *Justification*, pp. 74, 88; LeCauchois, *Addition*, p. 8

⁶⁴⁹ *Public Advertiser* (12 June 1786).

behaviour of those involved in the Salmon case.⁶⁵⁰ Following *parlementaire* ideologies gaining traction in 1786 Paris, both LeCauchois and Fournel made assertions that the Salmon case had terrifying ramifications for all ‘citoyens’ and that within the justice system Salmon had ‘her rights like any other’.⁶⁵¹ The publicity surrounding the Salmon case therefore drew from a new understanding of the justice system as responsible for the individual rights of each *citoyen*. Salmon’s status as a vulnerable and lower class woman made this message all the more powerful. Through emphasis on Salmon’s young victimhood, a radical new image of ‘justice’ as an abstract concept based on the principles of self-correction and equality before the law, rather than embodied in ceremonial judges, was put forward.

While provincial judiciaries were shown to be still mired in corruption and venality, Salmon’s acquittal by the Parisian *Parlement* served to endorse the *Parlement*’s role as the bastion of this new philosophy. A series of public ceremonies were enacted following Salmon’s acquittal, planned in such a way as to reaffirm the Parisian *Parlement*’s role as protector of the innocent. After being presented with bouquets of roses by the judges in the courtroom, Salmon was marched down the great staircase accompanied by court officials, before being exhibited to the enormous crowd below. The event was commemorated in an engraving (Figure 5.8).⁶⁵² The Salmon case therefore formed part of the Parisian *Parlement*’s redefinition of itself as an institution for the people, in contrast to other outmoded absolutist institutions, which would come to hold sway over the early Revolutionary years.

⁶⁵⁰ ‘Lois outragées’, LeCauchois, *Justification*, pp. 112, 128; LeCauchois, *Supplément*, p. 22; ‘Un outrage fait à la Justice’, Fournel, *Consultation*, pp. 49, 103, 132-142; L. P. De Bachaumont, *Mémoires Secrets pour servir à l’histoire de la République des Lettres de France*, Vol. 16, No. 32 (‘London’, 1789), p. 5.

⁶⁵¹ ‘Elle y a ses droits comme tout autre citoyen’, LeCauchois, *Justification*, pp. 93, 124; LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, pp. 109, 115, 139, 159; LeCauchois, *Supplément*, p. 44; Fournel, *Consultation*, pp. 49-50, 103, 137.

⁶⁵² *Journal politique ou gazette des gazettes*, No. 2 (June, 1786), p. 35; *Journal historique et littéraire* (1 June 1786); *Journal encyclopédique* (August, 1786), p. 515; *Gazette d’Utrecht* (5 June 1786); *Gazette de la Haye* (2 June 1786); *Journal politique de Bruxelles*, No. 25 (24 June 1786), p. 191; *Gazette des Tribunaux* (17 May 1786), p. 246.



Figure 5.8: *L'innocence reconnue Marie Françoise Victoire Salmon au Parlement de Paris* (Paris, 1786).⁶⁵³

This appropriation of the case to demonstrate the wisdom of the Parisian *Parlement* was further shown in the dramatic outpouring of poems, images and articles written in praise of LeCauchois, probably in part thanks to LeCauchois himself, who seems to have had a gift for self-publicity. Increasingly, focus shifted in print on the case onto LeCauchois rather than Salmon. The journal *Année Littéraire*, in particular, capitalised on the case, stretching its remit as a literary review paper to print several poems in celebration of LeCauchois, and even one on LeCauchois' mother, as well as lengthy articles by LeCauchois himself. A popular portrait was also produced (Figure 5.9). But through saccharine poetry and superlative biographies, such print went beyond self-promotion to

⁶⁵³ Image taken from <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> [Accessed 13th September 2014] <ark:/12148/btv1b6942545w>. Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE QB-370 (8)-FT 4 275

enact a broader celebration of a judicial system capable of self-improvement through the wisdom of defence lawyers, who were themselves shown to be important figures in a corrupted system that could no longer be trusted to enact justice by itself.⁶⁵⁴ Many of the poems were written by Parisian lawyers who shared in (or were keen to capitalise on) LeCauchois and Fournel's visions for an enlightened judiciary.



Figure 5.9: *Portrait de Pierre Noël LeCauchois* (Paris, 1786).⁶⁵⁵

Yet these *Parlementaire* interpretations of the crimes were rivalled by a second narrative that would become very familiar in the early Revolutionary years: that of Louis XVI as king-protector. Much emphasis was given to Louis' role in swooping in to save Salmon from execution in 1784 and in moving her case to Paris to facilitate an acquittal. Later

⁶⁵⁴ *Le Courier* (2, 23, 27 June 1786); *Journal Général de France* (17, 27 June, 2 July 1786); *Journal Politique ou Gazette des Gazettes* (June, and July, 1786); *Courrier de L'Europe* (2 June 1786); *Mercure de France* (1 July 1786); *Journal Historique et Littéraire* (1 June 1786); *Journal Encyclopédique* (April, 1786), p. 517; *Gazette d'Utrecht* (5, 20 June, 17 October 1786); *Gazette de la Haye* (2 June 1786); *Année Littéraire*, No. 4 (July, 1786), pp. 200-208, 246-247, 288-295, 325-333; *Journal de Bruxelles* (3, 10 June 1786); *Gazette des Tribunaux*, (17 May 1786), p. 246; Poetry reproduced in *Public Advertiser* (16 October 1786).

⁶⁵⁵ Image taken from <http://gallica.fr> [Accessed 15th September 2014] ark:/12148/btv1b69425469.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE QB-370 (8)-FT 4

coverage of the case, for example, replaced the story of M Revel's concealment of Salmon's execution postponement with reports that the cancellation of her execution from Versailles in fact arrived just before the stake was about to be lit, rather than the day before, dramatizing the role of the king in saving a member of his people.⁶⁵⁶ In his *factum* written for Parisian readers, LeCauchois went as far as to place Louis in the role of God himself in his declaration that 'the only Providence to whom Salmon owes her life is the king', and Fournel devoted a lengthy passage in the *Consultation* to praising the benefits of the absolute power of the king in the justice system to cancel executions and pardon as he saw fit.⁶⁵⁷ The Salmon case was therefore part of the forging of the image of the king as protector of the third estate against the second that would become so powerful in the final years of his reign. Interestingly, such a narrative appeared within LeCauchois' and Fournel's texts alongside the overt *Parlementaire* arguments for a new system of enlightened justice with little conflict, despite the fact that these two interpretations were inherently contradictory: indicative, perhaps, of the irreconcilable and unsustainable faultlines emerging within Parisian society.

By 1789, however, these two depictions of the crime were replaced with a simplified image of Salmon as justice betrayed. The heroic actions of the Parisian *Parlement* and/or the King to secure an acquittal were written out and Salmon's victim status was reinstated, with her now shown to be a victim of the entire French state. This can be seen in her inclusion in a popular Revolutionary print, reprinted throughout the 1790s, which celebrated institutional reform symbolised as 'the death of abuse' (Figure 5.10) through an allegorical funeral cortege. The procession is led by 'victims of abuse' and is followed by the aristocracy, with Necker at the fore. Among these victims is Victoire Salmon, walking alongside Calas and Joan of Arc. By the time of the Revolution, then, the case

⁶⁵⁶ *Gazette de La Haye* (15 May 1786); Simon, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. 143, p. 74; *Journal de Bruxelles* (24 June 1786); Des Essarts, *Procès Fameux*, Vol. 9, p. 250.

⁶⁵⁷ 'Le seul Grand seigneur à qui cette infortunée doive son salut, c'est le roi lui-même', LeCauchois, *Justification*, p. 34; LeCauchois, *Mémoire*, p. 139; Fournel, *Consultation*, p. 82.

had shifted from being seen as either an example of the virtue of the *Parlement* or the King into an important and easily identifiable symbol of the failings of old France, with Salmon herself moving from ‘innocence reconnue’ to a ‘victim of abuse’, whose sufferings at the hands of the Ancien Régime earned her a place alongside Joan of Arc.

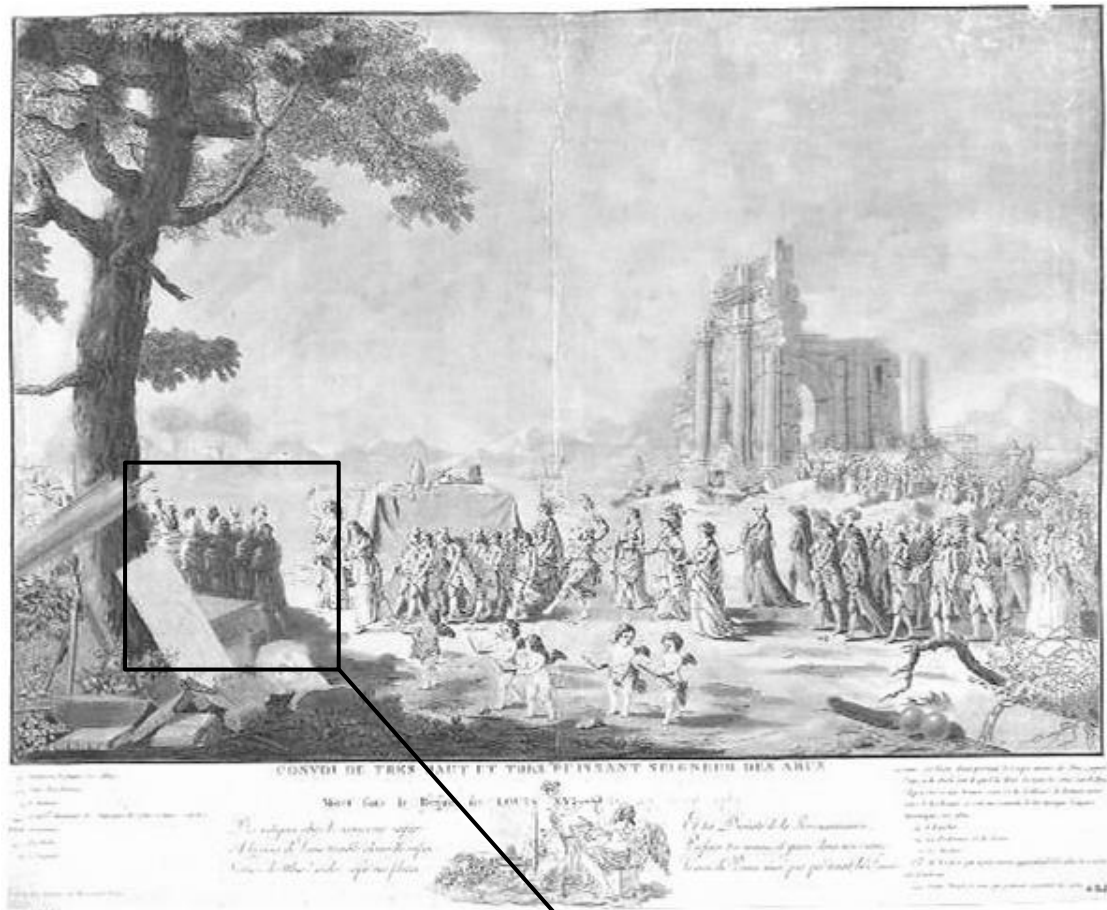


Figure 5.10 *Convoi de Très Haut et Très Puissant Seigneur des Abus Mort sous le Règne de Louis XVI* (Paris, 1789). With enlarged section.⁶⁵⁸



Both the Brownrigg and the Salmon cases were seen to affirm the responsibility of the state towards the most vulnerable and insignificant of individuals: young lower-class girls. In London, the Brownrigg case was perceived to expose the failings of parish care

⁶⁵⁸ Image taken from <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/> [Accessed 3rd October 2014] ark:/12148/cb41508953g. Bibliothèque nationale de France, RESERVE QB-201 (170)-FT 4 Hennin, 10222

systems that did not communicate with one another or properly monitor those under their care. Such anti-parish feeling was hijacked by proponents of Hanway's Second Act, quashing any potential for the case to improve the rights of the poor, instead channelling the outrage of the case into the passing of more rigorous control measures. Yet once the bill had passed, the case moved from being symbolic of the failings of London infrastructure to becoming a broader by-word for unduly harsh treatment that was used to discuss a wide variety of perceived injustices. In Paris the Salmon case was seen to drastically expose the failings of a corrupt and inefficient provincial judicial elite, motivated by lust and greed, and provided a space in which to expound new judicial principles. Here too, however, the rhetorical potential of the case was focused into particular causes: demonstrating of the wisdom of the Parisian *Parlement* and the benevolent agency of the king. Both cases therefore contributed to a mobilisation of public awareness of the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable. The appropriation of the Brownrigg case to the passing of Hanway's Second Act in London meant that such awareness was controlled by reforms that in fact increased institutional power. In 1780s Paris, a city beset by such expanding dynamics of change that it had become 'unlike any other city in Europe', however, Victoire Salmon's acquittal was not enough to quell the feelings of injustice and frustration that the case had stimulated, and the cogs of Parisian society turned one degree further towards Revolution.⁶⁵⁹

Penitent Sinner and Happy Housewife

While discussions surrounding the cases of Brownrigg and Salmon were expanding into political and judicial debates, the rhetorical power of both cases was counterbalanced by a writing-out of the individual figures of Salmon and Brownrigg into less challenging narratives. In constructing these images, the authors of eighteenth-century London and Paris drew from two different trends: in London the centuries-old motif of the penitent

⁶⁵⁹ D. Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (California, 2004), p. 302.

sinner and in Paris the sentimentalised figure of the domestically-devoted rural housewife. While these cases could have wide ranging implications in powerful debates, then, the women at the centre of both were subsumed into reports that emphasised their passivity and their conformity.

Sarah and Sarah Morgan Metyard faced no such attempts at rehabilitation into penitential or sentimental narratives. The Ordinary repeatedly emphasised that both women were too taken-up in fighting with one another to pay much attention to their eternal fate.⁶⁶⁰ The vitriol that these women's crimes was met with, in the same vein as Brownrigg though on a smaller scale, was expressed through the execution crowd who were reported to have thrown stones at their hanging corpses.⁶⁶¹ While the newspapers reported this disapprovingly, there were none of the same calls for crowd forgiveness and reconciliation found in the Brownrigg trial. As one of the first parish apprentice abuse cases that received wide interest, commentators were primarily concerned with the circumstances that had led to the crime, with a focus on the disordered mother/daughter relationship and the urban all-female household, rather than its broader implications on the morality of the London populace. For this reason this final section will again focus primarily on the Brownrigg and Salmon cases.

The passive ideal in the case of Elizabeth Brownrigg came in the form of the penitent sinner, ready to face her maker. Although extremely popular in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, narratives of the slippery slope towards crime and the repenting criminal facing death had begun to disappear by the late eighteenth century, as seen in the decline and eventual disappearance of the Ordinary's *Account*,⁶⁶² and were replaced by images of criminals as born deviant and incapable of penitence. However,

⁶⁶⁰ *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 19th July 1762 (o17620917-1).

⁶⁶¹ *London Evening Post* (17-20 July 1762).

⁶⁶² P. Linebaugh, 'The Ordinary of Newgate and His Account', in J. Cockburn (ed.), *Crime in England 1550-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 246-69; A. McKenzie, 'From True Confessions to True Reporting? The Decline and Fall of the Ordinary's *Account*', *The London Journal* 30.1 (2005), pp. 55-70.

representations of Brownrigg in prison and at the scaffold were dominated by older motifs of her accepting her fate and piously preparing herself for execution. Depictions of her in prison showed her studiously praying, her eyes closed and distanced from the viewer (Figure 5.11). Press coverage particularly focused on the 'extremely moving scenes' between her and her husband and son within Newgate, in which she led both men in forgiveness and spiritual reconciliation. In this way she was transformed into both an older form of the penitent sinner and an early form of the nineteenth-century characterisation of women as the spiritual centre-point of the family.⁶⁶³ Her final prayers on the universal tendency of mankind toward sin were seen as having usefulness for the whole population and were reproduced not just in the Ordinary's *Account*, but in several other criminal biographies and cheap ballads.⁶⁶⁴ Brownrigg was therefore shown to be not only a spiritual guiding point for her husband and son but for the whole of society. Attributions of the causes of Elizabeth's crime were shifted from her heart hardening towards her badly behaved apprentices to her having stopped attending church.⁶⁶⁵ While commentators continued to refer to her as an 'inhuman monster' in their wider descriptions, a phrase often emphasised by scholars of Brownrigg,⁶⁶⁶ they in fact showed her to be the opposite: intensely human, and therefore a powerful example to all of society. In this broadening out of the case the problems of the parish system, the anonymity of London, and the instability of female household governance were all subdued in the face of the universal didactic message (for both men and women) of the need for faith and to avoid sin.

⁶⁶³ *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *Genuine and Authentic Account*, pp. 20-22; Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 30; *A New and Universal History, Description and Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (London, 1776), p. 650; *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 4, pp. 316-318; *The Malefactor's Register*, Vol. 4, pp. 316-318; *The Old Bailey Chronicle*, Vol. 3, pp. 358-359; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1767), pp. 24-26; *Public Advertiser* (15, 21 September 1767).

⁶⁶⁴ *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *The Cries of the Afflicted*, p. 8.

⁶⁶⁵ *OBP Ordinary's Account*, 14th September 1767 (OA17670914); *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 21; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (1767), p. 26; *London Evening Post* (15-17, 19-22 September 1767); *Public Advertiser* (17 September 1767).

⁶⁶⁶ Straub, *Domestic Affairs*, Chapter Four; Doody, "Those Eyes are Made so Killing", pp. 77-78; Straub, 'The Tortured Apprentice', pp. 66-81.



Figure 5.11: ‘Mrs Brownrigg in the Cell, Newgate’, from *The Malefactor’s Register or New Newgate and Tyburn Calendar*, Vol. 4 (London, 1779), p. 312.⁶⁶⁷

This emphasis on Elizabeth Brownrigg’s penitence was almost certainly a reaction to the high level of public engagement with the case. Cheap print and reports of public unrest suggest, as discussed above, that some lower class Londoners may have seen the case as a means of asserting their rights within the city.⁶⁶⁸ Patty Seleski has suggested that the large number of young girls who Syllas Neville was shocked by when he went to see Brownrigg’s dissected corpse were in fact motivated by a sense of empowerment, glorying in the fact that those who abused apprentices would be punished.⁶⁶⁹ The reabsorption of the Brownrigg case into penitence narratives may therefore have been part of attempts by the middling sort to quell this form of proto class consciousness (if it

⁶⁶⁷ Also in *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar; or, Villainy Displayed in all its Branches*, Vol. 4 (London, 1795), p. 308. Image taken from Eighteenth Century Collections Online, <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx> CW102966301 [Accessed 13th September 2014]. © The British Library Board, (General Reference Collection C.140.b.65.)

⁶⁶⁸ *London Evening Post* (12-15 September 1767); *Public Advertiser* (15 September 1786); *Gazetteer* (10 June 1769).

⁶⁶⁹ Seleski, ‘A Mistress and a Murderess too’, pp. 210-238.

did exist), as also seen in the passing of Hanway's Second Act, by rendering the case symbolic not merely of the threats to the lower classes but to all mankind. Whether it was a concerted reaction or not, the Brownrigg case did become a means of actively enforcing ideas of repentance, forgiveness and the overriding power of eternal justice among the London populace. Most reports of Brownrigg's execution expressed shock at the reactions of a crowd who saw Brownrigg as beyond salvation and undeserving of a confessor.⁶⁷⁰ This allowed for a wider depiction of the London crowd as inherently godless and in need of control and spiritual discipline, another popular late eighteenth-century trope stemming from discomfort with high levels of attendance at executions.

This was in stark contrast to the crowds depicted in the Salmon case who were shown as driven by good aims, united in their outpouring of sympathy, generosity and joy. Yet in reports of the jubilant celebrations and public appearances that followed Victoire Salmon's release from the Châtelet there was one continuous theme; that such spectacle was temporary. While prior to her acquittal she had been a giggling girl, on her departure from the *Tournelle* Salmon was shown as transformed into a passive ideal of womanhood: calm among the crowd, submissive in her quiet relief at acquittal, and uncomfortable at being in a public space.⁶⁷¹ Her insistence on maintaining her peasant dress and Norman *coiffe* (Figures 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10) in her public appearances was particularly celebrated, demonstrating that she did not seek to capitalise on her experiences by trying to rise up the ranks of Parisian society.⁶⁷² As Marilyn Francus has shown, for such an image of idealised demure womanhood to be compelling, it also had

⁶⁷⁰ Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 31; *Gazetteer* (21, 23 September 1767).

⁶⁷¹ 'La pompe de cette cérémonie contrastoit avec l'extérieur simple de celle qui en étoit l'objet', *Gazette des Tribunaux*, (17 May 1786), p. 246; *Journal de Bruxelles* (24 June 1786), p. 193; *Journal Encyclopédique* (August, 1786), p. 515.

⁶⁷² 'Elle a le bon esprit de conserver son costume champêtre', *Journal politique*, No. 1 (July, 1786), p. 1; *Journal Encyclopédique* (August, 1786), p. 515; *Le Courrier* (23 June 1786).

to be short-term, emphasising that as soon as possible Salmon would disappear from print and the public eye to be truly happy in passive, self-sacrificing anonymity.⁶⁷³

The form that such anonymity would take, however, was the subject of some debate.

Initial discussion following the acquittal suggested that Salmon would join a convent, but in subsequent weeks this was replaced by (false) reports that Salmon was to marry a man to whom she had been engaged prior to her arrest (sometimes referred to as Jean Hébert) and who had remained devoted to her throughout her time in prison. This story was more popular in that it emphasised that the natural place for ideal womanhood was in the home and not in spiritual chastity. It even made its way into the London press.⁶⁷⁴ However, in August 1786 it was finally announced that LeCauchois together with the Comtesse de Genlis had organised Salmon's marriage to Jean Savarry, a soldier who LeCauchois had saved from the gallows in 1761. The Comtesse also secured Savarry a place in the household of the Duc d'Orléans, which was paid for using the money donated to Salmon. Salmon's decision to spend of all her money on her securing her husband's future was seen as yet another aspect of her modesty and domestic devotion.⁶⁷⁵ The wedding took place in September 1786, and LeCauchois completed his performance as a father figure to Salmon by giving her away. As with other representations of Salmon, images of the wedding day showed her in a simple Norman gown and *coiffe* (Figure 5.12).⁶⁷⁶

Attendance was limited to a very small group of aristocratic guests but received widespread coverage in the press in both Paris and London: indeed, it was the most reported -upon event of the entire case. Six separate songs were composed, printed as

⁶⁷³ Francus, *Monstrous Motherhood*, Chapter Five.

⁶⁷⁴ Convent reports in *Gazette d'Utrecht* (5 June 1786); *Gazette de la Haye* (2 June 1786). Engagement reports in: *Le Courrier* (6 June 1786); *Courrier de L'Europe* (16 June 1786); *Journal Encyclopédique* (August, 1786), p. 523; *Gazette d'Utrecht* (20 June 1786); *General Evening Post* (24 June 1786); *Morning Chronicle* (26 June 1786); *Whitehall Evening Post* (27-29 June 1786).

⁶⁷⁵ In fact, in the end, the Duc D'Orléans gave the position to Savarry for free.

⁶⁷⁶ Also in *Année Littéraire*, No. 6 (August, 1786), pp. 208- 212 and No. 7 (September, 1786), pp. 28-34; *Mercure de France* (23 September 1786); *London Chronicle* (31 August, 2 September 1786); *Morning Chronicle* (31 August 1786); *St James's Chronicle* (31 August, 2 September 1786); *Morning Herald* (2 September 1786); *Public Advertiser* (1, 2 September 1786); *Les Lunes du Cousin Jacques* 2 (August, 1786), pp. 108-115.

stand-alone ballads and in newspapers, each celebrating the simple peace and love that Salmon was now to enjoy.



Figure 5.12: *Le Mariage de la célèbre Dlle Salmon* (Paris, 1786).⁶⁷⁷

But, in Paris, such saccharine depictions were not without their political undertones.

Garrioch and Darrow have shown that the ideology of domesticity was increasingly used in 1780s Paris as a criticism of aristocratic luxury, and so aristocratic women were keen to use the Salmon case to show themselves as domestic idealisers rather than debauched consumers.⁶⁷⁸ Beyond the Comtesse de Genlis, Salmon also appeared at the homes of several aristocrats in the days following her acquittal. There were even (probably unfounded) rumours of a possible appearance before the Queen, keen for damage control of her flagging reputation following the diamond necklace affair.⁶⁷⁹ Those who could not

⁶⁷⁷ Image taken from <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> [Accessed 23rd October 2014] ark:/12148/btv1b8410520t.r. Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE FOL-QB-201 (116)

⁶⁷⁸ Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*, pp.270-275; M. Darrow, 'French Noblewomen and the New Domesticity, 1750-1850', *Feminist Studies* 5.1 (Spring, 1979), pp. 41-65.

⁶⁷⁹ Claims of the meeting with the Queen appear in *Semaine Religieuse* (Rouen, 1886) but I can find no other evidence to verify them. Visits to other aristocrats mentioned in *Année Littéraire*, No. 4 (August, 1786), p. 205. Salmon is recorded as having been to visit one of the accused of the Diamond Necklace Affair, the Comte de Cagliostro in *Le Courier* (23 June 1786).

boast a meeting with Salmon could demonstrate their sympathy to her cause through wearing the *innocence reconnu* outfit, a striking ensemble that was supposed to symbolise Salmon's innocence and celebrate the victory of justice within the case through symbolic use of colour and Salmon's image (Figure 5.13).⁶⁸⁰



Figure 5.13: 'Innocence Reconnu' in *Cabinet des Modes* 22 (1 October 1786).⁶⁸¹

Yet there were limitations to the ways that aristocratic women were willing involve themselves in the case. While the Comtesse de Genlis happily organised Salmon's wedding, she quickly distanced herself when disagreements sprang up. In particular, when LeCauchois foolishly referred to her patronage when publishing his 'dream', a thinly veiled metaphor for his perceived mistreatment by the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, the Comtesse quickly declared that she had had no involvement with the text or with

⁶⁸⁰ *Cabinet des Modes*, No. 22 (1 October 1786); *General Evening Post* (14-17 October 1786).

⁶⁸¹ Image taken from <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> [Accessed 23rd October 2014] ark:/12148/bpt6k1040062c Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Philosophie, histoire, sciences de l'homme, SMITH LESOUEF R-4281.

LeCauchois. Three decades later, in her memoirs, Genlis chose not to include the Salmon affair, which through Revolutionary iconography and Salmon's connection to the now controversial figure of the Duc of Orléans (subsequently Philippe Egalité, and victim of the Terror) had gained a rhetorical power she may have no longer wished to be associated with.⁶⁸² Moreover, the saccharine responses to the case were not without their detractors; the satirical newspaper *Les Lunes du Cousin Jacques* was particularly vitriolic in its mocking of the poems written for Salmon's wedding.⁶⁸³

While aspects of the case, in particular the wedding, could still provide fertile material for elite women trying to prove their relevance in 1780s Paris, there was little space allocated in publications on Salmon for vocal and active women beyond organising and celebrating Salmon's happy domestic ending. Salmon's role, in particular, was always seen to be symbolic and passive. While the original *Mémoire* by LeCauchois had been written in the first person, it was clear that the reader was not supposed to think it was actually Salmon speaking, but instead to marvel at LeCauchois' ability to empathise with a servant girl.⁶⁸⁴ Salmon's voice was in fact rarely captured unless to assert her role as the possession of LeCauchois.⁶⁸⁵ Anything else would have been not in keeping with the image of Salmon as 'innocence avenged'- a passive and harmless victim of forces entirely beyond her control, entirely reliant on men for her salvation. This is a dynamic that Tracey Rizzo argues was common to representations of the ideal figure of virtuous woman across popular legal print of the 1780s, shown as 'vulnerable and thereby easily victimized, only the paternalistic compassion of men could save her from dishonour or

⁶⁸² *Année Littéraire*, No. 7 (September, 1786), p. 105, 283; *Mémoires de Madame la Comtesse de Genlis* (Paris, 1825).

⁶⁸³ *Les Lunes du Cousin Jacques*, No. 2 (August, 1786), pp. 108-115.

⁶⁸⁴ LeCauchois, *Mémoire*.

⁶⁸⁵ 'Ma fille Salmon', LeCauchois in *Année Littéraire*, No. 4 (August, 1786), p. 288; the only possible piece of writing by Salmon (which could easily have also been written by LeCauchois) is a letter she writes in support of LeCauchois to *Année Littéraire* in which she emphasizes her new status as a wife, *Année Littéraire*, Vol. 7 (September, 1786), p. 36.

death'.⁶⁸⁶ There was no possibility that Salmon would have had any other reaction to her acquittal but serenity, gratitude and forgiveness. It was also this which made prosecuting the Huet Duparcs impossible. Salmon could only be embraced by the Parisian public with the understanding of the temporary nature of her high profile and her total lack of opinions.

On a much smaller scale such dynamics can also be seen in the London depiction of the apprentices Marys Clifford and Mitchell. Before her death, Mary Clifford was depicted as voiceless, due to her injuries.⁶⁸⁷ As for Mary Mitchell, following Brownrigg's conviction several newspapers advertised the creation of a fund to ensure Mitchell's future, given that she was suffering from several disabilities caused by Brownrigg's abuse. Over 60 pounds was raised through the scheme. Yet again, however, there was no question of Mary Mitchell continuing to have a role in the reform of the parish system that had so failed her. Instead, the 60 pounds was spent on buying her some new clothes and an apprenticeship with a mantua maker.⁶⁸⁸ Like Salmon, Mitchell's happy ending was only believed to be secured through a disappearance from print.

In both London and Paris, perceptions of high-profile female-perpetrated murder in the late eighteenth century were marked by an unprecedented interest with young female victims and narratives of injustice. But, despite this rising interest, there was little space for discussion of individual agency of those involved, either as murderess or as victim. While both cases impacted on discussions for reform and contributed to reshaping understandings of national governance, the women at the centre were quickly re-

⁶⁸⁶ T. Rizzo, *A Certain Emancipation of Women: Gender, Citizenship and the Causes Célèbres of Eighteenth-Century France* (Cranbury, 2004), p. 92.

⁶⁸⁷ *OBP* September 1767, trial of James Brownrigg Elizabeth his wife John their son (t17670909-1); *An Appeal to Humanity*, p. 5; *Genuine and Authentic Account*, p. 8; Wingrave, *A Narrative*, p. 22; *The Annual Register* (London, 1768), pp. 118, 195; *The London Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 481; *God's Revenge Against Murder!* (London, 1768), p. 8; *St James's Chronicle* (4-6 August 1767); *London Evening Post* (4-6, 11-13 August 1767); *Gazetteer* (15 August 1767); *The Gentleman's Magazine* (September, 1767), p. 580. The only depiction of Mary Clifford's voice is in *A New Song*.

⁶⁸⁸ *Gazetteer* (18, 19 September 1767); *Public Advertiser* (17 October 1767); *Public Advertiser* (18 June 1768).

assimilated into less challenging narratives of subservience and conformity involving the penitent sinner and domestically contented housewife. Such representations were not merely small endnotes to depictions of both women, but formed central parts of the ways that both cases were perceived. In London images of Elizabeth Brownrigg's penitence were promoted by religious and middle class reformers, keen to defuse any sense of lower class entitlement that the case had stirred up. In Paris these narratives were encouraged by an emerging group of (exclusively male) middling-sort legal commentators, seeking idealised figureheads for their new philosophies, and aristocratic women, wishing to prove their adherence to domestic ideals.

Conclusion

The cases of Elizabeth Brownrigg, Sarah and Sarah Morgan Metyard and Victoire Salmon demonstrate both continuities and changes in perceptions of female-perpetrated murder in the late eighteenth century. The problematic women at the core of these cases were, like many previous high-profile murderesses (particularly in London), middle-aged, middle-class matriarchs. Understandings of the crimes of Elizabeth Brownrigg, Sarah and Sarah Morgan Metyard and Mme Huet Duparc focused on the disorder of perpetrators' female-run households, their unbalanced family relations, and their relationships with the surrounding community. It was shown that the fragility of middle-class female-run households encouraged the cruel treatment of household residents. For London, rising concerns about neighbourhood isolation previously hinted at in the Malcolm case became central to both the Brownrigg and Metyard cases, while in Paris concerns about community breakdown were counterbalanced by exploration of the dangers of its opposite: provincial small communities dominated by committees of matriarchs.

However, unlike previous cases, interest in such figures was offset by a rising fascination with images of young female victimhood. This was part of a wider recasting of previously deviant female figures such as servants and prostitutes as victims, mirrored in the rise of philanthropic institutions for such women. The rhetorical power of these narratives of victimhood facilitated the appropriation of both the Brownrigg and Salmon cases into wider campaigns for reform. Issues surrounding the parish care system were exposed within the Brownrigg case, and provided emotive material for those seeking to gain support for the passing of Hanway's Second Act. The Salmon case, especially when reframed for a Parisian audience, exposed the corruption and failings of the provincial judicial elite and allotted the reading public a central role in the restitution of miscarriages of justice. In this way the suffering of young, vulnerable women was shown to be the scale against which the civilised state was judged. In both London and Paris, the outpourings of outrage generated by the Brownrigg and Salmon cases demonstrated to the lower classes that they could, and should, expect the state to meet their needs. But the reformist bite of both cases was mitigated through images of female passivity and penitence. In London this was most successfully enacted through a rejuvenation of the motif of the penitent sinner, the long entrenched defender of judicial and social conformity, and through middle-class reformers' channelling of the emotional outcry stimulated by the case into support for reforms which in fact extended control of the poor. But in 1780s Paris neither the absorption of the Salmon case into narratives of pastoral domesticity nor the appropriation of the case into declarations extolling the virtues of the Parisian *Parlement* and King-Protector Louis XVI could halt the gathering feelings of frustration and outrage towards Ancien Régime institutions generated by Salmon and her fellow 'victims of abuse'. In the end, then, it was a case of female innocence and not one of female murderous deviance that proved too transgressive to be contained by print culture.

Conclusion

Stories about women who committed murder (as stated in the opening to this thesis) were a common feature of the eighteenth-century London and Parisian imaginative landscape. But, as has been shown, the act of a woman committing (or attempting to commit) a murder was a necessary but by no means sufficient factor in the telling and printing of such stories. Female murder was rare, and such rarity made it difficult to absorb into broader narratives concerning criminal behaviour proliferating in both cities. Instead, the murderess forced London and Parisian commentators to turn inwards and to search within their respective societies for ways to explain and rationalise these women's crimes and their ramifications. Such a discursive print reaction was, in theory, possible for any case of female-perpetrated murder, but only emerged in a very few. When it did emerge, however, it was on a much larger scale than the print reaction to male killers or other kinds of female criminals. The high-profile murderess was a distinct print phenomenon, representing only a very small number of female killers in either city, and eliciting a high level of imaginative engagement from authors across a wide range of print forms. The women who stimulated such a response were those whose lifestyles, crimes, and trial and execution behaviour were perceived to resonate with specific concerns in each city. These were women who tapped into contemporary fears about more specific issues than a general belief in female evil or the universal threat of female agency. Such fears were the products of a complex web of tensions in two societies undergoing dramatic population change and shifting social hierarchies. Through close analysis of the writings created on each of these 11 high-profile female killers, this thesis has identified varied forms of unease and prejudice present within London and Parisian societies emanating from European-wide trends in urbanisation, shifts in the political, economic and social

structures of France and Great Britain, as well as more immediate points of tension within each city.

The term ‘perception(s)’ has been used to analyse such stories to reflect the fact that in representing such women’s crimes authors of print on the murderess were attempting to make sense of particularly unusual and disturbing acts. In the absence of a criminological analytical framework through which to explain them, authors instead saw these crimes as extreme examples of broader sources of concern and disorder. It was these wider concerns that coloured authors’ understandings of such crimes, leading them to identify only particular cases as worthy of print discussion, to focus upon specific aspects of each crime and to then represent those aspects in a particular way. While little is known about the individual authors of many texts printed on female killers, and even less is known about the reactions of those who read them, it is reasonable to assume that print about the murderess was created to appeal to a broader mentality and so secure sales. In this way, depictions of these women would have been selected and formed in a way that was believed to appeal to, and resonate with, a wider audience. So by unravelling the assumptions and fears which lay behind depictions of these women and the perceived ramifications of their crimes, this thesis has shown, we can learn more about issues and concerns at the core of (or at least that authors perceived to be at the core of) eighteenth-century London and Parisian societies.

There were many similarities in London and Parisian perceptions of high-profile murderesses. Comparison of the judicial treatment of women accused of murder in Chapter One has shown that London and Parisian judicial trends for female homicide were not of a markedly different nature, nor did they differ drastically from trends in male-perpetrated murder, except in the fact that female-perpetrated murder was a much rarer crime. The major judicial difference was that men were more likely to receive a manslaughter verdict, which is perhaps indicative of understandings of masculinity as

naturally violent, and/or that men were more (or perceived to be more) likely in both cities to find themselves in situations where killing could happen by accident. But London and Parisian women were more likely to be given a manslaughter verdict than their rural sisters, perhaps reflecting the more (or perceived to be more) violent and intense nature of women's lives in the city. A higher proportion of Parisian trials involved poisonings than in London, reflecting the long history of obsession with poison in France, stoked up by a more sophisticated policing system, equipped with the means to investigate suspicious deaths from stomach complaints and, perhaps, a society in which the continual threat of famine nurtured an obsession with food less present in better-provisioned London.

But, in reality, the variations in the judicial treatment of women accused of murder on either side of the channel were surprisingly small given the sizeable differences in the judicial and political systems of the two cities. Women in both London and Paris were more likely to be accused of/commit murder if they were in their 30s, if they were unmarried and if they worked in a service profession. They were more likely to be convicted in both cities if they killed their husbands than friends or acquaintances, but husbands were also much more likely to be convicted if they killed their wives. From the limited archival records, it appears that female-perpetrated murder was not limited to murders committed in the home, nor only to the killing of immediate family members using non-physical methods such as poisoning. Instead women, like men, killed a wide range of acquaintances, often in public spaces and using intensely violent methods.

Against this backdrop, similarities can also be traced in the space occupied by the murderess within the print culture of each city. Chapter One also showed that, in both cities, the high-profile print murderess was a distinct print phenomenon, categorically distinguished from the majority of murderous women by a high volume of print coverage over a wide range of genres. Such high-profile treatment was almost never given to male

293

killers, and reflects the imaginative engagement stimulated by the unusual nature of the crime. But despite this distinction, on both sides of the channel, print about the murderess existed in a diverse range of forms that would have been accessed by readers in social spaces that encouraged extensive reading and broad societal discussion. In such environments, high-profile murderous women would have been appropriated into a densely-populated imaginative landscape and into a variety of debates, rather than being perceived as didactic exemplars for personal study and misogynistic oppression.

Perceptions of female killers in both London and Paris were not constrained within a framework of stereotypical images of female deviance, but instead connected with more precise concerns within the city environment. A major concern in both cities was the mobility of certain kinds of women in the urban space who, through their occupation or social status, were able to move unchallenged across the city, and from community to community, outside of neighbourhood networks of surveillance and control. In both London and Paris possibilities for deception (and all its criminal opportunities) were shown as proliferating in urban spaces where it was increasingly difficult to judge someone's rank by their appearance. Here, it was not woman's naturally duplicitous nature that was emphasised so much as the burgeoning fields of fashion, cosmetics and obstetrics, providing opportunities for women to prosper in trades dedicated to concealing ugliness, poverty and debauchery beneath a sheen of respectability. Such deception was seen as indicative of the diverse and complex urban space more generally, where reputations could be lost and re-formed, and people could disappear and re-emerge.

Alongside those who worked in the beauty and fashion industry, London and Parisian high-profile murderesses were also perceived through a focus upon the equally troubling female occupations of servant and midwife: women whose work required them to move between households and the city streets, often at night, and gave them intimate access to

households when residents were at their most vulnerable. Three of the eleven high-profile murderesses explored in this thesis were midwives. These women, particularly in the late-seventeenth century, were shown as appropriating the space of childbirth and knowledge of female bodies for subversive ends and at the same time depriving male midwives of business. The work of the midwife gave her a role on the city streets and a network of contacts across the city which, in Paris in particular, included some of the most powerful women in the land, transcending class boundaries and bringing lower-class expertise into upper-class intrigue. These were women who held power over some of the most crucial aspects of early modern life: legitimacy and paternity, and so, particularly in London following the Warming Pan scandal, could be seen as embodying a dangerous power at the centre of urban society. The threatening figure of the domestic servant, with easy access to the household and whose reputation was increasingly difficult to verify, was evoked in the case of Sarah Malcolm in London and in critical depictions of Parisian male domestic servants in the cases of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, the *affaire des poisons*, and Madame Tiquet. Servants were, like midwives, figures who straddled the household and public space, and in so doing posed the threat of bringing criminal plots and intrigues into the home. By the late eighteenth-century, however, concern with servants had shifted dramatically from their inherent threat to the ways in which young female servants and parish apprentices were exploited within the city space. In both cities, the abuse of young female servants and apprentices by older middle class mistresses became a powerful rhetorical tool for discussions of city and state governance more broadly, reflecting changing expectations of the city government to provide for its inhabitants.

Cases of high-profile murderesses in both cities also were also perceived to expose the dangers posed by the unstable nature of urban living conditions to family and affective relationships, in particular the difficulties created by the communal nature of life in urban

households marked by high servant turnover and the presence of lodgers. Particularly challenging, according to high-profile cases of female murder, was the task of maintaining marital harmony in such spaces. Marriage was a central factor of eighteenth-century life, as reflected in the fact that half of the cases of high-profile murderesses analysed in this thesis involved husband murder. In both cities, emerging understandings of marriage as an affective union, yet one in which the husband still had to enforce order, clashed with living arrangements in which the most intimate marital spaces were penetrated by the presence of other men, both servants and lodgers. Such men embodied a kind of anti-patriarchalism: outside of the traditional masculine ideal of householder and master, inherently weak, and yet also posing a serious threat as allies to wives whose husbands had failed to maintain the delicate balancing of loving discipline.

The urban household was at once open to penetration and exploitation, but also, by the end of the period, increasingly shown to be dangerously isolated from the wider community in discussions of high-profile female killers. Urban growth was blamed for a breakdown in community networks, allowing cruelty and abuse of the vulnerable to go unmonitored and deception and exploitation to run rife. Such cruelty was seen to be particularly present among middle-aged, middle-class female householders, whose precarious economic situations and increasing domestic power could drive them to exploit philanthropic systems for monetary gain and attack those in their care. Such women's crimes were perceived to be symptomatic of the broader failings and corruption of urban society. This reflected a dynamic seen across the period, particularly in Paris, through which individual cases of female-perpetrated murder were seen to be indicative of the poorly managed and disordered nature of the society in which they lived.

But alongside these similarities, there were also noticeable differences in the ways that high-profile murderesses in London and Paris were perceived, in terms of the kinds of print in which such women were depicted, the sorts of cases which authors selected as

being of interest to their readership, and the wider debates that such figures were appropriated into. Heavy censorship, and a print culture that represented itself as aimed at the upper classes (or those aspiring to be within the upper classes), led to an emphasis in Parisian print on cases of female-perpetrated murder that took place among the governing elite, and within immediate intimate relationships, in which narratives of betrayal and rebellion held particular sway. In a city in which political discussion was intensely controlled, these cases were imbued with implicit political ramifications concerning the moral corruption of the city, and governors who failed to maintain control even within their own homes. It was not that Londoners had no interest in those who were running the city, but they had other outlets for such discussions, particularly following the lapsing of the 1695 Licensing Act, as well as a smaller aristocracy who played a less dominant role in the social and print landscape of the city. Moreover, there was no London equivalent to the late seventeenth-century murderous aristocratic scandals that gripped Paris. In London, a middle-class readership primarily concerned with their relationship to, and management of, the lower classes focused upon cases that exposed the practical threats of urban life.

In Parisian discussions of high-profile murderesses there was a focus, especially in the earlier decades of the period, on relations between Paris and the newly separated court of Versailles. Paris was shown as a dangerous space in which powerful aristocratic women could mingle with the lower classes to fuel and escalate the kinds of romantic intrigue and debauchery believed to be endemic to Versailles culture. Concerns about the mixing of lower-class Parisian knowledge with court libertinism erupted in the cases of the Marquise de Brinvilliers and the *affaire des poisons*. Louis XIV's perceived moral corruption, and his foisting off of the running of his capital onto *robe* counsellors, was exposed through discussion of these cases which were removed enough from direct political events to avoid censorship (that is, the parts of the *affaire* that were allowed to

be public knowledge) but still contained salacious and damaging implications. Such criticisms of the Parisian governing classes were further explored in the 1699 case of Madame Tiquet. In exposing the weakness and corruption of *parlementaires* such as Madame Tiquet's attempted victim (and husband), and of other governing officials such as the *Lieutenant Criminel* and the Archbishop of Paris, Madame Tiquet was perceived to be a victim of an inept and paranoid judiciary rather than a plotting killer.

The later high-profile cases of the non-aristocratic Marie Catherine Taperet and Victoire Salmon saw a continuation of political messages stated implicitly (and with Salmon, increasingly explicitly) within print on the cases. The Taperet case served to ridicule an overly sentimental and morally corrupt aristocracy bent on saving Taperet from the scaffold, alongside exposing a city space slowly descending into chaos through the debauched activities of the *haute bourgeoisie*. Most importantly, the case became a crucial exemplar for new campaigns for the legalisation of divorce in the later decades of the century. By time of the Salmon case, the political rhetoric of Paris was shifting, and with it print on the high-profile murderess, as shown in the move away from an exclusive focus on the upper-classes onto the figure of a lower class provincial servant.

Increasingly, the governing systems of Paris were assessed not through exposure of the individual corruptions of their personnel but by their treatment of the lowest and most vulnerable individuals in the land. Alongside this shift in focus came an escalation in rhetoric as the Salmon case became a means of asserting this new wisdom of the Parisian *Parlement* and Louis XVI, the king protector, in the face of a corrupt, old-fashioned and utterly un-enlightened provincial judiciary, and of projecting a new image of 'justice' as an abstract concept embodied in judicial systems populated by defence lawyers rather than in absolutist judges.

The implicit tendency toward politicisation present within perceptions of Parisian murderesses was much rarer in London. The exception that proves this rule was the 1688

London case of Mary Aubry. Taking place in the politically-charged atmosphere of the early days of the Glorious Revolution, and in the more heavily censored world of pre-1695 London, Mary's murder of an abusive and corrupting husband was perceived to have important rhetorical currency for those seeking justification for the dispatch of a Catholic tyrant. But outside of the fraught atmosphere of 1688, a primarily middle-class London readership (compared to Paris' projected upper-class readership) was believed to be predominantly concerned with pragmatic questions of the murderesses' social and economic background and the urban conditions that had facilitated their crimes. The brutal murder of John Hayes by his wife Catherine in 1726 was primarily seen as an example of the dangers of clandestine elopement and marrying below one's social rank. Mass-murderess Sarah Malcolm served as a powerful illustration of the dangers of employing unknown female migrants in casual professions that gave them close access to the households of their employers and the ways in which the capital could corrupt young migrant women. In the final two cases of mother and daughter Sarah and Sarah Morgan Metyard and Elizabeth Brownrigg, more overt criticism of governing systems can be found, yet, unlike Paris, such criticism remained closely focused upon immediate parish legislation, in particular the passing of Hanway's Second Act, and a broader need to expand the Christian education of the masses.

In London focus was particularly trained upon the emergence of an urban middling sort with extremely fragile levels of wealth. Such households were intensely vulnerable to sudden shifts in fortune, and the task of keeping afloat often fell to matriarchs such as Brownrigg or Metyard, whose fear of poverty could, it was believed, lead to the committing of atrocities. The unique space of the Temple as a new form of middle-class residence with a high turnover of single individuals, bringing with it isolation and community breakdown, was exposed as a dangerous site of potential criminality in the Malcolm murders. Concerns about such isolation had expanded by the time of the

Brownrigg and Metyard murders in which it was asserted that the city space might have been covering up hundreds of such crimes. This was a new urban demographic group who had emerged on the back of economic growth and prosperity, but whose lifestyles, it was implied, could open up new forms of criminal opportunity in the capital.

To summarise, then, London and Parisian perceptions of high-profile murderesses in print displayed some similarities in that, in both cities, such women and their crimes were seen (at least by the authors who created print upon them, although readers' perceptions may have been more diverse) to be indicative of the disruptive effects of population growth and changing social hierarchies upon city living, and upon the changing roles of women in certain occupations. Yet, at the same time, the differing political and cultural nature of print in London and Paris, as well as broader socio-economic differences, led to differences both in terms of the kinds of women who became high profile, and the kinds of discussions that they were incorporated into in each city. A censored and upper-class facing Parisian print culture led to an overwhelming interest in female killers from the second estate, with their crimes seen as making implicit suggestions about the corruption of the ruling elite, the problematic relationship between Paris and Versailles and, later in the period, more overt criticism of Ancien Régime systems. In London, where print on the murderess existed within a more developed criminal print culture and where a more limited censorship system made the implicit politicisation of cases less inevitable, commentators' focus was trained upon the emerging urban middling sort and their relationship with the lower classes, as well as the impact of high levels of migration on neighbourhood ties.

This study ends in 1789 because, three years after the Salmon trial, Parisian society changed dramatically, making London and Parisian comparisons infinitely more difficult. In the tumultuous and uncertain times of the Revolution, overtly politicised female violence (alongside male violence) proved to be a problematic subject. Misogyny was a

powerful rhetorical tool for both sides, seen in the graphic derogatory sexualisation of female aristocrats, yet existed alongside a celebration of feminine virtue embodied in *la République* herself. Sharper ideas of gender difference emerged with calls for universal rights for men, and counterpart calls for (and then dismissal of) universal rights for women. Such tensions appeared in the figure of the angel-assassin Charlotte Corday, killer of Jean-Paul Marat. Studies of Corday have revealed how representations of her (even down to the colour of her hair) swung in different directions according to the Revolutionary or Counter-Revolutionary inclinations of their authors. But even here, in the harried centre of political tumult, scholars have shown that images of Corday were not simply constructed along a Madonna/whore binary but allowed for complex and contradictory readings, not least those promoted by Corday herself.⁶⁸⁹ In the early years of the Empire and into the first decades of the nineteenth century, the message of cases of female homicide in Paris changed again. The interest in false accusations highlighted in the Salmon case was magnified in the *Causes Célèbres* of the 1800s and 1810s. While the Salmon case had been used to demonstrate the value of the defence lawyer to the judicial process, the acquitted murderess of the post-Revolution era, usually vulnerable, young and lower class, served to evoke the wisdom of the new institution of the jury, and at the same time to clearly distinguish this new judicial system from the dark days of the Revolutionary Tribunal. For those rare *Causes Célèbres* involving conviction, the source of evil behind female murderous intent shifted to the Revolution itself, which was shown to have broken down marital values and given women insidious aspirations.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁹ On Corday see N. R. Gelbart, 'The Blonding of Charlotte Corday' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.1 (Fall, 2004), pp. 201-221; E. R. Kindleberger, 'Charlotte Corday in Text and Image: A Case Study in the French Revolution and Women's History', *French Historical Studies* 18.4 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 969-999; C. Thomas, 'Heroism in the Feminine: the Examples of Charlotte Corday and Madame Roland', *The Eighteenth Century*, Special edition: The French Revolution 1789—1989: Two Hundred Years of Rethinking 30.2 (1989), pp. 67-82. See also D. Godineau, 'Femmes et violence dans l'espace politique révolutionnaire', *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, Special edition: Violence and the French Revolution 29.3 (Fall 2003), pp. 559-576; C. Jones, 'A Fine 'Romance' with No Sisters', *French Historical Studies* 19.2 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 277-287.

⁶⁹⁰ *Recueil de Causes Célèbres* (Paris, 1811-16).

In London, though less dramatically, change was also afoot. After 50 years in which interest in murderesses appeared to wane and the only high-profile cases of murder or attempted murder by women focused on the insane and unprosecuted (Margaret Nicholson for the attempted regicide of George III in 1786 and Mary Lamb for the murder of her mother in 1796), the case of Eliza Fenning in 1815 placed the judicial system under new print scrutiny. In conditions strikingly similar to that of the Salmon case, Fenning, a servant maid, was accused of poisoning the family she worked for, and was hounded into the courts by a determined magistrate. Unlike Salmon, however, Fenning was convicted and executed despite sizeable public outcry. The case formed part of a gathering momentum against capital punishment resulting in the passing of a series of reforms championed by Whig politician Samuel Romilly, including a sharp decline in the number of crimes punishable by death. While in the case of Elizabeth Brownrigg social outcry had been dampened down through the promise of reform, the Fenning case would continue to be conjured up throughout the nineteenth century at times of judicial protest culminating in the abolition of public execution in 1868.⁶⁹¹

Modern historians of gender and crime see the early nineteenth century as a watershed moment in understandings of gendered criminality. The beginnings of academic discourses that, by the end of the century, would lead to the creation of criminology and sexology, it is argued, resulted in an epistemological re-conception of murderers as extreme assertions of aestheticized individualism: no longer representative of wider social threats but rather individuals born into, and completely defined by, their murderous subjectivity. In such definitions, gender played a powerful role with ideologies of femininity as passive, asexual and morally pure becoming the measure

⁶⁹¹ *OBP*, April 1815, trial of ELIZA FENNING (t18150405-18). This is, at least, the reading of the case put forward by V. A. C. Gattrell in *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People* (Cambridge, 1993). See also P. Seleski, 'Domesticity in the Streets: Elizabeth Fenning, the London Crowd and the Politics of the Private Sphere', in T. Haris, *The Politics of the Excluded, 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 265-290. The Salmon case is retold in direct comparison with the Fenning case in the Wilkie Collins short story 'The Poisoned Meal' which appears in *Cases Worth Looking At* (London, 1875).

against which murderesses were judged: as Lisa Downing rather neatly puts it ‘male murderers came to be seen as having something extra, female murderers were seen as having something missing’.⁶⁹² Such ideologies are seen to pinnacle in the 1894 work of criminologist Cesare Lombroso and his declaration that ‘the female criminal is doubly exceptional, first as a woman and then as a criminal’.⁶⁹³ This rise of exceptionalism and individualism in discussing female killers means that it is much harder to apply the methodologies used in this thesis to this later period, at least in terms of the representation of murderous women in scientific studies and ‘high’ literature. But such narratives were not all-consuming and, in cheaper forms of print in particular, there appear to have been some continuities in depictions of female-perpetrated murder into the nineteenth century, with a sustained focus on a perpetrator’s socio-economic status as indicative of wider social issues. The women of this thesis, for example, continued to be represented in essentially similar terms, often through reproduction of the same hundred-year-old texts, throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.⁶⁹⁴

This thesis has demonstrated the ways in which the intricacies of two differing societies can be traced and compared through a focus upon their reactions to high-profile transgressive figures. These were women who received high levels of public attention for their criminal acts rather than for their achievements or lineage. They can therefore in some ways be termed among some of the first ‘celebrities’: famous simply because public interest made them so. In this way, such figures open up new opportunities for

⁶⁹² L. Downing, *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality and the Modern Killer* (London, 2013) p. 124; see also J. Black, *The Aesthetics of Murder: A Study in Romantic Literature and Contemporary Cultures* (Baltimore, 1991); M. Foucault, *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister and My Brother: A Case of Parricide, in the Nineteenth Century* (1973), trans F. Jelinek (Lincoln, 1975); M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), trans. A. Sheridan (Harmondsworth, 1991); J. McDonagh, ‘Do or Die: Problems of Agency and Gender in the Aesthetics of Murder’, *Genders* 5 (1989), pp. 120-134.

⁶⁹³ C. Lombroso and G. Ferrero, *Criminal Woman: The Prostitute and the Normal Woman* (1895), trans. D. Appleton (Colorado, 2003), p. 189.

⁶⁹⁴ The exceptions were the cases of the Marquise de Brinvilliers and the *affaire des poisons* which provided fertile material for a new series of melodramatic plays and novels. For more on continuity see also T. Craigin, *Murder in the Parisian Streets: Manufacturing Crime and Justice in the Popular Press 1830-1900* (Bucknell, 2006).

comparative analysis. While male killers were of less interest to London and Parisian eighteenth-century print manufacturers than female killers, there were a series of high-profile male criminals, particularly brigands and highwaymen, who did receive extremely high levels of print coverage. Further comparative study of such figures, as already shown in initial works by Lise Andriès and Léa Lebourg-LePortier, may yield new insights into London and Parisian understandings of masculinity and criminal threat within the urban space, as well as broader insights into London and Parisian eighteenth-century societies.⁶⁹⁵

More broadly, this thesis has suggested the enormous possibilities that exist for the comparative study of eighteenth-century London and Paris. In the period between the Glorious and French Revolutions these two metropolises were undergoing strikingly similar forms of demographic and social change, as well as economic expansion.

Moreover, thanks to networks of travel, knowledge-transfer and war, Londoners and Parisians were by no means unaware of the happenings of their cross-channel neighbours. Yet in other ways they were separated by the yawning chasm between Restoration and Glorious Revolution constitutionalism on one side of the channel, and crystallising (then cracking) absolutist monarchy on the other. Even within the close subject matter of this thesis, much broader implications have been suggested through this comparative framework for the ways in which political, cultural, economic, social and demographic factors could interact in the construction of London and Parisian mentalities. There remains a great deal more to be done. The criminal patterns of eighteenth-century London and Paris, as seen in this initial analysis, shared many

⁶⁹⁵ L. Andriès, 'Histoires criminelles anglaises', in L. Andriès (ed.), *Cartouche, Mandrin et autres brigands du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 2010), pp. 245-268; L. Lebourg-Leportier, "'Slippery Eel': Escape Episodes and Ideological Ambiguity in Eighteenth-Century Criminal Biographies. The Cases of Louis-Dominique Cartouche and John Sheppard', in D. Grelé and M. Mulryan (eds), *Caught Between Fact and Fiction: Eighteenth-Century Escape Tales* (Bucknell, Forthcoming); L. Lebourg-LePortier, 'Les biographies de criminels et la culture savante à l'époque moderne. L'exemple de la gloire du brigand au XVIII^e siècle en Angleterre et en France', *Revue des Études Culturelles* (Forthcoming).

similarities, but differing print cultures, systems of punishment and conceptions of justice created two separate culturally-constructed criminal worlds. Wider comparisons of criminal print emerging from each city would help to highlight the importance of the eighteenth-century media in the construction of understandings of criminal threat, and the two-way relationship between judicial institutions and public opinion(s) that played a central role in defining eighteenth-century conceptions of justice and order. Finally, there remains the question of the connection between the content of print and the beliefs of its readers. The problem of reader reaction is still somewhat of an elephant in the room of studies of eighteenth-century print culture in European history. Recent digitisation projects concerning book publishing and reading, such as the STN archives and the Reading Experience Database,⁶⁹⁶ alongside the transcription and publishing of increasing numbers of eighteenth-century diaries may provide new opportunities to reach more satisfying conclusions in the quest to understand just how much the life experiences and thoughts of eighteenth-century Londoners and Parisians were dictated by what and how they read.

The aim of this thesis has been to write a history of perceptions of female killers that is not, or at least not exclusively, a history of gender. In economic and social history such studies abound, and it has been compellingly shown that gender was by no means the sole determinative factor in the day-to-day lives of eighteenth-century women or their portrayal in print. In the study of criminal men, also, new histories of masculinities have been masterfully woven into the wide network of economic and social factors that lay behind the crimes of men and their representations. Continuing such methodologies for the figure of the murderous woman, this thesis has shown that high-profile print female killers were figures who stimulated a wide range of reactions, often simultaneously, through complex forms of representation. These women and their crimes were explained

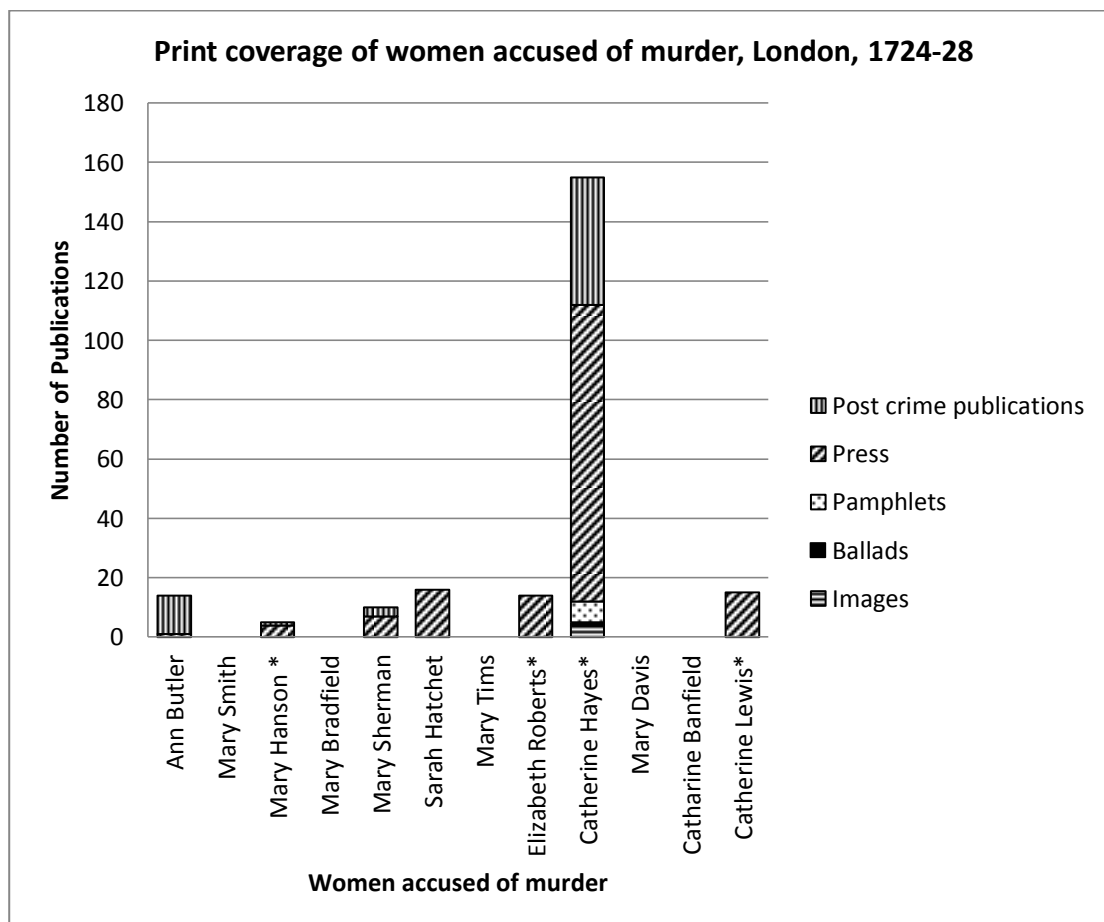
⁶⁹⁶ STN Online Database available at <http://fbtee.uws.edu.au/stn/interface/> and the Reading Experience Database available at <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/> [URLs correct as of 27th July 2015].

and understood through a multitude of characters, motifs and stereotypes which populated the social imaginations of eighteenth-century London and Paris, themselves reflective of the vast diversity present within urban life on the cusp of modernity. Just as London and Paris were complex societies in which gender interacted with a wide variety of other factors in determining and interpreting sites of tension and prejudice, so eighteenth-century murderesses were, and, more importantly, were perceived to be, more than murderous women.

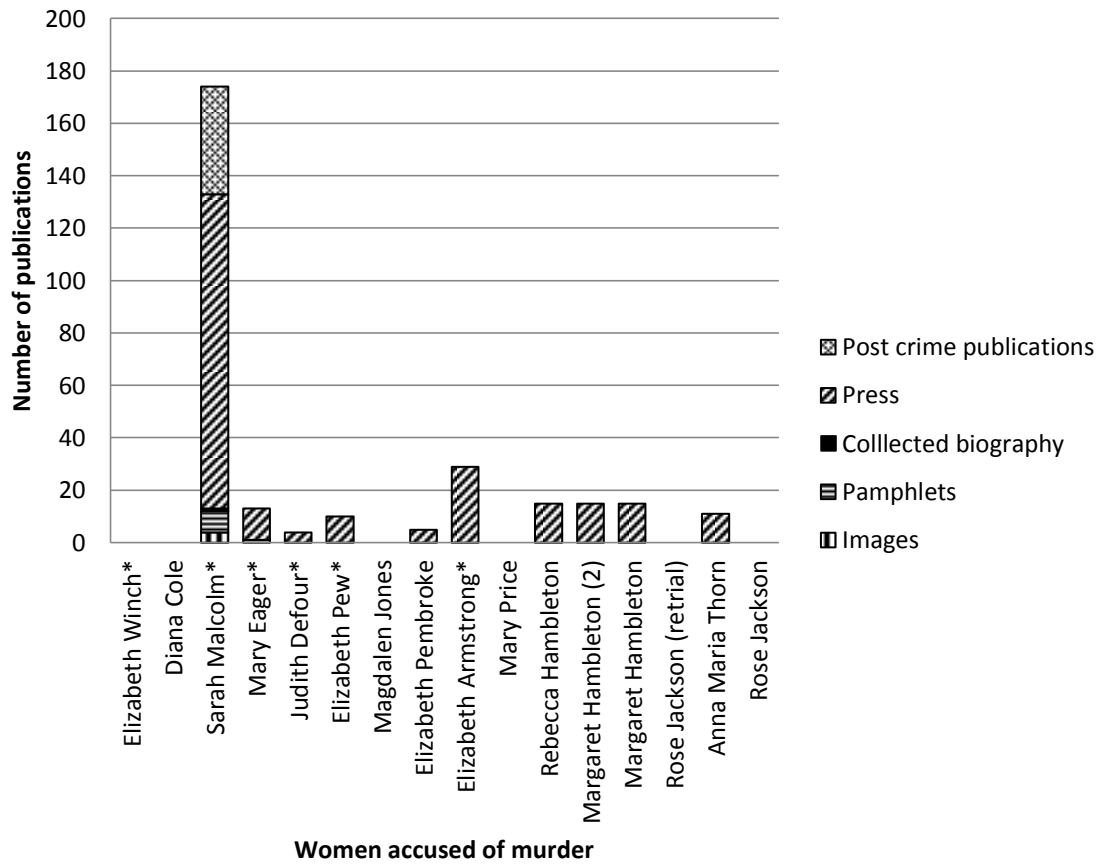
Appendix One: Records of print material generated on cases of female murder in the years surrounding high-profile cases:

* Denotes guilty verdict.

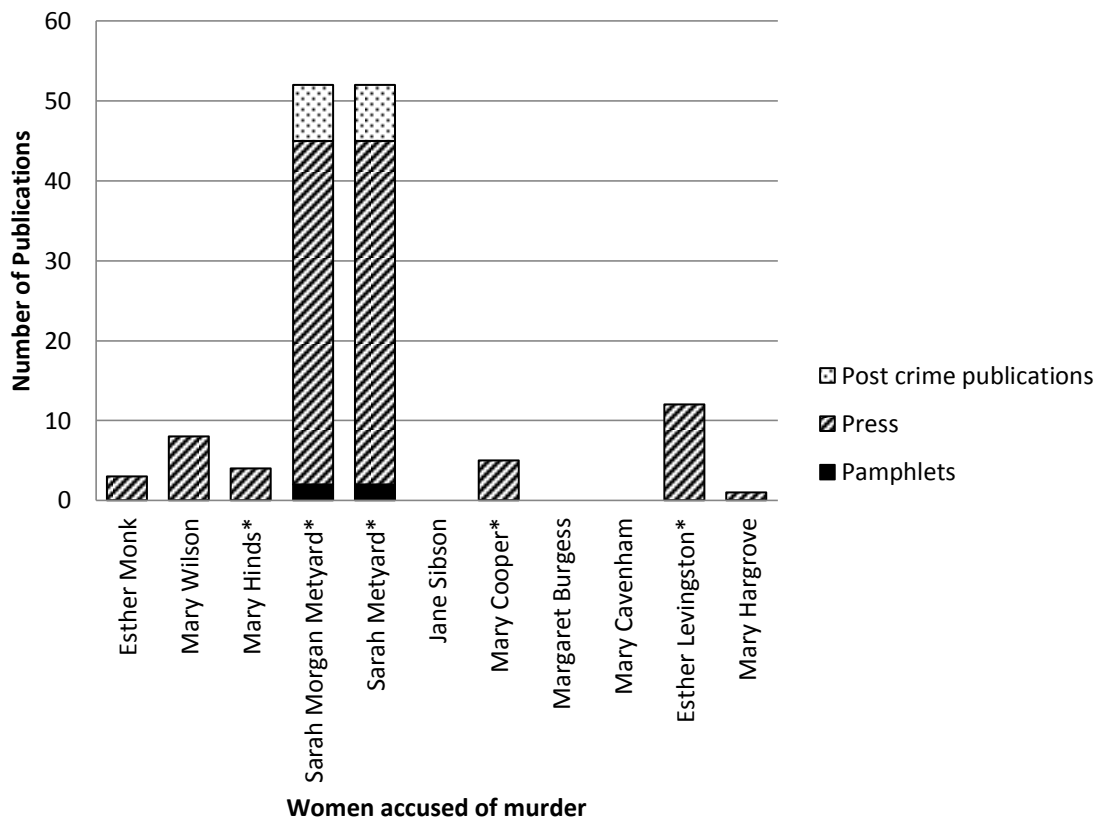
London cases:



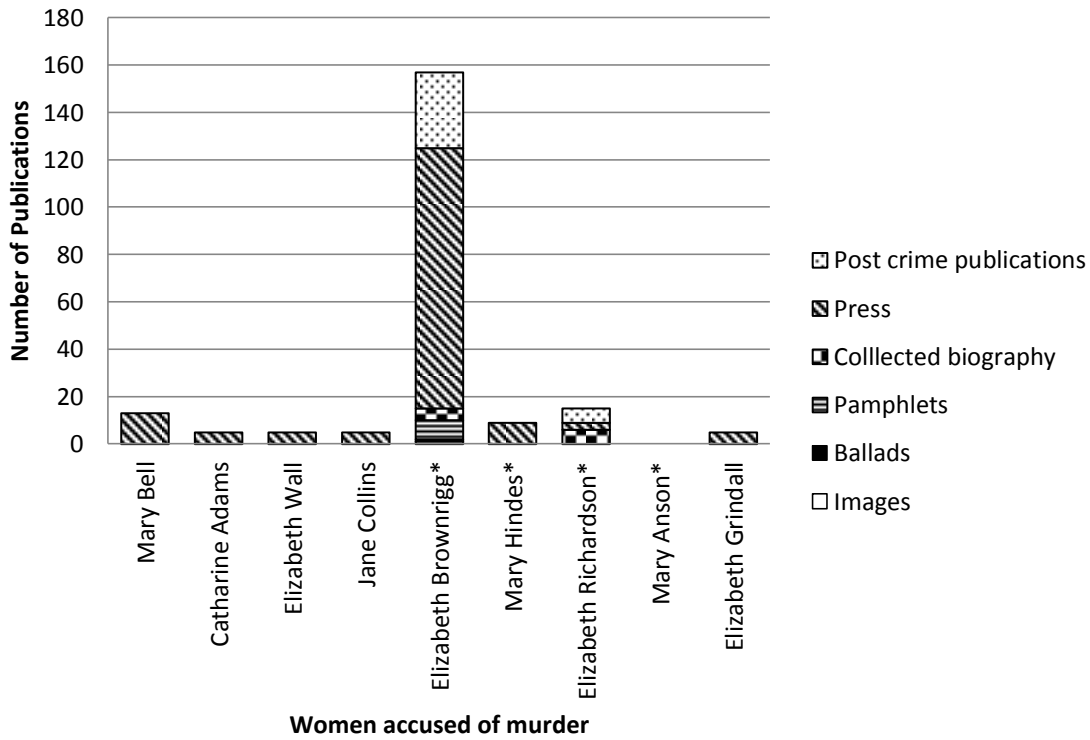
Print coverage of women accused of murder, London, 1731-35



Print coverage of women accused of murder, London, 1760-1764

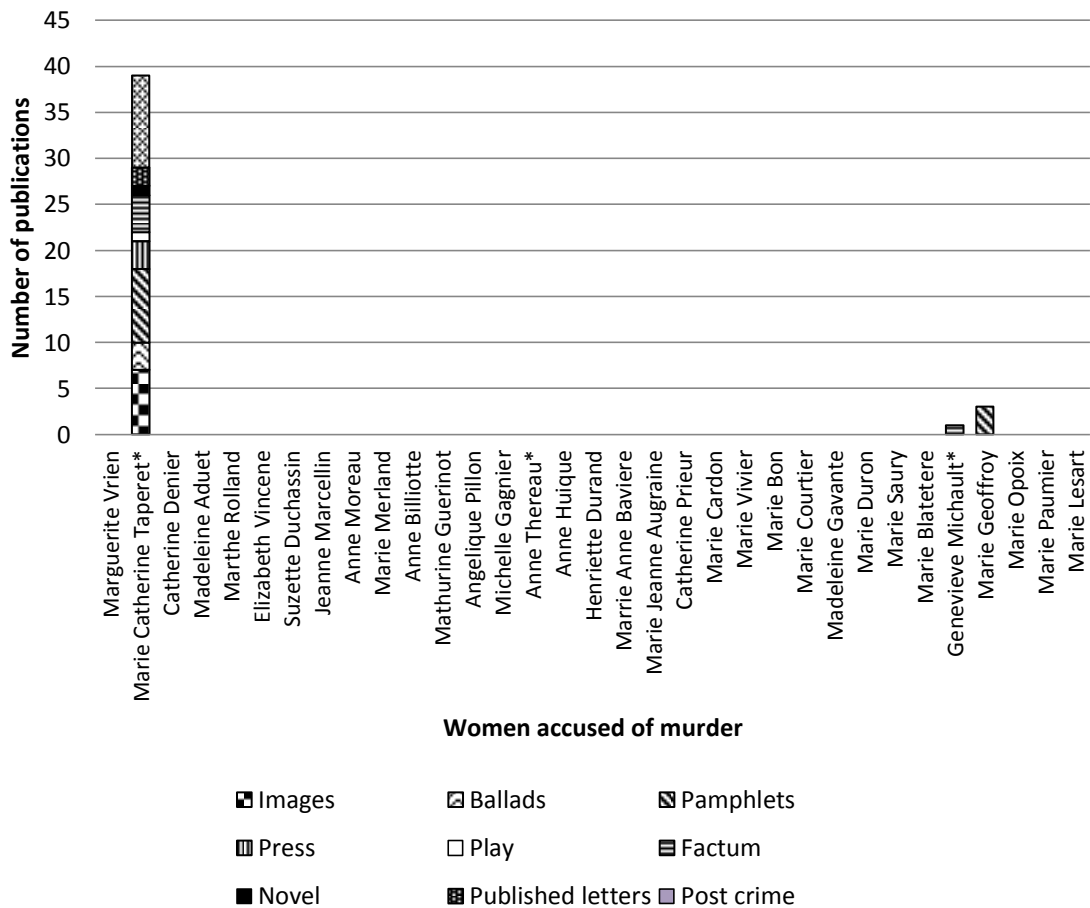


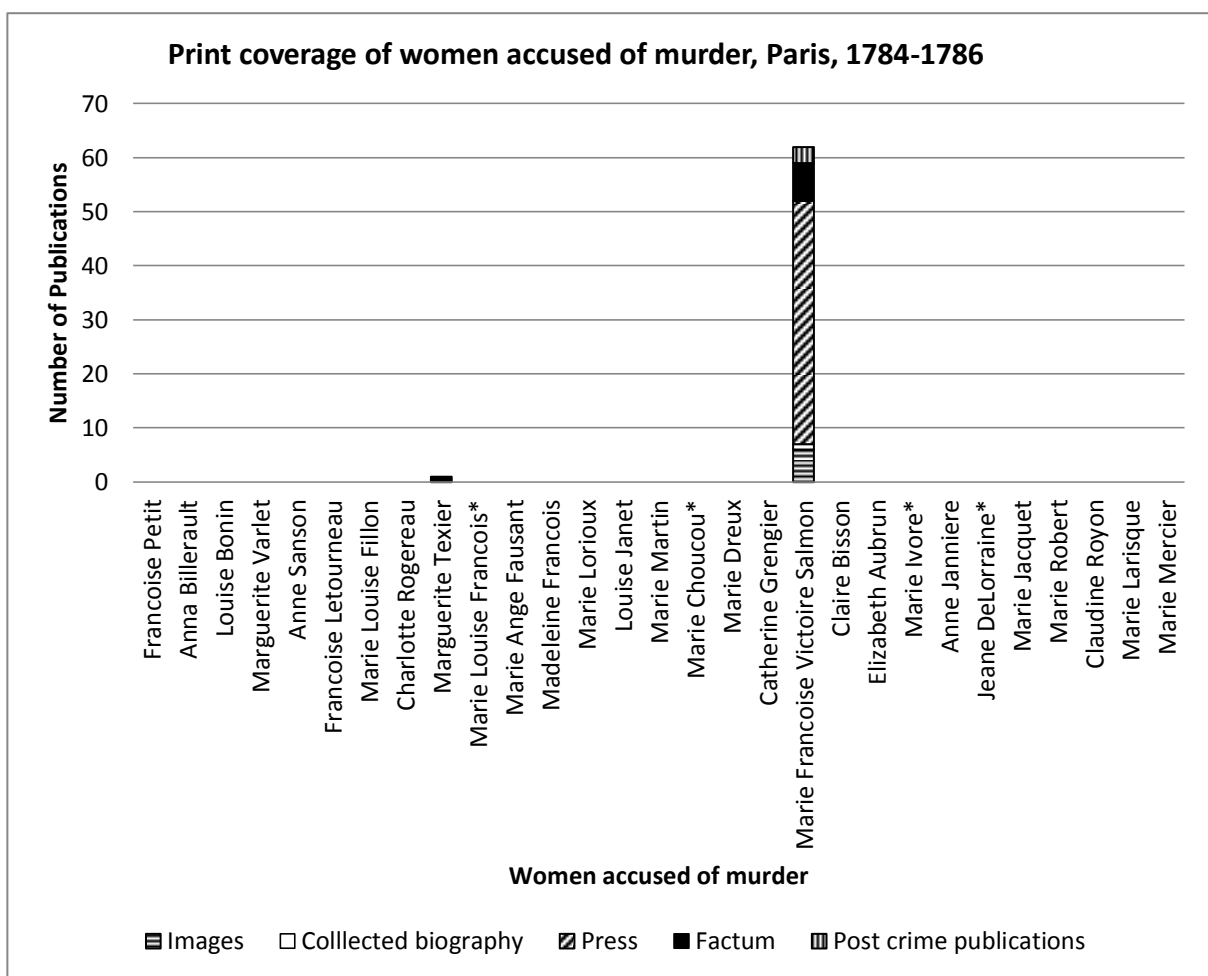
Print coverage of women accused of murder, London, 1765-1769



Paris cases:

Print coverage of women accused of murder, Paris, 1753-1758





‘Press’ is used to denote entries in newspapers or periodicals. Multiple references to a murderess in one edition of a newspaper or periodical have been counted as one entry but references in different editions of the same newspaper or periodical have been counted separately. Data collected by searching for the names of women accused of murder listed in <http://oldbaileyonline.org> 01/01/1686-31/12/1690, 01/01/1724-31/12/1728, 01/01/1731-31/12/1735, 01/01/1760-31/12/1764, 01/01/1765-31/12/1769 [Searched: Defendant Gender: Female, Offence Type: Killing, all subcategories, except infanticide] and all women accused of murder listed in Catalogue 450 accused 1753-58 and 1784-86 in: the English Short Title Catalogue, <http://estc.bl.uk/> ; the Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Burney Newspaper Archive <http://gdc.gale.com/products/17th-and-18th-century-burney-collection-newspapers/>; Early English Books Online <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>; Eighteenth Century Collections Online <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/producthighlights/history/eighteenth-century-collections-online.aspx> ; the British Library Catalogue, <http://bl.uk> ; the Bibliothèque Nationale Catalogue, <http://bnf.fr> ; Gallica, <http://gallica.fr/> ; Le Gazetier Universel, <http://gazetier-universel.gazettes18e.fr/> ; Google Books, <https://books.google.com/> [Accessed 28th February 2015] and AN: AD Guellette III. The cases of the Marquise de Brinvilliers and the *affaire des poisons* cannot be judged against their contemporaries as Catalogue 450 only begins 1700 so it is difficult to gauge which other women were accused of murder in those years. Data will be more limited for Parisian murderesses due to the limitations of text searchable digitised resources and the fewer number of newspapers.

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[Gazetier Universel] – Le Gazetier Universel

[Google Books] – Google Books Online

[NPG]- National Portrait Gallery Online

[OBP]- Old Bailey Proceedings Online, Version 7.2

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