

The Campaign for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts

*The Repeal Campaign's Attitudes towards
Prostitution and the Women Affected by the Acts*

Mari Nylende Tollan



A Thesis Presented to the Department of Literature, Area
Studies, and European Languages (30 credits)

Supervisor: Hilde Løvdal Stephens

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

SPRING 2018

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Mari Nylende Tollan

<http://www.duo.uio.no>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract:

This thesis explores the relations between the campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts and the women affected by the Acts, in addition to the repeal campaign's measures to end prostitution. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to an understanding of the history of working-class women and prostitutes. However, this analysis is largely based on a presentation of these women by mostly middle-class repealers because the women affected by the Acts left very few sources. I have analysed the repeal campaign's circular *the Shield* and applied theories on prostitution, class and gender theory in addition to existing literature on the repeal campaign in order to explore how the repeal campaign and their views represent and/or the larger view on prostitution and the women affected by the Acts.

This thesis argues that the repeal campaign presented two different images of prostitutes, the prostitute as arrogant and unredeemable and the prostitute as a victim. These attitudes are closely connected to the campaign's arguments for repeal where the unredeemable prostitute is presented to illustrate their argument that the CD Acts legitimised prostitution. The prostitute as a victim was used to illustrate how the CD Acts were unjust because they were subjected to only one sex, that they were cruel to the women subjected to them, that they made prostitutes and that they upheld prostitution through preventing women leaving the trade. Working-class women on the other hand were exclusively presented as victims in order to strengthen the repeal campaign's arguments that the law failed to protect women, that the Acts stripped women of their basic legal rights and that they intruded on the private sphere. This thesis further argues that the repeal campaign presented a specific image of the women affected by the Acts in order to create a mass movement for repeal that included both middle-class and working-class repealers. Furthermore, the attitudes towards prostitutes were closely connected to the repeal campaign's measures to end prostitution. The repealers advocated an end to both the supply and demand of prostitutes. The repeal campaign proposed to rescue the fallen, voluntary hospitals and social reforms as measures to end the supply. The demand of prostitutes would end if the Victorians, and especially male Victorians heightened their morality. Lastly, this thesis argues that the repeal campaign was shaped by their contemporary society, both contesting and upholding the strict class and gender hierarchy.

Acknowledgements:

Although this thesis is based on my own work, it would not have been possible without considerable contributions from several people. I would like to express my gratitude to the following people, who have helped me with this thesis.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Hilde Løvdal Stephens for constructive feedback and prompt responses to all of my questions. Your support and good advice have been indispensable in this writing process.

Secondly, I would like to thank Marc Calvini Lefebvre at the Aix-Marseille Université for introducing me to this interesting theme in the first place. Thank you for helping me with finding relevant sources and for introducing me to the circular *The Shield*, which has been my main source for this thesis.

Thirdly, I would also like to thank the staff at The Women's Library located at London School of Economics for all the help and advice during my week at the archives.

Fourthly, thanks to my friend Kjersti Aasgård, who took the time to proofread my thesis. I would also give a special thanks to my fellow students and Marianne Austvik in particular for good support and constructive conversations about the writing process.

Lastly, thanks to my family and my boyfriend Erik for always supporting me.

Mari Nylende Tollan.

Oslo, May 2018.

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Historiography.....	3
1.2	Sources and Method.....	5
2	The Repealers and those Affected by the Acts	8
2.1	Who Did the Contagious Diseases Acts Affect?.....	8
2.2	Identification of the Women Affected by the Acts.....	11
2.3	The Repeal Campaign’s Attitudes and Arguments.....	12
2.3.1	Prostitutes	12
2.3.2	Working-Class Women	23
3	The Remedy for the Great Social Evil.....	33
3.1	Rescue of the Fallen	33
3.2	Voluntary Hospitals	37
3.3	Social Reform	40
3.4	Improve Morality	45
4	Conclusion.....	49

1 Introduction

“Within the past few years a most audacious attempt at secret legislation, of a character most repugnant to the habits, feelings, and convictions of the British people has been made.”¹ With these words, the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts began their official campaign, a battle that would occupy the public for 16 years. The Contagious Diseases Acts (CD Acts or Acts) were three Parliamentary Acts passed in 1864, 1866, and 1869 that were implemented in several military stations and naval ports with the goal of preventing the spread of venereal diseases among soldiers. An additional Act in 1868 also extended the CD Acts to Ireland.² These Acts gave the police authority to seize women they suspected of being common prostitutes to be taken in for a fortnightly medical examination. If infected, they were put in a lock hospital for a period up to nine months. If women refused to go through with the medical examination, they could be arrested with or without hard labour up to three months.³

Even though the CD Acts were implemented on sanitary grounds, the discussion soon turned into a moral debate on prostitution. These Acts created a huge public debate and efforts were made to extend the Acts to the rest of Britain. These efforts were subverted by an extensive campaign that worked for the repeal of the CD Acts. In 1869, two associations that advocated repeal of the Acts were founded: The National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (National Association) and the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (Ladies National Association). Due to their enormous impact on the campaign, the foundation of these two associations marked the beginning of the campaign. Members of these associations were primarily middle and upper class. They were lawyers, businessmen, clergymen, Members of Parliament and influential middle-class women.⁴ Within these two organisations several sub-groups were founded, together with other associations that worked for repeal, such as The Northern Counties League and The Working Men’s National League (Working Men’s League). Through

¹ “Our address”, *Shield*, March 7, 1870, 1. Microform drawer 3, The Women’s Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom.

² The Contagious Diseases Act, 1868”, *Shield*, April 4, 1870, 41.

³ (An Acts for the better Prevention of Contagious Diseases Acts at certain Naval and Military Stations 1866, VR, 28, c. 35) 24.05.2018. <https://archive.org/details/b24398470>

⁴ Margaret Hamilton, “Opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts, 1864-1886”. *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 10, no.1 (1978): 16. doi:10.2307/4048453.

publicity, lobbying, campaigning, petitioning and lecturing throughout the 1870s and part of the 1880s, the CD Acts were suspended in 1883 and finally repealed in April 1886.⁵

The aim for this research is to explore the campaign for the repeal of the CD Acts and the campaigners' attitudes towards prostitution and the women who were affected by the Acts. This thesis therefore explores the relations between the repealers and the women subjected to the CD Acts, in addition to the repeal campaign's measures to end prostitution. I have divided the analysis of this thesis into two subparts presented in chapter two and three. In chapter two, I will analyse how the repeal campaign presented women who were affected by the Acts to fit their arguments for repeal and how the relations between the campaigners and the women affected by the Acts reflect Victorian society. Although I will analyse the campaign's attitudes toward prostitutes as well as working-class women, my main interest will be their attitude towards the former. The reason for this is that these attitudes are the foundation for the analysis in chapter three. In chapter three, I will look at how most of the campaigners were against prostitution, and I will analyse the campaign's measures to prevent prostitution and how their opinions were influenced by their contemporary society. Furthermore, the campaign's measures are closely connected to their attitudes towards prostitutes and their arguments for repeal of the CD Acts dealt with in chapter two.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to understanding the history of a group usually underrepresented in history. From the 1960s, the second wave feminists attempted to rewrite history books in order to include a representation of their own gender.⁶ This thesis is largely a contribution to that because it is fixed on a set of Acts that affected women and the following protest that engaged many women. The female repealers, exemplified through Josephine Butler, are well represented in later scholarly debate. My main interest is therefore to contribute to a presentation of working-class women and prostitutes in Victorian society. This is however problematic in that these women left very few sources and the few sources about these women are predominately written by others. In this thesis, middle-class repealers were largely the ones who wrote about these women and their views will therefore largely influence any representation of these working-class women and prostitutes. This is therefore not a direct representation of the women affected by the Acts, but rather a contribution to a representation of their stories through how contemporaries viewed them.

⁵ Susan Brown, "Economic Representations: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Jenny,' Augusta Webster's 'a Castaway,' and the Campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts." *Victorian Review* 17, no. 1 (1991): 79. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27794675>.

⁶ Catherine Hall. "Thinking Reflexively: Opening 'Blind Eyes.'" *Past & Present* 234, 1 (2017): 254-263. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtw059>, 259.

1.1 Historiography

There is a considerable literature on class and gender relations and prostitution in the Victorian period. Several scholars have analysed the gender and class hierarchy in the Victorian society. Herbert Sussman elaborates on how the industrial revolution and the following centralization contributed to a strict social hierarchy. He further argues that although divided in a strict hierarchy, the collective consciousness among the working class also led them to fight for better political rights. Regarding gender, Sussman argues that the division between home and work was an important factor in developing the notion of separate spheres, meaning the notion that a woman's place was the private home while the man's place was that of the public workplace.⁷ Helena Michie further elaborates on the separate spheres ideology and class hierarchy through an analysis of the Victorians' view of the skin and body and how this view of the body upheld a strict gender and class division.⁸

Even though there was a strict gender division, scholars have explored how feminism started to make an appearance in this period. Barbara Caine offers an overview of English feminism from 1780 to 1980 where she analyses feminist organisations, debates and campaigns and illustrates how the relationship between feminist thoughts and actions and the wider social and cultural debate. In the nineteenth century, Caine argues, women were supposed to give up their own desires and wishes in order to provide care and moral guidance to their family and society. This became known as the woman's mission and led to a greater demand in education, employment for women and independence from men. Mid-Victorian feminism therefore embraced the differences between men and women and sought to gain rights within their own right as women.⁹

The industrialisation of society and the division of men and women into separate spheres also had impact on sexuality. Michel Foucault is probably the greatest contributor to understanding sexuality in the modern world. Foucault argues that with the industrial revolution and division of the spheres, the dominant view of sexuality was that it belonged exclusively to the private sphere and the only purpose of sex was its reproductive role.¹⁰

⁷ Herbert Sussman, "Industrial". In *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture*, edited by Herbert F. Tucker, Blackwell Publishing, 1999, 244-251.

⁸ Helena Michie, "Under Victorian Skins: The Bodies Beneath". In *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture*, edited by Herbert F. Tucker. Blackwell Publishing, 1999, 407-424.

⁹ Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 82-89.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, 3.

Although the typical view on Victorian sexuality is that of sexual oppression, Foucault further argues that the need to understand sexuality in the Victorian era contradicts this view. Even though the aim for the middle class was to constraint sexual desire, the many ways sexuality appeared in society made sexuality more indirect but still as important as earlier. One can identify a dual view of sexuality with the view of sexual repression for the “normal” couple and a fascination of the sexual “other”.¹¹ Foucault’s work has been greatly influential and Shannon Bell relies on his theory when analysing the prostitute throughout the ages. Bell explores how the meaning of the term prostitute has changed throughout time and that it varies on the dominant discourse. She analyses various texts in order to illustrate how the prostitute is represented in the different discourses. In the nineteenth century, the view of the prostitute was largely influenced by the dichotomy of identity based on sameness and otherness. This was evident throughout the whole society, and created a woman dichotomy where women were viewed as either moral or immoral, emphasising the Madonna and whore dichotomy.¹² Similar to Bell, Attwood also analyses a set of texts in the nineteenth century in order to explore how Victorians both challenged and upheld the dominant image of the prostitute, illustrating that the attitudes towards prostitutes were more complex than formerly believed.¹³

Paula Bartley elaborates on the Victorians’ efforts to end prostitution. She gives an extensive overview of the attempts at reforming prostitutes and the morality campaign that evolved into a suppressive purifying campaign at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Most of the writings on the repeal campaign have been on the progress of the repeal campaign, its actors, class and gender issues within the campaign and the differences between those who were in favour and those against the Acts. Within this field, Judith R. Walkowitz has been the greatest contributor. In *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, Walkowitz gives a thorough overview these issues in addition to an overview of prostitution in Victorian society and two case studies from cities subjected to the Acts.¹⁵

¹¹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 38-45..

¹² Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, 40.

¹³ Nina Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body: Rewriting Prostitution in Victorian Britain*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011.

¹⁴ Paula Bartley, *Prostitution. Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2000.

¹⁵ Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society. Women, Class and the State*. Cambridge, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

1.2 Sources and Method

In this thesis, I have combined the theories on prostitution with the repeal campaign in order to explore how the repeal campaign and their views combine and/or represent the larger view on prostitutes and prostitution. It further explores how the repeal campaign presented these attitudes to fit their overall arguments for repeal of the CD Acts. This thesis therefore contributes to the multidisciplinary approach of studying prostitution at the same time as it explores the attitudes of the Victorians.

The repeal campaign was largely influenced by the time they were living in and the discussion will therefore also include class and gender theory. My main interest is to use the women who were affected by the Acts and their trade as a starting point and from there look at the function of gender and class between these women and the repealers in a period with a strict class and gender hierarchy. When discussing the repeal campaign, I have therefore emphasized the role of the middle-class female repealers as represented through Josephine Butler and the Ladies National Association, and the working-class repealers. I have done this because I believe that these groups are the ones that express the clearest attitudes towards the women affected by the Acts, and they are also groups that are underrepresented in history. Furthermore, both middle-class women and working-class men fought to better their own rights at the same time as they fought for repeal, which influenced their views and arguments. I will therefore make the distinction between the repeal campaign, which refers to the overall campaign, and the Ladies National Association and working-class repealers.

From 1870 to 1886, the National Association published a circular called *The Shield: The Anti-Contagious Diseases Acts Association's Weekly Circular* that were to monitor closely the campaign for repeal and the working of the Acts. This newspaper followed parliamentary debates, the progress of the various bills that were sent to Parliament, the progress of the movement itself, together with stories and observations of the workings of the Acts in various parts of the country and the views of both repealers and those in favour of the acts. Although the circular was published from 1870 to 1886, I will mainly focus on the first years of the campaign. This is because most of the articles relevant for my thesis are found in these years and also because as the campaign progressed, *The Shield* also took on other issues, such as prostitution abroad and the progress of the Criminal Amendment Act, giving less room for articles on the CD Acts. *The Shield* gave room for a great variety of voices such as the Ladies National Association and the Working Men's National League, and attracted people of both genders and all classes to join the cause for repeal.

From 1870 to 1886, various petitions, memorials and other official documents were sent to Parliament in order to try and influence Parliament to vote for repeal of the CD Acts. These were mostly organised by associations such as the National Association, the Ladies National Association and the Northern Counties League. These documents state very clearly which arguments the different associations are promoting in order to achieve repeal. I have also included documents from the Working Men's League because this was the most influential representation of the working-class part of the campaign.

In 1871, Josephine Butler published an essay called *The Constitution Violated: an Essay*. It was especially directed towards working-class men and women of Great Britain whom she dedicated the essay to. The aim was to show how the CD Acts were unconstitutional and thus attract people to join the campaign for repeal. I have included this source because of the influence and important position Josephine Butler had in the campaign.

In addition to these sources on the repeal campaign, I will use Parliamentary papers such as The Contagious Diseases Acts and the Royal Commission's *Report of Royal Commission upon the Administration and Operation of the Contagious Diseases Acts* together with contemporary sources on prostitution such as Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and London Poor* and William Acton's *Prostitution, considered in its moral, social & sanitary aspects, in London and other large cities*.

This thesis uses a qualitative approach with a close reading of primary and secondary sources. I collected most of my primary sources in the Women's Archive located at The London School of Economics. The evidence for this thesis is bound to be fragmented, partial and ambiguous due to the lack of a complete overview of the theme. It is also fragmented in that some of the material from the campaign for repeal is lost and some of it was difficult to read because of age. Due to time issues at the Women's Archive, I tried to gather as much material as possible, prioritising the women affected by the Acts and the campaign's proposals to prevent prostitution because this is the main focus of my thesis.

My main source is the campaign's weekly circular *The Shield*, which gives an overview of the whole campaign. I divided the relevant articles into three categories: stories from the women affected by the Acts, the suggestions to end prostitution and otherwise interesting articles on prostitution. I decided to use the column "Intelligence from the Subjected Districts" and other cases that attracted publicity, because these articles include a large amount of narratives from and about the women subjected by the Acts. This gave me an overview of the attitudes the repeal campaign had towards women subjected to the Acts in addition to the relations between the repealers and the women affected by the Acts. I

compared these attitudes to the main arguments of the larger associations found in their official documents in order to show how the repeal campaign used their attitudes toward the women affected by the Acts to strengthen their main arguments. In chapter three, I used the proposals to end prostitution I found in *The Shield* and various official documents from the repeal campaign, and analysed them to illustrate how these were compatible with the attitudes and arguments found in chapter two. I further compared my findings with scholarly literature on Victorian society to show how the repeal campaign both contested and upheld the dominant view of their contemporary society.

2 The Repealers and those Affected by the Acts

This chapter explores the relations between the repealers and the women affected by the CD Acts. The first part will give a short introduction to which type of women were subjected to the CD Acts, while the second part will elaborate on how these women were identified in the repeal campaign. The third part will explore how these identifications reflect the repeal campaign's attitudes towards these women and how the representation of them are closely connected to the campaign's main arguments for repeal. This part will also explore how the repealers' attitudes towards these women are representative of the Victorian period and how the repealers presented particular images of the women affected by the Acts in order to attract people from different classes and genders to their cause.

2.1 Who Did the Contagious Diseases Acts Affect?

Even though the targets of the CD Acts were prostitutes, working-class women were also subjected to the Acts. From the wording in the CD Acts, it becomes clear that the targets of the Acts were prostitutes:

Where an Information on Oath is laid before a Justice by a Superintendent of Police, charging to the Effect that the Informant has good Cause to believe that a Woman therein named is a common Prostitute, and either is resident within the Limits of any Place to which this Act applies, or, being resident within Five Miles of those Limits, has, within Fourteen Days before the laying of the Information, been within those Limits for the Purpose of Prostitution, the Justice may, if he thinks fit, issue a Notice thereof addressed to such Woman, which Notice of the Superintendent of Police shall cause to be served on her.¹⁶

This paragraph clearly stated that the subjects of the Acts were what they called “common prostitutes”. However, working-class women were also detained and forced through the medical examination on suspicion of being prostitutes. This was largely due to the Acts' lack of definition of “common prostitute”. The repeal campaign heavily contested this lack of definition and argued that women would be subjected to, or exempted from, the Acts, according to the definition of those who enforced the Acts.¹⁷ The Royal Commission's Report, which examined the success of the workings of the Acts attempted to define

¹⁶ (An Act for the better Prevention of the Contagious Diseases Acts in certain Naval and Military Stations 1866, VR, 28, c. 35), 317.

¹⁷ Douglas Kingsford, “Proof of Being a Common Prostitute”, *Shield*, January 13, 1872, 789.

“common prostitute” based on the police’s definition: prostitutes were women who resided in brothels, engaged in solicitation in the streets, frequented places where prostitutes often resided, were informed on by soldiers and/or the admission of the woman herself.¹⁸ Attwood argues that this definition was problematic because prostitutes and working-class women often resided in the same areas, making it difficult to distinguish them from each other.¹⁹ Although the CD Acts’ targets were prostitutes, working-class women were also subjected to the Acts because these two groups often resided in the same are and because of the lack of definition of “common prostitute”, which resulted in that women were subjected to, and exempted from the Acts according to the definition of those who enforced the Acts.

The physical appearance of the working class was a contributing factor to why working-class women were subjected to the Acts. In Victorian society, social hierarchy was upheld through the middle-class Victorian’s theory on the “classical” and “grotesque” body. Their conviction was that people had different bodies depending on their social class and the “classical” body of the upper and middle class was in sharp contrast to the “grotesque” body of the working class. According to this theory, middle-class women were thought to be delicate and refined, while working-class women were often seen as robust and coarse.²⁰ The outer appearance of the working-class woman was therefore more similar to what was viewed as the typical prostitute than of the refined middle class. A similar explanation is the view of the role of the middle- and working-class female body. The middle-class female body belonged to the private sphere, while the working-class female body was seen as more open to public access because it often operated outside the home due to their need to work. Michie explores a theory of the street as a marketplace where women were up for sale when they left the home, leading both to sexual advances and harassment from men, but also state governed inspections of the female body such as the Contagious Diseases Acts.²¹ Working-class women were therefore subjected to the Acts because of their physical appearance and their operation in public places, which was in opposition to the dominant view of womanhood in the middle classes.

Even though all women could be detained, women from the working classes were largely, if not exclusively, the ones subjected to the Acts. Evidence for this can be found in Josephine Butler’s *Constitution Violated* where she argued that even though prostitutes could

¹⁸ Great Britain, *Report of Royal Commission upon the Administration and Operation of the Contagious Diseases Acts. Vol 1*. London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office. 1871, 6. 15.05.2018. <https://archive.org/details/b21365945>

¹⁹ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, 50-51.

²⁰ Michie, “Under Victorian Skins”, 408-410.

²¹ Michie, “Under Victorian Skins”, 410.

be found in all layers of society, upper class men “who kept prostitutes” had wealth and position, which enabled them to prevent their women from being subjected to this law. She further argued that this resulted in a misplacement of the law because working-class women who were not prostitutes were more often subjected to the Acts than middle- and upper class prostitutes, illustrating the failure of the Acts.²² This is closely linked to the physical appearances, where middle- and upper class prostitutes were more similar to the middle- and upper class “classical” body than that of the “grotesque” working class. Even though the targets of the CD Acts were prostitutes, some prostitutes avoided being subjected to these Acts because the men who kept them protected them and because their physical appearances were more similar to the middle and upper classes.

Similar to class, the lack of definition of a “common prostitute” and the myth of the prostitute were contributing factors to why working-class women were the ones subjected to the Acts. Because the Acts did not define a “common prostitute”, middle- and upper class prostitutes often escaped the law because they did not fit the police’s description of a prostitute, and often moved in the finer circles of society. The upper- and middle-class prostitute was also in sharp contrast to the myth of the prostitute in Victorian society. An example of this is Mayhew’s grim picture of the typical soldier’s woman: “There is not much to be said about soldiers’ women. They are simply low and cheap, often diseased and as a class do infinite harm to the health of the service.”²³ This description of the soldier’s prostitute illustrates the dominant view of the prostitute as a degrading creature belonging to the lower classes. Attwood argues that the typical view of the prostitute in Victorian Britain can be traced to a set of works published in the early 1840s. According to these works, the typical prostitute was a streetwalker, often drunk and diseased on her way to an early grave.²⁴ Because of her role as a streetwalker, these works created a myth of the prostitute as a working-class woman, influencing which type of woman would be subjected to the CD Acts. Despite that prostitutes were active in all layers of society, working-class women were the ones subjected to the CD Acts because of the lack of a definition of a “common prostitute” and the myth of the prostitute as a working-class woman.

²² Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler. *The Constitution Violated. An Essay*. Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1871, 39-40.

²³ Henry Mayhew and others, *The London Underworld in the Victorian Period. Authentic First-Person Accounts by Beggars, Thieves and Prostitutes*. New York: Dover Publications, 2005, 46.

²⁴ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, 5.

2.2 Identification of the Women Affected by the Acts

In *The Shield*, the repeal campaign presented stories from the women affected by the Acts where it is possible to identify women's status as prostitutes or working-class women. There are two ways of identifying these women's status: either through mentioning their profession or by a description of their attributes. References to prostitutes through their profession were usually done by the use of common prostitute or simply prostitute, while working-class women were often referred to as servants or shop girls. Mayhew argued that many prostitutes were also maids, servants etc.²⁵ However, the repeal campaign made the claim that these working-class women were not prostitutes by clearly distinguishing their profession from prostitution. Prostitutes were identified by their attributes with the use of descriptions such as, fallen woman, suffering woman, lowest class of woman, poor wretched creatures, unfortunate sisters, Queen's woman, poor victims, victims, unhappy woman, lost sheep, unfortunate woman, women of ill-fame, harlot etc. Working-class women on the other hand were described by a set of different attributes, such as respectable, decent and virtuous. In *The Shield*, one can identify two groups of women subjected to the Acts by the use of the various names for prostitutes and working-class women.

By leaving out the identification of women as either prostitutes or working class, the repeal campaign could gain more sympathy towards their cause. Although the women affected by the Acts were often described through their profession or attributes, there were instances where this was left out. These were cases where the woman was referred to as woman, poor girl or by the use of her name. Because the campaign emphasised the respectability and virtuous character of working-class women, one can assume that the unidentified women were prostitutes. Because of the dominant view of the prostitute as degrading and diseased, the repeal campaign excluded the identification of these women in order to draw sympathy to their cause. This was done by emphasising the unjustness of the system rather than identifying these women. An example of this is a series of court cases in Canterbury where it was described how five women refused to comply with the terms of the CD Acts and how they were trapped in an unjust and cruel system. These women were referred to either as women or by their name, not giving away whether or not they were prostitutes.²⁶ By leaving out the identification of these women and instead focusing on the cruel system of the CD Acts, the repeal campaign could gain more sympathy and attract

²⁵ Henry Mayhew and others, *The London Underworld in the Victorian Period*, 43.

²⁶ "Canterbury", *Shield*, May 5, 1870, 67.

people to their cause. By identifying and distinguishing between prostitutes and working-class women, the repeal campaign presented an image of these women that was closely connected to their arguments for repeal of the CD Acts.

2.3 The Repeal Campaign's Attitudes and Arguments

The different naming of the two groups was closely connected to the repeal campaign's main arguments for repeal, and their attitudes towards these women. By analysing the naming of the prostitutes in *The Shield*, one can identify two attitudes towards prostitutes among the repealers: the prostitute as arrogant and unredeemable and the prostitute as a victim. This is in accordance with Bell, who argues that two different images of the prostitute emerged in the Victorian era: the prostitute as a diseased and destroying force and the prostitute as destroyed and victimized.²⁷ Contrastively to prostitutes who were seen as both arrogant and victims, working-class women were exclusively seen as victims by the repeal campaign.

2.3.1 Prostitutes

By presenting prostitutes as arrogant, the repeal campaign strengthened their argument that the CD Acts legitimatised prostitution. The prostitute as arrogant can be seen in cases such as this: "Like that fallen woman in Cork, who rudely said to a servant-girl, as she pushed her off the pavement, 'Make way for the Queen's woman', one of them expressed herself similarly, but in language too vile to be put into print."²⁸ The repeal campaign's presentation of prostitutes as arrogant and as "Queen's women" can be explained through the campaign's argument that the Contagious Diseases Acts legitimated prostitution. By emphasising the prostitute's view of themselves as "Queen's women", the campaign underlined the prostitute's role as servants to the queen and equated prostitution with that of other trades. This is further illustrated by a letter to Members of Parliament from The Northern Counties' League: "The Acts confer a shameful advantage upon those women who are so given up to evil as to submit voluntarily to the degrading treatment enforced by them, which treatment ensures for them greater patronage, higher pay and a recognised social status."²⁹ This is in sharp contrast to the Royal Commission's report, which argued that the CD Acts prevented

²⁷ Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, 44-45.

²⁸ "Dartmouth", *Shield*, March 28, 1870, 25.

²⁹ Northern Counties' League. First Annual Report of the Northern Counties' League for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. Sheffield: D. T. Ingham, 1873. 3AMS/B/01/02, Box 036, The Women's Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom, 15-16.

prostitution by inducing fear of the Acts in girls that possibly would have ended up as prostitutes.³⁰ The repeal campaign contradicted the Royal Commission's conclusion when they argued that although the Acts and the medical examination brought shame and fear into these women, there had been no diminution in the number of prostitutes.³¹ They argued that instead of decreasing, prostitution was flourishing because of the medical security the Acts provided to prostitutes. This is illustrated in the Working Men's memorial to the premier, where they argued that instead of preventing prostitution, it encouraged it by enabling women to continue to engage in prostitution in a safer way.³² The increase in the prostitute's income and social status further strengthened the argument that prostitution was becoming a legitimate trade. The repeal campaign presented prostitutes as arrogant in order to illustrate their argument that the CD Acts legitimated prostitution.

The repeal campaign further argued that the CD Acts was a step towards legalising prostitution. The campaign argued that if the Acts continued to be implemented in society, the next step would be legalisation of prostitution, something they were strongly against.³³ This is illustrated in the role of the medical examination: "The piece of paper signed by the surgeon, which each woman receives on leaving the examination, is indeed a prize to a shameless woman."³⁴ Josephine Butler argued that this signed paper, which showed that the prostitute was free from disease worked as a licence, not different from the French licence where prostitution was regulated by the state. She further illustrated how both prostitutes and men recognised this paper as a licence: "Men constantly ask, 'Where is your licence paper? Let me see it.' Girls call it their licence or *pass*."³⁵ Within this view, the state regulated prostitution by providing prostitutes with a signed paper that worked as a licence. By illustrating how both men and prostitutes used the passing of the medical examination as a licence, the repeal campaign argued that the CD Acts was a step towards legalising prostitution.

The repeal campaign presented the prostitute as unredeemable to illustrate their arguments for repeal. Even though there are several opinions towards prostitutes in the repeal campaign, there was a general agreement that even though some prostitutes could be redeemed, others were beyond rescue. These women were often the prostitutes under the term harlot or Queen's women as mentioned earlier. This is illustrated in *The Shield*, where

³⁰ Great Britain, *Report of Royal Commission*, 12.

³¹ "The Debate and Division on the Army Estimates", *Shield*, August 19, 1871, 615.

³² "Edinburgh Working Men's Memorial to the Premier", *Shield*, June 1, 1872, 958.

³³ "The Truth Coming Out", *Shield*, July 18, 1870, 163.

³⁴ Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, "The Educative Processes of the Acts", *Shield*, May 2, 1870, 72.

³⁵ Butler, "The Educative Processes of the Acts", *Shield*, May 2, 1870, 72.

Josephine Butler used the word harlot to refer to those prostitutes that were seen as unredeemable: “The terrible increase of custom obtained by the regularly inspected and certified harlot is a matter about which it is not easy to cite one’s authority without shocking your readers.”³⁶ Attwood argues that the unredeemable prostitute was described as the old, depraved and hardened prostitute who had lost all sense of shame, which is in accordance with the view of the harlot presented by the repeal campaign.³⁷ Attwood further argues that the repeal campaign believed that the unredeemable prostitutes were those who reacted to the CD Acts as a validation of their trade.³⁸ This is consistent with the view the repeal campaign presented of the Queen’s woman. Walkowitz argues that female repealers tried to shape prostitutes into their own middle-class view of the ideal woman, but became indignant when met by the unrepentant that refused to be rescued.³⁹ The repealers therefore made a distinction between the redeemable and unredeemable prostitute, and presented the unredeemable prostitute in order to strengthen their arguments for repeal. By presenting prostitutes as harlots and Queen’s women, the repeal campaign strengthened their argument that the Contagious Diseases Acts legitimated prostitution.

By presenting the prostitute as a victim, the repeal campaign contested the dominant discourse of the prostitute found in Victorian society. Although the repeal campaign presented prostitutes as arrogant, the more recurrent view was that of the prostitute as a victim. An example of this is the case of Sarah Waters: “She is a young girl. She is pregnant. She has been examined thrice. The instrumental violation of her person has caused her on each occasion great pain and copious flooding.”⁴⁰ To further illustrate their role as victims, the word common prostitute was rarely used. Instead the repeal campaign frequently used the terms suffering woman, fallen woman, poor wretched creatures, etc. The identification of prostitutes as victims in the repeal campaign was in sharp contrast to William Acton’s descriptions of them as daughters of pleasure and the harlot’s progress.⁴¹ Acton’s report on prostitution can be viewed in light of Michel Foucault’s analysis of the medical history of sexuality where he argues that through medical research and writings, doctors such as Acton, established a discourse on sexuality that was presented as the truth.⁴² Acton’s report on

³⁶ Butler, “The Educative Processes of the Acts”, *Shield*, May 2, 1870, 71.

³⁷ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, 80.

³⁸ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, 49.

³⁹ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 7.

⁴⁰ “Canterbury”, *Shield*, May 2, 1870, 67.

⁴¹ William Acton, *Prostitution. Considered in Its Moral, Social, & Sanitary Aspects in London and Other Cities. With Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of Its Attendant Evils*. London: John Churchill, 1857.

15.05.2018. <https://archive.org/details/prostitutioncon00actogoo>

⁴² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 55-56.

prostitution therefore became a contributing factor to establish an image of the prostitute as the source of venereal diseases and the resulting myth of the prostitute as a diseased and degrading figure. The repeal campaign however contested this dominant view by embracing the image of the prostitute as a victim. There are however ambiguities in within these views. As mentioned earlier, the repeal campaign admitted that some prostitutes were beyond rescue and Acton also believed that some prostitutes could be redeemed.⁴³ It is also important to point out that there were differences in opinions within the repeal campaign.⁴⁴ The general tendencies however were the repeal campaign's view of the prostitute as a passive victim and Acton's image of the prostitute as an agent of the great social evil. The repeal campaign presented prostitutes as victims, something that went against the dominant discourse of the prostitute as an agent of the great social evil.

The view of the prostitute as a victim was closely connected to the repeal campaign's main arguments against the Acts. The repeal campaign strongly criticised that the Acts were subjected to only one sex, where most of the petitions from the larger associations include this argument. An example of this is "The Ladies' Appeal and Protest", published in *The Shield*, which stated that it was unjust to punish the sex who were victims of vice and letting the sex who was the main cause go free.⁴⁵ The Royal Commission questioned whether men should be subjected to the Acts in addition to women, but rejected this on the ground that no comparison should be made between prostitutes and the men who consorted with them. The report stated that for the prostitute, the sin of the sexual act was as a matter of gain, for men however, the same act was done by natural impulse.⁴⁶ This is representative of the general view on gender and prostitution in the 19th century as can be exemplified by Acton's report on prostitution. According to Acton, the spread of venereal diseases was largely due to the prostitute, because it was inevitably that she caught a disease during her career.⁴⁷ The customer was largely exempted from fault because male desire, even though it could be curbed, could not be completely repressed.⁴⁸ This is heavily contested by the repeal campaign as can be seen in an article called "The Ethics of the Contagious Diseases Acts": "It is an argument of the social guiltlessness of the man; it says in effect, society has no right to put any restraint upon him."⁴⁹ The Ladies National Association and Josephine Butler wanted to

⁴³ Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, 23.

⁴⁴ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 140.

⁴⁵ Ladies National Association, "The Ladies' Appeal and Protest", *Shield*, March 14, 1870, 9.

⁴⁶ Great Briatin, *Report of Royal Commission*, 17.

⁴⁷ Acton, William. *Prostitution*, 33.

⁴⁸ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 45.

⁴⁹ "The Ethics of the Contagious Diseases Acts", *Shield*, September 2, 1871, 636.

end this sexual double standard where sexual infidelity and promiscuity in men was seen as natural, whereas for women it was seen as unnatural. Instead of submitting to the existent image of the prostitute as the source of venereal disease, the Ladies National Association and Josephine Butler inverted it, creating an image of prostitutes as victims of male pollution rather than being the pollutants of men.⁵⁰ By presenting prostitutes as victims of male vice, the repeal campaign strengthened their argument that the CD Acts were unjust because they were only subjected to one sex.

The Ladies National Association fought against male vice and the sexual double standard by emphasising the unity of the female repealers and the women affected by the Acts. For the Ladies National Association, prostitution was preliminary a moral issue where the CD Acts legitimated male vice.⁵¹ The Ladies National Association strongly criticised both the Acts and the sexual double standard in addition to emphasising the similarities of women. The Ladies National Association often used the term of womanhood to create a bond between the female branch of the repeal campaign and the women affected by the Acts: "I entreat you, women of Oxford, to use that influence in the interest of purity and morality, and for the defence of outraged womanhood."⁵² By using the term womanhood, the repealers created a female bond between themselves and the women affected by the Acts, illustrating their unity in fighting against male vice. Caine argues that this is consistent with mid-Victorian feminism that embraced the gender differences and wanted to fight for rights based on their own qualities.⁵³ This is further reflected in the female repealers use of motherhood where the young age of the prostitute was emphasised in addition to the term "our girls".⁵⁴ This is representative of the view of the family among the middle class, where women were seen as the care providers and moral guardians of the family. At the same time as the female repealers called upon their right as moral guardians, they also criticised male authority. Walkowitz argues that by emphasising motherhood, the female branch of the campaign was at the same time challenging patriarchal authority over their "daughters".⁵⁵ This is in accordance with Attwood, who argues that the female repealers believed that it was maternalism that could save these unfortunate women and the respectable and pure middle-

⁵⁰ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight. Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 92.

⁵¹ Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, 75.

⁵² Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, "Letter to the Women of Oxford, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, March 14, 1874, 81.

⁵³ Caine, *English Feminism*, 89.

⁵⁴ "Public Lecture in London by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, May 11, 1872, 933.

⁵⁵ Judith R. Walkowitz, "The Politics of Prostitution." *Signs* 6, no. 1 (1980): 125. 15.05.2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173970>.

class women were therefore the right saviours of the unfortunate.⁵⁶ By emphasising womanhood and motherhood, the female repealers were both criticising male authority and vice at the same time as they were emphasising the unity of their own gender. In order to fight for repeal and contest the sexual double standard, the female repealers emphasised the unity between themselves and the woman affected by the Acts.

Even though the female repealers created a bond between themselves and the women affected by the Acts, the terminology used to describe the women affected by the Acts upheld a distance between the middle-class female repealers and the working-class targets of the Acts. The use of the terms “fallen sister”, “victims”, “unfortunate woman” etc. attracted people to the campaign’s cause for repeal, but it also upheld the social distance between women affected by the Acts and the repealers. Attwood argues that by using this kind of terminology, it upheld the view that prostitutes were outcasts of society and is in sharp contrast to the respectable middle-class female repealers.⁵⁷ Even though the Ladies National Association’s emphasis on womanhood, motherhood and family could evoke a feeling of unity among the repealers and the prostitute, the image was still largely hierarchal. The female repealers also attempted a more egalitarian approach in using the term sister and sisterhood: “to raising and reclaiming their unhappy sisters.”⁵⁸ However, as Attwood argues, there was still a hierarchical difference between them in terms of chastity and pureness. As victims of male pollution, prostitutes were in need of help in order to regain morality and respectability. The Ladies National Association and Josephine Butler therefore engaged in rescue work, which aimed to reform prostitutes and incorporate them back into society.⁵⁹ By emphasising these women’s need to be rescued and to become respectable, the female repealers upheld the view that prostitutes were deprived.⁶⁰ This illustrates that even though the repealers tried to contest the dominant view of the prostitute by presenting her as a victim, they were still influenced by their strict class society. This is also evident in how the middle-class repealers tried to shape their “unfortunate sisters” in their own middle-class view. Although the Ladies National Association attempted to create a unity between themselves and the prostitutes, their own class biases still upheld the sameness/otherness dichotomy creating a social distance between themselves and the women affected by the CD Acts.

⁵⁶ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, 87.

⁵⁷ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, 77

⁵⁸ A Member of The Ladies National Association, “The Reclaimability of Fallen Women”, *Shield*, April 18, 1870, 55.

⁵⁹ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, 85-88.

⁶⁰ Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, 63.

The repeal campaign presented the women affected by the Acts as victims in order to strengthen their argument that the implementation of the CD Acts was cruel to the women subjected to them. Most of the official documents from the various associations strongly opposed the treatment of these women. Examples of this are The Northern League's 7th report where they opposed "the violation of the rights possessed by every woman over her own person"⁶¹ and the Ladies' appeal and protest where they protested against the Acts in that they are "cruel to the woman affected by them."⁶² Although this argument also applied to working-class women, the stories that illustrated the cruelty of the Acts found in *The Shield* were often stories of prostitutes. This was done to strengthen the repeal campaign's image of prostitutes as victims. Various letters sent to *The Shield* from observers of the working of the Acts illustrate how the Acts were cruel to the women affected by them. This illustration was done in two ways, firstly by emphasising these women's fear of the Acts: "I have seen some of these poor souls run, and fall down in the street from mere fright and horror, and the police call a cab and lift them into it."⁶³ Secondly, by illustrating how degrading and brutal these examinations were: "Some of them wept bitterly at the memory of the pain endured, weeks before the birth of their child, from the instrumental violation."⁶⁴ The repeal campaign argued that the CD Acts were cruel to women by presenting prostitutes as victims of a cruel and ruthless system.

The repeal campaign strengthened the image of prostitutes as victims by describing the sexual exploitation these women experienced by the men enforcing the Acts. Closely connected to the argument that the CD Acts were cruel to the women affected by them, was the argument that men enforcing the Acts were misusing their power. Josephine Butler strongly criticised these men for creating a network that engaged in surveillance, degradation and oppression of women. Butler further criticised the sexual investment some of these men had in the fact that they could switch roles – client one day and magistrate the next.⁶⁵ This is also reflected in a letter Butler sent to *The Shield* where she illustrated the double role of the men enforcing the Acts: "It did hard ma'am, that the magistrate on the bench, who gave me the casting of the vote for my imprisonment, was one who had, a few days before, given me

⁶¹ Northern Counties' League, Report of the Northern Counties' League for the Abolishing State Regulation of Vice, and for Promoting Social Purity and the Rescue of the Fallen. Sheffield: D. T. Ingham, 1881.

3AMS/B/01/02, Box 036, The Women's Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom, 7.

⁶² Ladies National Association, "The Ladies' Appeal and Protest", *Shield*, March 14, 1870, 9.

⁶³ "Plymouth", *Shield*, April 4, 1870, 35.

⁶⁴ "Chatham", *Shield*, May 23, 1870, 91.

⁶⁵ Caine, *English Feminism*, 109.

several shillings to go with him for immoral purpose.”⁶⁶ This case illustrates how the repeal campaign presented the men enforcing the Acts as sexual exploiters in addition to highlighting the powerlessness women affected by the Acts experienced when encountering these men. The repeal campaign strengthened the prostitute’s role as a victim by illustrating how the men enforcing the Acts sexually exploited these women.

The repeal campaign presented the police and the courts as cruel and corrupted in order to illustrate how the women affected by the Acts were victims of men misusing their power. The repeal campaign strongly criticised the deceiving of women into signing a voluntary submission. According to the Contagious Diseases Act, any woman could voluntarily sign a voluntary submission, which meant that she had to attend periodical medical examinations up to one year.⁶⁷ The many court cases in *The Shield* illustrate how the repeal campaign claimed that the police deceived women to signing the voluntarily submission without realising what they had signed. An example of this is the case of Mary Nicholls where the superintendent presented a signed version of a voluntarily submission document and claimed that he read the document to her, whereas her answer was: “No, you did not. You never read it to me. I did not know the meaning of it. I am no scholar, and why did you not read it to me?”⁶⁸ Cases such as this were presented in *The Shield* to emphasise how women who could not read and write were tricked into signing and further trapped into an unjust system. Once signed, one had to attend. It is also described how these women were further deceived in that they were not told that their cases could go for open court. The repealers argued that the accused woman was better equipped to get justice when reporters and the public attended the courts, than in a closed court, only relying on herself for defence.⁶⁹ Butler strongly criticised the Acts because it gave men additional power and new authority to humiliate and degrade women. With the implementation of the CD Acts, men in power had complete control over the fate of these women, which that gave them opportunity to misuse their powers whenever they wanted to. By portraying women affected by the Acts as victims, the repeal campaign strengthened their arguments that the Acts were cruel to these women and that the men enforcing the Acts were misusing their power.

The repeal campaign presented the women affected by the CD Acts as victims, which was in agreement with their argument that the Acts made prostitutes. This argument can be

⁶⁶ Butler, “The Educative Processes of the Acts”, *The Shield*, May 2, 1870, 72.

⁶⁷ An Act for the better Prevention of the Contagious Diseases Acts in certain Naval ports and Military Stations 1866, VR, 28, c. 35), 318.

⁶⁸ “Imprisonment of two women”, *Shield*, April 4, 1870, 35.

⁶⁹ “Closed Courts and Sharp Practice”, *Shield*, May 3, 1873, 137.

found in the National Association's manifesto from 1883 where they protested against "the making of prostitutes through law."⁷⁰ This is further elaborated in Josephine Butler's *A Constitution Violated* where she argued that through the registration of working-class women as "public women", the CD Acts deprived them of their honour and this led to their ruin.⁷¹ This was done by the voluntary submission arrangement, which the repeal campaign strongly criticised because it enrolled all women into the category of common prostitutes. Description of cases where women were subjected to the Acts with the result of them taking up a dissolute life further strengthened this argument. This was the case with Catherine Pickles, a girl of 16 who was a virgin before being subjected to the Acts: "After I was examined, I was so ashamed and hurt that I thought I might as well go altogether, and I went on the town. I swear this – and this alone – was the cause of my becoming a prostitute."⁷² Attwood argues that one of the arguments of the repealers and especially the Ladies National Association was that the Acts made prostitutes by removing the shame of being a prostitute or that it enrolled women into a life of prostitution through the registration of prostitutes.⁷³ By presenting women as victims of a system that enrolled them as prostitutes, the repeal campaign argued that the CD Acts made prostitutes.

Similar to the argument that the CD Acts made prostitutes, the repeal campaign also argued that the CD Acts upheld prostitution in that it became impossible to leave the trade. This is illustrated in stories from prostitutes in *The Shield*:

She stated that she was desirous of abandoning her present vicious course of life, and wished to go home and live with her parents, but had been prevented doing so, because she believed that she would still have to go to the hospital for examination, and serve out the time of her submission paper.⁷⁴

This example illustrates how the CD Acts prevented those who wanted to escape this trade from being redeemed and respectable. This is consistent with the National Association's main arguments against the Acts: "The attempt to officially register or recognize the status of certain women as prostitutes; which necessarily tends to render permanent that status, and thus to devote those women to a life of prostitution."⁷⁵ According to Walkowitz, the repealers argued that through the registration process of the CD Acts, prostitution became

⁷⁰ National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. "Manifesto Adopted by the Committee for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts", 1883. 3NAR, Box FL074-FL075, The Women's Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom.

⁷¹ Butler, *The Constitution Violated*, 30.

⁷² "Prostitute-Making by Act of Parliament – A Shocking Case", *Shield*, August 15, 1870, 197.

⁷³ Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, 81.

⁷⁴ "Five Women Summoned for Repenting of the Voluntary Submission", *Shield*, August 15, 1870, 196.

⁷⁵ Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. "To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled" petition 1882. 3AMS/B/01/01, Box 036, The Women's Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom.

professionalised. Before the Acts, women chose to be prostitutes for a period of time before leaving the profession, but with the CD Acts the prostitute became a more public figure and it therefore became more difficult for them to get out of the prostitution trade and to gain respectable employment.⁷⁶ This illustrates the campaign's argument that the CD Acts upheld the prostitution through condemning women to a life of vice. The repeal campaign heavily contested the CD Acts, both because they made prostitutes and because they prevented prostitutes from leaving prostitution.

By presenting stories from the women affected by the Acts in the voices of middle-class repealers, the repeal campaign could manipulate the image of the women subjected to the Acts to fit their own views and arguments. The cases in *The Shield* are predominately presented through the eyes of the middle class. This is done either through the descriptions of the prostitutes and their situations or by the middle classes' arguments and discussions. According to Caine's analysis, Butler and her fellow repealers in the National Ladies Association deliberately avoided direct representation of the women who were affected by the Acts. She further argues that prostitutes in particular were spoken for rather than being invited to speak.⁷⁷ There is of course a practical explanation to this in that many of the women affected by the Acts could not read and write. There are however other reasons for representing these women from the voices of the middle class. One explanation is that the repeal campaign could manipulate the image of the women affected by the Acts to fit their arguments for repeal and their images of the prostitute. As already mentioned, *The Shield* presented two attitudes towards prostitutes, the arrogant unredeemable prostitute and the poor victim, which both strengthened their main arguments for repeal. Even though both attitudes were represented, the one that predominates was the one of the poor victim. By using middle-class voices the middle-class repealers could present prostitutes as poor victims of male vice who wanted to redeem themselves, an image that would likely attract more people to their cause.

The repeal campaign presented contributions from the prostitutes differently, emphasising their arguments for repeal. There are examples where women affected by the Acts were represented in their own voice. Although there are various examples of this kind, I have chosen to present two petitions from prostitutes, alongside with references to a third, to illustrate the voices of the prostitutes. 116 "unfortunate women" in Southampton signed a petition against the CD Acts due to the treatment these women experienced when subjected

⁷⁶ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 210.

⁷⁷ Caine, *English Feminism*, 111.

to the Acts.⁷⁸ The other two petitions were in favour of the CD Acts. The Colchester petition signed by 48 prostitutes was presented in *The Shield*, together with references to the Windsor petition signed by 30 prostitutes.⁷⁹ To attract sympathy to their cause, the repeal campaign presented the three petitions differently regarding the naming of the prostitute. In the petitions in favour of the Acts, the women were named as prostitutes, whereas in the petition against the Acts the women were named as unfortunate women. According to Nina Atwood, the word prostitute was a loaded term, a medical, social and sexual identity.⁸⁰ By using the term prostitute, it called upon the myth of the prostitute as a diseased and degrading creature and an agent of the great social evil. The repeal campaign used the terminology unfortunate women and the loaded term prostitute to distinguish between those prostitutes against and those in favour of the Acts. The use of this terminology could attract more sympathy towards the prostitutes against the Acts, which was in accordance with their own view that the Acts should be repealed.

Some prostitutes were in favour of the CD Acts because it provided them with better conditions. With the opposition mounting against these Acts and the repealers pointing to the Acts' unjustness, brutality and immorality, it might seem surprising that some of the prostitutes themselves were in favour of the Acts. The petition from the prostitutes in Colchester stated that they were for the Acts because they were grateful for the medical attention; they did not feel that the Acts had affected their liberty and that the repeal would be of great calamity to them and the country as a whole.⁸¹ Catherine Lee similarly argues that the Acts often gave prostitutes better conditions than they previously experienced, such as free medical treatment, better earnings when they were free of disease and it relieved prostitutes of the categorisation of belonging to the criminal classes because it was thought that the Acts legitimised prostitution.⁸² This suggests that although the repeal campaign argued against the Acts, some women subjected to the Acts were in favour of them.

The repeal campaign discredited the prostitutes that were in favour of the Acts by using their overall arguments for repeal. The comments on the petitions from prostitutes firstly question the authenticity of the prostitutes' petitions because of the power the

⁷⁸ "Southampton", *Shield*, May 20, 1871, 501.

⁷⁹ "The Petition from Prostitutes", *Shield*, April 27, 1872, 916. "Petitions from Prostitutes", *Shield*, July 6, 1872, 999-1000.

⁸⁰ Atwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, 48.

⁸¹ "The Petition from Prostitutes", *Shield*, April 27, 1872, 916.

⁸² Catherine Lee, *Policing Prostitution, 1856-1886: Deviance, Surveillance and Morality*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.

magistrate, police and doctors had over these women.⁸³ When the instigator of one of the petitions argued that the signing of the submission document was voluntarily, the repealers answered with illustrating how these women, or “members of an ignorant, police-hunted, and down-trodden class”,⁸⁴ had no other choice than to obey the police or magistrate under the threat of penalties. By commenting on the power the men in power had over these women, the repeal campaign strengthened their image of these women as victims of an unjust system.⁸⁵ Secondly, the writers of *The Shield* further used the example of the voluntarily submission to illustrate how these women would sign anything out of fear.⁸⁶ Emphasising these women’s fear underlined the repeal campaign’s argument that the Acts were cruel to the women affected by them.⁸⁷ Thirdly, in comments linked to the petition from Colchester, the writers of *The Shield* argued that presenting a petition from prostitutes legitimated prostitution: “they now petition Parliament, not in the character of citizens, but *in their capacity of prostitutes*.”⁸⁸ They argued that through these Acts, prostitution was raised to a recognised trade and a respectable calling. These arguments supported the repeal campaign’s overall argument that the CD Acts were immoral because they legitimated prostitution. Instead of agreeing with the prostitutes affected by the Acts, the repeal campaign discredited the voices of the prostitutes in favour of the Acts by using their arguments for repeal.

2.3.2 Working-Class Women

The repeal campaign presented working-class women as innocent victims and excluded prostitutes when needed in order to gain sympathy and attract people to their cause for repeal. Many of the arguments made by the repeal campaign in order to achieve repeal also applied to prostitutes. However, the repeal campaign emphasised the innocence of working-class women and excluded mentioning prostitutes in order to strengthen their arguments. Many of the arguments made in this section will therefore also apply to prostitutes. This is in agreement with Attwood’s analysis of Butler’s work, where she argues that Butler and her fellow repealers included and excluded prostitutes according to their message.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the emphasis on working-class women as respectable and virtuous further explains the need to present women affected by the Acts as fitting to the middle-class view of womanhood. The

⁸³ “Petitions from Prostitutes”, *Shield*, July 6, 1872, 999-1000.

⁸⁴ “Petitions from Prostitutes”, *Shield*, July 20, 1872, 1012.

⁸⁵ Ladies National Association, “The Ladies’ Appeal and Protest”, *Shield*, March 14, 1870, 9.

⁸⁶ “Petitions from Prostitutes”, *Shield*, July 6, 1872, 1000.

⁸⁷ Ladies National Association, “The Ladies’ Appeal and Protest”, *Shield*, March 14, 1870, 9.

⁸⁸ “Petition from Prostitutes in Favour of the Contagious Diseases Acts”, *Shield*, April 13, 1872, 899.

⁸⁹ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, 97.

middle-class repealers presented working-class women as fitting to their view of the ideal woman and excluded prostitutes in order to attract people to their cause.

By presenting working-class women as innocent victims, the repeal campaign strengthened their argument that the CD Acts were unjust because women were left defenceless to male abuse. The innocence of these women is illustrated in a case from *The Shield*, where the circular present a woman as a virtuous young woman who was forced through the medical examination. A doctor named Dr. Rule, however, alludes that she was a notorious prostitute, which was well known by her parents. The debate further continued with a letter from her father, where he attested to her proper character and proved Dr. Rule wrong by contesting his evidences of her being a prostitute.⁹⁰ This case illustrates how the repeal campaign presented working-class women as innocent victims of an unjust system. It further illustrates how the repeal campaign discredited those who were in favour of the Acts by showing how the men responsible of enforcing the Acts were misusing their power and how respectable women were victims of their abuse. The repeal campaign portrayed these women as innocent victims of male vice and the abuse of those enforcing the Acts in order to illustrate the unjustness of the Acts.

The repeal campaign presented working-class woman as innocent victims of the CD Acts, which strengthened their argument that the law failed to protect these women. The detaining of women who were not prostitutes was strongly opposed by the repeal campaign, as can be seen in The Ladies' Appeal and Protest: "Because so far as women are concerned they remove every guarantee of personal security which the law has established and held sacred, and put their reputation, their freedom, and their persons absolutely in the power of the police."⁹¹ Women were entitled to protection by law and the campaign therefore attacked the lack of it. In order to strengthen their argument that the Acts did not protect women, the campaign presented working-class women as victims of the CD Acts. An example of this is the case of Mrs. Percy, a professional singer and actress who drowned herself because of the harassment of the Police. Although the police regarded her as a "common prostitute", the repeal campaign held that there was no evidence of her error or her unchastity.⁹² This case known as "The Suicide at Aldershot" caused considerable agitation and it is covered in three

⁹⁰ "Veracity of the Spies", *Shield*, June 13, 1870, 125.

⁹¹ Ladies National Association, "The Ladies' Appeal and Protest", *The Shield*, March 14, 1870, 9.

⁹² "Hunted to Death. The Suicide at Aldershot", *Shield*, April 1, 187, 97.

editions of *The Shield*.⁹³ This case illustrated how the guardians of the law, the police, harassed innocent women instead of protecting them of injustices. This strengthened the repeal campaign's argument that the CD Acts removed the legal security of the women affected by the Acts. Through presenting working-class women as victims of an unjust law, the repeal campaign made the argument that the Acts resulted in a lack of protection by law for the women affected by the Acts.

This is further connected to the repeal campaign's argument that the CD Acts were unconstitutional because they stripped the women affected by the Acts of their legal rights. The Acts' unconstitutional nature is described in length in Josephine Butler's *A Constitution Violated* where she argued that these Acts were unconstitutional because they deprived women affected by the Acts of their liberty. An example of this is the compulsory medical examination in which women were subjected to fortnightly examination up to one year. Butler argued that this was unconstitutional because the woman was judged without trial and was deprived of her honour and her liberty.⁹⁴ This illustrates that women, although not committed a crime, were deprived of their liberty by being tied to the compulsory attendance of the medical examination. Furthermore, the Acts were also a threat to all women. At the same time as middle-class women advocated repeal of the CD Acts, they also fought for better political rights. The CD Acts limited the few legal rights women had and it therefore became important to repeal the Acts in order to preserve legal rights for women. The repeal campaign argued that the CD Acts were unconstitutional because they stripped women of their basic legal rights.

By presenting married women as victims of the CD Acts, the repeal campaign objected to the Acts' intrusion of the private sphere. In *The Shield*, there are several cases where married women were harassed by the police or taken into examination: "Had my friend's wife been with her brother, or any relative with military air, the man in blue would have jumped to a conclusion, and taken prompt action."⁹⁵ The detaining of married women went against the sameness/otherness dichotomy of Victorian society. Bell argues that one of the dichotomies within the category of woman was the wife/prostitute dichotomy, meaning that if you were a wife, you were not a prostitute.⁹⁶ By arresting married women, the Acts therefore upset the dominant dichotomy and penetrated the private sphere of respectable

⁹³ "The Widow and the Fatherless Participate in the Benefits of the Acts", *Shield*, March 22, 1875, 91-92.

"Hunted to Death. The Suicide at Aldershot", *Shield*, April 1, 1875, 97-98. "The Suicide at Aldershot", *Shield*, April 17, 109-112.

⁹⁴ Butler, *The Constitution Violated*, 26-28.

⁹⁵ A working man, "Annoyance to Married Persons", *Shield*, April 11, 1870, 44.

⁹⁶ Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, 40.

couples. Through presenting married women subjected to the Acts, the repeal campaign could therefore attract popular support by emphasising that the CD Acts went against the dominant dichotomy of the Victorian period and interfered on the private sphere.

The repeal campaign presented working-class women as victims in order to attract the working classes to their cause. Walkowitz argues that the portrait of the working-class woman wrongly accused was especially aimed to gain support among working-class men and women.⁹⁷ In order to create a mass movement it was important to attract people from all social layers, and the middle-class repealers therefore tried to inspire and aid the working classes in their campaign effort. An example of this is The Working Men's National League that was sponsored by the Ladies National Association and the Friends' Association.⁹⁸ The case most illustrative of the middle-class repealers' attempt to rally working-class women and men to their cause is the repeal campaign's lobbying around the Colchester election in 1870. The repeal campaign lobbied against the election of Henry Stokes, a politician who believed that prostitution was a necessity and advocated an extension of the CD Acts. Pamphlets addressed to both working-class men and women written by Josephine Butler and the Liberal candidate Baxter Langley tried to prevent the election of Henry Stokes by discrediting him and showing how his suggestions of extending the Acts would be further harmful to working-class women.⁹⁹ In order to create a mass movement, the repeal campaign attempted to attract the working classes to their cause for repeal through lobbying and presenting women as victims of cruel politicians.

The repeal campaign attracted working-class men to their cause by calling upon them to protect their wives and daughters. This is exemplified in a letter from Peter Alfred Taylor, the M.P for Leicester, who argued that the question of the CD Acts were largely a working man's question because it was predominately their daughters, wives and sisters that were victims of the legislation.¹⁰⁰ The repeal campaign's effort to attract working men to their cause by presenting their women as victims could be said to be successful when analysing the male working classes' arguments. In the article "Protest of the Working Classes of the United Kingdom Against the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1866 and 1869" political and trade leaders for the working classes presented their arguments against the Acts. Many of these arguments

⁹⁷ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 109.

⁹⁸ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 94.

⁹⁹ J. Baxter Langley. To the Electors of the Borough of Colchester. London: T. Pewtress & Co, 1870. 3AMS/B/01/01, Box 036, The Women's Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom. Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler. To the Working Men and Women of Colchester. 1870. 3AMS/B/01/01, Box 036, The Women's Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Alfred Taylor, "Good News for Working Men", *Shield*, June 29, 1872, 987.

were similar to those of the larger associations, but some of them were clearly directed towards protecting their women against the Acts. The article criticised that any woman could be taken in for medical examination only relying on herself to prove her innocence and that the accusation led to loss of character, livelihood and personal liberty. Similarly, they underlined the danger for women of their social standing in that these women dreaded false accusation and did not have the means to defend themselves.¹⁰¹ These arguments were in accordance with the repeal campaign's attempt to attract working-class men to protect their wives and daughter. The male working-class repealers embraced the role as guardians of their wives and daughters and argued for repeal on the basis of protecting their women.

By presenting married working-class women as victims, the repeal campaign advocated that the CD Acts were a threat to the legal security of men. Michie quotes Sir William Blackstone when she argues that Blackstone's notion of "marriage makes one flesh" was still persistent in the Victorian era.¹⁰² In Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Law of England*, he argued that by marriage, the husband and wife became one person in the eyes of the law. That person became that of the husband, while the wife was the subject of coverture during her marriage, in other words that her legal existence was suspended or incorporated into the husband's.¹⁰³ If one takes Blackstone's commentaries as being dominant in the nineteenth century, the implementation of the Acts to married women could also be seen as a threat to the legal security of working-class men in particular. Similar to middle-class women, working-class men were fighting for better political rights during the Victorian period, and these men therefore contested the CD Acts because it threatened their political rights. According to Sussman, workers defined themselves as different from their masters and this class-consciousness led to a political culture in opposition to those with economical power.¹⁰⁴ Their engagement in the repeal campaign can therefore be seen as a way of contesting those in power. They did this by inverting the threat against them and used the campaign for repeal as an arena to increase their political influence. An example of this is a meeting of agricultural labourers that was reported by the editors of *The Shield*: "The very moment that they (the labourers) should make their voices heard throughout the length and breadth of the rural district by rising and condemning the Acts, he believed there would be

¹⁰¹ Members of the Working Classes of the United Kingdom, "Protest of the Working Classes of the United Kingdom Against the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1866 and 1869, *Shield*, March 23, 1872, 879.

¹⁰² Michie, "Under Victorian Skins", 420.

¹⁰³ Blackstone, William. *Commentaries on the Laws of England. Volume 1*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765.

¹⁰⁴ Sussman, "Industrial", 247.

sufficient influence to move upon the minds of the legislators of this country.”¹⁰⁵ This statement illustrates how working-class men used the campaign to influence politics instead of submit to the threat of the Acts. The repeal campaign presented married working-class women as victims in order to illustrate how the CD Acts threatened the legal security of men. Instead of submitting to the threat of the Acts, working-class men used the campaign to influence politics.

By presenting working-class women as victims of the CD Acts, the repeal campaign prevented working-class women to join their cause. The Ladies National Association tried to attract working-class women to rally to their cause through meetings and pamphlets, but this effort failed in that the female working-class movement never became a mass movement. This is evident when analysing *The Shield* where the voices of working-class male repealers were recurrent, while working-class female repealers had very little representation in the circular. An explanation of the low numbers of working-class women in the campaign was the middle-class repealers’ presentation of working-class women as victims. By emphasising their role as victims, the repealers frightened working-class women by showing how easily they could be subjected to the Acts. Similarly, Walkowitz argues that one of the probable explanations for the scepticism of working-class women to join the campaign was their self-preservation in that any association with prostitutes could attract suspicion and place them on the registration list.¹⁰⁶ By illustrating how easily these women could be detained, the repeal campaign further strengthened this self-preservation, which in turn prevented them from join the repeal campaign. By presenting working-class women as victims of the CD Acts, the repeal campaign contributed to the fear of the Acts, preventing working-class women to join their cause.

Although the repeal campaign attempted to attract working-class women to their cause, the low numbers of working-class women in the repeal campaign illustrates the gender and class issues in the Victorian period. Efforts to rally working-class women to their cause can be seen in Josephine Butler’s pamphlet where she addressed working-class women to work against Sir Henry Stokes in the Colchester Election, “Are you prepared”, she asked, “to stand quietly by, and see the man who has expressed these horrible opinions returned to Parliament as the representative of your husbands and brothers?”¹⁰⁷ This pamphlet at the same time illustrates working-class women’s lack of direct political influence. The pamphlet

¹⁰⁵ ”The Agricultural Labourers and the Contagious Diseases Acts”, *Shield*, June 8, 1875, 187.

¹⁰⁶ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 209.

¹⁰⁷ Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, *To the Women of Colchester*. Colchester: Bagon, 1870. 3AMS/B/01/01, Box 036, The Women’s Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom.

encouraged these women to work their influence upon their husbands and brothers without being able to represent themselves. Contrastively to the working-class women, many working-class men were allowed to vote, and they were already politically organized.¹⁰⁸ Even though middle-class women could not vote, they were more equipped for political struggle than their working-class sisters. Walkowitz argues that the leaders of the Ladies National Association enjoyed financial security, a respectable position and political consciousness and experience through the political agitation of the 1830s and 1840s.¹⁰⁹ Middle-class women, here represented by the leaders of the Ladies National Association, were therefore more experienced and prepared for political struggle than working-class women. Even though the CD Acts were a threat for working-class women, they did not rally to the repeal cause because of their lack of direct political influence and experience, which illustrates Victorian society's strict gender and social hierarchy.

The repeal campaign presented working-class women as fitting to their own view of womanhood, which prevented working-class women to join their campaign. Butler tried to attract working-class women to the repeal cause on the basis of their role as women, "I entreat you, women of Oxford," she wrote, "to use that influence in the interest of purity and morality, and for the defence of outraged womanhood."¹¹⁰ This reflects the middle-class view on womanhood where Butler was calling for working-class women to join their cause by emphasising women's role as the moral and pure guardians of the family and society. This is in agreement with Francis Michael Thompson who argues that the middle classes attempted to socially control the working classes through imposing their notion of what was suitable.¹¹¹ Even though the female repealers emphasised gender unity through their role as moral guardians, this was at the same time one of the reasons why the repeal campaign did not attract working-class women to their cause. Walkowitz refers to Dorothy Thompson when she argues that the dominant middle-class view of family and separate spheres also contributed to the failure of rallying working-class women into a mass movement. Before the 1840s, women were employed outside the home and therefore participated in political activities. After the 1840s however, the working classes adopted the separate spheres ideology of the middle classes resulting in working-class women largely staying at the private

¹⁰⁸ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 145.

¹⁰⁹ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 118-120.

¹¹⁰ Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, "Letter to the Women of Oxford, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, March 14, 1874, 81.

¹¹¹ Francis Michael Longstreth Thompson. "Social Control in Victorian Britain." *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 34, 2 (1981): 189-208. doi:10.2307/2595241, 190-191.

home.¹¹² The privatisation of working-class women therefore prevented them from entering the public sphere and joining the repeal cause. Although the repeal campaign attempted to attract working-class women by calling upon the middle-class view of womanhood, working-class women hesitated to join their cause because they had adopted the middle-class ideology of separate spheres.

Even though working-class women did not gather into a mass movement, there were working-class female repealers who fought against the injustices made towards them by the implementation of the CD Acts. In *The Shield*, there are several examples of working-class women engaging in the cause for repeal. In a Memorial from Working Women to Mr. Gladstone, they opposed the Acts and emphasised their class belonging: “Your Memorialists are working women, and as such can speak of the indignation of the class they represent.”¹¹³ This is further strengthened in a letter from a working woman who encouraged women to join one of the several associations that were available for working-class women: “I am anxious to urge upon your women readers the importance of helping forward every attempt at self-help on the part of working women.”¹¹⁴ This quote illustrates how some working-class women identified themselves as members of a distinct group, distinguishing themselves from both middle-class women and working-class men. By emphasising their class belonging and urging other working-class women to join them, these working-class women attempted to fight for their own rights by arguing for repeal. Although the working-class women did not gather into a mass movement, there were working-class female repealers that attempted to attract other working-class women to fight for repeal and the desired result of ending the injustices made towards them.

With the influence of middle-class repealers, the women affected by the Acts resisted the CD Acts by denying signing the voluntary submission and attending the medical examination. Some of the repealers were occupied with spreading information and encouraging women affected by the Acts to use the few rights they had to protest against the Acts. This effort can be exemplified by the work of Daniel Cooper, Secretary to the London Rescue Society and Eliza Mary King, a New Zealand feminist, who were both prosecuted for the information work they did.¹¹⁵ These findings are also consistent with Walkowitz’s

¹¹² Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 145.

¹¹³ Liverpool Women’s Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, “Memorial from Working Women to Mr. Gladstone, *Shield*, April 20, 1872, 907-908.

¹¹⁴ “Shall Women Work, Starve, or Do Worse?”, *Shield*, September 8, 1877, 239.

¹¹⁵ “Prosecution of the Opponents of the Acts by the Admiralty – Protracted Proceedings – Mrs. King and Mr. Cooper Fined by the Magistrates – Notice of Appeal – Great Excitement in Court”, *Shield*, August 8, 1870, 187-189.

analysis where she argues that repealers and especially feminist leaders sought out hospitals, low streets and workhouses in order to encourage subjected women to fight a battle against the men who enforced the Acts, in addition to offering legal advice and defence.¹¹⁶ The many court cases found in *The Shield*, where women refused to attend the medical examination and complying to the voluntary submission further illustrates the repealers' success in encouraging women affected by the Acts to resist the working of the Acts. This is illustrated in *The Shield* where the editors report a case where a young woman denied to comply with the CD Acts and would therefore be sent to prison: "The defendant had every opportunity offered of complying with the Act, and there would be a commitment to prison for fourteen days."¹¹⁷ This is in accordance with Walkowitz's analysis, where she argues that the closest thing the women affected by the Acts came to a political protest were the court cases.¹¹⁸ This indicates that even though the women affected by the Acts were not involved in the official repeal campaign, they still fought against the CD Acts by denying to be subjected to them. Encouraged by the middle-class repealers, working-class women and prostitutes resisted against the Acts through refusing to submit to them.

Although the repeal campaign wanted to attract working-class men and women to their cause, they simultaneously wanted to create an all-class campaign, meaning that they also needed to attract support from their own class. Due to the strict class hierarchy in Victorian society, it was therefore important for the middle-class repealers to present the working classes as a positive contribution to their campaign. This was done through the presentation of working-class women as respectable, decent and virtuous. Working-class men were also presented in a positive way in *The Shield*. This can be seen by the repealers' descriptions of working-class men at a conference of the Agricultural Labourers: "those, hard-working, homely, but extremely intelligent men."¹¹⁹ Josephine Butler expressed similar views, noting that, "Sentiments of justice and of compassion still live and burn strongly in the breasts of working-class men, as I know by experience."¹²⁰ By creating a positive image of working-class men and women, the overall campaign could gather a wide support for their cause for repeal.

¹¹⁶ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 138.

¹¹⁷ "Another Unhappy Recusant Sent to Prison", *Shield*, June 20, 1870, 131.

¹¹⁸ Judith R. Walkowitz, & Daniel J. Walkowitz. "'We Are Not Beasts of the Field': Prostitution and the Poor in Plymouth and Southampton under the Contagious Diseases Acts." *Feminist Studies* 1, no. 3/4 (1973): 89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1566481>.

¹¹⁹ "The Agricultural Labourers and the Contagious Diseases Acts", *Shield*, June 8, 1875, 187.

¹²⁰ Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, "Slander Refuted", *Shield*, May 25, 1872, 948.

Similarly, the repeal campaign frequently used middle-class voices that were believed to be more legitimate than working-class voices in order to attract their own class to their cause. An example of this is how the circular questions the value of a petition from prostitutes. Under the title “Which Shall Prevail? Petitions from Prostitutes, or from The Church of Christ?”, the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland argued that their petition against the Acts weighed heavier than the petition from the prostitutes due to their role as religious leaders popularly elected by the masses.¹²¹ This is in agreement with the view of middle-class voices as more legitimate than the voices from the women affected by the Acts. This is further illustrated in Bartley’s research, where she argues that young working-class women were not reliable witnesses to their own past, but instead needed a reliable voice or verification to speak for them.¹²² An example of this is a letter forwarded by a Sunday-school teacher from a “respectable servant in Canterbury”: “I am afraid to go out in the evening now”. “They are actually taking up respectable people, and if they do not go, they have to be thrust into prison.”¹²³ By mentioning that she is a “respectable servant”, the article distinguished her from being a prostitute and she fitted into the dominant middle-class view of women as respectable and pious. Furthermore, a Sunday-school teacher presented the letter, verifying the servant’s story and adding a religious weight at the same time. This illustrates how the repeal campaign used the middle-class virtue of respectability in addition to religion in order to legitimate the women affected by the Acts’ stories. The repeal campaign emphasised respectability and presented stories from the women affected by the Acts through the voices of the middle classes in order to attract the middle and upper classes to their cause.

The repeal campaign illustrated their attitudes towards the women affected by the CD Acts by presenting prostitutes as arrogant and as victims in addition to the presentation of working-class women as victims. These presentations were in agreement with their arguments for repeal and aimed at attracting people from all classes and sexes to join their cause for repeal. Even though there were different views towards prostitutes within the repeal campaign, the repealers predominantly agreed that prostitution was the great social evil and that society would prosper if prostitution ended. The repeal campaign therefore also proposed several measures in order to end this great social evil.

¹²¹ “Which Shall Prevail? Petitions from Prostitutes, or from the Church of Christ?”, *Shield*, June 15, 1872, 971-972.

¹²² Bartley, *Prostitution*, 37.

¹²³ “Canterbury”, *Shield*, March 28, 1870, 25.

3 The Remedy for the Great Social Evil

In addition to fighting for repeal of the CD Acts, the repeal campaign also waged a war against prostitution. The editors of *The Shield* stated that their goal was to achieve repeal of the Acts and that it was not their duty to substitute the Acts with anything, “We do not ask the surgeon who has removed a cancer, to provide a substitute for the evil.”¹²⁴ Even though the repeal of the Acts was their primary goal, it is possible to identify several proposals to prevent prostitution within the campaign. These proposals are further connected to the campaign’s attitudes towards prostitutes and their arguments for repeal.

Although there are many proposals of this kind, I have collected the ones that are most recurrent in *The Shield* and therefore most representative of the overall campaign. The repeal campaign directed their proposals towards both the supply and the demand of prostitutes. The first three proposals are largely directed towards prostitutes in an effort to get them to give up their profession or to prevent women entering the trade, while the last one is predominately directed towards men in an attempt to stop them from buying prostitutes. The repeal campaign’s proposals are compatible with Bartley’s analysis of the history of how the Victorians tried to deal with prostitution. Bartley argues that Victorian first attempted to reform prostitutes, and then supplemented reform work with an attempt to prevent women becoming prostitutes. When these measures did not suffice, Victorians moved on to a campaign to purify the nation and end prostitution.¹²⁵

3.1 Rescue of the Fallen

The repeal campaign advocated rescue of prostitutes in order to diminish the number of prostitutes and to prevent prostitution. Bartley argues that the Victorians generally believed that if there were no prostitutes, prostitution would be eliminated.¹²⁶ They therefore believed that one way to diminish the number of prostitutes was by rescuing and reforming them. This is closely connected with the image the repeal campaign presented of the prostitute as the redeemable victim. The importance of rescuing prostitutes can be seen in The Northern Counties’ League’s Constitution from 1877, where they state that one of their objects should

¹²⁴ “No Substitute for a Wrong”, *Shield*, October 5, 1872, 1099.

¹²⁵ Bartley, *Prostitution*, 14-15.

¹²⁶ Bartley, *Prostitution*, 25.

be “To Promote the Rescue of the Fallen.”¹²⁷ This is further strengthened by the positive and numerous mentions of the Rescue Societies and their work: “We have received and read with much interest the 55 annual report of the Bristol Female Refuge Society, a society which is evidently not only doing a good work, but doing it successfully and well.”¹²⁸ These quotes illustrate the repeal campaign’s view of the importance of rescue work in order to diminish the number of prostitutes. Because the repeal campaign’s goal was the repeal of the CD Acts, the campaign contested the claim put forward by those in favour of the CD Acts that the Acts reformed prostitutes. The repeal campaign advocated rescue of the fallen, but discredit those who argued that the CD Acts did the same. This can be seen in the Rescue Society’s Report where they contested the numbers put forward by those who advocated the Acts. According to the Rescue Society, those in favour of the Acts put forward false statistics when they claimed that 90% of the prostitutes had been reclaimed and that prostitution had diminished.¹²⁹ This illustrates that although the repeal campaign advocated rescue of the fallen, they discredited similar advocacy by those in favour of the CD Acts, because it went against their cause for repeal. The repeal campaign advocated rescue of the fallen, but discredited the claim that the CD Acts reformed prostitutes because it went against their cause for repeal of the Acts.

The rescue of prostitutes reflected the two attitudes towards prostitutes in the repeal campaign. In order to rescue prostitutes, various institutions were established where it was thought that prostitutes could be rehabilitated and made respectable.¹³⁰ The success of the rehabilitation is depicted in *The Shield* with stories from women who are redeemed: “We have been amongst that unhappy number, but thank God, kind friends have lent us a helping hand in the time of need.”¹³¹ This account was sent from girls at a Home in Dover to Josephine Butler where they elaborated on how they were redeemed through the belief in God and with the help from the people at the home. However, there were selection procedures in most of these institutions and prostitutes were divided between those worth saving and those not. The prostitutes were categorised by age, health, class and sincerity.¹³² The selection procedures and the division between those redeemable and not illustrate the

¹²⁷ Northern Counties’ League. Fourth Annual Report of the Northern Counties’ League for the Abolishing State Regulation of Vice, and for Promoting Social Purity and the Rescue of the Fallen. Sheffield: Leader and sons, 1877. 3AMS/B/01/02, Box 036, The Women’s Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom, 2.

¹²⁸ “The Bristol Female Refuge Society”, *Shield*, April 22, 1871, 465.

¹²⁹ Rescue Society, “The Greatest Hypocrisy of the Day”, *Shield*, December 13, 1873, 405.

¹³⁰ Bartley, *Prostitution*, 25.

¹³¹ “Dover”, *Shield*, April 18, 1870, 51.

¹³² Bartley, *Prostitution*, 36.

repeal campaign's attitudes towards prostitutes as victims and as unredeemable. This can be seen in an account from the Rescue Society:

The Society had received, through private agency, from that town, a considerable number of fallen women, but the reiterated complaints of its matrons of as to the moral insensibility and greater depravity of these women, led the Society of late to consent to receive only younger girls, and those more recently subjected.¹³³

This reflects the campaign's attitudes towards prostitutes where they presented the young newly fallen as victims, while the hardened harlot as unredeemable. This illustrates Walkowitz's point that women in rescue homes were often young because it was believed that the young "newly fallen" prostitute was more responsive to reform.¹³⁴ By dividing prostitutes between those worth saving and those not worthy of rescue, the selection procedures reflected the view of the prostitute as victim and as unredeemable that can be found in the repeal campaign.

By emphasising the importance of rescuing prostitutes, the repeal campaign went against the dominant view of the prostitute as unredeemable. The prostitute as redeemable was in sharp contrast to the forensic psychiatrist Charles Mercier's view on prostitutes, where he identified all prostitutes as "moral imbeciles". As he saw it, all women risked becoming moral imbeciles because all women could potentially lose their modesty, meaning that they never could regain it.¹³⁵ The repeal campaign however contested this dominant discourse in presenting the prostitute as redeemable. This is in accordance with Bell who argues that Josephine Butler believed that by rescue and reclamation, the prostitute could be restored to her pre-fallen state of morality and purity.¹³⁶ This was contrary to the beliefs of Mercier and other scientists who believed that prostitutes could not be redeemed. In order to prevent prostitution, the repeal campaign advocated rescue of the fallen, something that went against the dominant view of the prostitute as unredeemable.

Middle-class female repealers both contested and upheld the passive nature of women found in Victorian society. Bland argues that Victorians believed that men had the will power to restrain their sexual desire, while women on the other hand had the quality of modesty, an unconscious power that insured women of their purity.¹³⁷ These different qualities emphasize the male as active and the female as passive.¹³⁸ The middle-class female repealers both contested and upheld these gender roles as active and passive through the rescue of

¹³³ "The Greatest Hypocrisy of the Day", *Shield*, January 10, 1874, 13.

¹³⁴ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 18.

¹³⁵ Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast. Feminism, Sex and Morality*. London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001, 58.

¹³⁶ Bell, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, 62.

¹³⁷ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, 57.

¹³⁸ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, 63.

prostitutes. Walkowitz argues that the rescue of prostitutes was partly done in order to pursue their own political goals in embracing and continuing the moral mission that was laid upon their gender.¹³⁹ These women created a place for themselves in public life by upholding the gender roles found in the Victorian era, which at the same time contested men's authority. This went against the dominant view of the Victorian era where it was believed that the qualities of women needed to be protected by shielding them from the public life.¹⁴⁰ As such the female repealers contested their role as a passive gender in entering the public sphere and challenging men's authority. At the same time they embraced their modest quality, a quality founded on their role as the passive gender. Furthermore, they upheld passivity for their unfortunate sisters. By presenting prostitutes as victims, they simultaneously underlined their role as passive, failing to contest the gender roles in Victorian society. Middle-class repealers both contested and upheld their passive nature by engaging in the repeal campaign and upheld the passive nature of prostitutes by presenting them as victims.

Although the repeal campaign contested the dominant view of prostitutes as unredeemable, the rescue of prostitutes still reflected the strict class hierarchy of the nineteenth century. Bartley argues that even though there were differences among the reform institutions, there were similarities in that it was mostly middle-class moral "superiors" who saved working-class women.¹⁴¹ This can be seen in Josephine Butler and the Ladies National Association's view where it was seen as a duty by the middle classes to rescue those less fortunate than themselves.¹⁴² Butler and a few others had been active in rescue work before the Acts, but with implementation of the Acts and the repeal campaign's work, many women joined this rescue work.¹⁴³ The middle-class woman's role as a superior saviour illustrates how the repealers upheld a strict social hierarchy. Closely connected to this is how a number of the reform institutions were divided by social rank, eliminating contact between middle-class and working-class women."¹⁴⁴ The division between the two classes therefore contributed to upholding a strict class hierarchy where the amalgamation of social classes was discouraged. The class hierarchy was also upheld through the belief that prostitutes needed to be shaped into the view of the middle-class woman as a guardian of maternity and

¹³⁹ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 131.

¹⁴⁰ Adams, James Eli. "Victorian Sexualities". In *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture*, edited by Herbert F. Tucker, 125-138. Blackwell Publishing, 1999, 129.

¹⁴¹ Bartley, *Prostitution*, 25.

¹⁴² Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, 85.

¹⁴³ "Aim at the Highest", *Shield*, May 3, 1879, 65.

¹⁴⁴ Bartley, *Prostitution*, 37.

domesticity.¹⁴⁵ This reveals a lack of understanding of the prostitutes' conditions in addition to an unwillingness to disturb the social hierarchy. The repeal campaign contested the view of prostitutes by presenting them as victims worthy of rescue, but failed to contest the class hierarchy of Victorian society.

3.2 Voluntary Hospitals

The repeal campaign advocated voluntary hospitals as a positive option of curing and reforming prostitutes, which would diminish the number of prostitutes and contribute to the end of prostitution. Closely related to the rescue of prostitutes and the image of the prostitute as a victim are the voluntary hospitals that the repeal campaign viewed as the better option than the lock hospitals connected to the Contagious Diseases Acts. In Victorian society, two institutions were in charge of curing venereal diseases: voluntary hospitals and workhouse infirmaries. Voluntary hospitals were further subdivided into general hospitals where some beds were reserved for patients with venereal diseases and lock hospitals where all patients had venereal diseases.¹⁴⁶ In order to make a distinction between the two, I will use the term voluntary hospital for the venereal beds in the general hospitals and the term lock hospital for the hospitals connected with the CD Acts. The Contagious of Diseases Act of 1866 did not mention the term lock hospital, but rather referred to them as Certified Hospitals. According to the Acts, The Admiralty or the Secretary State for War could requisition buildings and hospitals and transform them into certified hospitals, explaining why some lock hospitals became closely connected to the Contagious Diseases Acts.¹⁴⁷ The repeal campaign used the term lock hospital instead of certified hospital and I have therefore chosen to use the same terminology to refer to the lock hospitals connected with the CD Acts.

The repeal campaign deliberately used the terminology voluntary hospital and lock hospital in order to illustrate their attitudes towards the two. The use of the term lock hospitals was used when describing the degrading conditions in the lock hospitals connected to the CD Acts. The term voluntary hospital on the other hand was used to describe those institutions that cured and reformed prostitutes. The difference in terminology was probably done deliberately by the repeal campaign in order to illustrate their positive attitudes towards the voluntarily hospitals and their contrastively negative attitudes toward the lock hospitals.

¹⁴⁵ Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, 86.

¹⁴⁶ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 57.

¹⁴⁷ An Act for the better Prevention of the Contagious Diseases Acts in certain Naval and Military Stations 1866, VR, 28, c. 35), 316.

According to Acton, the term “lock hospital” came from the Southwark lock hospital, a hospital founded on the grounds of a previously house of lepers where the patients were kept in restraints.¹⁴⁸ The term lock hospitals therefore gave clear associations to compulsion and someone being locked up. This was further strengthened in the liberal politician William Fowler’s use of the term “hospital prisons”, underlining their compulsory part.¹⁴⁹ The terminology voluntary hospital however gives entirely different associations that are connected to free will. The compulsory part of the lock hospital was closely connected the repeal campaign’s main arguments in that the CD Acts was unconstitutional because they stripped Englishwomen of their basic legal rights, as mentioned in chapter two. Since prostitution was not illegal, the repeal campaign criticised that women were committed to the “hospital prison” without committing any crime. By distinguishing between the terms lock hospital and voluntary hospital, the repeal campaign illustrated their attitude towards the two and underlined the lock hospital’s function as a way of stripping women of their liberty and free will.

By illustrating the reformatory aspect of the voluntary hospitals at the expense of the lock hospitals, the repeal campaign strengthened their argument that voluntary hospitals were the better option to reform prostitutes. Closely connected to the terminology of the two hospitals is the descriptions of the voluntarily hospitals and the lock hospitals. Although both hospitals aimed to cure venereal diseases, the repeal campaign distinguished the two in terms of conditions for the prostitutes. This is illustrated in two articles found in *The Shield*. In the article “Charity at other expenses” written by Eliza Mary King, it is described how the diseased girls are forced to work. She also gave account of how a girl named Sarah Black, caught a cold and inflammation due to the treatment at the hospital: “I was a strong healthy woman before I went into the Royal Albert Hospital.”¹⁵⁰ King further illustrated how this girl was sent away from the hospital when she was too weak to work, emphasising the hospital’s cruel treatment of these girls.¹⁵¹ This account is in sharp contrast to the article “Appeal. From the honourable lady superintendent of the old park female voluntary lock hospital”. In this article, the lady superintendent described how most of the women admitted were cured and that many of them were restored to a respectable life, “No doubt some of them have relapsed into their former habits,” she wrote, “yet many of whom we had lost sight, and had feared the worst, have recently visited us or written to us as happy, respectable, wives, or as being still

¹⁴⁸ Acton, *Prostitution*, 134.

¹⁴⁹ “The Debate and Division on the Army Estimates”, *Shield*, August 19, 1871, 615.

¹⁵⁰ Eliza Mary King, “Charity at other People’s Expences”, *Shield*, September 17, 1870, 221.

¹⁵¹ King, “Charity at other People’s Expenses”, *Shield*, September 17, 1870, 221.

in good situations.”¹⁵² By emphasising the voluntary hospital’s success both in curing venereal diseases and reforming prostitutes, it was possible to gain more goodwill towards these hospitals. The repeal campaign presented voluntary hospitals and lock hospitals differently in order to advocate their attitude of the voluntary hospitals as the better option.

Although both the lock hospitals and the voluntary hospitals aimed at curing venereal diseases and reform prostitutes, the repeal campaign overlooked and discredited the reforming effort of the lock hospitals. Walkowitz argues that lock hospitals were founded on the same grounds as voluntary hospitals with the same financial structure and the same social functions, such as education and discipline in addition to medical treatment.¹⁵³ There was also a reformatory aspect of the CD Acts where it was stated that the Certified hospital should engage in moral and religious instruction of the women detained under the Act.¹⁵⁴ The reform effort of the lock hospitals was however overlooked or discredited by the repeal campaign where the campaign focused on the hospitals’ degrading conditions for the women forced to reside in them. In several articles it was shown how prostitutes rioted and revolted because of the conditions in the lock hospitals and the better treatment these women got in prison: “The victims of Lock Hospitals continue, by ‘breaking windows’ and ‘riotous conduct’ to escape from the tyranny of the Hospital, to the milder rule of the Prison.”¹⁵⁵ Due to the clientele in these lock hospitals, a clientele largely based on prostitutes, the lock hospital emphasised the moral reformation of these sinners. The lock hospitals therefore subjected their patients to a strict religious regime and coercive discipline.¹⁵⁶ This could explain why these hospitals were viewed as degrading with horrible conditions. This did not go unnoticed by the repealers and they used these conditions extensively to strengthen their argument that the lock hospitals did not contribute to the reform of prostitutes. Even though lock hospitals had the same functions as the voluntary hospitals, the repeal campaign discredited the reform effect of the lock hospitals by portraying prostitutes as victims of the degrading conditions of these hospitals.

By contesting the reform effect of the lock hospitals, the repeal campaign strengthened their argument that the CD Acts upheld prostitution and created prostitutes. The campaign argued that the lock hospitals upheld prostitution because these hospitals were not known for their reformatory success. This is evident in William Fowler’s argument that the

¹⁵² Catherine T Duck, “Appeal. From the honourable lady superintendent of the old park female voluntary lock hospital”, *Shield*, April 1, 1875, 104.

¹⁵³ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 59-60.

¹⁵⁴ An Act for the better Prevention of the Contagious Diseases Acts in certain Naval and Military Stations 1866, VR, 28, c. 35), 316.

¹⁵⁵ “The ‘Lancet on the Moral Effects of the Acts at Devonport”, *Shield*, January 1, 1875, 1.

¹⁵⁶ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 18.

lock hospitals did not redeem prostitutes, because the prostitutes knew that they were not taken there to be reclaimed, but only to become free of disease.¹⁵⁷ The repeal campaign therefore argued that instead of reforming prostitutes, the lock hospitals contributed to an increase in prostitution by giving medical security to prostitutes. The repeal campaign further argued that the lock hospitals contributed to the making of prostitutes. This is seen in an article in *The Shield* where it is argued that through registration, medical examination and sending these women to the “prostitute hospital” as it was called, they were made into prostitutes. Due to the connection between the lock hospitals and the CD Acts, most of the women in these hospitals were prostitutes. The editors of *The Shield* argued that by sending infected women who were not prostitutes to these hospitals, it was the same as making them into prostitutes: “Indeed, this wicked law is a law of ‘compulsory prostitution.’”¹⁵⁸ The repeal campaign discredited the reform effort of the lock hospitals and instead argued that the lock hospitals contributed to prostitution by upholding the medical security of prostitutes and creating prostitutes. Both the rescue of the fallen and the voluntary hospitals were viewed as part of the cure of prostitution, but most repealers agreed that as much as one should attempt to help those already lost in vice, prevention was a better option in order to end prostitution. This could be achieved by social reform.

3.3 Social Reform

By presenting the prostitute as a victim of poverty, the repeal campaign argued that prostitution could be prevented by social reform. The repeal campaign recognised social inequality as one of the reasons for prostitution, which can be seen in an extract from Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, as quoted in *The Shield*: “What is this history of Fantine? It is Society buying a slave. From whom? From misery, from hunger, from cold, from loneliness, abandonment, from privation. Melancholy barter – a soul for a bit of bread. Misery makes the offer, Society accepts.”¹⁵⁹ This presentation of the prostitute is closely linked to the repeal campaign’s image of the prostitute as a victim. This is further strengthened by stories about working-class women who had no other choice than to enter the trade of prostitution. An example of this is a widow residing in one of the military stations who had to enter prostitution in order to support herself and her two children.¹⁶⁰ This case illustrates how

¹⁵⁷ “The Debate and Division on the Army Estimates”, *Shield*, August 19, 1871, 615.

¹⁵⁸ “Southampton”, *Shield*, June 20, 1870, 131.

¹⁵⁹ “Thoughts of Great Men”, *Shield*, October 19, 1878, 201.

¹⁶⁰ “Deptford”, *Shield*, July 11, 1870, 155.

women were victims of social inequality and strengthens the repeal campaign's argument that poverty created prostitutes. By presenting the prostitute as victims of social inequality, the repeal campaign advocated prevention of prostitution by social reform.

The repeal campaign argued that by reducing the high unemployment of women, prostitution would diminish. Repealers argued that part of the reason for prostitution came from the difficulty of finding work for women. An example of this is a case from Cork, where a young girl, sick and destitute, could not get a job and therefore sold everything she had in order to survive. When all her belongings were gone, she had only two choices; become a prostitute or drown herself, of which she chose the former.¹⁶¹ This is in accordance with Butler's analysis of which alternatives a woman had if she could not get honest work: starvation, the workhouse or prostitution, all of which is a bad replacement for honest work.¹⁶² The Cork woman's case and similar cases were used to illustrate the conditions of working-class women and to advocate better work opportunities for women. The repeal campaign's argument for work reform can be exemplified with the arguments of Isabella Tod, a suffragist and women's rights campaigner. She argued that "an enormous amount of sin and crime is caused simply by the difficulty of finding remunerative work for women in all classes of society."¹⁶³ She further attacked the government's attempts to limit women's role in public work. This is further strengthened with the article's concluding remarks where she argued that their fight was against prostitution and all legislative efforts to try and restrict women's honest labour was bound to result in an increase in prostitution.¹⁶⁴ Improving work opportunities was viewed as a preventive effort, in that the increase of honest work would prevent women entering the trade.¹⁶⁵ By increasing work opportunities for women, the repeal campaign argued that prostitution would diminish.

The repeal campaign reflected the reform efforts of the nineteenth century by advocating for better wages for women, which would lead to an end of prostitution. In addition to improving work opportunities for women, Butler attacked the poor payment women received from their work. She wrote, "while women, ever since the beginning of civilisation, have been sharing the hardest, and doing the most unwholesome work, they have also been the *worst paid* workers in the world."¹⁶⁶ According to Walkowitz's research of the

¹⁶¹ "How Prostitutes are Made", *Shield*, August 30, 1873, 280.

¹⁶² "Extracts from Mrs. Butler's address Delivered at the Late Meeting of the Vigilante Association for the Defence of Personal Rights", *Shield*, November, 1874, 222.

¹⁶³ "Women's Work. – Is 'Agitation' Womanly or Unwomanly?", *Shield*, March 7, 1874, 75.

¹⁶⁴ "Women's Work. – Is 'Agitation' Womanly or Unwomanly?", *Shield*, March 7, 1874, 75.

¹⁶⁵ "The Causes of Prostitution. How to Remove Them", *Shield*, June 10, 1876, 196-197.

¹⁶⁶ "Public Lecture In London, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, May 11, 1872, 933.

workings of the CD Acts in Plymouth and Southampton, prostitutes could earn a weekly wage in a day, while the respectable working women had to work up to 14 hours a day for a week to earn the same amount.¹⁶⁷ Raising wages for respectable work was therefore important in order to prevent prostitution. This effort of improving women's work conditions can be viewed as typical of the reform initiatives in the Victorian period. Protests in the 19th century led to a set of reforms, improving both the rights of the working classes and women.¹⁶⁸ In this way, the middle-class campaign for repeal of the CD Acts can be seen as a contribution to the fight for reform and social change that was evident in the nineteenth century. This is in agreement with Walkowitz's work where she argues that middle-class repeal leaders belonged to the same group that advocated and supported other reform groups.¹⁶⁹ The repealers therefore used the repeal campaign as an argument to fight for social reforms in Victorian society. The repeal campaign advocated an improvement in income for working-class women in order to prevent women going into prostitution, something that reflected the reform efforts in the nineteenth century.

In addition to improving work conditions of women, the repealers believed that educating working-class women would diminish prostitution. An example of this can be found in an article called "Some Social Lessons from the Contagious Diseases Acts" where it is argued that better industrial training was needed for girls in order to master some household skill.¹⁷⁰ This is reflective of the reform work in the Victorian period, where local authorities, private organizations and education authorities organised classes in domestic education from the 1880s.¹⁷¹ Josephine Butler viewed this as a preventive effort as well as a reformative effort: "The *real work* of reclamation, the educating of the mind, the industrial training of the hands, the long and patient discipline, &c, which are the only sure foundation of a real and satisfactory restoration to purity and useful service in the world."¹⁷² These quotes illustrate how the repeal campaign promoted education for women in order to fulfil their moral duty as women and at the same time as they needed to learn an industrial trade in order to contribute to society. Bartley similarly argues that some female reformers believed that the main reason for prostitution was the inequality between girls and boys. Women were

¹⁶⁷ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 195.

¹⁶⁸ Hughes, Linda K. "1870". In *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture*, edited by Herbert F. Tucker, 35-50. Blackwell Publishing, 1999, 35-40.

¹⁶⁹ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 99.

¹⁷⁰ L.F.M. "Some Social Lessons from the Contagious Diseases Acts", *Shield*, June 3, 1871, 513.

¹⁷¹ Joanna Bourke. "Housewifery in Working-Class England 1860-1914." *Past & Present*, 143 (1994): 167-97. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651165>, 183.

¹⁷² Josephine Elizabeth Grey Butler, "The 'Reclaiming and Elevating Influences of the Acts'", *Shield*, May 9, 1870, 79-80.

dependent on men, but with financial independence that could be gained through better education and work opportunities, they believed that the number of prostitutes would diminish.¹⁷³ With better education, work opportunities opened up for them and they did not need to enter the trade of prostitution. The repeal campaign advocated social reform through the education of women in order to prevent prostitution.

The repeal campaign argued that the working classes needed to be educated in the mastery of their spare time in order to diminish prostitution. Closely connected to the improvement of education for women is the campaign's argument that the working classes needed to be educated in how to spend their leisure time. In the article "Prevention Better than Cure", Mr. Fuller argued that the reason for prostitution, together with drunkenness and pauperism was the unhealthy leisure time of the working classes: "It is not during their working hours, but during their vacant hour, that injury to soul and body is inflicted."¹⁷⁴ He further argued that this was not entirely the fault of working classes, but the higher classes had failed to teach their mastery of their spare time: "The higher classes have risen, and have not cared properly for the poor, who want pure and proper relaxation, and do not know where to find it."¹⁷⁵ In other words, the middle and upper classes needed to teach the working classes their way of life in order to prevent temptation and prostitution. This is in accordance with Thompson's analysis where he argues that the middle-class Victorians viewed the leisure activities of the working classes as unhealthy and would ultimately lead to harm to the individual and the family. They therefore sought to educate the lower classes in healthy and rational recreations, such as public parks, libraries, reading rooms, working men's club and organized games.¹⁷⁶ Healthy and rational leisure activities among the working classes would prevent working-class women to go into prostitution and working-class men to engage in prostitution. By educating and improving the conditions of the working classes, it was believed that prostitution would end because they had learned to use their spare time in a more productive way.

Although female repealers argued for better work conditions in order to prevent prostitution, their arguments reflected the strict class hierarchy of Victorian society. Caine argues that for Butler and many other mid-Victorian feminists, the prostitute symbolized women's oppression through the lack of education and employment possibilities, completely

¹⁷³ Bartley, *Prostitution*, 8.

¹⁷⁴ "Prevention Better than Cure", *Shield*, April 22, 1871, 469.

¹⁷⁵ "Prevention Better than Cure", *Shield*, April 22, 1871, 469.

¹⁷⁶ Thompson, "Social Control in Victorian Britain", 200.

depended on male sexual desire to survive.¹⁷⁷ She further argues that the female repealers did not understand how the class structure functioned and blinded by their own privileged position contributed to the oppression of working-class women.¹⁷⁸ They advocated measures they wanted for themselves, without realising that working-class women were in a different situation and therefore in need of other measures. An example of this is how middle-class female repealers advocated better work opportunities for working-class women, overlooking that this would double working-class women's workload. If working-class women were employed outside the home, they had to do the work at their workplace in addition to their domestic work at home. Bourke argues that this was one of the reasons for why working-class women preferred being housewives instead of being employed.¹⁷⁹ Middle-class women on the other hand were exempted from this due to their privileged situation. Furthermore, a condition for middle-class women to engage in public work was their dependency on working-class servants. The middle-class female repealers therefore overlooked the social hierarchy in attempting to improve working-class women's work opportunities. Even though middle-class repealers advocated for better work conditions, their view did not contest class structure in Victorian society.

The view of educating the working classes was largely based on a view of middle-class superiority. Similar to improving work conditions for working-class women, the educational effort was also shaped within middle-class views. This can be seen in Mr. Fuller's proposal of educating the working classes to use their leisure in a more rational way. This view is largely based on middle-class superiority where it was believed that it was the upper and middle classes who should lead the way. It is further based on the dominant view of the prostitute as a working-class woman, overlooking both the heterogeneity of prostitutes and male buyers. According to Thompson, middle-class reformers attempted to impose social control of the masses by educating them in the virtues of the middle classes. Reformers believed that educating the ignorant and the unruly and imposing their own views would create a better society.¹⁸⁰ The repeal campaign's effort to educate the working classes was therefore based on their belief of middle-class superiority. The repeal campaign believed that prostitution would end because the working classes would adopt their superior values if they were educated.

¹⁷⁷ Caine, *English Feminism*, 109.

¹⁷⁸ Caine, *English Feminism*, 90.

¹⁷⁹ Bourke, "Housewifery in Working-Class England", 173.

¹⁸⁰ Thompson, "Social Control in Victorian Britain", 193.

The repeal campaign's argument for social reform in order to prevent prostitution both contested and upheld the separate spheres ideology dominant in Victorian society. Attwood argues that Butler saw women's mission as an argument for greater political influence, better education and working opportunities.¹⁸¹ Because the female repealers wanted these things for themselves, it is not surprising that they also advocated them for working-class women. By advocating better work opportunities and wages together with industrial training, the repealers contested the separate spheres ideology by advocating the public role of women in employment. At the same time, the repealers upheld the separate spheres ideology by advocating that women deserved better rights due to their role as moral superiors, an idea founded on the separate spheres ideology. In order to prevent prostitution, the repeal campaign argued for social reform, something that both contested and upheld the dominant ideology of separate spheres. Although social reform could prevent prostitution and better the conditions of the women affected by the Acts, the repeal campaign argued that it would not be enough. One had to attack the underlying cause of prostitution, meaning the immorality in Victorian society.

3.4 Improve Morality

In order to end prostitution, the repeal campaign argued that a higher morality was needed in society. As much as the repealers encouraged the reforming of prostitutes and social reform, it was generally agreed that in order to prevent prostitution, a purification of the nation was needed. This can be illustrated in the words of Josephine Butler: "The saving of the victims, is, after all, not a thorough reform, in the largest view of this sorrowful question, put a mere patching of the social sore; it cannot be called a real remedy at all."¹⁸² This is supported in Bartley's analysis where she argues that by the 1880s, it was clear that the reformative efforts were not enough to prevent prostitution and that the solution was to purify the nation and heighten morality.¹⁸³ The argument that the nation needed to be purified can be seen in the constitution of the Northern Counties' League, where they stated that their organisation was working to overthrow the unequal standard of morality and instead establishing a public opinion that condemns unchastity of both sexes.¹⁸⁴ The rescue work, the voluntary hospitals

¹⁸¹ Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, 73.

¹⁸² "Aim at the Highest", *Shield*, May 3, 1879, 66.

¹⁸³ Bartley, *Prostitution*, 156.

¹⁸⁴ Fourth Annual Report of the Northern Counties' League for the Abolishing State Regulation of Vice, and for Promoting Social Purity and the Rescue of the Fallen. Sheffield: Leader and sons, 1877. 3AMS/B/01/02, Box 036, The Women's Library, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom, 2.

and social reform were means to raise morality among the prostitutes, integrate them into society with the result of ending the supply of prostitutes. It was however argued by the editors of *The Shield* that although reforming prostitutes was useful, it did not strike at the root of prostitution: the demand for prostitutes.¹⁸⁵ They therefore believed that, in order to purify the nation, one needed to concentrate on the demand for prostitutes and the repeal campaign therefore directed their efforts towards male vice.

By presenting women as victims, the repeal campaign strengthened their argument that prostitution would diminish if men gave up vice. In addition to improving morality in general, a large part of the argument was directed toward encouraging morality in men. In Josephine Butler's words, "There will be no improvement whatever, no lessening of vice, until a higher moral standard is attained by the male sex."¹⁸⁶ This is consistent with the repeal campaign's view of prostitutes as victims of men's desire. Both men and women were responsible for the sin, but the repealers argued that the man was more to blame for the sin because the man created the demand, which in turn created the supply.¹⁸⁷ Josephine Butler went even further in blaming men for the immorality in society: "I begin my remarks by saying that the heart of a man is the primary source of all the evils which trouble society."¹⁸⁸ These views illustrate the repeal campaign's overall attitude that women were the victims of male vice. The repeal campaign argued that prostitution would end if men gave up their need for vice and strengthened their morality.

The repeal campaign argued that in order to raise morality in society, the repeal of the CD Acts was needed. To heighten morality, the repeal campaign firstly urged for the repeal of the CD Acts, which in their view legalised the sexual double standard. They wrote, "They turn to Parliament and say, Go to! Let us regulate, superintend, and licence the evils which we cannot hope to remove."¹⁸⁹ This is in accordance with one of the campaign's main arguments that the Acts were unjust because they were directed towards women only. This can be seen in the words of Mr. Stuart at a repeal conference in London: "It was monstrous that man should do that without condemnation, for which women were tabooed for life."¹⁹⁰ The campaign argued that the repeal of the CD Acts was the first step towards an equal standard of morality for both sexes, which would result in the end of prostitution.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ "Prevention Better than Cure", *Shield*, April 22, 1871, 469.

¹⁸⁶ "Public Lecture In London, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, May 11, 1872, 934.

¹⁸⁷ "The Ethics of the Contagious Diseases Acts", *Shield*, September 2, 1871, 636.

¹⁸⁸ "Public Lecture In London, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, May 11, 1872, 933.

¹⁸⁹ "Public Lecture In London, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, May 11, 1872, 933.

¹⁹⁰ "Repeal Conference In London", *Shield*, May 24, 1873, 176.

¹⁹¹ "Practical Sympathy with the Fallen", *Shield*, October 21, 1876, 309.

Similarly, Caine argues that the campaign strongly opposed the CD Acts' intervention into people's lives and what they saw as the legalisation of the double standard.¹⁹² The campaign therefore advocated repeal and a higher morality for men, as can be seen by Josephine Butler's argument: "I believe it to afford the strongest and most reasonable ground of hope, if it be admitted that the spirit of a man is capable of illumination, and that his moral nature may be renewed, sanctified, and perfected."¹⁹³ Even though the repeal campaign criticised male vice, this quote illustrates their belief that men were capable of change. It was therefore important to address men in order to persuade them to give up vice. The repeal campaign advocated the repeal of the CD Acts as a measure to end the sexual double standard and thus prevent prostitution.

In addition to advocating better education for women in order to prevent them from entering prostitution, Josephine Butler also advocated a change in the education of boys in order to raise their morality. Although there was a general agreement within the campaign that a purification of the nation was needed, there was not a lot of discussion on how to achieve this. One can however identify proposals in a public lecture in London by Josephine Butler. Firstly, Butler denied the idea that boys were naturally less modest and pure than girls. Butler further criticised the custom of sending boys to be educated far away from home where they were trained in masculine arts, but with little learning in relations to the other sex, and the obligation of personal purity of body and mind. One way to achieve a higher moral standard among boys was to educate boys and girls together, teaching them to interact with each other from an early age.¹⁹⁴ According to Butler, boys received an education that enforced the sexual double standard and she therefore advocated education where boys were taught how to be pure and modest. Butler's proposal both contradicted and upheld the gender roles typical of the Victorian period. On the one hand, she contradicted the sexual double standard and the view that men's sexual desire was natural. She also contested the separate spheres ideology typical of the Victorian period by advocating joint education for both sexes. On the other hand, she upheld the middle-class view of women as morally superior and pure. According to Bland, feminists in the Victorian period took the idea of moral superiority and passionlessness and used them in order to demand a transformation between the sexes.¹⁹⁵ In order to raise morality, Butler therefore upheld women's role as superior at the same time as

¹⁹² Caine, *English Feminism*, 108-109.

¹⁹³ "Public Lecture In London, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, May 11, 1872, 933.

¹⁹⁴ "Public Lecture In London, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, May 11, 1872, 933.

¹⁹⁵ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, 52.

she contested the sexual double standard. In order to prevent prostitution, a different education for boys was needed for them to change their attitudes on male sexuality.

By emphasising the importance of family, the repeal campaign advocated a heightened morality, which would result in the end of prostitution. Butler argued that the corruption of boys found in their education was due to the tradition of sending boys away to be educated. According to Butler, this was against the Divine order in that it prevented the family to develop in a natural state, with the influence of both the father and the mother.¹⁹⁶ The emphasis of family is further strengthened in the article called "Some Social Lessons from the Contagious Diseases Acts": "But in all classes the first step towards reform is the adaption of a higher standard of home life; a greater reverence for family duties and family affection."¹⁹⁷ The evangelical movement largely influenced this view of the centrality of the family. According to Caine, the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth century resulted in an increased emphasis on family and strengthened woman's mission as guardians of morality and purity that would be dominant in the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁸ Family was therefore the place where one best could develop a sense of morality, often resulting in a corrupted sense of morality if not developed. This corrupted sense of morality could be seen as the basis of male vice. The repeal campaign emphasised the importance of family as the place to develop a moral compass that would heighten men's morality and therefore ending male vice and prevent prostitution.

In the repeal campaign it is possible to identify several proposals on how to end prostitution. The rescue of the fallen and the voluntary hospitals aimed at diminishing the number of prostitutes through helping prostitutes quit their trade. They further advocated social reform in order to prevent women going into the trade, while raising morality and purity, especially among men, would end the double standard and stop the demand of prostitutes. In this way, the repealers advocated proposals that would end prostitution by ending both the supply and the demand of prostitutes.

¹⁹⁶ "Public Lecture In London, by Mrs. Butler", *Shield*, May 11, 1872, 934.

¹⁹⁷ L.F.M., "Some Social Lessons from the Contagious Diseases Acts", *Shield*, June 3, 1871, 513.

¹⁹⁸ Caine, *English Feminism*, 82-83.

4 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the relations between the campaign for the repeal of the CD Acts and the women affected by the Acts, in addition to explore campaign's proposals to end prostitution. Even though the targets of the CD Acts were prostitutes, working class-women were also targeted because of the lack of definition of "common prostitute", in addition to the middle-class theory of the classical middle-class body and the grotesque working-class body. The physical appearances of the different classes and the myth of the prostitute was largely the reason why the working classes were the ones subjected to the Acts. In Victorian society there was a dominant image of the prostitute as working-class woman and the physical appearances of other working-class women were therefore more similar to the image of the prostitute than the upper- and middle-class prostitutes. The repeal campaign tried to attract people to their cause by manipulating the image of the women affected by the Acts and therefore presented two distinct images of them.

The repeal campaign presented two different images of prostitutes: the prostitute as unredeemable and the prostitute as a victim. Furthermore, the presentation of these women was closely connected to the repeal campaign's arguments for repeal of the Acts. The campaign presented the prostitute as arrogant and unredeemable in order to strengthen their argument that the CD Acts legitimatised prostitution and that the implementation of the Acts was a step towards legalising prostitution. The campaign further presented prostitutes as victims in order to illustrate their arguments that the Acts were unjust because they were only subjected to one sex, they were cruel to the women subjected to them, that they made prostitutes and upheld prostitution by preventing women leaving the trade. The images the repeal campaign presented of the prostitutes both contested and upheld the dominant image of the prostitute as the agent of the great social evil. The repeal campaign upheld this image by presenting the prostitute as arrogant and unredeemable, but at the same time contested this image by presenting the prostitute as a victim of the sexual double standard and cruel legislation. The image of the prostitute as a victim was the most recurrent and one can therefore conclude that the repeal campaign predominately contested the dominant discourse on how the prostitute was viewed in Victorian society.

Contrastively to the prostitute, working-class women were presented exclusively as victims. Working-class women were presented as innocent victims of the CD Acts in order to strengthen the repeal campaign's arguments that the law failed to protect women, that the

Acts stripped women of their basic legal rights and that they intruded on the private sphere of married couples. In order to achieve repeal of the CD Acts, it was important for the repeal campaign to create a mass movement by attracting people from all social classes. By presenting working-class women as victims, the repeal campaign attracted working-class men to their cause by advocating that working-class men needed to join the cause in order to protect their wives and daughters. The repeal campaign also presented married working-class women as victims to illustrate how the Acts were a threat to the legal security of men, in which working-class men inverted this image and instead used the Acts to fight for political power. The repeal campaign also attempted to attract working-class women to their cause for repeal, and although some working-class women joined the campaign, most working-class women did not. This was due to their lack of direct political power, that they had adopted the separate spheres ideology and because the repeal campaign's presentation of working-class women as victims frightened working-class women to join. Although they did not join in the mass movement, working-class women fought against the Acts by denying to sign the voluntary submission and to attend the medical examination. The repeal campaign wanted to create an an-class campaign and they therefore emphasised the positive attributes of working-class men and often presented the stories of the women affected by the Acts through their own middle-class voices in order to attract the upper and middle classes to join their cause.

Even though the repeal campaign's primary goal was to achieve repeal of the CD Acts, most repealers agreed that society would prosper if the great social evil ended. They therefore proposed several measures to stop prostitution by preventing both the supply and demand of prostitutes. In order to end the supply, the campaign advocated that rescue of the fallen and voluntary hospitals would diminish the number of prostitutes by redeeming those already involved in vice. They also believed that the number of prostitutes would diminish through social reform as both a preventive and reformatory aspect. Although these measures could stop the supply, prostitution would not end before the demand was stopped. The repeal campaign therefore advocated a higher morality among the Victorians, and especially among men. The repeal campaign argued that a change in education was needed in addition to the repeal of the CD Acts in order for men to heighten their morality. The repeal campaign's proposals to end prostitution was further closely connected to the campaign's presentation of the prostitute, whereas the selection procedures of the fallen reflected the prostitute as both unredeemable and as a victim, while the other proposals are closely connected to the prostitute as victims of unjust legislation, poverty and male vice.

The repeal campaign, and especially the female repealers' presentation of the women affected by the Acts and their proposals to end prostitution both upheld and contested the strict gender and class hierarchy of Victorian society. On the one hand, the female repealers contested the strict class and gender hierarchy in their critique of male authority and by emphasising the unity between themselves and the women affected by the Acts. They at the same time contested the view of the passive nature of women by entering the public arena and advocating better work and education opportunities for women. On the other hand, the repeal campaign failed to address other elements of the class and gender hierarchy. Although the female repealers contested the separate spheres ideology and critiqued male authority, they upheld their role as moral guardians, a role founded on the separate spheres ideology and the passive nature of women. Furthermore, they upheld the passive nature of the women affected by the Acts by presenting them as victims, an image which created a distance between themselves and the women subjected to the Acts. Similarly, the social reform efforts of the repeal campaign were largely founded on the belief that the middle classes were superior and that all women needed to be shaped into the middle-class notion of the ideal woman. In conclusion, the repeal campaign and especially the female branch, mostly contested the gender roles in the nineteenth century, often overlooking the class hierarchy upholding the social distance between the repealers and the women affected by the CD Acts.

My findings show that the repealers presented a particular view of the women affected by the CD Acts and that the relations between themselves and the women affected by the Acts were influenced by their contemporary society, even though the repealers tried to contest the class and gender hierarchy of their time. This thesis therefore contributes to an understanding of how prostitutes and prostitution was viewed within a specific group in Victorian Britain. Further research could therefore be to compare the repeal campaign's attitudes towards prostitutes and prostitution with those in favour of the CD Acts. Because the CD Acts also were implemented in the colonies, one can compare the attitudes of the repeal campaign with that of the colonies. Furthermore, one can also connect the attitudes and proposals of the repeal campaign to a broader context in order to explore if the repeal campaign reflected the attitudes towards prostitutes and prostitution in Europa and the rest of the world. My contribution to the field is an interpretation of the attitudes towards prostitutes and prostitution of a specific group in Great Britain, in which one can broaden the context in order to get a more extensive overview of the attitudes towards prostitutes and prostitution in the rest of Great Britain, Europe and the rest of the world.

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