

## **The Journals that Did: Writing about Sex in the late 1890s**

**Anne Humpherys**

The 1890s was a period of intellectual and social ferment in Britain and this is reflected in the plethora of reformist and progressive journals addressed to particular interest groups such as free thought and personal rights advocates, socialists, anarchists, suffragettes, reformers, vegetarians, anti-vivisectionists, and sex reformers. Partly to address the need for material, many of these periodicals filled some of their pages with references to and quotations from each other, sometimes with editorial comments and arguments. These cross-references created the sense of a substantial group of readers and writers ready to challenge almost every aspect of conventional social and cultural life, and thus reflected what Matthew Beaumont refers to in his essay in this issue as ‘a virtual community’,<sup>1</sup> in these cases, communities of radical progressive interest groups, the nature of which this essay discusses.

Perhaps no topic was more controversial among this community than ‘the sexual problem’, as the *Westminster Review* called it in 1895<sup>2</sup> by which it and others meant a broad range of social issues linked to gender, the law, and personal rights. The discussion about this ‘problem’ was most intense during the second half of the decade and is book-ended by two legal actions: the Oscar Wilde trial in 1895 and the 1898 arrest of George Bedborough, the editor of *The Adult*, which defined itself as ‘The Journal of Sex’,<sup>3</sup> who was charged with selling and ‘utter[ing] a certain lewd wicked bawdy scandalous and obscene libel in the form of a book entitled *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*’ as a result of selling a copy of this work by Havelock Ellis to an undercover policeman. The police evidence about the entrapment of Bedborough, however, makes clear that they were not interested in him, or the *Adult*, or Ellis and his work, or even in obscenity. What the police wanted to do – and they did – was to destroy the Legitimation League because its monthly meetings provided a platform that allowed various anarchist groups whom they had under surveillance to congregate and speak. The detective John Sweeney remarked of the lectures at the monthly

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Legitimation League meetings, many of which were published in *The Adult*, that they ‘were often of an entirely innocent and even elevating nature, but the public discussions after the lecture were mainly supported by Anarchists, and some speeches of a highly incendiary character were occasionally delivered’.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the police were more concerned with a ‘virtual community’ of radicals than with individual speech or thought.

Most of the free thought and other radical journals at this time did not write very much about the sexual problem. Journals like *The Agnostic and Eclectic Review*, the *Freethinker*, the *Reformer*, *The Truth Seeker*, and the Nietzschean *Eagle and the Serpent*<sup>5</sup> sometimes quoted from *The Adult*, but they did not often take up sexual issues themselves. If they did, as in the case of the feminist *Shafts*, the agenda was more in line with reformist issues in terms of sexual reform such as eliminating the inequality in marriage under the law of coverture through legislation. As Matthew Beaumont argues, *Shafts* was part of the social (read sexual) purity group rather than the sex reformer group, though he also notes that ‘free unions’ were among the subjects discussed in *Shafts*.<sup>6</sup>

There were, however, two journals in addition to *The Adult* which, during this half-decade, did pay significant attention to the sexual problem: the *Westminster Review* and *The University Magazine and Free Review*. It is on these three journals that I would like to concentrate in order to describe the community of writing on the sexual problem. All three of these journals were monthlies; none were illustrated and only *the University Magazine and Free Review* carried any fiction and that rarely, and what fiction there was supported its radical positions on religious and social issues. The sexual problem as presented in these periodicals had different emphases, but similar formal presentations: more or less short articles (five to ten pages), nearly all signed though this is fraught by the use of pseudonyms. There is an overlap of authors among the three: Allan Laidlaw wrote for both the *Westminster* and the *University Magazine and Free Review* (though not always about the sexual problem)<sup>7</sup>, as did Ellis Ethelmer [Ben Elmy] and Geoffrey Mortimer [Walter Matthes Gallichan], who

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also wrote for the *Adult*. Many of the articles were written as responses to articles in each other. For example, in June 1897 *The Adult* reprinted a February 1896 *Westminster Review* article ‘Divorce and Re-Marriage’ by J.A. Sewell as an ‘extra’ to its first number. In this piece Sewell joins an argument supporting divorce reform (a *Westminster* agenda) with one for free unions (*The Adult’s* agenda), saying that since church and state either forbid or complicate remarriage, couples should have a private contract for their second marriage.

The three also quote and review each other. The *University Magazine and Free Review* responds to articles in the *Westminster* as when in July 1896 ‘Democritus’ quotes ‘How We Marry’ from the June issue of the *Westminster*. Sometimes the *University Magazine* responds to *The Adult* as it did with a review in June 1897 of the proceedings of the Legitimation League published in the smaller journal. On the other hand, the *Westminster* in its ‘Contemporary Literature’ department – a review of current books – discusses 1899 issues of the *University Magazine and Free Review*, and in April 1897, August 1898, and November 1899 other publications by its publisher, the University Press.

There was a similarity in the theoretical position of all three journals as well. The explanatory model in each is a somewhat simplified evolutionary theory. This was most commonly expressed in terms of marriage as an institution: was it evolving towards extinction and the evolution into some other kind of relation between men and women, usually called ‘varietism’ which could mean anything from promiscuity to serial monogamy? Or was it in its present life-long monogamous state the end of an evolutionary development from polygamy to monogamy? H.D Webb put both sides of this argument in ‘Marriage and Free Love’ in the *Free Review* of September 1895, 545-549. He argued that while it was true that monogamy had evolved out of polygamy, there was no reason to assume evolution would not continue with the result that monogamy would in turn evolve into free unions. Ultimately, he concluded, ‘love’ was the end point of evolution and ‘emancipation from the bonds of sex is what we are seeking for men and women’. (p. 547) This evolutionary argument was

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sometimes combined with a more social critique of the future of marriage in the shape of an argument that women would never actually be free human beings or equal in marriage until they had economic independence.<sup>8</sup>

Under this theoretical umbrella lay a variety of sexual problem topics. The ‘marriage question’ was expanded to include such issues as the need to recognize and even legalize ‘secondary’ relationships in order to protect children who were products of such unions, and the advantages and disadvantages of divorce by mutual consent. Although almost all writers saw enforced lifelong monogamy as untenable at best and enslaving at worst for both men and women, there was no uniformity about the cure: some said divorce, some said free unions, some said evolution.

Most fraught were discussions about the sexual nature of men and women. Are men naturally promiscuous? Most writers said yes. This position was sometimes countered by an evolutionary argument: that men are evolving towards ‘purity’ and ‘love’ or more usually ‘spiritual love’, which was the endpoint of evolution.<sup>9</sup> But even those few who argued for this future development agreed that at the moment men were naturally promiscuous.

The issue of women’s sexual nature was more complicated for these writers. Did a woman’s sexual nature consist solely of maternal instinct? Most writers were unwilling to give up this belief, though the argument could take surprising twists. If woman’s sexual nature is maternal then, E.I Champness<sup>10</sup> argued in the *University Magazine and Free Review*, all women should have a right to have children even if they can’t (or won’t) get husbands – either by free love partnerships or by men (who were thought to be in short supply) fathering children on more than one woman (5 [1895], p.307). No one comes right out and says women have a sex drive independent of the desire for children (unlike Olive Schreiner’s argument to Karl Pearson in the Men and Women’s Club), not even the *Adult*, though the argument is made obliquely by saying women need sex ‘for their health’.<sup>11</sup> There was also a little discussion of the sexual education of children though nothing very specific beyond the assertion that both boys and girls should know the facts of life (as we would call them) early.

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Prostitution was another sexual problem and in these radical journals the discussion of it is almost always linked to the marriage question. In fact these journals don't just comment on prostitution but actually reconstruct the categories of both marriage and prostitution. For example, one position was that marriage was a *cause* of prostitution, as the boredom suffered by men under enforced monogamy led them to patronize prostitutes. But the term 'prostitution' was also used metaphorically: wives are by definition prostitutes, or more genteelly 'concubines' in that they trade sex for economic support, an explosive comparison in the context of the wide-spread marriage debates in the 1880s and 1890s. For example in the *Westminster Review* for 1898 Robert Turnbull Lang, who edited a series of travel books about Ireland in the early 1900s, argued in an article entitled 'The Extra Woman' (i.e. the prostitute) that 'wives are merely legalised concubines' and that prostitution is evidence that 'monogamy doesn't work' (*Westminster Review* 150 [1898], p.305). What he and the other writers who take this latter position never seem to articulate is that linking marriage to prostitution in this way only proves that monogamy doesn't work for men. The implication in this argument is that women unlike men do have sex drives that can be fulfilled within monogamy because their sexual fulfillment is attached to maternity. Lang affirms this when he restates the belief that women's sexual fulfillment is 'towards the next generation'. In another bizarre twist on this position about women's sexuality, he continues that since there are more women than men in the population and many men don't marry, women without partners can be driven to prostitution, a term which includes unsanctioned second relationships as well as street and brothel prostitutes, to satisfy their sexual drive for maternity.

In the aftermath of the Wilde trial there are a few fleeting references to homosexuality – never called such, of course. In fact I found only a couple of references to the Wilde case in the journals I surveyed, and in those few references, Wilde himself is never named. For example, there is an advertisement for *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* with no author named in

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the *Adult* in 1898, and an editorial remark about ‘terrible months of suffering – needless suffering – suffering which had neither justice nor sense for its excuse’ (April 1898, p. 67) again without mentioning Wilde by name. In the *Agnostic Journal and Eclectic Review* for June 1898, ‘W.S.R’, writing about the Bedborough prosecution, remarks:

For the exercise of sexual perversion, only a few months ago, a gentleman was sent, under tragic auspices, to collect the material for a ‘Ballad of Reading Gaol’. Would the same State send George Bedborough to, under similar circumstances, collect similar materials, and for doing exactly the reverse [?] . . . If one man is punished for sexual perversion, and another man is punished for circulating a book showing how to eliminate sexual perversion—for the best way to eliminate it is to impart a scientific knowledge of the nosological principles upon which it is based, can inconsistency and fatuity further go? (p. 380)

This quotation exemplifies both the refusal to name Wilde and the common defense of Ellis’s book.

I found only one exception to this refusal to name Wilde, the more notable for being unique. In the *Free Review*, in the month of Wilde’s trial, there was a piece entitled ‘Provincialism of Our Literature’ by Arthur Lynch. The author had attacked Wilde (by name) among others a year earlier in an article on Richard LeGallienne in *Our Poets* (1894). In his *Free Review* piece, Lynch included a general attack on the work of Wilde, but this time Lynch named neither the writer nor his works. ‘A few pages [presumably of *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*] were enough to make even my curiosity draw back in revolt from the atmosphere, the mephitic air that seemed to emanate from its dainty leaves’ (*Free Review* 4 [1895], p.127). Two months later, however, Ernest Newman, an acquaintance of Charles Bradlaugh and John Robertson and a member of the secularist circles, who also wrote for the *University Magazine and Free Review* and the *Westminster* (sometimes under the pseudonym ‘Henry Mortimer Cecil’), contributed a long laudatory piece on Wilde – named this time - as an artist and covering all of his work. Neither Lynch nor Newman mentions the Wilde trial, but the publication of Newman’s strong praise for Wilde as an artist could not but have struck

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everyone who read it two months after the trial as support for Wilde as a person if not for homosexuality as a practice.<sup>12</sup>

Though the Bedborough trial was also ostensibly about homosexuality in that it was Ellis's volume on 'Sexual Inversion' that was labeled obscene, there is no discussion of homosexuality in the journalistic responses to the trial – or in *The Adult* for that matter. For the progressive community, the trial was about free speech. 'How could the scientist find a remedy [for the morbid manifestations of the sex-instinct] without making a diagnosis based on scientific research?' argued Democritus (probably G.A. Singer) in the *University Magazine and Free Review* in 1898 (10 [1898], p.447).

When the *Westminster*, which called itself in 1897 'the Magazine of the Rationalists: the only periodical in England which allows a free discussion of unconventional and tabooed subjects', a label that both the *University Magazine and Free Review* and the *Adult* also claimed, wrote about the sexual problem, it did so in a high-minded way, for the most part supporting marriage by arguing for reform of the institution. In general its writers took the position that monogamy is the highest achievement of social evolution. They were by and large supportive of the position that women's desire was for maternity. The *Westminster* was in other words radical in discussing these subjects at all but fairly conservative in its opinions. Its placement in the midst of progressive thought throughout all its history enabled it to take up the subject of women's sex drive, divorce on demand, the advantages of free unions over marriage, and the relationship of marriage to prostitution, but it does so conservatively. It shifted more radical positions into the back-of-the-journal department 'Contemporary Literature' where it could anonymously review controversial sexual writings more or less favorably as it did the *University Magazine and Free Review* in August 1899, calling it a fearless periodical and recommending it to readers interested in progressive questions. The *Westminster*, however, did not recognize *The Adult* as far as I have been able to determine. It saw the Bedborough trial entirely in terms of free speech.

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*The Adult: A Journal of Sex*<sup>13</sup> is at the other end of the spectrum from the *Westminster*. Its writing about the sexual problem included arguments that women must have sex, arguably with multiple partners, for their 'health'. However, the journal published opposing articles on this and other subjects. Orford Northcote argued for the usefulness of prostitution in a transition to the new sexual order while William Platt supported marriage as it was and even argued against any sexual element in the institution.<sup>14</sup> And there were the usual disagreements about whether monogamy was an evolutionary endpoint or an institution that would be eliminated by evolution, though the consensus was that monogamy was on the way out.

The third of these journals which regularly published pieces on the sexual problem, the *University Magazine and Free Review*, was more radical in its coverage than the *Westminster* but less so than *The Adult*. Both it and its publisher, the University Press, which also published *The Adult*, played a significant role in the dissemination of free thought ideas and discussion of the sexual problem in the 1890s, and a number of the writers for both *The Adult* and the *Westminster* contributed to it. Further, its final owner and editor had a significant impact on both the unifying and the dissolution of the virtual community of radical writers on sex during this period.

Because the *University Magazine and Free Review* is relatively unknown a discussion of its history may prove useful. Briefly the *Free Review* began life in 1893, founded and edited by the future Liberal M.P. John Mckinnen Robertson, a protégé of the secularist Charles Bradlaugh. It was designed at its beginning as a continuation of Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* which ceased publication in 1893 after Bradlaugh's death in 1891. In the initial number Robertson wrote that it was 'an attempt to make a platform for opinions which are more or less unlikely to get a hearing in even the more advanced of the established reviews, with perhaps the exception of the *Westminster*' (1 [1893], p.2).

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The publisher of the *Free Review* was the distinguished progressive firm of Swan Sonnenschein.<sup>15</sup> Robertson edited the *Free Review* until September 1895 at which point he sold it either to Roland de Villiers or George Astor Singer and one or the other of them became the editor.<sup>16</sup> Swan Sonnenschein continued to publish the journal until 1897 when that role was taken over by the University Press, first located at 16 John Street, which Bedborough also used as a house and office. Soon after the University Press took over the publication from Swan Sonnenschein, it moved to Watford (at this point the press was sometimes known as The University Press at Watford). In addition to its two journals, it had a sizable list of progressive publications.<sup>17</sup> And of course, it also published Havelock Ellis's first volume of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex on Sexual Inversion* and more surprisingly the second volume which appeared after the Bedborough trial.<sup>18</sup>

The editor of the *University Magazine and Free Review* was now 'Democritus' but, according to the British Library catalogue, continued to be Singer, though Singer said it was de Villiers. The title of the journal changed to the *University Magazine and Free Review*. In 1899, in the wake of the Bedborough trial, the journal became an annual, the *University Magazine*, still edited by Democritus, though the British Library catalogue says this was now Allan Laidlaw. However, the University Press in 1900 published two pamphlets about the Bedborough trial by Democritus, and the British Library catalogue lists this Democritus as Singer. The last issue of the *University Magazine* was in 1900.

Almost immediately after Robertson sold the *Free Review*, the number of articles on the sexual problem increased. Frederick Rockell<sup>19</sup> wrote a strong piece in support of free love which resulted in a string of responses pro and con. 'Magda' wrote advocating 'marriage on lease', where couples would sign contracts like they did to buy property. Allan Laidlaw wrote a series of misogynistic pieces theoretically in support of total freedom for women because, he said, they needed it to become fully human. Edward Carpenter responded to a review by Rockell of *Love's Coming of Age*.<sup>20</sup> Other sexual issues included eugenics, divorce as a savior

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of monogamy and marriage, and agitation both for and against the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Acts into India. And while all this was going on Robertson continued to contribute a political or otherwise non-sexual article to every issue.

As should be obvious, George Astor Singer and Roland de Villiers were the same person although none of the parties knew this. Despite the fact that Ellis had his suspicions,<sup>21</sup> no one was to know for sure until January 1902 when Singer/de Villiers (he had, according to the police, at least 30 other aliases<sup>22</sup>) was finally arrested for selling obscene literature and died in police custody, the coroner said by apoplexy. His actual name, again according to the police, was Ferdinand Springmuhl von Weisenfeld. They said he was the son of a German judge, and had come to England in 1880 where he began a career of petty crime for which he had spent twelve months in jail for forgery.<sup>23</sup>

It is not known how he surfaced in the mid-1890s as a respectable editor and publisher with strong connections to the free thought and secularist world; nor is it known from where he had acquired the £10,000 with which he founded the University Press. Probably he had developed connections among the free thought and secularist world since everyone else involved in the community of writers about sex met through these connections. Why Robertson sold the *Free Review* to Singer in 1895 is also unknown, and how he met him equally so.<sup>24</sup> Singer must have seemed a little shady even at that early stage, and given the increased number of articles on the sexual problem after he took over the *Free Review*, it is hard to believe that Robertson didn't sense a difference. Martin Page, a biographer of Robertson, referred to George Singer as 'one of Robertson's close friends.'<sup>25</sup> In any case, Robertson, despite having to testify at the Bedborough trial<sup>26</sup> and being, as it were, tainted by his connection to that case (he was a member of the defense committee<sup>27</sup>), continued to contribute to the *University Magazine and Free Review* until the very end in 1900, and the University Press continued to advertise and sell his books.

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In 1899 the *University Magazine and Free Review* was driven to become an annual by reduced circulation which resulted from letters (supposedly from the police) to news agents across the country threatening them with arrest for distributing obscenity if they sold the journal. Bedborough in a deal with the police to avoid prosecution also fingered de Villiers as the publisher of Ellis, whereupon an order for de Villiers' arrest was issued. He disappeared, though George Singer (as Democritus) apparently continued to edit and write for the *University Magazine and Free Review* and to author several biting satires and commentaries on the Bedborough trial.<sup>28</sup>

When the police arrested Singer/deVilliers in 1902 they charged him with 'conspiring to print, sell, and publish obscene books, pictures, and pamphlets'.<sup>29</sup> After he died, the University Press went into bankruptcy. At the bankruptcy hearing in March 1902, the police said that when they had raided the firm's premises, they found 'one of the best furnished printing works ever seized' and half a dozen of 'the latest and most expensive linotype machines were in full work' (Sweeney, p.194). They confiscated and destroyed a large stock of books 'relating to psychology and pathology of sex', including thousands of copies of volumes I and II of Ellis's *The Psychology of Sex* (Sweeney, p. 194).<sup>30</sup>

Whatever one thinks about Singer/deVilliers, his dedication to progressive causes from 1895, when he surfaces to buy the *Free Review* from Robertson, to the debacle of the Bedborough trial, resulted in a significant contribution to the powerful mix of the secularist, free thought, and radical press in the 1890s. Furthermore, by all accounts, he dealt honestly and fairly with his writers and advertisers.<sup>31</sup> He also put up considerable money (£500) for the defense of Bedborough and Ellis at the trial.

What were his motives? It is hard to believe he made much money from the *University Magazine and Free Review* or the *Adult* or the other books published by the press. If there were truly obscene books that emerged from the press there is no record of them; all the evidence is that the books the Press published were related to free thought and

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sociological/sexual issues. But whatever the facts, the radical publishing scene in the late 1890s would have been much thinner without the University Press. Though Ellis would probably have been able to publish his book without the Press, he might not have been able to do so in England.<sup>32</sup> There probably would have been no continuation of Robertson's *Free Review* and its commitment to the ideas of Charles Bradlaugh, however much those ideas were mixed up with sex radicalism under the auspices of Singer/deVilliers. It is certainly true that without the University Press there would have been no *Adult: The Journal of Sex*, unique in its own time and however amateurish, for us one of the few pieces of evidence of the journalistic underworld of sex radicalism at the end of the century.

As Chaucer's Pardoner might have said "How can an immoral man tell a moral tale?"

In *Radical Underworld: Prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers in London 1795-1840*,<sup>33</sup> Iain McCalman traced the intricate connections among the illicit publications of working-class radical political figures and publishers in the first half of the nineteenth century. He demonstrated the strong interplay in the movement and the publications between 'liberalism and libertinism' through secularism.<sup>34</sup> McCalman demonstrated the various ways that the persecution by the police and government spies inevitably brought radical printers into relationship with elements of the unrespectable even criminal underworld, in prison if no where else. And when the radical political movement began to fade, the economics of underground publishing made it easy to slide from publishing illicit political documents to illicit pornography. McCalman concludes about this move into pornography that 'perhaps the most significant legacy of this tiny metropolitan underworld was to keep alive a tradition of plebeian unrespectability and irreverence in the face of powerful countervailing forces' (p. 237). Singer/deVilliers, it could be argued, is the final stage of this liberalism/libertine tradition.

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So where does this leave us in our discussions of ‘writing about the sexual problem’ in the late 1890s? Through the overlap of authors and subjects in the three journals under review here, we do gain a sense of the shape of the virtual community of a free thought periodical response to the sexual problem. We can also see that the ‘radical underground’ that began early in the century with an imbrication of free thought radicalism and free press sex and sexuality did not end at mid-century but continued right up to the beginning of the twentieth century and might have gone further had the police not been obsessed with eliminating a public forum for anarchism – the real cause of the collapse at the end of the century of the community of writing about sex and its major publications.

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1. Matthew Beaumont. ‘Influential Force: *Shafts* and the Diffusion of Feminist Ideas at the Fin de Siècle’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 3 (2006) [www.19.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk)
  2. Beswick Ancrum, ‘The Sexual Problem: a Rejoinder’, *Westminster Review* 143 (1895), 171-177.
  3. *The Adult* was the official publication of the Legitimation League, an organization originally founded to agitate for the rights of illegitimate children to inherit. Priced at two-pence (later three-pence), each issue sixteen (later twenty four) pages in quarto, the journal started in 1897 when the Legitimation League moved its headquarters from Leeds to London at which point it became a forum for debate on free unions and other sexual problem issues. See my article ‘The Journal that Did: form and content in *The Adult* (1897-1899)’, *Media History* 9 (2003), 65-80.
  4. See Sweeney’s autobiography, *At Scotland Yard: Being the experiences during twenty-seven years service* (London: Grant Richards, 1904), p. 179.
  5. *The Eagle and the Serpent. A Journal of Egoistic Philosophy and Sociology* (Feb. 1898-1902 plus two special issues) was ‘Dedicated to the Philosophy of Life Enunciated by Nietzsche, Emerson, Stirner, Thoreau, Goethe ... [it] Labours for the Recognition of New Ideals in Politics and Sociology, in Ethics and Philosophy, in Literature and Art’ according to its masthead.

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6. Matthew Beaumont, 'Influential Force: *Shafts* and the Diffusion of Feminist Ideas at the Fin de Siècle', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 3 (2006) [www.19.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk)

7. In an advertisement on the cover of his pamphlet *Sexual Love: What it is and what it isn't* (published by the *Truth Seeker* in Bradford probably in 1898, though the only dated copy in the British Library is 1902), Laidlaw described himself as a literary expert who could supply articles on 'Sex Matters, Sociology, Philosophical Literature, Music and Drama'. In August 1900 he contributed to the *Westminster* 'What Are Immoral Plays?' arguing that 'Under free conditions it is only the weak or diseased nature than can be permanently injured by what it sees or hears', 154 (1900), p. 216.

8. See, for example, 'Sagittarius'. 'Sexual Freedom in Relation to Women and Economics', *The Adult* 1 (1897), 25-29.

9. See, for example, William Platt, 'Spiritual Love', *The Adult* 1 (1897), 55-57 and Lucy Stewart, 'Freethought and Free Love', *The Adult* 1 (1897), 40-45.

10. Mrs. Eliza Champness wrote a biography of the MP Frank Smith in 1943.

11. Orford Northcote, usually the most radical of the writers for *The Adult*, even argues in 'The Mutability of Sex-Love' that women with multiple sex partners would have the 'spice of joy and delight' unavailable to women with only one. See *The Adult* 1 (1897), 20-26 .

12. 'Oscar Wilde: A Literary Appreciation', *Free Review* 4 (1895), 198. In 1900 Allan Laidlaw wrote a series of articles for the *Westminster* on the theater. In the first he praised the 'four masterpieces' of Oscar Wilde and saw 'the beginnings of a drama dealing with humanity in its complex state under high pressure' 153 (1900), 321.

13. The journal began life as 'A Journal for the Advancement of Freedom in Sexual Relations'; in the second issue it was 'A Crusade Against Sex-enslavement'; in the third, 'A Journal for the Free Discussion of Tabooed Topics' and finally in the fourth, 'A Journal of Sex'.

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14. Orford Northcote, 'Prostitution', *The Adult* I (iii) (1897), 34-38, and William Platt, 'Spiritual Love', *The Adult* I (iv) (1897), 55-57.

15. Swan Sonnenschein published the first English edition of Marx's *Capital*, the works of Schopenhauer, books by Robertson, Edward Carpenter, Sydney Webb, Frances Power Cobbe, Alfred Wallace, and many others, not to mention J.M. Barrie's first novel, and George Bernard Shaw's *An Unsocial Socialist*. The firm obliterated any connection to the *Free Review*, however, in its official history, which mentions neither Robertson nor the journal. See F.A. Mumby and Frances H.S. Stallybrass, *From Swan Sonnenschein to George Allen & Unwin Ltd.* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955). Following the official line, Ann Perry says in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (106: 295) that after its connection with periodical the *Universal Review* ended in 1890, Swan Sonnenschein never published any other journals. This is clearly wrong.

16. Odin Dekkers in *J.M. Robertson: Rationalist and Literary Critic*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998) says de Villiers owned the press and Singer was the editor, p. 36. Ellis said de Villiers was the editor and Singer the owner of the press (Phyllis Grosskuth, *Havelock Ellis: A Biography* (London: Allen Lane Penguin, 1980), p. 180). At his trial Bedborough said de Villiers owned the press. Singer says in *Judicial Scandals and Errors* (London: The University Press, 1900) that de Villiers had nothing to do with the press or the publication of Ellis's book, and that he, Singer, was the one who bought the copyright of the *Free Review* from Robertson, p. 73. Different police reports have the tasks assigned differently.

17. John Robertson's *The Saxon and the Celt* as well as his *Montaigne and Shakspeare* [sic], F.H. Perry-Coste's *The Ethics of Suicide*, Geoffrey Mortimer's *The Blight of Respectability*, and A. Hamon's *The Universal Illusion of Free Will and Criminal Responsibility*, which was reviewed favorably by the *Westminster* in 1899. *Westminster Review* 152 (1899), 705.

18. Ellis had submitted the manuscript of volume one of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* to a small scientific publisher Williams and Norgate, but they rejected it. A friend, Francis Hall Perry-Coste (a member of free thought circles, contributor to both the *Westminster* and *The Free Review* and two of whose books were published by the University Press) suggested Ellis contact 'a man of some wealth who was about to set up a small printing and publishing house for scholarly works with no wide general appeal' (Grosskuth, p. 180).

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19. Frederick Rockell wrote a number of pamphlets for various cooperative organizations in the 1890s and early 1900s.

20. Rockell's review was in the *Free Review* 6 (1897), 576-586, and Carpenter's response is in 7 (1897), 91-93.

21. Even though Ellis was slightly uneasy when he met de Villiers, he thought the books the publisher proposed to issue seemed 'eminently respectable'. Soon, however, he began to wonder if George Singer actually existed. 'Have you ever yet seen anyone who ever saw "G. Astor Singer?"'. I am distinctly inclined to believe that the signatures to letters from "G. Astor Singer" are in the same hand as those of R. De Villiers.' But Ellis was very pleased when de Villiers also agreed also to publish his wife Edith's novel *Seaweed*, which was also serialized in the *University Magazine and Free Review* (Grosskuth, pp. 180-181).

22. Some of these include, according to the policeman John Sweeney, Wells, Wild, Winter, Willing, Macmillan, M'Croquodale, von Jarchow, Perrier, Grant, Wilson, and Davis (p. 194). *The University Magazine and Free Review* contains a number of articles signed by some of his aliases. In fact in the penultimate number of the *University Magazine*, half of the articles are probably by Singer/de Villiers under different signatures.

23. Sweeney, p. 191. The most comprehensive account of the Singer/de Villiers story is in Arthur Calder-Marshall's *Lewd, Blasphemous, and Obscene* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), pp. 193-229. Apparently in addition to his publishing ventures, Singer/de Villiers was involved in various pyramid schemes such as a Brandy Distillery Company which netted him £60000, though it is not clear whether this venture was going on at the same time as his publishing enterprise.

24. Dekkers has found nothing about this, and he told me that he is as puzzled as I am about it, given Robertson's 'very serious ambitions for the *Free Review* and the fact that he was guarding Bradlaugh's moral and intellectual legacy'. Personal email communication 20 March 2005.

25. Martin Page, *Britain's Unknown Genius: The Life-Work of J.M. Robertson* (London: South Place Ethical Society, 1984), p. 24. This biographer also says that Robertson was concerned that he might be prosecuted

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during the Bedborough case (he wasn't) since two of his books had been seized in the raid on the University Press.

26. Robertson testified again in 1902 at the trial of de Villiers associates (Dekkers, p. 36).

27. '[T]he *Reformer* reported that on 5 September 1898, Robertson presided over the third public meeting of the Committee . . . and "opened with a vigorous speech in which the attack was soundly characterised"'. Quoted in Dekkers, p. 36.

28. See Democritus [G.A. Singer] *Darwin on Trial at the Old Bailey* (London: University Press, 1900) and G. Astor Singer, M.A. *Judicial Scandals and Errors* (London: The University Press, 1900). Both were also published in *The University Magazine* 1900, along with another satire 'A Narrow Escape' by A. von Jarchow (another pseudonym of de Villiers but this piece may have been written by Allan Laidlaw). *Judicial Scandals and Errors* contains Singer/deVilliers's version of the Bedborough debacle. The *Westminster Review* called *Darwin on Trial* 'an excellent piece of fooling' (152 [1899], p. 226) and *Judicial Scandals* 'a clear and accurate history of the well-known Bedborough prosecution, directed against a scientific work of the highest value by Dr. Havelock Ellis' (151 [1899], p. 586).

29. Also arrested were Allan Laidlaw, Singer/de Villiers's wife and also his mistress by whom he had had a child; two printers Edward Henry Coleman and Walter Munday, and a compositor Charles Maurice Coleman. They were all arraigned at Bow Street on 16 January 1902. Eventually Singer/de Villier's wife received a year at hard labor, Laidlaw six months; the mistress was released, and the cases against the printers were dismissed. See Calder-Marshall for full details.

30. For further details about the press see the account of the bankruptcy in 'The University Press, Limited'. *London Times* (21 March 1902), p. 10.

31. Ruth Brandon in her retelling of the case concludes that 'when it came down to business dealings de Villiers could not be faulted. He readily agreed to publish [Ellis's] book on generous terms. [...] Nor could any objection be made to the other books on the Watford University Press's list'. *The New Women and the Old Men: love, sex, and the woman question* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 124. In 1940, in *My Life*, Ellis's only judgment on de

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Villiers was that ‘even now it seems to me that he was essentially a man afflicted by a peculiar mental trait which it would have been psychologically interesting to investigate’ (Grosskurth, p. 203).

32. Of course it is arguable that the resulting Bedborough trial – which really didn’t have much to do with Ellis as I have suggested – was damaging to him. His biographers have all regretted his association with the University Press. Calder-Marshall blames Ellis (though not the Press) for the failure to repeal the notorious Labouchere amendment against homosexuality until the 1960s. The trial certainly was damaging to Ellis’s wife, Edith. All the copies of her novel *Sea Weed: A Cornish Idyll* were also seized and destroyed by the police. According to Grosskurth, Edith was devastated (p. 201).

33. Cambridge University Press, 1988.

34. ‘Libertinism and free thought shared a kindred antagonism to religion and religious establishments as enforcers of moral laws and codes of conduct’ reflecting what McCalman calls ‘the underside of the Enlightenment’ (p. 208).

