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In 1836, Richard Robinson murdered Helen Jewett, a former domestic servant from Maine working as a prostitute in New York. Jewett's death captivated the nation as newspapers and pamphlets detailed accounts of her seduction, fall from society, and life as a sex worker. The sensational stories about Jewett's early life were of particular interest for audiences wondering how a girl, who lived and worked in a prominent Protestant family household, could willingly choose to become a prostitute. George Wilkes created a novelization of Helen Jewett's life in 1878, which created a public image of Jewett and Robinson decades after the trial for Jewett's murder. My research paper will examine the following question: How did the Christian influences in the childhoods of Helen Jewett and Richard Robinson shape the ways in which George Wilkes viewed the joint victimhood and guilt of Jewett and Robinson in the late nineteenth century? I will argue that George Wilkes used the narrative of Genesis to frame his novelization of Helen Jewett's murder and the trial of Richard Robinson in order to discuss how family units and employers influenced the moral upbringing of youths in America through Christianity.

Who was Helen Jewett? To begin with, Helen Jewett was one of many aliases used by Dorcas Doyen during her time as a prostitute living in New York.[1] It was not uncommon for prostitutes to adopt a new name when they were employed in brothels or other protected houses as sex workers.[2] Doyen's new name 'Helen' was sometimes recorded as 'Hellen' or 'Ellen' in the press and in the trial papers from her murder. Official court records from an assault case dating before Jewett's murder show her signature as, "Helen Jewett."[3] For the purpose of this

[1] Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-century New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999) 47-8.
[2] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 47-8.
[3] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 87.

paper, Doyen will be referred to by the name that she herself picked: Helen Jewett. Jewett was born in 1813 in Maine and moved to New York as she began her work as a prostitute. Jewett was only 22 years old when Richard Robinson murdered her with an axe and set fire to her bedroom in hopes of covering up his crime. After Jewett's body was discovered by the brothel's own, the police were called in to investigate her murder. Robinson was arrested the following day and stood trial for Helen Jewett's murder, but was ultimately acquitted. Jewett's murder and Robinson's trial captivated the nation and created discussions on prostitution, moral reform, and the role of youths in the city.

Historiography on Helen Jewett

The literature on Helen Jewett tends to focus on the how journalists in the early nineteenth century discussed topics of sex and death in relation to Robinson's trial. Daniel A. Cohen, "The Beautiful Female Murder Victim: Literary Genres and Courtship Practices in the Origins of a Cultural Motif, 1590-1850," looks at a similar murder case in 1801, Massachusetts. Cohen examines the highly sexual language that was used to describe a female murder victim and the ways in which the press eroticized murder predating the death of Helen Jewett.[4] Michael Buozis's article "Reading Helen Jewett's Murder: The Historiographical Problems and Promises of Journalism," challenges the views historians have on journalism in the nineteenth century surrounding sensationalized murder. Buozis argues that historians should focus less on how the

[4] Daniel A. Cohen, "The Beautiful Female Murder Victim: Literary Genres and Courtship Practices in the Origins of a Cultural Motif, 1590-1850," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 2 (1997) 277-306.

press inaccurately recorded details of murder cases, and instead focus on the ways in which the newspapers made sense of the events in their contemporary moment.[5]

David Anthony's article, "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids, Men, and the Sensational Public Sphere in Antebellum New York," builds on the sexualization of Helen Jewett and how the press talked about issues surrounding sex, gender, and class in the wake of her murder. Particularly the language used by newspapers to describe Helen Jewett's body gained historians' attention as they connected the gothic, poetic descriptions of a corpse and the sexualized beauty of Jewett's female anatomy.[6] The focus is mainly on the written descriptions of Jewett, rather than a close examination of the images printed in newspapers. Such is the case with Patricia Cline Cohen's "The Mystery of Helen Jewett: Romantic Fiction and the Eroticization of Violence," which looks at the descriptions of Jewett in newspapers through the lens of novels and poetry in the 1830's.[7]

Additionally, David Anthony's article looks at how newspapers covering the murder viewed Richard Robinson as a new type of villain.[8] Robinson had come from a well-respected Protestant household and employer, making him an unlikely murder suspect. Anthony argues that this new profile of a criminal threatened America's middle class and pointed to troubling issues in city life, including the growth of prostitution in urban settings.[9] Protestant reform groups were baffled that a young man, who they viewed as having a promising future, could commit such a brutal crime. This conundrum resulted in the need for the press and reform groups

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[5]Michael Buozis, "Reading Helen Jewett's Murder: The Historiographical Problems and Promises of Journalism," *American Journalism* 35, no. 3 (2018) 334-36.

[6] David Anthony, "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids, Men, and the Sensational Public Sphere in Antebellum New York," *American Literature* 69, no. 3 (1997) 488.

[7] Patricia Cline Cohen, "The Mystery of Helen Jewett: Romantic Fiction and the Eroticization of Violence," *Legal Studies Forum* 17 (1993) 133-45.

[8] David Anthony, "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids," 487.

[9] David Anthony, "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids," 488.

to contextualize Robinson's actions in relation to familiar criminal behavior, which highlighted the evils of city life and its ability to corrupt youth. Newspapers in New York utilized the story of Helen Jewett to create a "male panic" that was wrapped in the class politics of the 1830's.[10] Patricia Cline Cohen's "Unregulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City," examines how the teenaged Richard Robinson was viewed in the public as an innocent young man who fell victim to the vice and sin of the city, as well as the rise of prostitution in urban areas.

The definitive work on Helen Jewett comes from Patricia Cline Cohen's monograph, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York*, which provides a detailed look into the lives of Helen Jewett and Richard Robinson, their relationship, and the public reaction to Jewett's murder. Cohen looks in-depth at the accounts of Helen Jewett's and Richard Robinson's childhood, their love letters, and the reaction to the murder in the press. While Cohen details the ways in which their childhood and Christian backgrounds contributed to the public's opinions about the story of Jewett's murder, her work is centered on the reactions leading up to the trial. The time period Cohen focuses on is from 1810-1840, and while she gives context for Robinson's post trial life in Texas, the bulk of her work is in analyzing newspapers surrounding the trial.[11]

The articles and books about Helen Jewett tend to focus on the time between her murder and trial to understand the social, political, and economic implications of Richard Robinson's actions and the public response in the mid 1830's. What has been given less attention by scholars are the ways in which Jewett's story continued to evolve in the 1840's through the 1870's in

[10] David Anthony, "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids," 489.
[11] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 291-360.

connection to moral reform, including issues of gender, race, and temperance in American society. Given that the murder gained such immense public recognition, it is critical to understand Helen Jewett's story as it changed in scope beyond the trial itself. This paper will examine the Protestant influences in the lives of Jewett and Robinson as told by George Wilkes, the public portrayal of the crime through pamphlets and novelizations, and the social reforms Protestants championed in the wake of Jewett's murder in the late nineteenth century.

George Wilkes

Multiple narratives on the life of Helen Jewett permeated newspapers in the aftermath of her murder and following the trial, all with different versions of her life story. While scholars tend to ignore the novelization of Helen Jewett and Richard Robinson by George Wilkes, due to its highly fictionalized telling of events, his adaptation of Jewett's story demonstrates the lasting themes from the newspapers during the time of the murder. Buozis had made the argument that stories surrounding murder in the press should be examined not just in terms of their accuracy, but for their contextualization of events. With this in mind, Wilkes' pamphlets and works showed the parts of the story that the public latched onto out of all the various accounts, regardless of accuracy. George Wilkes also had the benefit of writing after the trial and with a political perspective on class, gender, race, and religion. By breaking down his pamphlets, the reader can see the lasting commentary that permeated through the American public in the post-trial timeframe.

George Wilkes was a self-proclaimed radical Republican, who envisioned himself as representative of the working class in America.[12] Wilkes's own opinion of his humble origins, as the son of an artisan, led him to view access to wealth as inseparably linked to the class one is born into.[13] He worked as a law clerk and transitioned into political journalism, covering stories from criminal cases and even reviewing brothels in a publication of the *Sunday Flash*.[14] His emphasis on sex made him a controversial, but influential, figure in the nineteenth century. He founded the *National Police Gazette* to expose corruption in the court system in connection to class and access to wealth.[15] His pamphlets and political journalism utilized racist rhetoric and sexualized language to produce sensational stories for his readers, including issues labeled as pornography.[16]

Wilkes used the story of Helen Jewett and Richard Robinson as the setting for his social critic on class, corruption, and morality. Wilkes wrote the novelization of Jewett's life in 1878, entitled *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, who was so Mysteriously Murdered*. Many characters in his pamphlet were fictional and served the purpose of creating dialogue with Jewett on issues surrounding race, sex, and religion. The very fact that Wilkes was writing a pamphlet centered around Helen Jewett and invoked novelized language to describe her life made his work controversial. To counter criticism, Wilkes stated in the introduction his intentions for discussing the life and death of Helen Jewett by framing it as a horrific crime with a moral lesson for the reader:

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[12] Alexander Saxton, "George Wilkes: The Transformation of a Radical Ideology," *American Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1981) 438.

[13] Alexander Saxton, "George Wilkes," 438.

[14] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 179.

[15] Alexander Saxton, "George Wilkes," 439. For more on the crime system in the Early Republic see Mark Seltzer, "The Crime System," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2004): 557-83.

[16] Alexander Saxton, "George Wilkes," 441.

The birth and parentage of Helen Jewett and her childhood love. In commencing the relation of one of the most horrid tragedies that ever froze the blood, or in its harrowing details paralyzed the pulsations of the human heart, we are involuntarily disposed, like one entering the chamber of the dead, to pause upon the threshold, and for a moment to fortify our breasts with percepts which may dispose us to the lesson with a sense of profit. There are reasons, however, in this case which induce us to forego the inclination, and we will, therefore, rather choose to leave the reader to receive his moral from the course and body of the narrative itself.[17]

The Early Life of Helen Jewett: The Modern Eve

Wilkes stated that Helen Jewett, whom he has identified as Dorcas Doyen, was of Welsh parentage born in Augusta, Maine.[18] He wrote that "Their circumstances were humble, the father being a mechanic, dependent on his daily labor for his subsistence."[19] Jewett's humble origins echoed Wilkes' own experience as a son of a cabinet maker and represented the type of the rhetoric and ideology Wilkes had supported throughout his career. The dependency of Helen's father on his employer demonstrated the ability for the upper class to control the working class through wage labor. Corruption in the nineteenth century was thought of in terms of dependency. If an individual was dependent on an employer for their income, they would be bound to make political decisions in their employer's economic interest. [20] Freedom from corruption was tied to land ownership, which Jewett's family never obtained.

Alcohol played a critical role in George Wilkes's portrayal of Helen Jewett's father. Wilkes described the labor of Jewett's mother as providing a source of additional income to make up for the "deficits sometimes occasioned by her husband's drunken sprees."[21] There was a

[17] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, who was so Mysteriously Murdered* (Philadelphia: Barclay & Co, 1878) 19.

[18] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett,* 19. For more information on emigration and Wilkes se Alexander Saxton, "George Wilkes," 439.

[19] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett,* 19.

[20] For more information on dependency, corruption, and wage labor see J. M. Opal, *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England* (Philadelphia, Penn: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

[21] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett,* 19

need for Wilkes to provide some moral deficiency in Helen Jewett's parentage to explain her own moral ambiguity as an adult. The theme of intemperance was demonstrated not only in Jewett, but in her childhood lover, Sumner. Sumner was a friend of Helen's and connected to her experience of haven a drunken father. The connection between Sumner and Helen on account of their intemperate fathers pushed them together and sparked affection between the two.[22] Sumner awakened in Jewett passion and sexual desire which was revealed to Helen's father.

> As the intemperate habits of old Doyen (Jewett's father) increased upon him, the intercourse of the two children grew closer, and, finally, their impunity from check or observation emboldened them to a degree which led them to even step beyond the remotest limits of reserve. An accident one day betrayed this state of things to the father. His rage knew no bounds, and, half maimed under his blows, the boy was driven from the house.[23]

It is unclear the degree to which Helen and Sumner expressed their affection to each other at this time. What is clear from Wilkes' version of events, however, is the use of alcohol demonstrated how intemperance in families had the potential to create inappropriate behavior in their children. There was a need to find a moral failing in Jewett's childhood to explain why she became a prostitute. Wilkes made the argument that the intemperance of Sumner's and Jewett's fathers caused them to form inappropriate connections with one another as children. Wilkes described Helen as possessing a fire of passion that was "Undeveloped, and in childhood," that could be awakened by Sumner.[24] It was for those reasons that Sumner and Helen were separated to prevent a sexual awakening in Helen. This separation helped to safeguard Jewett's innocence and purity, but did not remove her from the immorality of her father's drinking habits.

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[22] For more information on religion in the Temperance movement see John L. Merrill, "The Bible and the American Temperance Movement: Text, Context, and Pretext," *The Harvard Theological Review* 81, no. 2 (1988): 145-70.

[23] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 20.*

[24] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 20.*

> But as she (Helen) increased in age, her father saw the impropriety of retaining a child of her quick and shrewd perceptions in such close proximity to the example of a parent's vices. He Therefore cast about for some situation in which to place her, where she might be brought up with a due regard to worldly profit and mental cultivation. She was a general favorite in the neighborhood, and he had no difficulty getting her a place in the family of Judge Weston…Afterward her father died, his death being the result, according to the statement of the judge, of intemperate habits.[25]

In order to remove Helen from the corruption of her father, Judge Weston accepted guardianship over his new charge. This was a critical aspect of Helen Jewett's childhood and moral upbringing in a well-respected Protestant household. After news broke of Jewett's murder, newspapers rushed to learn more about her childhood and connection to Judge Weston. Weston penned a letter to be distributed in the *Herald* which clarified his role in Jewett's childhood. He mentioned Helen Jewett's real name was Dorcas Doyen, and that she was the daughter of a mechanic prone to "Intemperate habits."[26] His family took in young Helen Jewett and provided her with an education and Christian upbringing. Weston wrote that Jewett was an avid reader and showed a zeal for education in Sunday school.[27] This highlighted how Weston's family fulfilled their Christian duty to educate Jewett so she would read the Bible and attend church.

When it came to Jewett's seduction, Weston averted any blame on the part of him or his wife. He wrote that he and his family had no knowledge of Helen's improper conduct while in his home and that when such allegations were brought to his attention and were proven to have merit, Jewett was forced to leave and take up residence with her distant relations. Weston finished his letter by stating that "The profligate life to which she abandoned herself, has been followed by a very tragic end. Both are to be deeply deplored; and I very sincerely hope that the

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[25] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 21*.
[26] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 37.
[27] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 38.

catastrophe, cruel as it was, may not be without its moral uses."[28] Weston's letter accomplished three goals: it absolved his family of Jewett's actions, confirmed the allegations of intemperance on the part of Helen's father, and served as a condemnation of prostitution and murder in the same breath.

Weston purposefully avoided writing a detailed account of Helen Jewett's childhood at his family's residence and refused to identify the man who allegedly seduced Jewett. The reason for this was to distance Weston from knowledge of behavior considered to be inappropriate and damaging to the important position his family held in society. The best way to clear any stain that Jewett's death cast on his family was to limit any discussion on such topics in relation to his wife and children and instead turn the attention to the Christian charity they provided Helen and how she betrayed the trust they showed her. In Wilkes' fictitious version of events on Helen Jewett's time in the Weston's household, he echoes the position Weston held and simply adds details to create a story around the order of events in the open letter.

According to Wilkes, Helen's time at the Weston's home was a period of growth from childhood into a bright, young woman as she continued her relationship with Sumner in secret.[29] It was Helen's mature and romantic spirit that drove her towards her own ambition, and in that regard her destruction. A critical part of Helen Jewett's maturity was characterized in her sexual awakening by Sumner and her avid reading of erotic novels.[30] This framing of Jewett's sexual desires emphasized the external factors that awakened her sexuality, rather than developing

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[28] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 38.

[29] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 22.*

[30] For more information on erotic novels in the nineteenth century see Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Patricia Cline Cohen, "The Mystery of Helen Jewett: Romantic Fiction and the Eroticization of Violence," *Legal Studies Forum* 17 (1993): 133-45; Daniel A. Cohen, "The Beautiful Female Murder Victim: Literary Genres and Courtship Practices in the Origins of a Cultural Motif, 1590-1850," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 2 (1997): 277-306; Karen Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination (*Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998).

female sexual desires based on the internal emotional growth during adolescents. At the core of Wilkes' argument of female sexuality was the notion that the desire on the part of a woman to engage in sex was controlled by external factors created by men. Wilkes saw Sumner and romantic novels as the means by which Helen Jewett was indoctrinated as a fully sexualized woman, instead of portraying the complexity of sexual development and desires for women. Wilkes did not understand how women could engage in sexual intercourse as a result of their own desires without the influence of male sexuality.

Wilkes sets the scene for Helen Jewett's sexual awakening in the home of a "Negress" who was employed by Sumner's family.[31] This added detail to the story created a separation between Judge Weston's home and the site of Helen Jewett's "shame," which helped further distance the Weston family from Jewett.[32] It also utilized the racist rhetoric of African American women as highly sexualized individuals who engaged in sexually immoral behavior.[33] The nameless African American woman was used by Wilkes as a literary tool to personify ideas of animalistic behaviors towards sexual desires. Wilkes portrayed the servant as an "old hag" who provided Jewett with a space to pursue her "Animal infatuation," with Sumner, and later came to regret her actions.[34] Wilkes described the moment in which the African American character he crafted had a reckoning with her views on sex and her Christian values. Wilkes wrote that the servant turned Helen Jewett away from her home saying "They had made her sinful enough already, and if she harbored or countenanced 'em any longer, she would expect some judgement

[31] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 22.*

[32] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 22.*

[33] For more information on the sexualization of African American women see Laurel B. Watson, Dawn Robinson, Franco Dispenza, and Negar Nazari, "African American Women's Sexual Objectification Experiences: A Qualitative Study," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (December 2012): 458–75.

[34] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 23.*

of the Lord to fall upon her."[35] Wilkes viewed Christianity as a form of moral restraint to counter sexual behaviors.

After it was discovered that Helen Jewett had engaged in sexual intercourse, Judge Weston had her removed from his household. Wilkes described this moment in Jewett's life as the "Expulsion from paradise."[36] Wilkes created a scene in which Helen Jewett walks to the nearest town and along the way sees houses with gated gardens she cannot enter.[37] This was in reference to the exile of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after committing the original sin. Wilkes used Biblical imagery to help portray Jewett as a modern-day Eve, who was corrupted by temptation and expelled from paradise. Wilkes used the story of the fall from Genesis as a way of showing the reader that because of Jewett's own actions, she had lost the protections she had with Judge Weston's family. By framing Jewett's story in this way, Wilkes made Jewett a more recognizable and sympathetic figure. Readers were not used to empathizing with a prostitute, so by portraying Helen Jewett as a modern-day Eve, Wilkes allowed the reader to see themselves in Jewett.

Wilkes implicitly created a Genesis style narrative around the events of Jewett's early life in which the African American domestic servant was given the role of the serpent who leads Jewett towards Sumner. Sumner's character was used as a way of personifying the temptation of the apple, rather than representing the figure of Adam. Sumner was Helen Jewett's gateway into learning about sexual intercourse and losing her innocence. Sumner does not suffer the consequences that Adam did, and instead Wilkes focused on Jewett as the figure of Eve expelled from her protected home. After Jewett left the Weston's home, she confronted the domestic

[35] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 23.*
[36] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 22.*
[37] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 27.*

servant and stomped on her with her bare feet. Wilkes created this domestic scene to show Jewett's anger at this woman for allowing her to give into temptation and lose her virtue.

Figure 1: "Bounding forward, she threw the old hag upon the floor, and in great fury jumped upon her." George Wilkes, The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 24.

After leaving the home of the woman she assaulted, Jewett accepted that she was marked by sin and exiled herself as an outcast in society.[38] Jewett moved to New York to work as a prostitute as a way of resigning herself to a life of shame. By doing this, Jewett was seen to have had a sense of redemption for her sin. Wilkes does not have her assume a false identity, but instead demonstrated how Jewett became a prostitute as a form of self-punishment. This contextualized Jewett's life as a sex worker and created a level of sympathy for Jewett. The guilt that Jewett harbored over her loss of virtue was not exacerbated by her career as a prostitute, but rather her way of accepting her fall and punishment. Wilkes portrayed Jewett as an innocent

[38] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 25.*

child who could not escape the immoral influence of her father and Sumner, and was resigned to the life of a prostitute as a result of immoral sexual behavior.

Wilkes' narrative did accurately report that Jewett was a domestic servant in Maine, worked for the Weston's and received an education from them, and was dismissed as a result of her sexual encounters as a teenager. It was not confirmed by Judge Weston in his open letter who Jewett had been sexually involved with so Wilkes created the fictious character of Sumner and the African American domestic servant to use for his own framing of Jewett's fall. In terms of Jewett's move to New York and early life as a prostitute, Patricia Cline Cohen argues that Jewett's decision was motivated by the desire to escape the entrapment of domestic servitude and marriage.[39] Cohen paints the image of Helen Jewett as a young woman who used her body as an economic asset that allowed her the means to live the life that she chose. This is important to keep in mind when analyzing the image Wilkes created of Jewett for his own narrative and argument on her life and death.

Richard Robinson and the Murder of Helen Jewett: From Adam to Cain

Richard Robinson was born in 1818 to a well-respected Protestant family.[40] His father had been a farmer in Durham, Connecticut. His land ownership made him the perfect model for the idealized agrarian society, free from the corruption of the market.[41] He had served eight terms as a representative for Durham in the Connecticut state legislature between 1820-1830.[42]

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[39] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 135-165.

[40] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 202-218

[41] For more information on dependency, corruption, and wage labor see J. M. Opal, *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England* (Philadelphia, Penn: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

[42] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 202-218

The reputation that the Robinson family had gartered as landowning farmers had helped defend Richard as a son of a respected family. Robinson's father was still able to serve on the legislature after the acquittal of his son, Richard, in 1837.[43] In order to separate the respectability of Robinson's family with the character of Richard Robinson, Wilkes falsely reported that Richard's father had died in his childhood.[44] This allowed Wilkes to craft a profile of Richard Robinson as a villain, detached from his family's moral standing in the community.

In this version of events, Wilkes portrayed Robinson as a young man vulnerable to the evils of the city. Richard Robinson was representative of a new generation of young men who wanted to move into urban cities and create a new life outside of the rural settings their parents had known.[45] Robinson had initially chosen to seek employment and housing with his relations in the city, which made his move acceptable to his anxious mother.[46] Wilkes wrote that Richard Robinson soon tired of the constant oversight of his relation, and chose to find employment with Mr. Hoxie. This allowed for Robinson to have employment during the day, and seek his own lodgings and entertainment in the evenings. Once out of the watchful eye of his employer, Robinson would visit brothels and engage in the sexual immorality the city provided for him.

Wilkes wrote, "What else could be expected of him? What else can be expected of the majority of youths similarly situated, and who, like him, are brought from the quiet routine of country life to be plunged into the midst of all the intoxicating pleasures and dazzling temptation of this great Babel of enjoyment."[47] The use of the phrase "Babel of enjoyment," was in

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[43] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 202-218

[44] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 34.*

[45] David Anthony, "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids, Men, and the Sensational Public Sphere in Antebellum New York," *American Literature* 69, no. 3 (1997) 488.

[46] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 34.*

[47] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 35.*

reference to another narrative found in Genesis.[48] Like the story of Adam and Eve, the tower of Babel was representative of the competitive nature between men and God. The tower of Babel was meant to touch the heavens, which was seen by God as a sign of human pride and arrogance for their own ambition. It had been self-determined ambition that drove young men, like Robinson, away from their rural family units towards the city and sin. Wilkes used the allusion to the tower of Babel as a way of portraying the pleasures of the city as a form of human pride and sin against God. These pleasures came in the form of alcohol and prostitutes.

When Robinson came to New York in the 1830s, prostitution was already a source of anxiety among moral reform groups.[49] William A. Alcott, a physician and teacher, had written several books and pamphlets geared towards young men about the dangers of prostitution and sexually transmitted disease. In 1834, Alcott published *The Young Man's Guide*, a book describing prostitutes as the culprits of early death and disease for young men in the city.[50] Sylvester Graham, a reform activist focused on diet and health, toured cities between 1832-1837, and to deliver his "Lecture to Young Men on Chastity."[51] For both Alcott and Graham, they feared the dangers of sex to the health of young men and the rise of prostitution with sexually transmitted diseases in the youth.

The public had difficulty viewing Richard Robinson as a murderer. His youth and family background differed from the popularized depiction of lower-class criminals portrayed in the press.[52] This new type of villain had created the "Excitement" in the press over the arrest of

[48] NRSV Genesis 11:1–9

[49] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 203.

[50] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 203.

[51] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 203.

[52] For more discussion on the views of young men and violence during the aftermath of the Jewett murder see Jeffrey S. Adler, "Young Men and Violence," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 5 (2000): 657-68; Patricia Cline Cohen, "Unregulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City," *Radical History Review* 52 (1992): 33-52;

Robinson for the murder of Helen Jewett. *The Herald* reported in response to the public's interest in the crime that "It is not to be wondered at that such an excitement does exist as was manifested in every part of the city yesterday, in relation to this dreadful and most unparalleled atrocity. The high respectability of the family and the connections of the unfortunate young man… have rarely, if ever been connected with the occurrence of any homicide, however, heart-rending and awful, in any country."[53]

Wilkes used the excitement over the figure of Richard Robinson in order to challenge the audience to reassess the public view of Robinson. This new image that Wilkes portrayed of Robinson was not one of an innocent young man, but instead as someone who had been corrupted by the sins of city life. Wilkes represented the city as a source of intoxicating pleasures, which showcased how the immoral behavior caused youths to become drunk with sin. Richard Robinson took on the role of Adam and was drawn into temptation by the vice of the city. This helped Wilkes shift the depiction of an innocent young man, into a man who was participating in immoral city life before he had encountered Helen Jewett.

Wilkes described the fateful meeting between Helen Jewett and Richard Robinson in a New York theater. In his version of events, Jewett was standing on the stairs when two drunken men pushed her down.[54] After the metaphorical fall of Jewett from her earlier life, Wilkes wrote this scene in which she literally falls after men push her. It demonstrated to the reader two key themes in Jewett's story, the first being the dangers of alcohol and the second the disregard men had for her body. Wilkes placed the blame for Jewett's fall on the intoxication of the men and

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David Anthony, "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids, Men, and the Sensational Public Sphere in Antebellum New York," *American Literature* 69, no. 3 (1997) 488.

[53] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 19-34.

[54] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 40.*

their use of her body for their own amusement, without consideration for the consequences she would suffer. It was after her fall that Jewett looked up and saw Richard Robinson, who helped her up. It was by seeing Jewett in this disheveled state that Robinson formed what Wilkes characterized as an obsession with Jewett.

Figure 2: "The unfeeling and intoxicated scoundrel dealt Helen a cruel blow, which sent her head-long down the dizzy flight of stairs." George Wilkes, The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 40.

It was during this period of obsession in which Robinson and Jewett formed their attachment as he requested her company to the theater and they became lovers.[55] It was difficult for young men to gain experience dating women without the social pressures surrounding courtship.[56] Jewett was able to offer men a chance to practice writing love letters, going on outings to the theater, and engaging in sexual acts outside of the expectations of a traditional courtship.[57] This high-class version of prostitution was popular among the young men who moved into the city and wanted an emotional relationship, in addition to a sexual one. The "male panic" of the 1830's overstates the sexualized nature of prostitution in the wake of Jewett's death and ignored how Jewett operated mainly as an escort.[58]

George Wilkes had the collection of letters found in Jewett's bedroom which gave him a lens into how she wrote to her lovers. Jewett used the language she had learned through reading novels to craft love letters and create a persona for herself as a fallen woman who could be saved by their love.[59] This lent her love letters an element of verisimilitude which Wilkes took to be true affection. Wilkes wrote a love story for Jewett and Robinson based on their correspondence and created the base for their fall out using his own imagined idea of their relationship. Wilkes made the character of Jewett want to pursue marriage with Robinson, which he refused on account of his plans to marry another woman.[60] This caused Jewett to threaten to expose Robinson to his employer and ruin him.[61]

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[55] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 42.*

[56] For more information on courtship practices see Daniel A. Cohen, "The Beautiful Female Murder Victim: Literary Genres and Courtship Practices in the Origins of a Cultural Motif, 1590-1850," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 2 (1997) 277-306.

[57] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 180-202.

[58] David Anthony, "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids, Men, and the Sensational Public Sphere in Antebellum New York," *American Literature* 69, no. 3 (1997) 488.

[59] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 218-247.

[60] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 44.*

[61] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 44.*

He was young and capable of redeeming the errors of the past, she was already shipwrecked upon the shoals of honor, and capable only of luring others and herself further upon the strand. In speculation such as this did the young villain at length persuade himself that he was unjustly involved with one who had no right to live to his destruction, and against whose fate his own should not go down. If Helen were to die, he thought, he could once again breathe free.[62]

Wilkes argued that Robinson viewed Helen Jewett as a lost soul capable of ruining his own ambition. While Robinson believed that Jewett was already ruined, he saw his escape from her influence. Wilkes described the moment that Robinson thought of murdering Jewett as "The devil tempted him, by the facility of stealthy egress in that quarter, with an idea of murder and escape which never left his mind till he baptized the black conception in the blood of the poor creature at his side."[63] The imagery of the devil tempting Robinson to commit murder was used by Wilkes as a way of explaining how this young man, from a good Protestant family, could contemplate murder. The vivid depiction of the pervasive thought staying in his mind until he "Baptized the black conception," was meant to depict the internal struggle between morality and temptation that Richard faced. Unfortunately, Robinson, having become drunk with sin from the vice of the city, had abandoned the Christian morality of his youth. Wilkes created a scene for the reader in which Robinson sat at a bar drinking wine when he finally decided to give into his sinful desire, and murder Helen Jewett.[64]

Wilkes' account of the murder came from the testimony of Mrs. Townsend, the brothel keeper where Jewett lived and the coroner report on the body of Jewett. Robinson had visited Jewett that night under the name of Frank Rivers. This was the false name Robinson had adopted when last he spoke to Helen Jewett. Robinson had told Jewett to use this name when greeting

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[62] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 45.*
[63] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 45.*
[64] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 51.*

him at the door to the brothel. Robinson was wearing a dark cloak and hide his face when Mrs. Townsend recalled her meeting with him at the door.[65] Jewett had greeted Robinson by saying, "Ah, my dear Frank, how glad I am you have come." After Jewett and Robinson retired into Jewett's bedroom at 9, Mrs. Townsend brought up a bottle of wine.[66] Jewett offered Townsend a glass, but she refused. Wilkes depicted the moment Townsend left Jewett's room.

> The door closed upon her, this poor creature, virtually bade good-night to the rest of the world forever. With the departure of Mrs. Townsend, she looked her last upon a human face, save that of the demon on the bed if his might so be called. Gradually all the inmates of that house of sinful luxury retired and with the rest, the beautiful Augustan, still blooming to the eye as when she left her home, sought on her tumbled sheets and in a serpent's arms the soft repose of sleep.[67]

Within this passage, the reader can see the shifting image of Robinson from an innocent Adam figure, into the serpent a symbol of deception. Robinson took the axe he had smuggled into the brothel house and killed Helen Jewett with three strokes.[68] He set fire to her bed chamber and fled into the night.[69] The brothel keeper witnessed his departure and reported her statement with the police. The next day, Robinson was brought back to the brothel by the police who identified him as Frank Rivers. Robinson was made to look at the body of Helen Jewett. This was a common practice in the eighteenth century, the belief was that the guilty person would cause the corpse to bleed fresh blood if they were around the body and they would show signs of their guilt when confronted with their own crime.[70] Robinson only said, "This is a bad business," and maintained that he was innocent.[71]

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[65] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 52.*
[66] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 52.*
[67] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 52-53.*
[68] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 53.*
[69] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 53.*
[70] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 13.
[71] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 57.*

At Robinson's trial, his employer and male friends spoke to his moral character and Protestant upbringing. Mr. Hoxie had been a well-known member of moral reform groups and donated a large sum of money to their campaigns. The moral character of Mr. Hoxie was used to defend the character of Richard Robinson. Robinson was sheltered by the reputations of his family and employer. This angered Wilkes who had dedicated his professional life to exposing class-based corruption in the New York court system in the press. Wilkes' wrote with resentment that the "Crafty lawyer endeavored to arouse sympathy by repeatedly referring to his client as 'this boy.'"[72] The press painted the image of an innocent young man who was led into sin by the wicked Helen Jewett. Wilkes on the other hand had used his publication to show how Robinson had engaged in sexual immorality before his meeting with Jewett.

Wilkes argued that Robinson was guilty of murdering Jewett and was acquitted on account of Jewett's status as a prostitute and Robinson's innocent image in the papers.[73] The case against Robinson was dependent on the testimonies of prostitutes living in the brothel and were treated with disrespect and skepticism. There was further gossip in the press that a prostitute within the house could have committed the crime out of jealousy of Jewett. Wilkes' finished his pamphlet by writing "Like Cain, his execrable prototype, he fled into the shadows of an unknown exile, with nothing behind him in the shape of recollection but universal detestation and the public curse!"[74]

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[72] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 63.*

[73] For notes from the trial see District Attorney's Indictment Papers. *People vs. Richard P. Robinson*. April 9, 1836. Rogers, David L. Dr., Autopsy report. People vs. Robinson, April 9, 1836. District Attorney's Indictment Papers. The Trial of Richard P. Robinson for the Murder of Helen Jewett. New York City, 1836 In American State Trials: Scholarly Resources, 1972. Wilkes, George. "The Trial of Richard P. Robinson, Before the Court on the 2nd of June, 1836, for the Murder of Helen Jewett, on the Night of the 9th of April, 1836." National Police Gazette. New York, 1849.

[74] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 64.*

The Body of Helen Jewett

The images of Helen Jewett's body demonstrate how her image in the public evolved in the years following her murder. The first image of Jewett to be published in the press was dated April 15, 1836, shortly following her murder. This early image of Jewett depicted her laying in bed with her night dress pulled down, exposing her breasts. This was a highly erotic picture of Jewett that served to reinforce the public opinion of her as a sexual figure. The press used Jewett's occupation as a prostitute to express her entire identity. It was not until more information surrounding her early life in Maine was published that the press began to develop her as a more dynamic character in their publications.

Figure 3: Image of Helen Jewett printed in The Herold April 15, 1836.

The second image of Helen Jewett was more closely tied to the coroner's report on the body of Jewett and the testimony given by Mrs. Townsend at Robinson's trial. Wilkes included the copy of the coroner's report at the end of his pamphlet on Jewett. The examination of the body of Helen Jewett by William Schureman, Esq, coroner at 41 Thomas street recorded, "She was found lying on her back, her head on the left side, bedstead, clothing and articles surrounding her much burned, a quantity of blood on the bed whereon her head lay, the countenance composed as if in sleep."[75] The image below depicted Helen Jewett laying out of her bed on the floor with her room on fire. The image does not show the blood from the blows or the burnt skin as described in the report. It does, however, display Jewett's cleavage as a way of eroticizing the image of her corpse for the reader.

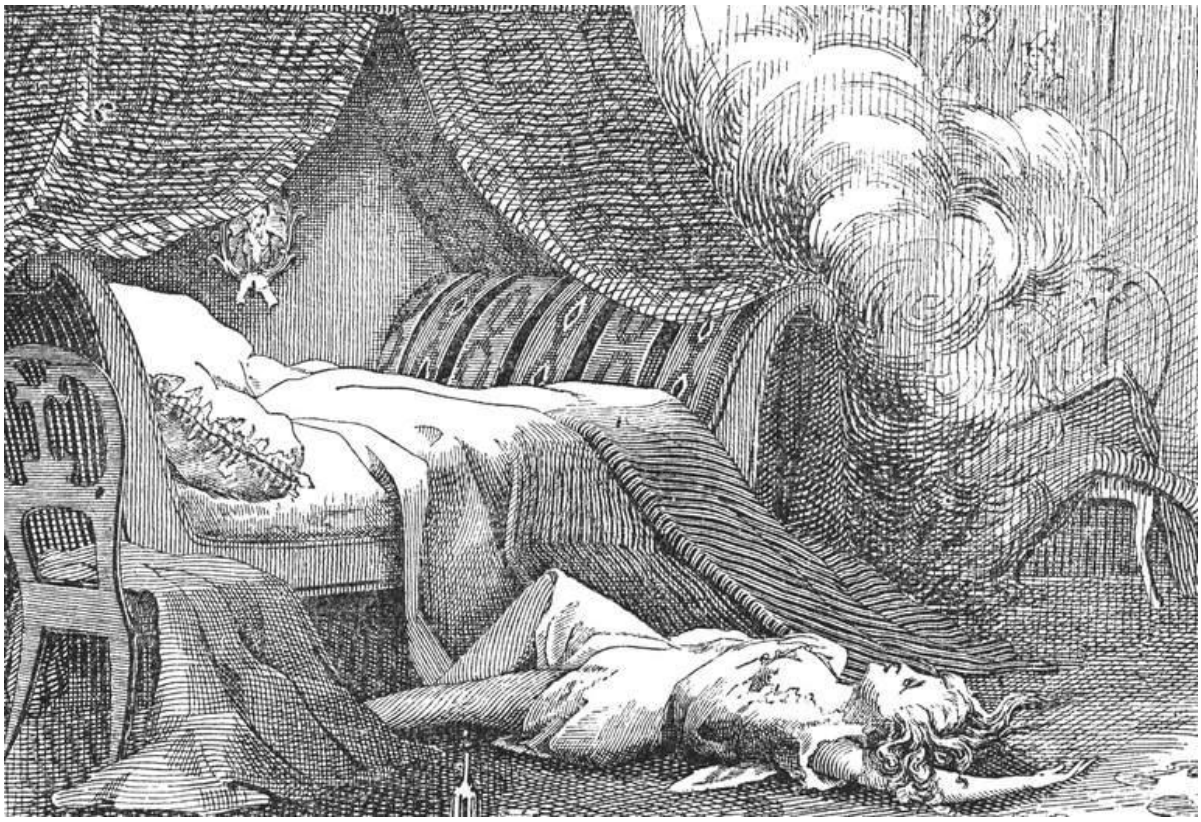

Figure 4: Image of Jewett's body based on the description in William Schureman's report.

[75] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 58.*

Scholars have noted the conflicting views of the erotic depiction of Helen Jewett with the reality of her burnt corpse. Patricia Cline Cohen's, "The Mystery of Helen Jewett: Romantic Fiction and the Eroticization of Violence," and Karen Halttunen's *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination,* break down how the body of Helen Jewett was used to discuss taboo topics relating to sex and death. The juxtaposition of Jewett's body as pure and white with the depictions of blood and fire created an intense image for the imagination of Jewett as a gothic romantic figure. News reporters who had been given access to enter Jewett's bedroom after the coroner had written his report. James Gordan Bennett had recorded his encounter with the body of Jewett in his periodical to the *New York Herald*.

> Slowly I began to discover the lineaments of the corpse, as one would the beauties of a statue of marble. It was the most remarkable sight I ever beheld- I never have, and never expect to see such another. 'My God,' exclaimed I, 'how like a statue! I can scarcely conceive that form to be a corpse.' Not a vein was to be seen. The body looked as white- ass full- as polished as the pure Parian marble. The perfect figure- the exquisite limbs- the fine face- the full arms- the beautiful bust.[76]

Cohen points out that given the coroner had cut the flesh surrounding Jewett's breasts, they would not have appeared to Bennett to be the romantic and erotic version he presented to the *New York Herald*. The unrealistic images of Jewett were created by male reporters to create a portrait of Jewett in the papers that would further captivate their audience. Initially, the only public interest in Jewett came from the fascination with her beauty and body, only later turning to her moral character. Wilkes both used the erotic image of Helen Jewett for his publication and worked to highlight her purity. The third image of Helen Jewett which appeared in Wilkes' pamphlet, depicted Jewett on her bed, as if asleep. This fit with Wilkes' written image of Jewett

[76] Patricia Cline Cohen, *Helen Jewett*, 15.

when Mrs. Townsend left her bedroom and Jewett "Bade good-night to the rest of the world forever."[77]

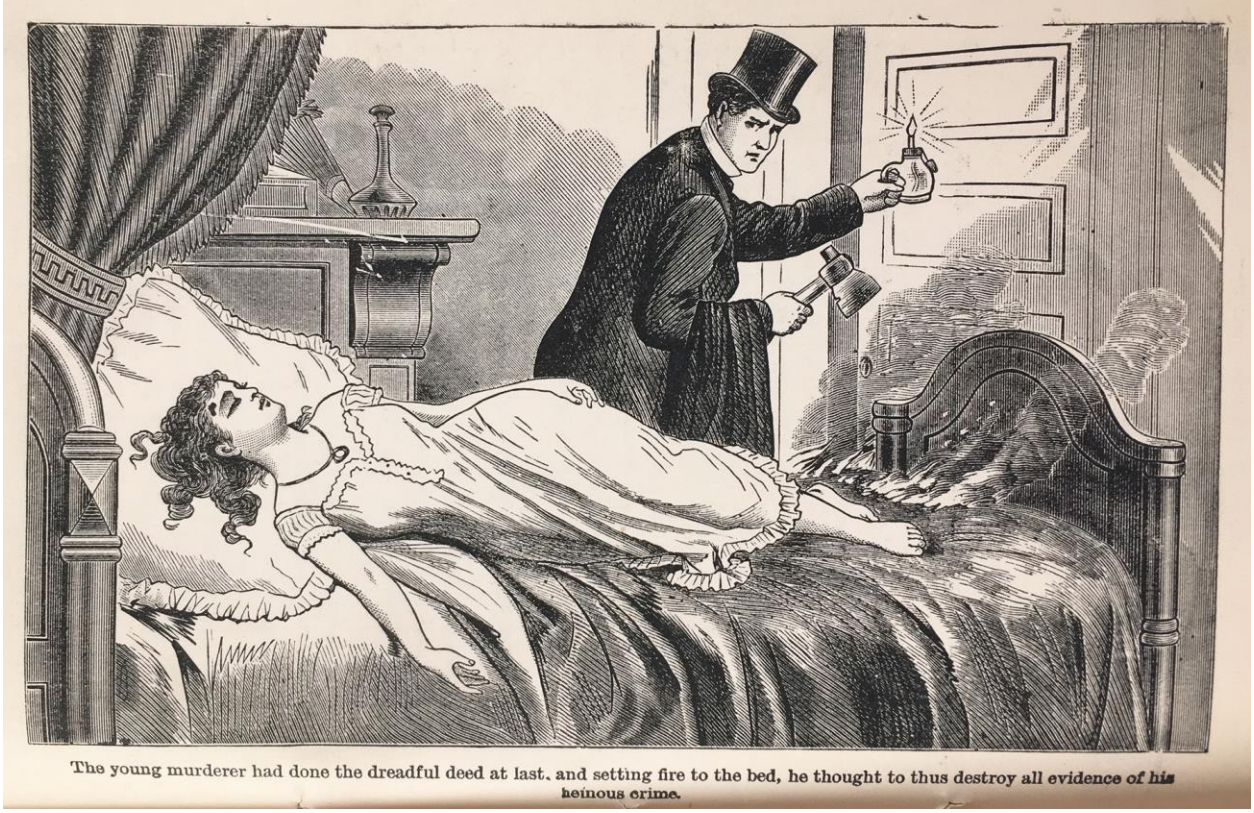

Figure 5: "the young murderer had done the dreadful deed and setting fire to the bed he thought to thus destroy all evidence of his heinous crime." George Wilkes, The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 48.

Hagiography of Helen Jewett

Moral reform groups were unsure how to discuss the story of Helen Jewett's life as a prostitute and her violent murder. On one hand, Jewett was a cautionary tale against the sins of alcohol and the dangers of erotic novels which could be used to advocate for temperance and brothel reforms. On the other side was the argument that discussions on Jewett's life would

[77] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 52-53.*

create a space for inappropriate topics of conversation surrounding sex and prostitution.[78] Newspapers and pamphlets which published biographies and novelizations about Jewett had to frame their discussion about her life as a moral lesson to prevent murder and prostitution by exposing the sins of city life for young men and women. George Wilkes used the cautionary tale rhetoric in order to publish his work on Helen Jewett.[79] At the same time though, Jewett represented a complex figure who was not fully innocent or guilty in the press. Wilkes was able to frame this dichotomy of Jewett's character as her fall and then redemption arc, which helped showcase her virtues and make her into the sympathetic victim.

With Jewett, it was difficult for the press to drum up support to prosecute Robinson, because of the moral failing they perceived Jewett to have had as a prostitute. Jewett did not fit the model of an innocent victim, but Wilkes was able to use her loss of innocence as the setting for her redemption. Rather than portray Jewett as a temptress, guilty of luring young men into sin, Wilkes depicted Jewett as a young woman, forced into prostitution, who fell in love with Robinson. Wilkes created a hagiographical style narrative of the life of Jewett, which helped portray her initial loss of innocence as a critical component of her story as she condemned herself to a life as a prostitute as a form of self-punishment.

Prostitution, eroticism, and asceticism have a tangled history in hagiographical texts. I will turn now to a case study on Mary of Egypt, an early saint from the fifth century. The text on Mary of Egypt was a hagiography in which a prostitute was portrayed as a holy woman living in the desert, who could walk on water, and levitated during prayer.[80] Rather than depict Mary of

[78] Nicolette Severson, ""Devils Would Blush to Look": Brothel Visits of the New York Female Moral Reform Society, 1835 and 1836," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 23, no. 2 (2014), 226-46.
[79] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett*, 19.
[80] Sophorinius, *The Life of Mary of Egypt*

Egypt as a virginal woman, she was described as a hypersexual prostitute with particular emphasis placed on her physical body. Virginia Burrus examines this phenomenon in her book *The Sex Lives of Saints: Erotics of Ancient Hagiography*. Instead of viewing asceticism in hagiographies as an example of repressive sexual morality, Burrus argues that the early accounts of the lives of saints are examples of "countereroticism," not antieroticism. This view highlights the erotic nature of the female bodies of saints and demonstrates the tradition of depicting sexualized bodies with Christian texts. Helen Jewett's body was highly eroticized both in the press and by Wilkes. Instead of viewing the erotic depictions of Jewett by Wilkes as proof of Jewett's own sexual nature, the reader can instead view descriptions of Jewett's body in connection to the historical tradition of eroticized female saints.

Mary of Egypt was described as an erotic prostitute, even though she denied having received money for her sexual activities with men.[81] Mary was portrayed as a temptress who would force men into committing sexual sins as a result of her own lust.[82] This was a different view on female sexuality than seen in Wilkes' version of Jewett's sexual awakening. Wilkes viewed female sexuality in relation to external factors, such as male sexuality. The hagiography of Mary of Egypt demonstrated the internalized hypersexual female sexuality and its ability to influence male sexual desire. Mary of Egypt was isolated in a desert as a form of ascetic practice to avoid men so that she would not tempt them into sexual immorality, because of the internal desire she had to seek out sexual intercourse. The emphasis that Wilkes placed on female sexuality in relationship with male sexuality highlighted how Jewett was not seeking sexual intercourse, but the victim of male sexual desire. Both Mary of Egypt and Helen Jewett can be

[81] Sophorinius, *The Life of Mary of Egypt*
[82] Sophorinius, *The Life of Mary of Egypt*

used to understand the erotic depictions of venerated women, with diverging views on their sexuality.

This points to the question: who was tempting whom? Wilkes does not give the impression that Jewett tempted Robinson into committing sexual sins, but rather that the two formed a mutual connection based on love that resulted in sexual intercourse. This distinction distanced Jewett from images of her as a temptress to sin, but instead demonstrated Robinson's misplaced blame at Jewett for his sexual desires. This emphasized male sexuality over female sexuality. Wilkes argued that Robinson mistakenly viewed Jewett as the cause of his sin and wrote, "She was already shipwrecked upon the shoals of honor, and capable only of luring others and herself further upon the strand."[83]

The view of Jewett as a temptress had been prevalent in the press leading up to Robinson's trial, and had made garnering support for her case difficult. Wilkes was arguing against this version of Jewett as a shipwrecked temptress and instead demonstrated how her murderer had, out of his own shame and guilt, viewed her in this light, but that the public should not. Rather than viewing Jewett as a hypersexualized prostitute, Wilkes argued that Jewett's work as a prostitute was the result of the sexual desires of men, rather than her own lust. This portrayal of Jewett used prostitution as a form of self-punishment for her original sexual sin with Sumner and expulsion from the Weston household. While Jewett was still a highly erotic figure, this framing showcased how her body was used by men for their sexual desires, instead of how she used her own body as a prostitute.

[83] George Wilkes, *The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, 45.*

How does viewing Wilkes' novel on Jewett as a hagiography further the readers understanding of this text? For a start, George Wilkes was a Catholic who wrote for a Protestant audience on topics touching on the moral reform they championed. It is important to understand how this style of narrative and its similarities to hagiographic texts helped portray Jewett as a figure moral reform groups could use when humanizing the social issue of prostitution. This depiction of Jewett does not shy away from her erotic image, but embraces it for the purpose of Wilkes' own argument on sexuality. Wilkes was able to use his publication to create a space for Protestant social reformers to discuss topics relating to sex and murder. Ironically, what made this text so accessible to Protestant moral reformers can be thought of in connection with this traditionally Catholic style of depicting female saints. While Protestants tended to acknowledge martyrs the majority of those figures had been male. Wilkes was able to take Helen Jewett, a female figure, and transform her life as a prostitute into a narrative on the life of a saint. Whether it was intentional on the part of Wilkes or accidental, his pamphlet represents a nineteenth century form of hagiographic narrative of the life and death of Helen Jewett.

Conclusion

The Truly Remarkable Life of the Beautiful Helen Jewett, who was so Mysteriously Murdered is a complex text that utilized Christian notions surrounding temptation, the Biblical narrative of Adam and Eve, and traditional hagiographic depictions of erotic female saints. Christianity was used by Wilkes as a way of making the story of Helen Jewett more accessible to his Protestant audience. The structure of the narrative helped to frame Jewett as a sympathetic character, who had been led into a life not of her choosing, and had paid for it with her life. By breaking down the religious language used in Wilkes' work, the reader can better understand the

ways in which Wilkes used the story of Jewett to advance his own argument on alcohol, prostitution, and morality. While the story of Helen Jewett's murder at first appears to be an outlying event in the Early Republic, her death marked the beginning of a serious debate on the ways in which young adults lived outside the influence of Protestant Christians and spurred virulent opposition to prostitution in the public sphere. This debate continued into the latter half of the century as prostitution, as an institution, became synonymous with the murder of Helen Jewett.

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