DISSECTING THE MONSTER

Mapping Discourses of Medicine, Ethics, and Monstrosity in the Victorian Penny Blood

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RSCA – Report from the Select Committee for Anatomy

OED – *Oxford English Dictionary*

ODNB – *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

DECLARATION REGARDING THE WORK

I, Anna Gasperini, hereby certify that the present thesis is all my own work and that I have not obtained a degree in this University, or elsewhere, on the basis of this work.

INTRODUCTION

"[A]natomy is the very basis of surgery … [It] informs the *head*, gives dexterity to the *hand*, and familiarizes the *heart* with a sort of necessary inhumanity…"

William Hunter, *Two Introductory Lessons*, 67.

"Well, for my part … I think it's wery hard if, after paying rates and taxes … I should be obleeged to go to the workhus, and then be cut up in a surgeon's slaughterhouse at last".

Poor widow Mrs Smith, *The Mysteries of London*, I: 316.

Preface

In 1874, middle-class journalist James Greenwood fulminated against penny dreadfuls in the section of *The Wilds of London* ominously titled "A Short Way to Newgate" (158). The term "penny dreadful" was indeed coined in the 1870s as a "derogatory label" for cheap serialised juvenile fiction (Springhall 326), but soon came to include the dreadfuls' mid-century antecedent, the gory penny blood (Springhall 331). Unlike penny dreadfuls, penny bloods addressed a miscellaneous (both in terms of age and gender) working- and lower-middle-class audience, and were more violent than adventurous. Notably, we are still unconsciously rewriting and retelling penny blood narratives, an exemplary instance being *Sweeney Todd*. The Greenwoods of the Victorian era ensured a long-lasting bad reputation for the bloods and dreadfuls, which excluded them from scholarly attention. However, Victorian popular fiction scholars are progressing the work of research and legitimisation of this genre and, after about seventy years, academia is triggering a response from contemporary popular culture: the TV series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-16) appropriately used scholarly correct information on the penny blood genre. In order to understand why we are reviving penny bloods nowadays we must gain a better understanding of the genre, firstly by starting to consider the function it performed towards its readership and how it engaged with, and was inevitably influenced by, its social, cultural, and political context in the process.

Reading penny bloods, one cannot miss the recurrent, obsessive interest they display for displaced and dismembered corpses, and the appearance of resurrectionists and doctors alongside these corpses. An enquiry into the history of early-to-mid nineteenth-century medicine reveals that penny blood literature

developed in the aftermath of that controversial socio-political phenomenon that was the passing of the 1832 Anatomy Act. This law ratified the use of the corpses of the poor as anatomy training material. The present study investigates this link, mapping the innermost functioning of its subject, the traditionally infamous penny blood, operating what could be defined as the dissection of a (literary) monster. To do so, it conflates the two emerging areas of popular fiction and medical humanities to provide the first examination of a cross-section of specimens of the penny blood genre.

New readers and alternative culture: rise of a monster.

The penny blood, as a literary object, was the product of a set of historical coincidences and of working-class alternative culture. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, a rapid demographic increase coincided with the raise of literacy rates (Eliot 293), following middle-class efforts to provide the masses with just enough education as to make them more manageable after the 1790s Jacobin panic (Altick 141-3). While the concept of leisure reading was not part of the "educationist" agenda (Altick 144), the introduction of basic literacy skills yielded an unexpected, yet inevitable, result: the masses developed a taste for reading. Simultaneously, the book market, which the Napoleonic wars had severely impaired, was finding new life through serialised publications. "Serial", as Graham Law and Robert L. Patten observe, is actually a neologism from the 1830s that marks the "revolution", in Law and Patten's terms, in the publication industry brought about by the invention of the rotary steam press and the paper-making machine (144).

Initially, this market was essentially middle-class in nature. In the 1830s, Dickens, soon followed by other popular authors, made respectable the originally lower-class monthly parts form, publishing his novels in monthly issues. Although cheaper than complete books, the price of 1s. put them out of reach for working-class readers, a tactic that Ian Haywood defines "typical of bourgeois compromise" (*The Revolution in Popular Literature* 163). Gradually, though, serialised publications would answer the demand for cheap reading material created by the new pool of semi-literate readers. The first to capitalise on "the mass publication" market (8), Graham Law observes, were the evangelical groups that embarked on the task of "improving" the masses: their religious tracts were mass-produced and distributed home-to-home for free by the volunteers of various

tracts societies. While the role of religious tracts in promoting literacy among the working class must not be underestimated, as both Louis James (115) and Richard D. Altick (103-4) justly underscore, it is true that they ultimately failed to attract their intended audience. Both the tracts and their distributors conveyed a patronising message of "social sedation" dramatically unsuitable to a climate of "democratic ferment" (Altick 105), they reinforced the traditional social hierarchy, and were often insensitive towards the reality of the poor readers.[1] Furthermore, a crucial shortcoming of the first religious tracts was that they did not contain fiction: due to the "evangelical mistrust of fiction" (James 120), they mostly consisted of "didactic treatises" or biographies of "pious individuals" (James 121). The same shortcoming characterised the literature with which the secular S.D.U.K. provided the libraries attached to the mechanics' institutes, which, though plentiful, was strictly "improving" and "utilitarian" in content (Law and Patten 152). In brief, societies bent upon the improvement of the masses refused to acknowledge the demand for fiction from their audience, whose tastes were "diverse and encompassing, … never exclusive, and embraced several cultural levels simultaneously" (Crone 167). The premises for developing a literary genre that specifically appealed to this public were already in place: Simon Eliot notes that the concept of cheap serialised publishing for the poor already existed in the eighteenth-century tradition of chapbooks, and in the early-nineteenth-century forms of the broadside ballad and the boxiana (295). Furthermore, the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Gothic mania, with its last outrageous offspring, the Minerva Press shilling publications, was slowly losing ground in middle-class culture; publishers of cheap serialised publications, conversely, were starting to realise its potential for thrill and sensationalism (James 72-87; Crone 176-7). Finally, the answer to the lower-class reader's hunger for exciting fiction arrived from Salisbury Square, London.

Between the 1830s and 1840s, publishers Edward Lloyd and G.W.M. Reynolds flooded the literary market with cheap serialised literature, creating a market that was parallel to, and distinct from, the middle-class one. Law underscores the

[1] Religious tracts were offered to the poor as a relief against hunger or in view of cholera outbreaks, and often preached frugality and diligence to a starving, jobless class (Altick 106). Dickens famously ridiculed this attitude through the *Bleak House* character of Mrs Pardiggle, who behaves as "an inexorable moral Policeman" (122). As for the reading material she distributes, Mr Jarndyce states that "he doubted if Robinson Crusoe could have read it, though he had no other in his desolate island" (122).

separation of writers, publishers, and distribution channels between these two markets: its products were "anathema to the established booksellers" (20). The word "anathema" also synthesizes how the middle class perceived Lloyd and Reynolds themselves. The question: "Fathers of the cheap press or 'able speculators'?" posed (and answered) by Haywood succinctly summarises the still ongoing debate around these two controversial radical publishers (*The Revolution of Popular Fiction* 162). Lloyd and Reynolds were, first and foremost, two businessmen, and therefore the middle class openly doubted the genuineness of their support of the working class's self-improvement aspirations. In point of fact, although only Reynolds pursued an active political career, a radical message transpired from their publications, which covered a wide range of topics and a variety of forms, and addressed working- and lower-middle-class readers of both sexes and all ages (Haywood 140); significantly, they included fiction. Unsurprisingly, they had a greater appeal for the working-class public than the publications of the various societies for moral improvement had, even though they were sold while tracts were distributed for free. Literature produced by Lloyd and Reynolds could be purchased for the small sum of 1d, including the lurid penny blood series.

Penny bloods were the definition of cheap: churned out by underpaid hack-writers, they were either issued in penny miscellanies or printed separately on cheap paper at the low cost that characterised the serialised publications market. They were read aloud, and passed around until the paper fell to pieces, which explains the scantiness of original material available to scholars.[2] Penny bloods were, quite literally, read to destruction, thus fulfilling their only function, that is: satiating the craving for fiction of as many readers as possible. Their plots suited the modest requests of working-class readers: they were exciting, easy to read, and graphic, and they soon crystallised in a formula involving murder, betrayal, gender-shifting, and the occasional supernatural event (not to mention scantily clad damsels in distress). Their literary antecedents were disgraceful, from a middle-class perspective, as they readapted features and techniques from the Gothic novel and the broadsheet, and shared a number of narrative features with melodrama (Crone 173-8). Unrefined though they might appear, bloods were

[2] Even when they remained intact, penny bloods and dreadfuls were not preserved by vendors or libraries.

compatible with the generally more violent and graphic concept of entertainment that was popular among lower class individuals, in spite of the efforts of the middle and upper classes to "tame" them (Crone 2-6).[3] Therefore, what distinguished Lloyd, Reynolds, and the penny blood authors whose biographies scholars have been able to reconstruct, was that they understood the needs of their target audience as much as the religious tract societies failed to understand them, and this was because they shared, or at least made an effort to understand, their audience's background.

Edward Lloyd may have died the equivalent of a multimillionaire, but he was born in the working class. He received little education, worked as a clerk, and attended the Mechanics' Institute (Crone 169), after which, still a teenager, he started his own business in Shoreditch (Sutherland 382). Haywood notes that, having "served his literary apprenticeship in the unstamped wars" in the 1830s, Lloyd "acquired an understanding that populist publishing techniques were not incompatible with radical politics" (*The Revolution* 163). In 1836, he published the *Lives of the Most Notorious Highwaymen* and *The Calendar of Horror* series (Sutherland 382), which revived the *Newgate Calendar* tradition (Crone 173). In the 1840s, he started the golden age of the penny blood genre by bringing on the market its two most prolific authors: in 1840-41, Lloyd published Thomas Peckett Prest's *Ela the Outcast; or, The Gipsy of Rosemary Dell* (James and Smith 75);[4] in 1843, *Ada, the Betrayed* by James Malcolm Rymer appeared on *Lloyd's Penny Weekly Miscellany* (James and Smith 83).

Both authorship classification and mere biographical research in the penny blood genre are complicated by anonymity, the habit of having a different writer continuing the series if the original author was unavailable,[5] and the sometimes arbitrary attributions made by scholars as in Montague Summers's 1940 *Gothic Bibliography*. Scholars, though, have been able to reconstruct the main facts in the lives of Prest and Rymer. Prest, born around 1810, started his career writing adaptations of French farce and melodrama (Sutherland 517). He then wrote imitations of Dickens for Lloyd, and later started writing his own fiction. In spite

[3] Crone deconstructs the whole concept of "taming" of working-class culture by middle-class culture, arguing that the wide circulation of tales such as *Sweeney Todd* suggests that they were not a "deviation from the norm of respectability" (2), but a substantial part of working-class culture that continued to exist, resisting the middle-class push towards a more "tamed" system (2-6).

[4] The series was originally published in 104 parts by J.K. Edwards (James and Smith 75).

[5] "[I].e. drunk, pregnant, or dead" (Herr 16).

of being one of the most prolific penny blood authors, he died a pauper at forty-nine, in 1859 (Sutherland 517). James ascribed Prest's ill-fortune, firstly, to the nerve-wracking rhythm of penny blood production, which impacted on his already weak health (33), and secondly, to Prest's inability to adapt his work to the changing tastes of his audience (96). The penny blood market was merciless: authors who did not sell were dismissed.

Rymer's story is different. In his biography in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Louis James writes that Rymer was born in 1814 in London (Holborn), his parents of Scottish origin, and that, primarily, he was interested in mechanics: records from 1841 register him as a civil engineer. There are grounds to suppose he attended the London Mechanics' Institute, and James suggested that Rymer and Lloyd may have met there (36). Rymer's output was prodigious: he was rumoured to have been writing at some point as many as ten series simultaneously (James 33). He usually published his works under several anagrammatic pseudonyms, such as "Malcolm J. Errym", or "Malcolm J. Merry" (Sutherland 214). James writes that Rymer was born in a middle-class family, and aspired to middle-class writing: from both his fiction and non-fiction transpires a certain contempt towards the ignorant masses, and his non-fictional writings bespeak "a competent essayist in the style of Leigh Hunt" (37). Yet, it was the fiction he wrote for the masses that made him famous and relatively wealthy (that is, for a penny blood author). In his essay "Popular Writing", he wrote that "[i]f an author … wishes to become popular in the sense in which we use the term, that is, to be read by the majority, … he should … study well the animals for whom he is about to cater" (Rymer 172), a precept which, as James observes, Rymer practiced skilfully (37). In his biography of Rymer, James suggests this skill originated in Rymer's work as a civil engineer, which brought him in touch with his targeted audience (ODNB). His sensitivity to his public's tastes led him in the 1850s to move from Lloyd to John Dicks, who was publishing "more sophisticated popular fiction": in 1858, *Reynolds's Miscellany*, published by Dicks, featured a tale by "M. J. Errym" (James, ODNB).

We find evidence of this change in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*. In the section titled "The Literature of the Costermongers", a costermonger interviewed about the literary tastes of his fellow professionals declared that "[w]hat they lov[ed] best to listen to – and, indeed, what they [were] most eager for – [were] Reynolds's periodicals, especially the 'Mysteries of the

Court'" (Mayhew 25). The man added: "[t]hey've got tired of Lloyd's blood-stained stories … and I'm satisfied that, of all London, Reynolds is the most popular man among them. They stuck to him in Trafalgar-square, and would again" (Mayhew 25). This comment refers to the event that marked the beginning of Reynolds's Chartist political activity. In 1848, he made a speech at the radical gathering in Trafalgar Square, which was held to show support towards the Paris rebellion that ultimately led to the overthrow of King Louis Philippe. The chairman, Charles Cochrane, never showed up and the police were about to disperse the meeting (Humpherys and James 5). Reynolds "impulsively scrambled onto the platform and, recognized as a radical novelist, was voted to the chair"; his speech so heated the audience that he was followed home and continued it from the balcony of his own house (Humpherys and James 5). Unlike Lloyd, Reynolds was born in the higher echelons of society, his father a senior naval officer and his mother the daughter of a Royal Navy captain. However, he showed no inclination to follow in his father's steps, and left early from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, where had been entered at thirteen (Humpherys and James 1). He espoused radical ideas early in his life, which brought him to Paris in the 1830s, where the 1830 Revolution consolidated his radical beliefs and introduced him to the idea of a "literature without social boundaries" (Humpherys and James 2). When he had to return, penniless, to his home country in the late 1830s, he started his career as a writer to support his family, which led him eventually to start his masterpiece, *The Mysteries of London* series, in 1844 (Humpherys and James 4). The first four volumes were published by Holywell Street publisher George Vickers; in 1848, they quarrelled, and Reynolds continued the series until 1856 with his own publisher John Dicks, slightly modifying the title to *The Mysteries of the Court of London* (Humpherys and James 4).

The combination of unorthodox authors and publishers, radicalism, and humble or "unsavoury" literary antecedents made the penny blood a subversive genre that contributed to shaping working-class alternative culture, as opposed to the mainstream culture of the middle and upper class. Penny bloods provided fiction for a class of readers that was seeking social, political, and personal improvement, and was inclined to do so without the guidance of its social superiors. Perhaps the most incriminating feature of penny bloods was that they made obvious to the middle class that working-class tastes regarding fiction were beyond their control.

Whether more or less overtly political, the subversiveness of the penny bloods emerged, among other things, in the fact that several series tackled issues of social inequality relevant to their readership. Within the context of social and political ferment of the 1830s there was a law that contributed to the climate of social injustice, perhaps in deceptively more subtle ways than the Reform Bill did: the 1832 Anatomy Act impacted heavily on the lives of the working class, or rather, on their deaths.

Bodies, snatchers, and doctors: the history of the Anatomy Act.

Since the sixteenth century, English anatomists had been studying the structure of the human body using the corpses of hanged felons (Richardson 32), which created a strong connection between crime and anatomy, making the anatomist "an executioner of the law" (Richardson 34). Then, in 1752 an Act of Parliament allowed judges to add dissection to the murderers' death sentence, in order to "better Preve[nt] the Horrid Crime of Murder" (Richardson 35-6), which explicitly connected the assassin to the lancet. This change affected dramatically the relationship between the poor and the medical world after the increase in population in mid-eighteenth century England. The burgeoning population made it necessary to improve the medical system; simultaneously, the Company of Barber-Surgeons split up in 1745, following the surgeons' demand for "better professional recognition" (Hurren 78-9). By 1800, they had become the Royal College of Surgeons, and placed increasing importance on the knowledge of anatomy (Hurren 79-80). Soon, the bodies of murderers became insufficient to meet the demand for corpses. As in the case of cheap literature, a new market rose to meet the new demand.

Bodysnatchers, also known as sack-'em-up men, resurrectionists, and resurrection men, were paid to steal fresh corpses from cemeteries, usually from the shallow graves and fragile coffins of the poor (Richardson 69), and deliver them to the anatomists. Although resurrectionism was technically not theft, as a corpse did not "constitute property" (Richardson 58),[6] bodysnatchers were strongly resented by the community because they profited from consigning the bodies of the innocents to the ignominy of the anatomist's scalpel (which, since 1752, was associated with the taint of murder). Reactions to the discovery of

[6] See also Richardson 70-1.

bodysnatching activity could verge on riot, and armed cemetery patrols were formed to prevent it. The patrols impacted on the body market: the increased risk of personal injury (or even death) for bodysnatchers boosted the price of the "commodity", with a detrimental effect on the already tense relationship between resurrectionists and anatomists. From 1800, surgeons began discussing alternative options for sources of bodies; anatomy became a matter of public and political discussion.

The debate revolved around the conflicting religious, philosophical, and popular beliefs about "the existence and nature of the soul" (Richardson 93), and was complicated by alarming rumours about the indecent way anatomists treated corpses (Richardson 95-9). The situation deteriorated in the 1820s, when a further decrease in the body supply coincided with an increased demand triggered by the Royal College of Surgeons' manoeuvres to monopolise anatomy teaching (Richardson 101). Prices for bodies sky-rocketed, and the fees for a qualification in surgery became so heavy, while yet not granting the possibility to perform regular dissections, that students migrated to France to pursue their studies (Richardson 101-2). Finally, in March 1828, two members of the medical profession stood trial for bodysnatching (Richardson 107), setting a dangerous precedent: surgeons now *could* be prosecuted for resurrectionism. It was at this point that the Benthamites in Parliament took action.

Utilitarian philosopher and politician Jeremy Bentham was reputedly interested in the issue of anatomy studies (Richardson 108). Ruth Richardson recovered a series of letters from 1826 that show Bentham trying to pitch to Robert Peel a first draft of the Anatomy Bill. He proposed that all hospital patients should be made to make bequest of their bodies for dissection in case of death, which, since hospital patients were poor "by definition", implied he believed that paupers were the logical source of anatomy material (Richardson 110).[7] Peel "respectfully rejected" Bentham's suggestions (Richardson 111). After March 1828, though, the Benthamites took more decisive action and pushed for the creation of a Select Committee on Anatomy in order to investigate how anatomy schools sourced their bodies, with the ultimate purpose of finding a steady, legal source of corpses

[7] Similar plans had been suggested repeatedly in the previous decade. John Abernethy had first made such a suggestion in his *Hunterian Oration* in 1816 (Richardson 108). Also, Thomas Southwood Smith's article "The Use of the Dead to the Living" published in the *Westminster Review* in 1824, proposed using the bodies of paupers who died in hospital and workhouses, as French anatomy schools did.

(Richardson 107). The Committee was "a fine illustration of the working of Parliamentary Benthamism" (Richardson 109). Its members were mostly Benthamites, the witnesses were partial to the solution proposed by Benthamites, and discordant voices were "simply not heard" (Richardson 108). The *Report from the Select Committee on Anatomy* (henceforth *RSCA*) was written by Henry Warburton MP, the man who would give his name to the Anatomy Bill (Richardson 108). The Committee's agenda fundamentally envisaged the realization of Bentham's solution. The Report suggested, predictably, the use of the bodies of those who had been "maintained at the public charge" in life and had died "in workhouses, hospitals and other charitable institutions", in cases where they were not "claimed by next of kin within a certain time after death" (*RSCA* 9). This was the first time the notion of "not claimed", or "unclaimed" (which appears one line below), one of the core concepts of the Anatomy Act, was mentioned; as Richardson notes, no discussion took place to clarify what exactly either "unclaimed" or "next of kin" meant (123-4). In accordance with Bentham's leading doctrine of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" (Richardson 108), the Report stated that this solution was necessary to guarantee protection to the rest of the community (*RSCA* 10). Besides, the selection it entailed would hurt no one, the Report asserted, as it was assumed that an unclaimed body meant "indifference on the subject of dissection" on the part of the relatives (*RSCA* 10). This assumption did not consider that "[t]o remove the body would mean assuming responsibilities for funeral costs", which would have been impossible for some of the poor (Richardson 124). The Report dismissed accusations of class unfairness stating that the "inconveniences" presented "must be compared with those of the existing system" (i.e. bodysnatching), which after all already affected the poor (*RSCA* 10), and repeated that "where there are no relations to suffer distress, there can be no inequality of suffering, and consequently no unfairness" (*RSCA* 10). Yet, as Richardson notes, the use of distress as the measure for injustice, paired with the blurred definition of "next of kin", disregarded any bonds of friendship that the poor might have formed outside the family circle (124), ultimately denying the status of the poor as a community.

The first Anatomy Bill, presented in 1829 and dubbed the "Midnight Bill" in the *Lancet* because of the secrecy that characterised its discussion in Parliament

(Richardson 157), did not pass. While opposition to it had been inconsistent,[8] the Bill was resolutely rejected by the Lords: some members of the aristocracy advocated the "right of the poor to a decent burial" and supported their aversion to be subjected to a practice that bore the mark of murder (Richardson 157). Others, most notably the Duke of Wellington, perceived the potential risk such a law represented for the already delicate political situation (Richardson 157-8). Things changed dramatically the following October, when, with perfect timing, certain gruesome accidents revealed that dealing in corpses had become so remunerative that some would literally kill to sell a body.

In November 1827, a lonely man died in rented lodgings in West Port, Edinburgh. His landlady's husband, Irish immigrant William Hare, and his compatriot William Burke, brought the body to Surgeon's Square: they had heard doctors paid well for corpses. Their quest for a purveyor led them to the private anatomy school of Dr Robert Knox, who paid £ 7 10s for the body (Rosner 28). Obtaining such a sum over a corpse must have seemed a portent to the two lower-class men. The second body they sold to Dr Knox had not died from natural causes, nor did the following fourteen, between 1828 and 1829. Nobody suspected foul play. Burke and Hare had perfected a system of dispatching their victims that was "practically undetectable until the era of modern forensics" (Rosner 54): they suffocated them, compressing the chest while simultaneously covering the mouth and nose, usually after intoxicating the victim with liquor.[9] Success, and the steady flow of money, made Burke and Hare greedy, which ultimately made the scheme fall apart. They murdered an Irishwoman named Margaret Docherty in Burke's lodgings while Ellen M'Dougal, Burke's companion, was hosting relatives. Although they had been sent away with an excuse while the homicide was being committed, M'Dougal's relatives eventually found Docherty's body, and alerted the police. Although the body was already gone when the police arrived, the incoherent justifications of Burke, Hare, and their companions raised suspicions. Docherty's body was tracked to Dr Knox's premises the following day. Hare turned King's evidence against Burke, who was found guilty and

[8] Richardson explains that divisions within the radical faction regarding the role of science made their opposition to the Bill ineffective, and ultimately led to its passing (Richardson 152-7). This point will be explored in greater detail in the next chapters.

[9] While the *Caledonian Mercury* alleged that Burke and Hare must have been instructed by an expert in human anatomy, Burke declared that, by lying over the chest of his victims, he had no intention of compressing the lungs, but merely of pinning them down (Rosner 55-6).

hanged on January 28, and his remains were publicly dissected. During the trial, the killing system was named "burking", after Burke, the alleged inventor, and the wave of panic that ensued was consequently named "burkophobia" (Richardson 194). Although the Edinburgh homicides were shocking, they had no substantial effect on the proceeding of the Anatomy Act through Parliament. Two years later, though, burking was discovered in London (Richardson 194).

In November 1831, known bodysnatchers James May and John Bishop and occasional resurrectionist Thomas Williams laid the "suspiciously fresh" corpse of a teenage boy before Richard Partridge, professor of anatomy at King's College (Wise 2). The corpse looked as if it had never been buried; the gums were toothless and, more alarmingly, bleeding. After a brief inspection, Partridge affected wanting coins to pay the men and went for the police (Wise 23). The corpse was identified as Carlo Ferrari, an Italian boy, and the trial that ensued found the men guilty of the murder of two more victims: Fanny Pigburn, a Shoreditch woman, and a homeless boy named Cunningham. May was later acquitted, while Bishop and Williams were hanged on December 5 1831, and their bodies were dissected. Their killing method classified as "burking", although instead of suffocating their victims after dazing them with drink and laudanum, they would thrust them head first into the well in Bishop's backyard, adjacent to Williams's, in the East End neighbourhood of Nova Scotia Gardens, Bethnal Green. The case triggered another wave of burkophobia, which Warburton expertly exploited. Twelve days after Bishop and Williams were executed, he introduced his second Anatomy Bill (Wise 248). During the Parliamentary discussions that ensued, whenever the argument of the opposition became too convincing, Warburton and his colleagues had but to remind the assembly about the "late 'enormities'" (Richardson 198). On August 1st 1832, the Anatomy Act was voted in (Richardson 215).

Twisted words: the 1832 Anatomy Act.

The Anatomy Act indeed opened by mentioning the murders. The first fourteen lines of the document stated:

> "Whereas a knowledge of the causes and nature of sundry diseases which affect the body, and of the best methods of treating and curing such diseases, and of healing and repairing divers wounds and injuries to which

> the human frame is liable, cannot be acquired without the aid of anatomical examination: and whereas the legal supply of human bodies for such anatomical examination is insufficient fully to provide the means of such knowledge: and whereas, in order further to supply human bodies for such purposes, divers great and grievous crimes have been committed, and lately murder, for the single object of selling for such purposes the bodies of the persons so murdered: and whereas therefore it is highly expedient to give protection, under certain regulations, to the study and practice of anatomy, and to prevent, as far as may be, such great and grievous crimes and murder as aforesaid:" be it therefore enacted …

This repetitive opening formula is deceptively simple. As Elizabeth T. Hurren observes, the twenty-one clauses constituting the final version of the Act were rife with "specious statements" virtually unintelligible for the semi-literate poor (21), among whom the oral culture still prevailed (22). Indeed, it is likely that the law, or rather its summary hanging on workhouse walls, church doors, and in other spaces in which the pauper might gather (Hurren 21), was read out loud by the more skilled readers to the others. Hurren notes that the sonnet-like form of the first 14 lines, which would have sounded familiar to the pauper, disappears in the rest of the text, which is characterised by "parliamentary, medical, and legal" technical terms, complicated phrasing, and "little punctuation" (27). Article 2 gives an idea of the challenge the reading of the Act might constitute for an unskilled reader or a semi-literate listener:

> It shall be lawful for his majesty's said principal secretary of state or chief secretary, as the case may be, immediately on the passing of this act, or as soon thereafter as may be necessary, to appoint respectively not fewer than three persons to be inspectors of places where anatomy is carried on, and at any time after such first appointment to appoint, if they shall see fit, one or more other person or persons to be an inspector or inspectors as aforesaid; and every such inspector shall continue in office for one year, or until he be removed by the said secretary of state or chief secretary, as the case may be, or until some other person shall be appointed in his place; and as often as any inspector appointed as aforesaid shall die, or shall be removed from his said office, or shall refuse or become unable to act, it

> shall be lawful for the said secretary of state or chief secretary, as the case may be, to appoint another person to be inspector in his room.

The endless repetitions ("appointment to appoint", "one or more other person or persons to be an inspector or inspectors"), the countless "aforesaid" and "such", and the long, convoluted periods interspersed with technical terms clash with the clarity and rhythm of the opening section. The document becomes increasingly intricate as it proceeds to discuss the rights of the deceased and their relatives. Art. 7, for instance, separates the role of "lawful owner" of the body from the relatives:

> It shall be lawful for any executor or other party having lawful possession of the body of any deceased person, and not being an undertaker or other party intrusted [sic.] with the body for the purpose of interment, to permit the body of such deceased person to undergo anatomical examination, unless, to the knowledge of such executor or other party, such person shall have expressed his desire, either in writing at any time during his life, or verbally in the presence of two or more witnesses during the illness whereof he died, that his body after death might not undergo such examination, or unless the surviving husband or wife, or any known relative of the deceased person, shall require the body to be interred without such examination.

The article recognized the ownership of the body, and therefore decisional right over it, to a figure such as a workhouse master and, while it ratified his position – it is "lawful" for him to have "lawful" possession of the body and "permit" the examination – it did not ratify that of the spouse or relatives. They could only "require" that dissection should not happen, not "lawfully prevent" or "lawfully deny permission for" it. A further controversial point is that the dying person had to be aware that they had to make explicit request not to undergo dissection, either in writing, which put the semi-literate poor in a disadvantaged position, or verbally in front of witnesses, which tied the execution of the dying pauper's will to the integrity of workhouse staff. Finally, as with the *Report* from the Select Committee, the expression "known relatives" constituted a loophole. Richardson observes that the Bill did not "envisage an obligation to inform survivors when a death has occurred", which made it plausible that "relatives' absence could be construed as 'indifference'" (207). Art. 8 specified that the "nearest known

relative" was "the deceased person's surviving husband or wife, or nearest known relative, or any one or more of such person's nearest known relatives, being of kin in the same degree". Therefore, the Act, as the Select Committee, failed to acknowledge the wider "network" of friendship relationships noted by Richardson (124). Notably, articles 10 and 14, which put the medical fraternity on safe ground, were surprisingly clear. Art. 10 established that licensed anatomists could dissect "the body of any person deceased", as long as they had been authorized by the "lawful" owner; art. 14 stated that a licensed anatomist could not be prosecuted for receiving, holding, and dissecting a human body, regardless of any irregularity committed by the lawful owner who authorized the dissection.

Art. 18 stated that violating the Act qualified as "misdemeanour", an offence of lesser degree, which was punished with either three months imprisonment or a £ 50 fine. This light penalty contrasts with the condemnation of burking stated in the opening, and effectively failed to change the situation since 1813, when bodysnatcher Joseph Naples, found in possession of a stolen body, brazenly asked the court if this was "a bailable offence" and, receiving a positive answer, he "made a bow and retired" ("Police - Hatton Garden").

Richardson and Hurren observe two further noteworthy details. Art. 16 repealed the 1752 Act by which dissection became distinctive of murder sentences. Richardson, though conceding that this represented "an achievement", suggests it is unlikely the pauper would find "much comfort in the knowledge that [they] would be dissected on the slab *instead* of a murderer, rather than *alongside* one" (207). By contrast, she continues, the Act never mentioned the body trade, basically failing to eliminate "the known motive for both bodysnatching and burking" (Richardson 208). In a subtle way, this rather constituted a ratification of the body trade. Furthermore, Hurren notes that the clause that repealed the dissection of murderers is also the only instance in which the word "dissection" appears in the text (29). In the rest of the Act, it is referred to as "Anatomical Examination", or simply "Examination", which, Hurren observes, implied "touch[ing], prob[ing], inspect[ing], and view[ing]" rather than systematic dismemberment (28). This euphemistic phrasing created the impression that the text of the Act was retaining information from the reader/listener (Hurren 28). In actual fact, the 1832 Anatomy Act was a law that, in theory, promoted the development of medical science while simultaneously setting in place safety measures; in practice, it was an exercise in rhetoric, against which the pauper –

the semi-literate, socially powerless, and politically underrepresented pauper – could not possibly win.

The poor, the doctor, and the penny blood: a new analytical perspective.

Scholarship on penny bloods is scanty if compared to that on other forms of Victorian fiction. In 1963, Louis James's groundbreaking *Fiction for the Working Man* first outlined the history of cheap serialised fiction, which included the penny bloods. Then, research on the penny bloods and penny dreadfuls enjoyed a particularly productive moment in the late-1980s – early-1990s, during which the bulk of scholarship was produced by John Springhall and Anne Humpherys. In 1998, Elizabeth James and Helen R. Smith published *Penny Dreadfuls and Boy's Adventures,* the catalogue of the Barry Ono Collection of Victorian cheap serialised fiction at the British Library. The importance of this catalogue cannot be overestimated, as it guides the scholar through the single largest surviving collection of original material in the field. Three years later, Jonathan Rose's *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, examining records of witnesses collected from readers, provided invaluable insight in the reading experience of the Victorian working class. He included a section on penny dreadfuls, in which the testimony of former readers, now adults, counterbalanced the strenuous middle-class opposition to the genre that still influenced (and influences) its perception.

There has been a recent increase of interest in the genre, particularly in its earlier penny blood form. In 2002, Helen R. Smith's stylistic study *New Light on Sweeney Todd, Thomas Peckett Prest, James Malcolm Rymer and Elizabeth Caroline Grey* provided important new data on the authorship of Rymer's and Prest's works. Crucially, it produced convincing evidence that Rymer, and not Prest, was the author of *The String of Pearls,* or *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (henceforth *Sweeney Todd*). In 2004, Ian Haywood's *The Revolution in Popular Fiction* devoted an entire chapter to the reassessment of Edward Lloyd's and G.W.M. Reynolds's role in producing cheap serialised fiction for the working class. Haywood examined their careers from the perspective of their radical ideas, tackling the issue of the two publishers' dual nature of radical businessmen, highlighting the encompassing quality of their publications and the challenge they posed to conventional "social, sexual,

intellectual and cultural boundaries" (140). In the same spirit, Humpherys and James edited in 2008 the collection of essays *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, which examined Reynolds's fiction and journalism, his politics, and literary legacy.

Besides focalising on the re-evaluation of the authors and publishers, scholars started exploring the narratives. A whole section of Humpherys and James's collection was dedicated to Reynolds's contribution to the "mysteries" genre, and included chapters on *The Mysteries of London*. In 2004, the edited collection *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation* featured Sally Powell's chapter "Black Markets and Cadaverous Pies: The Corpse, Urban Trade, and Industrial Consumption in the Penny Blood". Powell analysed the narrative of Sweeney Todd from the perspective of the anxieties about the "black market commodification" of the "displaced corpse" the industrial revolution sparked in the working class (45). She underscored that "cadaverous trading presented itself as most pertinent to the working-class reader", and that the passing of the Anatomy Act strengthened in the popular mind the threat anatomists posed to the integrity of the bodies of working-class people (46). Robert L. Mack's 2007 study *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd* also highlighted this connection, noting that bodysnatching activities, burking, and the body trade generated anxiety because they fuelled a set of associations between anatomy and cannibalism in the popular mind (41-3).

In 2009, Sarah Hackenberg' article "Vampires and Resurrection Men: The Perils and Pleasures of the Embodied Past in 1840s Sensational Fiction" examined the characters of Varney the vampire and the cadaveric Resurrection Man, the arch-villain of the *Mysteries of London*, as embodiments of "the inescapable return of personal and political history" (73). In 2010, attention focused again on Sweeney Todd in Rosalind Crone's *Violent Victorians*. Within the broader landscape of working-class entertainment, Crone analysed the penny bloods as literary artefacts providing entertainment within the "violent" (according to middle-class notions) working-class culture. Notably, Crone expanded Powell's argument in favour of a correlation between the story of Sweeney Todd and the Anatomy Act, including in her own argument the overcrowded conditions of the mid-century metropolis. Crone reads Todd's "murder-machine" as "a macabre solution to the mounting dead in the city", "designed to deal with the urban

masses and ensure that their remains would be put to good use" in a way that resembled the efficient yet soulless logic of the Anatomy Act (189).

This survey of the scholarship produced on the penny blood highlights the conspicuous absence of an extensive systematic study of a selection of specimens focusing on what the bloods can yield as narratives. The approaches that emerge from the survey above – production and distribution history, history of the publishers and publishing environments, studies on authorship and isolated narratives – are invaluable tools to understanding the literary and historical context in which the genre developed. However, they do not allow us to notice recurrence of features, themes, and repetitive patterns. Following the methodological approach adopted by Powell, Mack, and Crone, the present study proposes to fill this gap by examining a cross section of penny bloods within their cultural and literary context. More specifically, the examination finds its focal point in a trait that Powell, Mack, and Crone include in their exegeses of *Sweeney Todd*: the connection between the pauper, their fiction, and the Anatomy Act. In order to do so, I delve deeper in the relationship between the pauper and medicine, examining the scholarship on the history of the Anatomy Act.

Ruth Richardson's 1987 study *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* revolutionised studies in medical history, providing the first revisionist reading of the Anatomy Act. Whereas it had long been regarded solely as a landmark in the progress of medical science, Richardson considered the Anatomy Act from the point of view of its impact on the Victorian poor. Analysing the social and cultural context in which the Act came to be, its slow progress through Parliament, and the documented reactions of the pauper to its passing, Richardson showed the actual extent of the Act's effects on the life of the pauper. In 2012, Elizabeth T. Hurren's study *Dying for Victorian Medicine* progressed research on this issue, reconstructing the history of a number of anatomy schools, in London and in the provinces, and of the body traffic between 1834 and 1929. Both Richardson and Hurren challenge the idea promoted by the supporters of the Act that paupers were not "distressed" by its provisions. Recent studies on burking confirm this argument, and extend the examination of the issue to its diffusion through the press. Sarah Wise's *The Italian Boy* (2004) and Lisa Rosner's *The Anatomy Murders* (2010), examining the London and Edinburgh burkers' cases respectively, illustrate how burking affected the most exposed members of the lower class and how the two cases became part of the sensational life of the

country through press coverage and fictional readaptation. Wise, most notably, establishes a connection between the London burkers and the penny blood genre, making a convincing case for the two Bethnal Green murderers having inspired Reynolds's monstrous Bethnal Green resident, the Resurrection Man. The present research considers the information these historical studies provide on the context of the Anatomy Act and compares it with the way medicine and the dissected/dismembered corpse are represented in the narratives examined.

Recent studies on the novel from mid to late nineteenth century adopt a similar medical historical approach. Tabitha Sparks' study *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel* (2009) uses the figure of the doctor to "chart the sustainability of the Victorian novel's central imaginative structure, the marriage plot" (3). Sparks examines the impact of the development of medical science on the novel, arguing that in this moment "fiction gradually loses the authority that medicine and science were claiming as the medical profession worked to locate the knowledge of human life in physiology rather than literary subjectivity" (7-8). In 2013, *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* featured Pamela Gilbert's chapter "Sensation fiction and the medical context", which focused on the medical figures of sensation novels in relation to the development of the mid-century figure of the clinician. Gilbert notes the Victorian belief that sensation fiction provoked "a vitiated taste for even more intense physiological stimulation" (184), and the interest of sensation novels for "extreme medical and mental states" (185). She therefore argues that the development of the figure of the medical hero in mid-century novels concretised in sensation fiction in a character made "uncanny" by the quasi-supernatural power of his clinical gaze: the medical man, "especially the doctor scientist, becomes a frightening figure", one that "if … not mad in the strict sense, … certainly becomes bad and dangerous to know" (187). Both Sparks and Gilbert focus on the impact of mid-century advancements in medical science on the novel, and examine how the increasing importance of medicine in Victorian society influenced the representation of the doctor in a range of representative narratives. The present study adopts the same paradigm: it explores representations of doctors, dissection, and displaced/dismembered cadavers in a selection of penny bloods in the light of early- to mid-century changes affecting anatomy studies. In this way, it proposes to outline how the penny blood genre represented the medical fraternity and the practice of dissection after the Anatomy Act had changed the way the poor could expect to conclude their lives.

On a broader level, this research argues the importance of the penny bloods as marginalized narratives. The term "marginalized" is here used with the double meaning of narratives that, traditionally, are considered low-brow, hence unworthy of scholarly interest, and of "suppressed historical narratives of marginalized groups" (Tyson 287), in this case the poor. As mentioned above, the research area of penny bloods is still comparatively unexplored, due to two chief reasons: first, the long-lasting nineteenth-century stigma attached to the bloods, and second, the fact that penny blood narratives do not, from a qualitative perspective, match the standards of canonical fiction. The term "canonical" here refers to the concept of "novelists in English [that are] worth reading" (9), or "the few really great … novelists" (10),[10] established by F.R. Leavis in 1948 and challenged by Franco Moretti since his early work *Signs taken for Wonders* (1983). Moretti argued in favour of the inclusion of "mass literature" in literary studies (15) in order to "allow us to reconstruct the literary system of the past with great theoretical precision and historical fidelity" (16). He also contended that researching mass literature would provide new perspectives for reading the "extraordinary" works that constitute the so-called canon (15). By providing a systematic, structured study of a set of penny bloods with respect to the context of the Anatomy Act and its impact on the readership of the genre, this study aims to contribute to broaden the picture of Victorian literature, facilitating the departure from nineteenth- and twentieth-century views that still influence the perception of the Victorian penny blood.

This research advances scholarship on the Victorian penny blood in that it constitutes a shift from the examination of (one selected specimen of) the genre within the serialised publications context to the examination of the genre itself within its historical context. The cross-section paradigm allows the detection of common traits, continuities, discontinuities, and evolutions that do not emerge from the case study or book history approach, and the medical history angle contextualises one of the bloods' outstanding traits, the recurrent representation of the displaced/dismembered corpse. Instead of dismissing this trait as the fruit of the somewhat unrefined tastes of the bloods' readership, this study considers it in

[10] Leavis's definition of "great novel" was famously restrictive. His controversial 1948 critical work, emphatically titled *The Great Tradition*, opens with the statement: "[t]he great novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad – to stop for the moment at that comparatively safe point in history" (9).

the light of the momentous change that the passing of the Anatomy Act constituted for the people whose disposal of remains was determined by poverty, with the purpose of achieving a better understanding of the genre's role towards its readers. Finally, by performing a close-reading analysis of narratives traditionally considered difficult from this perspective, this study also opens new perspectives on authors, particularly on the still elusive James Malcolm Rymer, highlighting the recurrence of themes and techniques in their narratives and connecting them with their lives and careers.

Penny bloods and medical discourse: new historicism, discourse theory, and spatiality.

The first challenge the penny blood genre poses to the scholar is the sheer size of the corpus. Series were started, abruptly interrupted if unsuccessful, or, conversely, stretched to impossible length if they sold well. This creates the second problem, that is, the tendency of the penny bloods to be bulky, rambling narratives. A study that proposes to analyse, to dissect, so to speak, this literary monster, in which "monster" means simultaneously frightening, marvellous, and enormous ("monster", def. 6, 2, 4b) should first of all attempt to isolate a selection of specimens. This research began with an examination of three texts that can be reasonably considered key-narratives in the genre on the basis of their success among the intended readership and durability of their fame: *Varney the Vampyre* and *Sweeney Todd* by J.M. Rymer and *The Mysteries of London* by G.W.M. Reynolds. From this analysis started to emerge the recurrence of dissected or displaced bodies moving through a vertical space, of people displacing or dissecting bodies, and of doctors occupying liminal ethical positions. Further research in the Barry Ono collection at the British Library led to *Manuscripts from the Diary of a Physician*, again ascribed to Rymer. Virtually unknown by scholars, this blood was successful enough to run for two series in *Lloyd's Penny Sunday Times* (James and Smith 87). Its medical theme is unusual, perhaps unique, in the penny blood genre, and its representation of medical figures displays major similarities with that of *Varney*. It was therefore included in the sample examined here.

The analysis considers first Rymer's three works, in chronological order, and then Reynolds's *Mysteries*. This structure allows an appreciation of the continuities in the works ascribed to Rymer, making it possible to compare and

contrast the three narratives and then test their traits against Reynolds's work, highlighting common features and/or differences in the approach of the two authors. Allowing for the scarcity of original material, the editions on which the analysis is developed have been chosen considering their faithfulness to the original penny bloods, at least in their volume form. The edition of *Manuscripts* used here is a British Library Historical Collection reproduction of the original 1844 (series 1) and 1847 (series 2) volumes that Lloyd reprinted, allegedly, "at the request of a large number of its readers" (James and Smith 87). *Varney* was originally published in penny parts by Lloyd (Law and Patten 153), then reprinted in volume form, which the Dover edition used here reproduces. Mack's 2007 edition of *Sweeney Todd* matches faithfully the copy at the British Library, a volume form of the original series issued in Lloyd's *The people's periodical and family library* from November 1846 to March 1847 (James and Smith 79). Finally, the copy of *Mysteries* used here is a digitized reproduction of the original 1845 volume 1, originally published in penny parts by George Vickers starting "in or around October 1844" (Humpherys and James xvii).

A preliminary reading of the four works yielded three main results. First, all characters involved in the displacement/dismemberment of bodies display monstrous traits; second, the movement of the bodies through space can be upwards or downwards, but it is always markedly vertical; third, the relationship between medical men and the displaced/dismembered corpses displays a strong concern with issues of power. Medical men appear to be positive or negative characters in consequence of their approach to the power that comes with their profession. If they abuse this power, showing disregard for the moral code of the community they operate in, they are represented as oppressors. Positive medical figures, instead, use their power to support the members of their community, and subscribe to its moral code. Considering the recurrence of these features, I formulated three key research questions which the present study aims to answer: firstly, in what ways did penny bloods engage with, and promote the circulation of, discourses around medicine and anatomy? Then, how did penny bloods elaborate and circulate discourses of power connected to anatomy? And finally, how did penny bloods use space to map out discourses around poverty and dissection? The analysis developed to answer these questions uses tools from three different theoretical approaches that stem from Foucauldian philosophy and its theorisation of power relationships, including that between surgeon and patient.

Lois Tyson writes that new historicism brings attention to the narratives of "marginalized groups" with the goal of achieving "a plurality of voices, including an equal representation of historical narratives from all groups" and "[helps] ensure that a *master narrative* - a narrative told from a single cultural point of view that, nevertheless, presumes to offer the only accurate version of history – will no longer control our cultural understanding" (287-8). Therefore, new historicism suits the purposes of an analysis that emphasizes the penny bloods' value as both an object of literary study and an indirect source of historical information. In general, the present research is part of a process of deconstruction of the canon, where "canon" means: a master narrative that privileges the study of "great literature" over a broader, more complete knowledge of Victorian literature. This process, stemming from 1960s and 1970s Post-structuralism, finds, as far as this research is concerned, its highest purpose in the necessity for a revision of the approach to mass literature emphasized by Moretti since the 1980s. If examined outside their context, penny bloods arguably present a number of faults. The quality of their writing and the originality – or lack thereof – of their plots are no match for the "great works of great individuals" (Moretti 13). They were low literature, down to the very paper they were printed upon in dense lines, matched by their crude woodcut illustrations. By contrast, Tyson observes that "text … and context … are mutually constitutive" (291-2). Notwithstanding their poor aesthetic qualities, the bloods were undeniably a momentous phenomenon for their countless working-class readers. The question addressed here, therefore, is not whether or not they are "good" literature, but, more pragmatically, what role they performed towards their audience as a literary product. So far, studies performed by scholars on penny bloods as narratives and as commodities in the marketplace have been pointing in this direction. The purpose of this study is that of advancing this process, examining the penny blood as an 1830s-1840s "cultural artifact" (Tyson 286) to ascertain what information it can provide about "the interplay of discourses, the web of social meanings" operating in its context (Tyson 291), and specifically about the "marginalized narrative" of the relationship between their poor readership and anatomy. In order to do so, the fictional narratives here examined are analysed alongside the narratives that can be evinced from newspaper articles, different types of reports, and, of course, the 1832 Anatomy Act. The rhetoric of these sources is compared to the language strategies the penny bloods deployed when discussing issues of death, dissection,

and medicine. The resulting composite picture of rhetorical strategies and intersected fictional and historical narratives aims to expand our understanding of the role of the penny bloods in the circulation of anatomy discourses.

While the discourse around medicine concerned the poor directly, a set of strategies were put in place to exclude them from the conversation. More or less overtly, the promoters of the Act wished the poor to know very little, and understand even less, about what the document implied for them. Adopting as a starting point Robert T. Tally's principle that "[i]n a manner of speaking, literature also functions as a form of mapping, … providing points of reference by which [readers] can orient themselves and understand the world in which they live" (2), this study uses tools from spatial theory to examine the way in which penny bloods mapped out anatomy and dissection for their readers, allowing them to understand a discourse from which they were excluded. The study examines how the narratives represented and transformed Victorian London's "geospace". This term, coined by Barbara Piatti, stands for the "real" space as opposed to the "imaginary" space represented in the literary text, which will never be the same (qtd in Tally 52).[11] The analysis considers the strategies penny bloods deployed to circulate the discourse on anatomy through the representation and transformation of London's geospace in their narratives. More specifically, it concentrates on two types of spatial representation: the mimesis of the geospace, and the narrative space as a metaphor. Particularly, the recurrent dichotomy of surface versus subterranean space is crucial in order to ascertain the role of the bloods as a means of discourse circulation. Across the nineteenth century, the middle and upper class took a variety of measures in order to keep at bay their increasing anxiety about the underground space, which translated to concerns about the criminal underworld, poverty, and, ultimately, death. These measures, which spanned from the manipulation of the urban landscape to such laws as the Anatomy Act, were based on the power dynamics that regulated class distinction and therefore worked downwards through the social strata. Similarly, penny bloods represented the vertical movement of bodies through the social and geographical space as ultimately based on the dynamics of power. This research uses tools from spatial theory to map out these representations, outlining how they

[11] Piatti, Barbara. *Die Geographie Der Literatur: Schaulplätze, Handlungsräume, Ramuphantasien*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008: 32–3

translated for their audience the power dynamics that regulated their relationship with death and dissection, ultimately arguing that these spatial representations circulated discourses of power associated to medicine and anatomy.

Finally, the term discourse has been used frequently in the last pages, often in association with the word "power". This leads, quite naturally, to discourse theory. Foucault's influence on both new historicism and spatial theory makes his theory of discourse particularly suited to complete the theoretical framework of this research. The Anatomy Act, as a social and historical phenomenon, was intrinsically part of a discourse of power. From the standpoint of its nature as a written document, the Act is a practical example of the relation between power and knowledge. Controlling the circulation of information, establishing restrictions on what can be discussed, the control, in brief, over knowledge, is what characterizes power according to Foucault. He also stressed the nature of power as a relation and its being consequently subject to negotiation. The elusive language of the Act was meant to prevent the paupers' protests. However, this elusiveness "only increased suspicion", to use Hurren's words (28), about the power relationship the Act entailed and about the position of the poor within it, triggering a process of negotiation of power in which penny bloods had a role. The narratives here examined will be read through the Foucauldian theory of power discourses as a channel for the circulation of an alternative discourse, contrasting with the dominant one about medicine and anatomy. Through their spatial representations, but even more subtly and effectively through the deployment of specific linguistic strategies, penny bloods allowed the poor a certain degree of power, that of discussing, understanding, and ultimately finding a way to cope with their position with respect to medicine and dissection.

The first chapter of the thesis analyses *Manuscripts from the Diary of a Physician*, examining the ways in which the narrative poses the role of the medical man, and of the medical student, as positive or negative depending on his work ethic. The second chapter moves on to examine the same dichotomy of positive/negative medical man in *Varney the Vampyre,* in which the nature of the medical man is more directly related to issues of masculinity, nervous mind states, and the clinical gaze. The chief difference between the positive and negative doctor in *Varney* pivots on their application of the clinical gaze as the language of truth: the less truthful the language, the less trustworthy the doctor. Issues of truth also form the basis of the analysis of *Sweeney Todd* in the third chapter. Although

the medical discourse is less obvious, it nonetheless works in the background of this narrative, in which power relations between characters are regulated on the basis of control over the transmission of knowledge. An intrinsic "Londoner" quality and the representation of a trapdoor-paved urban landscape connect *Sweeney Todd* to Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*, which is analysed in the fourth and last chapter. In Reynolds's narrative, the presence of an actual burker-bodysnatcher recreated for the reader one of the darkest pages of medical history, while moving the discussion of the power struggle between the pauper and anatomists to a more markedly political ground.

1. *MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE DIARY OF A PHYSICIAN*: POWER, ETHICS, AND THE SUPER-DOCTOR.

Manuscripts from the Diary of a Physician (hereafter *Manuscripts*) is an example of how the sensation and gore that came to define the penny blood as a "low" genre could be deployed to discuss controversial themes that concerned its readership. This chapter will examine how the series engages with the least savoury aspects of medical studies, ultimately building a narrative response to the ethical debate around poverty, power, and dissection.

As with most penny bloods, the author of *Manuscripts* was not cited. Montague Summers' *Gothic Bibliography*, reported in Louis James in *Fiction for the Working Man*, ascribes the authorship to one of the chief penny blood authors, James Malcolm Rymer and so did Helen R. Smith in 2002 in *New Lights on Sweeney Todd*. Although, as we have seen, when it comes to penny bloods and penny dreadfuls, authorship is a delicate matter[1], I agree with Smith's conclusions, since *Varney the Vampyre* and *Sweeney Todd*, both works ascribed to Rymer, display recurrent similarities to the style of the *Manuscripts*. Significantly, as mentioned in the introduction, the use of medical terms and the construction of medical characters in *Manuscripts* and in *Varney* are remarkably similar.

The little information we possess on Rymer is relevant to different aspects of the narratives examined. Firstly, his Scottish origins offer some ground for reflection on the Edinburgh setting of the very first narrative of the series, "The Dead Restored". Moreover, the recurrence of Utilitarian vocabulary and philosophy in the two narratives here examined can be read in the light of Rymer's profession as a civil engineer, which perhaps, as James suggests, put him in contact with the environment of the Mechanics' Institute and the idea of "useful knowledge". This chapter, therefore, also explores the use Rymer makes of Utilitarian ideas to treat the topic of anatomy in the narratives here examined.

Before I start the analysis of the two narratives, I would like to draw attention to the title of the series, *Manuscripts from the Diary of a Physician*.[2] The wording

[1] See Herr ("Introduction" 15) and James and Smith (xiv–xvi).

[2] It bears an obvious similarity to that of a series issued on *Blackwood's Magazine* between 1830 and 1837, *Passages from the Manuscripts of a Late Physician* by Samuel Warren. *Passages* pivoted on an unnamed physician narrating his different cases, in which the physician-narrator itself is backgrounded by the dramatic stories of the patients, which celebrated positive values and virtues (Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel* 14-5).

is peculiar: these are not "excerpts", or "notes", but "manuscripts", which, considering the document they (allegedly) belong to is a "diary", sounds somewhat redundant. Yet, this redundancy reinforces the impression that the text contains authentic information: it implies that the work the reader is about to peruse consists, ostensibly, of the actual excerpts from the diary of an unnamed "physician", written in his own hand.[3] This physician addresses his reader in the introduction, explaining that the text relates a number of "those 'moving incidents' ... which are unfolded to none more freely than to the physician" (*Manuscripts* 1: 3). Nevertheless, he assures his readers that many of the characters of his stories are now dead, and that "[t]hose who still live" must not be afraid: he "will only speak of the past" (*Manuscripts* 1: 3), therefore portraying himself as a person whose discretion can be trusted. Then, he proceeds to introduce the first narrative, granting that it "proves that truth is stranger, far stranger, than fiction" (*Manuscripts* 1: 3). The anonymity surrounding the real author reinforced the impression that readers were holding in their hands an actual record of truth. *Manuscripts* is unique, in this respect, among works of the same genre. Penny blood titles did not usually frame their narratives as records of past events, and while it was not uncommon for characters in the stories to recover lost diaries and letters, *Manuscripts* constructed itself as a found document in its own right, consequently turning the reader into the person who found it. In so doing, the text aimed to achieve two distinct outcomes.

The construction of the narrative as a fragment of reality had, first of all, the purely commercial function to lure the reader into purchasing the series. The title enticingly hinted at the secret nature of the content through the word "diary", simultaneously exploiting a figure that was gathering prominence in popular literature, that of the medical man. Gilbert notes the rise to popularity, around mid-century, of the figure of the medical hero (187). While she refers, specifically, to the development of the phenomenon in sensation fiction, this genre stems in some measure from other forms of popular print culture in the earlier part of the century (Beller 8), including the penny bloods. *Manuscripts*, then, participated in the broader literary context of Victorian fiction by exploring new

[3] This is another point in which *Manuscripts* resembles *Passages*: the *Blackwood's* series was so realistic that it sparked outrage among surgeons, who believed it a gross violation of patient-doctor confidentiality (Sparks, *The Doctor* 14). *Manuscripts* engaged in a similar attempt, but it did so deploying entirely different strategies to meet the tastes of its readership, which was substantially different from that of *Blackwood's*.

trends that could suit its readership's taste for thrill. The figure of the physician as author-narrator of a penny blood is consistent with the phenomenon indicated by Gilbert, as physicians were potentially melodramatic figures. They were the "gentlemen of the medical world" (Hurren 81), people entrusted with family stories and secrets. Hence, the author-narrator's profession promised salacious, scandalous, or horrifying details, the kind of titillation the readers of cheap serialized fiction looked for when purchasing literature. From this perspective, then, *Manuscripts*' configuration of its narrative as the diary of a medical man, tapping into fashionable literary trends in popular fiction, aimed to fulfil the chief objective of penny bloods according to the editors, namely, profit.

Furthermore, the construction of the series as a fragment of reality impacts on the relationship between the reader and the text. It is an explicit invitation to the reader to pretend he or she is perusing an original document, blurring the boundary between reality and fiction. The (fictional) author reassures his readers that, out of delicacy, facts about (fictional) living people were omitted from the reprint of the (non-existent, fictional) diary. The statement "truth is stranger, far stranger, than fiction" (*Manuscripts* 1: 3) that introduces the physician's first adventure further reinforces this blurring. The proximity of the two words, "truth" and "fiction", ultimately confuses the distinction between the two: the remark suggests that what is being related is a fact so strange that it is more incredible than fiction, while indeed it is fiction. This sentence seals the contract the text stipulates with the reader, who agrees to pretend that the fictional content of *Manuscripts* is true.

The choice of a physician as the author of this impression of truth acquires further interest if we consider the context in which the narrative appeared. The fact that a penny blood participated in the phenomenon of the rise of the medical man as a fiction hero raises a question. A medical man may, certainly, have had a few interesting stories to relate, but penny blood readers were used to the adventures of criminals and murderers, compared to which the life of a physician might look quite uneventful. What could his diary have contained that would have interested the average action-seeking, gore-loving penny blood reader? The answer is in the title of the opening narrative of the series, which appeared immediately below the Introduction: "The Dead Restored; or, The Young Student". From the first page, the physician narrator, the contract between reader and narrative, and the whole series are linked to the most gruesome and terrifying

aspect of medicine: the sight of, and the contact with, the dead body. Sparks, who also notes the development of the medical hero phenomenon in the Victorian novel, states that, until the reputation of medical men improved towards mid-century, the figure of the doctor was not considered novel material also due to its unsavoury connection with bodysnatching (*The Doctor* 13). These elements, instead, suited the penny blood genre perfectly and, as it appears from the contents of the first episode, *Manuscripts* exploits them fully. Indeed, the simultaneous presence of a "student" and a corpse in a sentence would trigger in the mind of the mid-Victorian reader a number of connections to the issue, still debated in the 1840s, of the use of paupers' bodies as dissecting material for training anatomy students.

This chapter explores the ways in which *Manuscripts* discusses, elaborates, and problematizes this topic. The analysis focuses on two specific episodes: the above-mentioned episode one of series one, "The Dead Restored; or The Young Student" (hereafter "The Dead Restored"), and episode seven of series two, "The Long Subject; or, The Unexpected Denouement" (hereafter "The Long Subject"). My choice of these two episodes out of the considerable number constituting the long series is based on the fact that they share some crucial features. Firstly, both narratives revolve around unscrupulous doctors exhuming, or attempting to exhume, a pauper's body for dissection purposes. Furthermore, both episodes pivot on cases of premature burial, and finally, in both stories the physician has a critical role in restoring the health of the person who was buried alive.

In "The Dead Restored", the author of the diary, the unnamed physician, relates an adventure he had as a young student in Edinburgh. The protagonist is walking through the poorest neighbourhood of the city with his friend and colleague Musgrove, when, upon hearing laments coming from one of the wretched houses, they discover the desperate Major Sinclair, weeping over the corpse of his beautiful little daughter Mary. Mary's corpse, and her inexplicable death, become an obsession for Musgrove, who decides to disinter her and dissect her. His determination to carry out a dissection borders on madness, or, as he terms it, "monomania". It is worth noting that Gilbert identifies monomania as a core element of sensation fiction and as a trait characterising also Dickens's 1860s fiction (185). Alongside the theme of the medical hero, therefore, *Manuscripts* embraced also the interest in altered mental states shown by related narrative forms.

The (soon to be) physician is not keen on Musgrove's project, but decides to help him anyway, to prevent him from asking for help from someone less trustworthy, thus exposing himself. However, when the two reach the cemetery on an appropriately stormy night, they find the distraught father weeping over the daughter's tomb, and the sight makes Musgrove renounce his plans. To their horror, however, they see Major Sinclair has actually disinterred the corpse of the child with the purpose of burying it in the tomb of her mother by the river. The two medical students approach the deranged man to make him desist, and it seems everything will eventually turn out well. However, Musgrove suddenly realizes that the child is sitting upright with her eyes open, watching them. The sight kills Major Sinclair on the spot. It is eventually discovered that his daughter was alive and well, and had been buried while in a state of coma.

The events of "The Dead Restored" provide ground for an examination of the use of space in the narrative. From the description of the locations in the story emerges an effort to reproduce the geospace of the city of Edinburgh in the narrative space. By comparing a map of early nineteenth-century Edinburgh with these descriptions, it is possible to find some of the landmarks that characterize the narrative space. The two medical students find the Sinclairs in a slum and, later, Mary is buried at "Caulknows", "[t]o the left of the Leith road" (*Manuscripts* 1: 4). In Victorian Edinburgh, there were slums in the area of Princes Street, near the spot where Waverley train station is now. Heading east, Princes Street makes a turn into Leith Street, which conceivably could be the "road to Leith" near which the young physician states is the cemetery where Mary Sinclair is to be buried. Since no evidence of such place as "Caulknows" can be found in historical maps, the space is probably fictional.

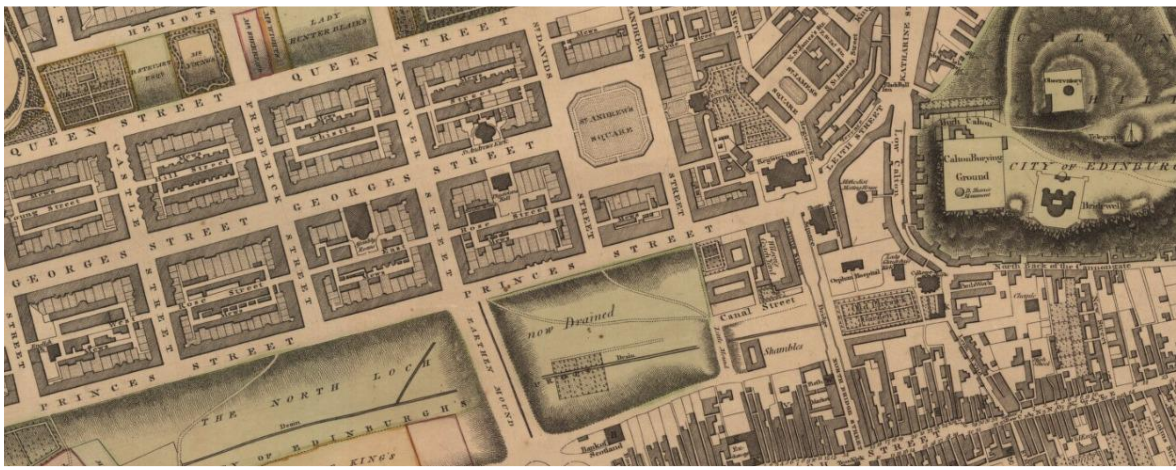

Figure 1: Old and New Town of Edinburgh and Leith with the proposed docks - detail. Edinburgh: John Ainslie, 1804. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

However, next to the "road to Leith" there is Calton Hill with Calton burial ground, the name of which somewhat resembles that of the fictional Caulknows. While the Edinburgh setting could be ascribed, in part, to Rymer's Scottish descent, the nature of the narrative as a penny blood suggests other reasons connected to the history of crime and medicine, which at times were tightly interlaced, of that city. The story obviously tries to connect the snatching of Mary Sinclair from her grave with the past of bodysnatching of Edinburgh. Likewise, the determination Musgrove shows to dissect Mary's body is redolent of the long-lasting debate around the ethics – or lack thereof – of the behaviour of the anatomists, which saw the Edinburgh medical community at the centre of debate on different occasions.[4]

Unexpected resurrection happens also in "The Long Subject", in which the physician is now a seasoned practitioner and lives in a village in the south of England. "Long" Hannibal Jeffries, the idle and drunkard, but famously tall, husband of the doctor's landlady, dies of exposure on the night in which Mrs Jeffries, exasperated by his disorderly conduct, refuses him admittance to the house. The woman is distraught and blames herself for her husband's death, although her whole community tries to console her – except a certain Revd. Gluck, a preacher, who asserts that she is doomed.

Meanwhile Garratt, a colleague and friend of the doctor, is founding a Literary and Scientific Institution, and would like to have the skeleton of Long Hannibal as a specimen for its museum, considering his exceptional body frame. Garratt asks the physician to help him disinter the body, which he condescends to do, on condition that everything must be done so that the widow shall suspect nothing. On the night that follows the burial, Garratt's party digs up the body; as they are refilling the tomb, the physician watches the body, which starts moving. He thus discovers that Long Hannibal Jeffries had been thrown in a coma by exposure, and is actually alive. This is convenient, for the night he (apparently) died, he had just received the news that an uncle of his had passed in the West Indies, leaving him four thousand pounds. His brother Tom had brought him the news; Hannibal meant to give a thousand pounds to him, but Tom, who became entitled to the whole sum upon his brother's (apparent) death, would have shared none with the widow and fatherless children. Long Hannibal is reunited with his wife, through a

[4] This point is further explored in the next sections of the chapter.

tactful tale the doctor tells her (in which he manages to put the grave-robbing operation in the best possible light) and the cruel brother Tom is chased out of the house. The apparent death is explained by a prank played on Tom in order to test his generosity. The adventure cures Hannibal of his penchant for drinking and he and his family move to London, where they lead a respectable life.

"The Long Subject" engages more openly with the ethical implications of resurrectionism for dissection purposes than "The Dead Restored" does. The emphasis on the "usefulness" of the "knowledge" that can be derived from opening a corpse, which characterizes the whole narrative, bears remarkable similarity to the language of Utilitarian philosophy. It suggests an attempt to justify the behaviour of surgeons who purchased bodies stolen from graves, or at least to come to terms with the idea that certain bodies did end up on the dissecting table. The absence of professional resurrectionists in both "The Long Subject" and in "The Dead Restored" is thus explained. The narratives mean to show the doctors in the best possible light, even when they exhume bodies, in a frame within which the ends justify the means.

Although the sensationalism necessary to guarantee the success of a penny blood is certainly the central element of the narratives, they arguably display an intention to discuss the ethical implications of the act of bodysnatching. Both narratives tap into the negative perception the public had of dissection and resurrectionism, as emerges from the murky settings and the presence of arrogant, monstrous doctors. By contrast, they stand out among other popular forms of discussion of these issues, such as cartoons, by proposing a positive representation of anatomy and medical men. Indeed, the discourse on anatomy and dissection developed in the narratives is built on a dialectic structure that juxtaposes rationality and irrationality, or insanity, hubris and humanity, science and superstition. This chapter explores this dialectic structure, focusing on the figure of the physician, who is constructed as a figure opposed to the negative connotations that medicine assumed in the popular mind. Not only does he resist the detachment from emotions that the medical discipline required students to develop, but he is also endowed with a strong ethical sense, and transforms spaces of death and superstition into spaces where science and rationality can triumph. The analysis below frames this character within the discussion on medical deontology in the first half of the century, and connects it with the power

dynamics that characterized the relationship between the medical fraternity and the lower class, which also constituted the intended readership of the series.

Monomaniac monsters and balanced heroes: the medical man reimagined.

Monsters in *Manuscripts* are less overtly "monstrous" than in the other penny bloods examined in this study. This is a series that is (purportedly) based on the diary of a medical man who, as the reader gradually discovers, takes pride in his rationality; therefore, there are no supernaturally monstrous creatures. Rather, there are humans who behave monstrously, who are deceitful, murderous, and mad. In the two episodes selected, monstrosity is embodied by a medical man. The extant relationship between madness and medical men in the two narratives is rooted in the socio-historical context in which the series appeared. The 1830s and 1840s saw Victorian society expressing concerns about the balance of members of the medical fraternity, especially in relation to anatomy studies and dissection.[5] These concerns proceeded from the combination of the secrecy that characterized medical training, the medical fraternity believing that laypeople would not understand their methods and challenge them, with the disquieting intelligence that leaked from the closed doors of the dissection room into the pages of periodicals.

Truly, studying medicine in the nineteenth century was a rough matter, a powerfully physical experience that required the surgeon-to-be to make several adjustments at a psychological level, or to withdraw from the course. Although the discipline was advertised as a contemplative experience for a private club of well-dressed gentlemen that mostly involved the examination of the bodies of beautiful females, in the actual dissection room students found themselves up to their elbows in gore, their nostrils full of the smell of decaying flesh, working on unappealing pieces of dismembered corpses for hours on end. Even the sexual dimension of the experience was drastically different from what advertisements suggested: the bodies in the dissection room were chiefly male (Hurren 105). The public expressed concerns about the effects that this experience might have on students, and imagining the consequences this would have for patients caused even greater alarm. It was feared that "patients might become objects of

[5] See Hurren 93-104.

experimentation and prurient interest" for medical students (Hurren 83). Dissection did, in fact, sever the cultural ties that bound the medical student to perceiving the dead body as an object of reverence and his fellow human beings as such, and not as patients. The avowed purpose of dissection, as William Hunter[6] enunciated it around 1780, was that of "inform[ing] the *head*, guid[ing] the *hand*, and familiariz[ing] the *heart* to a kind of necessary inhumanity" (67).[7] The concept of "necessary inhumanity", which is defined today as "clinical detachment" (Richardson 31), was then new and disconcerting. It implied that anatomy required medical students to relinquish the moral and religious values of their society, acting contrarily to what was classified as human and Christian behaviour. From the surgeon's perspective, students learned to operate with a steady hand; from the uninitiated's perspective, they learned detachment at the idea of mutilating other human beings, and made a habit of touching and dismembering corpses. They became, in a word, monstrous.

This perceived monstrosity stemmed also from another concept that developed in medical sciences in the nineteenth century, namely, the medical gaze. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault discusses the supremacy of the gaze in nineteenth-century medical practice, arguing that during the (comparatively) brief life-span of nineteenth-century medicine and its focus on pathological anatomy, "[t]he 'glance' ha[d] simply to exercise its right of origin over truth" (*The Birth of the Clinic* 2). It was the gaze of the clinician, therefore, that established what truth was, and it was not the gaze of "any observer", but that "of a doctor supported and justified by an institution … endowed with the power of decision and intervention" (Foucault *The Birth of the Clinic* 109). The medical gaze as a manifestation of power was acutely felt by the public. Firstly, it represented the power of the trained clinician to individuate illness, the malfunctioning of human anatomy as only the proficient anatomist could know it. This power transformed the patient from unique individual into a set of "constitutional and disease characteristics" subject to the gaze of the clinician (Gilbert 183). Secondly, it

[6] William Hunter, physician, anatomist, and man-midwife (Brock, ODNB), and his brother John Hunter, surgeon and anatomist, were key figures in the medical environment of the second part of the eighteenth century (Gruber, ODNB). Both brothers deeply influenced medical practice and instruction in the following century, including the field of anatomy studies. John Hunter's massive collection of anatomical specimens was acquired by the government after his death and entrusted to the Company of Surgeons (soon to become the Royal College of Surgeons) and is still open to the public today in the Hunterian Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

[7] Hunter's emphasis.

represented the power to look, to pry into what was normally concealed from view. The intimate observation of a naked, open body that surgeons-to-be and anatomists had the power to perform disquieted laypeople, especially if that body was female. Even more disquieting was the anatomists' apparent impatience to exercise their gaze, to the point of starting a business relationship with individuals who disinterred bodies precisely with the goal of selling them for dissection. The clinical gaze exercised in the dissection room and the hospital thus became a prying, voyeuristic gaze in the mind of the public, the exercise of power over the ultimate powerless entity, the diseased or dead body.

Manuscripts is profoundly rooted in this context, notwithstanding its humble literary origins, and possibly because of them. The working-class audience of the penny bloods was a group that more than any other was subject to the power of the medical gaze: they were observed and touched by the surgeons-in-training when receiving free treatment, and their bodies were the chief source of subjects for dissection, before and after the Anatomy Act. The themes of madness, voyeurism, and dissection emerge powerfully in the medical characters of the two narratives examined. In "The Dead Restored", the narrative juxtaposes two types of medical students: a mad one, who is prone to monstrous behaviour and to abusing his power, and a balanced one (the protagonist as a student), who does not yield to monstrosity. This latter figure is connected to the mature, balanced physician of "The Long Subject", who combines excellent medical performance with prowess and mettle. Through the young and mature physicians, the narrative builds a positive re-invention of the figure of the medical man.

The character of the medical student Musgrove embodies Victorian concerns about the impact the study of anatomy could have on the mind of students. From the first paragraph, Musgrove is characterized as a person who lacks sensitivity, but who has gained pride, and a certain sense of superiority, from his status of medical student. When he and the protagonist hear the laments coming from one of the poor houses they are passing by, they have two markedly different reactions that reveal two different perceptions of the boundaries between themselves and the private sphere of the poor members of their community:

> "Let us go in," said [Musgrove].
>
> I hesitated a moment, for there was ever to me something sacred about grief which repressed all curiosity.

> "Pho! pho!" said my young companion, "our profession is our passport to such scenes. We may be of some service." (*Manuscripts* 1: 4)

The protagonist shrinks from imposing his presence on a stranger in grief, whereas Musgrove is ostentatiously dismissive of such scruples. He treats his status of medical trainee as a "passport" that allows him to break boundaries that people are usually expected to respect, such as private property, or the intimate moment of grief. Although his suggestion that they "may be of service" makes one suppose that perhaps he means well, his nonchalance in intruding into the house and life of the pauper in distress suggests the urge to indulge his own voyeuristic curiosity. He perceives the pauper as an object to gaze upon, while he is in the position of the observer, free to perform a close inspection that engages his eye, but not his feelings. The narrative reinforces this impression by outlining a distant, dismissive medical community in the background through the reaction of Major Sinclair at the sight of the two medical students. Believing them to be the doctors who left his pleas for help unanswered, he cries: "Fiends! fiends! … In my poverty and bitter destitution … I sent for ye, and ye came not" (*Manuscripts* 1: 4). Although the two youths manage to explain that they are not the surgeons to whom Sinclair appealed and even leave a small contribution to the funeral, the covert text is that the Edinburgh medical community is too proud, and too interested in money, to provide treatment for the destitute. The character of Musgrove is framed as the offshoot of such medical community, which engages with the destitute only as long as they constitute interesting subjects. However, in the house of Major Sinclair the medical student finds interesting material for his gaze in the lifeless body of Mary Sinclair.

The reader is given an image of the body of Mary through the gaze of the young physician, who describes her as

> a young girl of apparently seven or eight years of age. The beauty even of that face in death exceeded anything I had ever beheld. There was still a faint tinge of colour on the cheeks, the beautiful lips were slightly apart, and through the long silken eyelashes a glimpse of clear blue eyes could be obtained: a flood of golden hair hung over her breast and the pillow on which she lay.

> I was quite fascinated by the still picture before me. She looked like some beautifully executed piece of wax work. (*Manuscripts* 1: 4)

Notably, the gaze of the medical student registers the corpse as beautiful. The morbidity of such a description would not have escaped the expert eye of the average penny blood reader, who would have been looking for gory and disturbing passages. Additionally, a nineteenth-century reader would have connected the comparison between the corpse and a "beautifully executed piece of waxwork" with the Anatomical Venus, wax models of beautiful females with long hair, which indeed seemed rather asleep than dead. These were used as anatomy models for students (wax internal organs could be found under the movable "lid" of the torso), but they were also the central pieces of the anatomy exhibitions open to the public, and the readership of *Manuscripts* was likely familiar with them.[8] What makes the comparison between Mary's corpse and a wax work, and hence a Venus, problematic is the process of sexualisation these figures underwent. Ludmilla Jordanova underscores the attempt at a "realistic" representation of the female body in these models, which were "meticulously detailed" down to eyelashes, eyebrows and pubic hair (45), and the markedly feminine, and erotic, elements that characterized the Venus. They were always in a recumbent position on silk or velvet cushions, and their alluring poses sometimes recalled those of famous works of art, such as Bernini's Saint Teresa (Jordanova 44-5).[9] Their head was adorned with flowing human hair, and they wore pearl necklaces around their neck. In his description, the young physician of *Manuscripts* focuses on Mary's "flood of golden hair", her eyelashes, and "tinge of the skin". These details were the same ones that defined the realistic reproduction of the female body of the wax model as a beautiful sight, as a perfect work.[10] Jordanova argues that the

[8] The first public anatomical museum was open in London by the Italian Antonio Sarti in March 1839, and the central piece of Sarti's exhibition was a Florentine Anatomical Venus. Sarti believed in making the public privy to the world of anatomy, in instructing workers and women (who were usually excluded from anatomy studies) in the shape and functioning of the body. In this way, he maintained, not only would he spread knowledge on the "laws of health", but he would also combat atheism, showing the divine at work in the human body (Bates 8-9).

[9] Indeed, the habit of placing the female body in a reclining pose that simultaneously suggests sensuality and vulnerability can be found in paintings representing reclining "Venuses" as far back as the 16th century. Artists aimed to portray, and determine, the ideal female beauty, hence the name "Venus" in the titles. Giorgione started the tradition with his "Sleeping Venus" (1508), and several artists continued it in the following centuries, most notably his pupil and friend Titian, in his "Venus of Urbino" (1538). The effort at representing the ideal female beauty for the (male) gaze to behold that characterized these paintings survived in the Anatomical Venus.

[10] Jordanova notes that wax was the material of choice for the models because it reproduced both the texture and the natural colour of skin (45).

realism that characterized the Venus was "uncanny" to behold (45); in *Manuscripts*, however, the disturbing element is not so much the uncannily lively corpse as the onlooker, the student who registers the corpse as beautiful, even sensually so. By establishing a connection between the reader and popular Victorian displays such as these, the description of Mary's corpse through the young physician's eyes is a first hint in the narrative to the perception of the gaze of the medical student on the dead body as morbidly voyeuristic.

The corpse awakens the interest of both students; however, here too they have radically different reactions to the stimulus. While the description does hint at the fact that the young physician's gaze has been altered by his training and he now perceives a corpse as an attractive object, the sinister feeling is mitigated by the sense of respect for the dead child that transpires from his words. The protagonist is able to draw the line between his medical gaze and his human, and humane, perception of the dead body. By contrast, Musgrove's perception of the corpse rapidly assumes marked necrophiliac tones. He displays a suspicious interest in the exact location where the dead girl will be buried. He confesses that he "should like vastly to know what she died of" and he suggests that "[b]y getting -- the body" they "might know" (*Manuscripts* 1: 4).While the young physician admits that he "was not much shocked at the proposition" because his "professional education" had freed him from his "prejudices", he "shr[inks] from disturbing the repose of that young creature", and suggests that they "[l]eave her alone" (*Manuscripts* 1: 4). Musgrove, however, is determined:

> "… I must do it … the idea has haunted me, sleeping or waking … I believe I shall never know peace till I find out what that child died of."
>
> "Why, Musgrove, are you mad?"
>
> "It almost amounts to a monomania," said Musgrove, smiling; "but call it what you will, I am resolved, with you or without you, to possess myself of that girl's body tonight." (*Manuscripts* 1: 4)

The dead body has become an idée fixe for Musgrove, so much so that he terms it a "monomania". As he felt entitled to enter a pauper's house to satisfy his curiosity, he now feels entitled to examine the corpse of the dead destitute girl for the same reason. From his perspective, the girl is already a "subject", a body, which can, and must, be subjected to his gaze. While the young physician

observes the body of the girl from a distance, respecting the boundaries established by her father, Musgrove is convinced that the pursuit of knowledge that characterizes his career path entitles him to disregard such boundaries, as well as the boundaries imposed by the funerary rites. Believing himself, as a medical man endowed with power and allowed to make decisions, superior to social and religious rules, he commits a sin of hubris that almost leads him to madness. The fact that he admits to a monomaniacal state adds strength to his disturbing, necrophiliac closing remark: "I am resolved ... to possess myself of that girl's body tonight". The medical student thus becomes a mentally unstable character, reiterating Victorian concerns about the impact of anatomy training on students' minds and about the appropriateness of their gaze over the dead (female) body.

From this perspective, the gaze of the two medical students on the corpse of Mary Sinclair, and consequently the *Manuscripts* series, is framed in a context in which the medical gaze on the corpse was being represented, and scrutinized, through different channels. Pictorial representations of dissection offered contrasting views on the all-powerful medical gaze, and while some celebrated it for the medical community, others focused on the anxieties about necrophilia and metaphorical cannibalism that it awakened in the wider public. Hurren examines the 1864 chalk drawing "The dissection of a beautiful woman directed by J. CH. G. Lucae (1814-1855) in order to determine the ideal female proportions" (Fig. 2), which exemplifies the type of image that was used to advertise anatomy courses for students (Hurren 106-113). In the scene, three smartly dressed doctors examine – that is, they *observe* – a beautiful female corpse, not unlike an Anatomical Venus, with the purpose of determining the exact shape of female beauty.

Figure 2: Hasselhorst, Johann Heinrich. The dissection of a young, beautiful woman directed by J. Ch. G. Lucae (1814-1885) in order to determine the ideal female proportions. 1864. © Wellcome Library, London.

As Hurren points out, Hasselhorst's representation of the proceedings of a dissection room is not realistic (109). The blood and gore are conspicuously absent, while the power of the clinician to access the inaccessible with his gaze is exalted. Jordanova notes Lucae focused on the "physical basis of female beauty", and argues that the image, particularly the detail of the sheet of skin lifted from the woman's breast, conveys the idea that "the corpse is indeed being undressed scientifically" (98). The title itself reveals the true aim of the painter, which is not that of offering a realistic representation, but of celebrating the medical gaze. This bloodless dissection is performed on a "beautiful" woman to allow a surgeon to "determine" the parameters of female beauty: the image invites the anatomist-to-be to imagine himself as part of a select group whose trained gaze not only does engage in the delightful observation of naked female beauty, but also, being able to access what others cannot, produces authoritative knowledge that is endowed

with the status of truth. Foucault states that "[t]he genesis of the manifestation of truth is also the genesis of the knowledge of truth" (*The Birth of the Clinic* 135). Since the gaze of the clinician affords him a privileged access to the genesis of the manifestation of truth (in this case, the corpse), he enjoys direct access to the knowledge of truth. Consequently, his diagnosis, his words, acquire the status of truth, of knowledge. This kind of pictorial representation of dissection, therefore, advertised the power of accessing, scrutinizing, and evaluating as the privilege of the inhabitant of the dissecting room, the same power Musgrove claims for himself as soon as he lays eyes on the corpse of Mary Sinclair. In his mind, his ability to access the truth through his gaze is tantamount to his entitlement to do so whenever he wants.

By contrast, cartoons represented the gaze of the medical man and the medical student as grotesquely voyeuristic. In this type of representation emerges an intention to pose uncomfortable questions about whether or not the "necessary inhumanity" advertised by modern medicine and its promotion of pathological anatomy had any boundaries. Discussing *The Lancett Club at a Thurtell Feast* (Fig. 3) by Thomas Rowlandson, which represented the dissection of the murderer John Thurtell, Flanders notes that the anatomist "is grotesquely caricatured, while the corpse of Thurtell is entirely realistic" (*The Invention of Murder* 41). The title itself implied that the surgeon and his students, conceived as a sort of private club, fancied human flesh, and that the dead body of Thurtell represented, for them, an appetizing feast. In the print, the surgeon dips his bare hands avidly into the open abdomen of the corpse, the fingers contracted in a clawed position, while a mass of gore and organs tumbles from the open body into a bucket. The medical students are equally caricatured and display facial expressions ranging from excitedly interested to cruel. Only one of them is touching the corpse, keeping one side of the abdomen open for his senior to perform his task; all the others stand and watch eagerly, hovering behind the surgeon's shoulders to get a better view of the corpse. The corpse, as Flanders notes in her comment on the plate, is "almost classically handsome" and does not resemble the actual Thurtell as portrayed by Joseph Hunt during the trial (*The Invention of Murder* n. pag.). Indeed, it could be any corpse. Its face has nothing of the contorted expression of Tom Nero in Hogarth's famous illustration of dissection (*The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1751, Fig. 4). While the title of Hogarth's print implies that dissection is the just reward for Nero's crimes and the corpse is neither idealised, nor celebrated, *The Lancett*

Club portrays the cadaver as a banquet for the voyeuristic surgeons. The form of the cartoon, belonging to a more popular context (meaning it was intended for the general public, as opposed to the specialist public addressed by Hasselhorst), represents the dissected body as powerless under the hands and gaze of the medical fraternity. This type of representation is reflected in the way the body of Mary Sinclair, which stands for an ideal and idealized beauty disconnected from the actual age of the girl, is powerless under the gaze of the monomaniacal, voyeuristic Musgrove. The representation of Musgrove as a threat to Mary's body therefore conforms to the tendency of popular culture to portray the clinical gaze as threatening.

Figure 3: Rowlandson, Thomas. The Lancett Club at a Thurtell Feast. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

Figure 4: Hogarth, William. Caricature of an anatomical dissection, depicting the cruelty of dissected criminal avenged by the heartlessness of the anatomists; 'The Reward of Cruelty'. 1751. © Wellcome Library, London.

Unlike the corpse in in Rowlandson's print, the idealised body in "The Dead Restored" is female. This difference is unsurprising, as it addressed a specific concern of the public about anatomy studies. The fact that the anatomist's gaze on

the female corpse had explicit sexual connotations emerged from both pictorial and sculptural representations of the female corpse (as we have seen) and, more alarmingly, from rumours of grotesque jokes made behind the closed doors of the anatomy theatre. Anatomists and medical students were famously fond of jokes and pranks that disregarded the dignity of the dead body, especially the female one.[11] The character of Musgrove in "The Dead Restored" embodies Victorian concerns about disrespect towards the (female) corpse in the dissection room. He would remind the Victorian reader of the average medical student, or young anatomist, such as Richard Partridge, who Wise describes as the typical self-made man who "quickly adopted the condescension and waggishness of the gentleman-born" (179). Musgrove, with his dismissive "pho! pho!" and his high opinion of his own medical person, tallies with this type of character, and his excessive, inappropriate interest in the body of Mary Sinclair reiterates popular representations of the medical gaze as voyeuristic and necrophiliac.

The mad medical student of "The Dead Restored" tapped into the popular perception of the medical student as a bogeyman. Dissection affected his mind, dehumanizing him, and he is inebriated with the power of the medical gaze. He believes to be above the norms imposed by the values of the community around him, and feels entitled to break them. He is a monstrous figure, whose hubris leads him to behave monstrously towards both the living and the dead. The narrative, however, suggests that his condition is not irreversible. When they are finally on the point of disinterring the girl, Musgrove and the young physician spot the father weeping on the tomb, and the young physician asks Musgrove if, after seeing this, he will still pursue his aim. He replies: "No … I will not. My mind has strangely altered. I have lost the wish to do so" (*Manuscripts* 1: 5). His answer sounds as if the sight of Major Sinclair's deranged state has exorcized the idea that "haunted" him like a ghost. The sin of hubris and the desecration of Mary's body are avoided in the moment Musgrove is reminded of his own humanity, and he is saved after all. This would not have been possible, however, without the young physician.

[11] The dandyish Richard Partridge, the anatomist who reported to the police the London Burkers Bishop and Williams, was known for peppering his lectures with inappropriate jokes (Wise 179), while the anatomist Joseph Carpue claimed personal acquaintance with some of the subjects he dissected. He once told his students that a certain skeleton was "the prettiest girl [he had] ever known" (Wise 179–80).

The protagonist represents an ideal alternative to the character of the monstrous student. The narrative hints at least twice at the fact that the two received the same training. The young physician admits that Musgrove's plan did not shock him *per se*, as his training rubbed off the "rust of a good many of [his] prejudices" (*Manuscripts* 1: 4). The use of the word "prejudice" may not be casual, since it had an important role in the anatomy debate. "Vulgar prejudice" was the way in which supporters of the Anatomy Act defined the fear of dissection as a feeling entertained by the less educated portion of the population (Richardson 151). Even the better educated radicals, the ones who believed in science as instrumental to social progress, perceived "superstition or sentiment [as] emblematic of ignorance" (Richardson 152). The use of the word in "The Dead Restored" suggests that the young physician himself is in favour of dissection. Moreover, when he voices again his disapproval of Musgrove's plans, Musgrove exclaims "Oh, nonsense! … I never knew you were so scrupulous before" (*Manuscripts* 1: 5), which suggests that the young physician never showed reservations concerning the dissection of a subject before. Nevertheless, the young physician, differently from Musgrove, never behaves inhumanely. Although he perceives Mary's body as beautiful, he does not consider his status of medical student as a passe-partout: he is capable of controlling his morbid curiosity and putting his respect for the father's grief and the dead herself before it. He retains, to an extent, the sensitivity and humanity students, through the study of anatomy, were supposed to lose, and he disapproves of the unnecessary, obsession-driven bodysnatching operation planned by his friend. His attitude towards the body of Mary Sinclair suggests that he is able to distinguish between the legitimate pursuit of knowledge and transgression of social norms. For instance, Mary's body lacks the anonymity that, according to Rosner, helped medical students to "cross the line more readily" towards professional detachment (155). The expressions the fictional medical student uses to refer to Mary, such as "young creature" (*Manuscripts* 1: 4), indicate that to him Mary Sinclair is most decidedly not an anonymous subject. She triggers in the humane student the scruples attached to the moral code of his society, to which he subscribes, notwithstanding his medical training. While Musgrove is entirely dominated by his hubris and morbid curiosity, the young physician is able to "switch off" his clinical detachment depending on the situation. He exercises the decisional power that Foucault associated with the figure of the clinician by deciding not to follow up to his medical gaze with the

touch of the lancet. His gaze on Mary's body, unlike the necrophiliac gaze of Musgrove, takes the form of an aesthetic contemplation mitigated by his sympathy for Major Sinclair's sorrow and his respect for the remains of his daughter.

Scruple and lack of scruple, therefore, is what distinguishes the human(e) medical student from the inhuman(e) one. This element is repeated in "The Long Subject", in which the mature physician is juxtaposed to the figure of his friend, the medical man Garratt. Garratt, though less melodramatic a figure than Musgrove, embodies another element that characterised popular representations of surgeons, namely, cannibalism. He has a scientific interest in the exceptionally tall corpse of Long Hannibal, as he wants it as an "interesting" specimen for the museum of his newly founded Literary and Philosophical Institution. The mature physician "cannot but agree … that the osteological system of [their] friend Hannibal would answer the purpose very well" (*Manuscripts* 2: 48), but he voices his doubts on the feasibility of the plan. Garratt, however, is determined:

> "Well, of course, there is some difficulty … We cannot expect that Mrs Jeffries would exactly like the skeleton of her husband to be hung up in a glass case in our new museum. People have their prejudices, you know, upon those matters. But still, when a great object is to be attained, I think we might take some trouble to carry it out. In a word, doctor, I have quite set my heart upon having Hannibal Jeffries nicely boiled, and scraped, and polished, and all the articulations of the joints got up with springs in the best manner, and hung up in the museum …" (*Manuscripts* 2: 48)

Whereas Mr Garratt is almost a caricature, and some of his statements, such as the comment on Mrs Jeffries "not exactly liking" the idea of her husband's skeleton on display, are obviously meant as comic relief moments, his figure would have reminded the reader of some deeply suspicious facts regarding anatomy and dissection. The emphasis on the unusual height of Hannibal's skeleton would have reminded the Victorian reader of the case of Charles Byrne, the Irish Giant. Byrne was part of the freak show scene of 1780s Britain, and lived in terror of the idea that doctors would dissect him after death. He asked for his body to be buried at sea, but John Hunter managed to obtain the body by bribery,

and his skeleton is now exposed at the Hunterian Museum.[12] The story of "Long" Hannibal Jeffries, therefore, connected the fictional surgeon Garratt to a real surgeon whose actions demonstrated that the medical community was not disinclined to legerdemain when an "interesting" subject was the aim. Garratt is adamant on this point: "when a great object is to be attained", one must "take some trouble to carry it out" (*Manuscripts* 2: 48), by which he means that he should either get personally involved in resurrectionism, or pay someone to do it in his place. In the course of the narrative, Garratt attempts both. At first, he approaches the gravedigger with the intent of bribing him, but he stumbles on one of the very few honest gravediggers in the whole country: he informs the physician that he has "sounded that official personage, and found it most emphatically and decidedly no go … when [he] began upon the subject of resurrection at all, [he] found such strong tide of prejudice against [him], that [he] saw it was in vain to battle with" (*Manuscripts* 2: 52). It is possible to see that in "The Long Subject" the word "prejudice" is explicitly used as synonym of unreasonable, borderline-superstitious beliefs, a hamper on the progress of medical science. Garratt's definition of the feeling of aversion shown by the gravedigger as "prejudice" identifies him as a medical man who considers the psychological attachment of the bereaved to the body, or the reverence inspired by the dead, the mark of ignorance. Like John Hunter, he believes that science should have no patience with, and no interest in, the wishes of the dead or their bereaved relatives.

Another element that connects Garratt to popular, negative representations of the medical community is his detailed description of what he means to do with Long Hannibal's body. Boiling and scraping bones were operations linked to the butchery sector. Nineteenth-century surgery was profoundly different from the focused, methodical practice that we know today: it was a gruesome, messy, and violent business. The concept of anaesthesia was still in its infancy. The semi-conscious (when not fully conscious) patient was strapped down to the operating

[12] Byrne's skeleton is still a matter of both study and dispute. The analysis of his DNA proved that his acromegaly, or gigantism, originated in a tumour to his pituitary gland. On December 2011, legal researchers started a campaign to consign Byrne's skeleton to the sea, as the Irishman himself wished. The campaigners pressed the Royal College of Surgeons to respect Byrne's wish, arguing that everything that could be inferred from the study of his remains had been discovered. The Director of the Hunterian Museum, on the other hand, argued that current studies on the tumour of the pituitary gland connect Byrne's skeleton "to living and future communities". ("Royal College of Surgeons Rejects …"). See also "Skeleton of Charles Byrne the Irish Giant…".

table, surrounded by men who held his limbs down for further measure, while the surgeon cut, explored, sawed or otherwise severed, and sewed back, perhaps lecturing medical students all the while. Consequently, surgeons and medical students were represented in cartoons as butchers, the instruments in their hands more similar to meat cleavers than lancets (Fig. 5).[13] Garratt's statement, then, assumes the macabre and disquieting undertones that characterized the perception of the surgeon anatomist as cannibalistic savages since the beginning of the century (as the allusive word "feast" in the title of Rowlandson's print suggested).

Figure 5: Heath, William. Modern Medical Education: Actual Practice. Cartoon, 1825. By permission of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

To the comically gruesome Garratt is juxtaposed the figure of the mature physician. He displays a somewhat more permissive attitude towards unauthorized exhumations than his younger self, as long as they have a scientific purpose. When Garratt announces his intention of having Long Hannibal Jeffries' body "nicely boiled, and scraped, and polished … and hung up in the museum" he replies: "I have no objection" (*Manuscripts* 2: 48), but then, he gives his own conditions: "whatever means are taken to get the body, … the most special care shall be taken that Mrs Jeffries shall be kept in the most profound ignorance upon the subject" (*Manuscripts* 2: 48). For the physician, the peace of mind of the bereaved widow is paramount. As in "The Dead Restored", his medical colleague

[13] Note the clothing and the attitude of the surgeon, who resembles more a butcher than a doctor, the swooning patient and the terrified attitude of the other characters. Note also the two empty coffins on the left, ominously suggesting the outcome of the operation.

tries to overcome his hesitation by alluding to his familiarity with resurrectionism. When the physician objects to participating in the exhumation on the ground of his acquaintance with the Jeffries, Garratt replies: "Nonsense… You have been on these expeditions before … [your experience] will be invaluable" (*Manuscripts* 2: 52-3). Although to this remark the physician admits that he "[owns] the soft impeachment" (*Manuscripts* 2: 53), the mere fact that he voiced his scruples about exhuming a family friend separates him from the enthusiastic and cannibalistic Garratt, who dismisses the physician's scruples as "nonsense". Furthermore, when Long Hannibal Jeffries comes back to life in the cemetery, the physician is the only one who keeps his nerve and identifies the man as a patient coming out of a coma and not as a revenant. The "soft impeachment" of having been involved in exhumation, then, disappears in front of the considerable experience and ability that characterize the physician, as opposed to the comical loss of nerve Garratt's exhumation party suffers in front of the moving body of Mr Jeffries. Unlike them, the physician is able to literally "see" the truth through his medical gaze, which makes him the only true medical man in the story.

There is a further aspect of the character of the physician that makes him the medical man par excellence in the narrative. In this episode, and in others in the volumes, he gives proof of exceptional stamina and prowess. The series recurrently portrays him overpowering his foes in fights or defending himself skilfully, and "The Long Subject" is no exception. As the resurrectionist party is getting ready to set off for the cemetery, Garratt distributes the various tools, and the physician picks the spade "because in addition to its usefulness, it is no bad weapon of defence" (*Manuscripts* 2: 55). He is always ready to fight, although not in the position of the offender, which makes him appear both strong and gallant. His physical strength, as well as his agile intellect, is often devoted to the protection of the weak, as happens when he chases Josiah Gluck, the preacher, out of Mrs Jeffries's house. The preacher, who introduces himself as "one of the instruments of grace" (*Manuscripts* 2: 52), has come to the house of the widow to "convince [her] what a miserable wretch she is" and that "her husband has gone to the bottomless pit" (*Manuscripts* 2: 52). The physician dismisses Mr Gluck's solemn declarations as "unintelligible fanaticism" and kicks him out of the house, stating that "if ever [he has] an aversion to anybody, it is when that body comes before [him] in the shape of a canting vagabond, who gets sleek and fat upon pretended sanctity, and goes about instilling fears into ignorant women and weak-

minded persons" (*Manuscripts* 2: 52).[14] The character of the mature physician, therefore, doubles as science overpowering superstition: he is the scientific man who, enlightened by his studies, chases away manipulative bigots, preventing the more exposed members of society from becoming the hapless victims of fear.

From "The Long Subject" the character of the mature physician emerges as a portentous combination of strength, stamina, mettle and humanity. He is so perfect that even the grey areas of his character (such as his support of dissection) are justifiable, and forgivable. This extraordinary character is indeed the representation of the ideal doctor, a super-heroic doctor. He is the embodiment of the positive clinical gaze and positive clinical detachment, a highly skilful surgeon who retained his capacity to empathize and sympathize with the members of his community, to the point of literally fighting for their right to peace of mind.

From the analysis conducted we can evince that *Manuscripts* reiterated fears that characterized the relationship between the public, particularly the lower-class, and the medical fraternity. Granted, the themes of madness and monstrosity, translated in disturbing images of necrophilia and cannibalism, constituted excellent material for the sensationalistic plots relished by the audience of this genre. However, a close examination of the narratives shows active engagement with the anxieties sparked by the development of modern medical concepts such as the medical gaze, clinical detachment, and the figure of the clinician. Therefore, reading the figure of the physician merely as a sensational element would be reductive. It is also possible to individuate elements from artistic representations of these medical concepts, particularly from the popular artistic form of the cartoon. This indicates that, contrary to the general assumption that penny bloods were solely a commercial enterprise propelled by the newly developed serialised publications industry, this genre could, and did, participate in debates on issues concerning their readership by adapting their stock characters – the monstrous villain and the brave hero, for instance – to the figures and

[14] The evangelical preacher is a typical figure in works ascribed to Rymer. In *Sweeney Todd* we have Reverend Lupin and in *Varney* we have Mr Fletcher. We may suppose the physician's opinion of the category may somehow mirror Rymer's own, as from the narratives emerges a decided dislike towards it, which however does not extend to Anglican clergy. The priest who officiates at the burial rites for Hannibal Jeffries is gentle, empathetic, and has the beadle remove Mr Gluck, come to stir more havoc, from the burial ground. The three preachers, instead, are shifty, hypocritical, and sometimes lascivious, which suggests Rymer was a conservative as regarded religion.

anxieties connected to said debates, in this case the debate around the relationship between medicine and the poor.

I would take this point a step further and argue that *Manuscripts* proposes its own solution to the debate, a narrative alternative to the idea of the voyeuristic, cannibalistic anatomist that dominated popular representations. The two narratives, indeed, do not limit their engagement with the fears awakened in the pauper by the medical man by simply catering to the sensational potential of the monstrous medical student/man, as would be expected if exploitation and cheap titillation were actually the only propeller of the series. *Manuscripts*, instead, builds the character of the heroic doctor, the ideal medical man, a balanced student who becomes a humane practitioner, a figure in which stamina and strength blend with ethics, creating a fully trustworthy surgeon, entirely dedicated to the wellbeing of the community in which he operates, including – and principally – the poor. In this way, I argue, *Manuscripts* attempts to exorcize the fears of its readership. The heroic doctor is the narrative antidote to the medical bogeymen that figured in the perception the lower class had of its position with respect to medicine. This figure, modelled on the larger-than-life hero typical of penny blood narratives, conveys through the page the sense of safety regarding medical treatment that readers of penny bloods could not find in reality.

Once these considerations are made, it is possible to turn the analysis towards the discourse underlying the two narratives. We have seen so far that the characters of Musgrove, Garratt, and the young and mature physician embody different interpretations of the figure of the medical man, particularly of the idea of power connected to it. The next section moves on to examine specifically how the narratives engage with the conflict of power that characterized the relationship between their readership and the medical world. Indeed, as historians of medicine have largely demonstrated, the situation immediately preceding the Anatomy Act, as well as its aftermath, pivoted on power relations among social strata.

Powerful doctors and the ethics of exhumation: solving a deontological issue.

The dialectic of monstrosity and humanity in the episodes examined rests mostly on the perception the medical student/man, has of the power that comes with his position as a member of the medical fraternity. The kind of power a nineteenth-century surgeon or physician could wield was compatible with the idea

of power as based on knowledge theorized by Foucault. While few members of the medical fraternity were actually rich or belonged to nobility, the knowledge of human anatomy and the ability to heal its ailments put every medical man in a position of power with respect to the other members of his community. Foucault underlines the role of pathological anatomy as the defining essence of the new medical expression that developed in the nineteenth century (*The Birth of the Clinic* 152) and, as can be evinced from a survey of early-nineteenth century medical figures, the rise to prominence of pathological anatomy as a subject began early in the century. Thomas Southwood Smith, a supporter of the Anatomy Act and author of the pamphlet "The Use of the Dead to the Living", pointed out that "[d]iagnosis of diseases of the epigastric region" had significantly advanced as dissection increased the knowledge of this area of the human body (Rosner 151). Dissection also allowed Robert Knox, the surgeon who purchased the bodies from the Edinburgh burkers, to prevent a patient in the Edinburgh Infirmary from undergoing potentially "fatal" surgery (Rosner 153).[15] However, the rise to prominence of dissection posed deontological problems that characterized the discussion of anatomy training for the best part of the century.

The use of paupers' bodies to acquire new medical knowledge was the core point of the deontological discussion. The power relationship between the medical fraternity and the poor was extremely unbalanced. The medical fraternity occupied a higher position than the poor in the social system; to the social disparity corresponded an economic disparity, since the poor depended on charity treatment from the medical fraternity. This power disequilibrium allowed the medical fraternity to exploit the economic dependence and social inferiority of the poor, turning the bodies of the pauper into teaching material. This was a hard bargain indeed for the poor, who suffered the consequences of receiving treatment from unskilled practitioners. A famous example is the case of the lithotomy Bransby Cooper, nephew of the more famous Sir Astley Cooper,[16] performed on Stephen Pollard, a labouring man, at Guy's Hospital in 1828.[17] While lithotomy,

[15] Thanks to his dissection of a subject with a tumour in her neck, Knox was able to correct the diagnosis of the patient from aneurism (an aneurism operation would have certainly resulted in death) into tumour.

[16] Astley Cooper was created Baronet in 1821 after successfully performing an operation to the King's scalp to remove a cyst. He was one of the best surgeons of his times, an excellent operator and an innovator, who had several influential patients and covered important positions in the London medical fraternity (Bynum, ODNB). He was also a most proficient anatomist, a proficiency that he reached by his consistent business contacts with the resurrectionists.

[17] For a detailed relation of the case, see Richardson 44-51.

or bladder stone removal, was already a relatively simple operation, it proved an ordeal for Cooper, and resulted in the death of his patient the following day.[18] The *Lancet* covered the case as an example of singular medical incompetence, and blamed it on the nepotistic management of the London hospitals, the connection between Cooper and his uncle Sir Astley being, according to the magazine, the only possible reason why the incapable Cooper held a position at Guy's. Needless to say, Cooper sued Thomas Wakley (the *Lancet*'s editor) for libel. Richardson notes that during the trial, Sir Astley was called as a witness, and he candidly asserted that, although his nephew held a post at Guy's, he "was neither fully skilled nor experienced"; he had no doubt, however, that in time Bransby would become "a most thriving surgeon…" (48). In brief, Sir Astley all but stated that the surgery Bransby operated on Pollard – and Pollard's death – were but part of his nephew's training.

Concerns about the possibility that poor patients may suffer from being used as training material for inexperienced surgeons were voiced also within the medical fraternity. Edinburgh surgeon Robert Liston remarked on the responsibility that came with treating poor patients for charity. "[W]ant of adroitness" with the lancet, and the "unnecessary pain" and danger that came with it was in general deplorable, but it became "highly criminal" when it affected patients in public practice, who were "by chance, and without the means of appeal, thrown upon [the surgeon's] care" (qtd in Rosner 152).[19] Liston, and his London colleague Charles Averill, argued that the only way to prevent this was to allow the medical students to practice at length on dead subjects. Of course, this raised yet more ethical issues, as the bodies that the medical community proposed to use were those of the very poor about whose safety they expressed concerns. This idea, which constituted the foundations of the Anatomy Act, ultimately enforced the power relationship already in place. Either by exploiting the pauper's socio-economically inferior position, or by compelling them to give up their remains with a law, the medical fraternity turned paupers' bodies into teaching material for its students.

[18] Cooper subjected his conscious patient to a long, painful operation, after which he started lecturing his students on the stone that he had – finally – managed to extract, heedless of Pollard, still tied to the operating table.

[19] Liston, Robert. *Practical Surgery*. George W. Norris Ed. Philadelphia: Thomas Cowperthwait, 1842, xi.

The two episodes from *Manuscripts* here examined address directly the deontological issues of the pauper-medical student relationship. The narratives show medical men reacting in opposite ways to the idea of dissecting a pauper's body. In both cases, the exhumation and dissection represent an abuse of power, aggravated by the fact that they are not aimed to instruct a surgeon, but to satisfy his whims. The two narratives appear to be balancing the abuse of power inherent to the use of the body of the pauper for dissection against the importance of the role of the medical fraternity in society. While they cast a scrutinizing look on how surgeons use (and abuse) the power with which their knowledge invests them, they also display awareness of the necessity for well-trained medical men.

In "The Dead Restored", Musgrove displays a conception of the power of the medical man that is manifestly based on social class. He claims that his "profession" – although, in fact, he is still a student – grants him access to the house of Major Sinclair, who is a pauper, and therefore occupies a lower station in society. Musgrove's idea that his position in the medical fraternity constitutes a "passport" does in fact indicate that he identifies himself with a socially powerful category, one whose members traditionally feel entitled to access the pauper's body. The fictional medical student is aware of his superior socio-economic position. Hence he feels entitled to access the pauper's house and, by extension, to "possess himself" (*Manuscripts* 1: 4) of the corpse of his daughter – regardless of her being, technically speaking, a "claimed" body – as if both were his own property. The character of Musgrove, then, replicates on the page the power relationship between the medical trainees and the poor, although the narrative criticizes said relationship by representing him as mad. While the series acknowledges the superior position of the medical man from both a socio-economical and an intellectual perspective (after all, the protagonist is a physician, and in "The Dead Restored" both students appear better educated and richer than Major Sinclair), the character of Musgrove is a critique of the conception of medical knowledge as a source of social power. He is a medical student, a trainee, driven mad by the potential power – healing power, but also social and economic – that the achievement of further knowledge would bring him. In this way, "The Dead Restored" conflates Victorian concerns regarding the impact of dissection on the mental health of medical students with the greater debate over the deontological implications of the power the medical fraternity, down to its trainees, exercised on the poor.

The young physician, by contrast, embodies an entirely different interpretation of the power that comes from medical knowledge, because he embraces values other than the socio-economic power characterizing the medical fraternity, which makes him the ideal medical trainee. His knowledge of the human being appears to be far superior to that of Musgrove because it transcends anatomy. He is able to sympathize with the psychological distress of Major Sinclair, and at the same time he invites him to "be more a man" (*Manuscripts* 1: 6), that is, not to let himself be overcome by the feelings that are affecting his balance. Medical studies have strengthened the mental fibre of the young physician, although not to the point of dehumanizing him, which makes him more powerful than the arrogant, mad Musgrove. Indeed, he is able to restore Mary Sinclair to health by exercising both his medical knowledge and the authority with which this endows him. As he takes care of the child, he also takes charge, dispatching Musgrove to alert the village and instructing the first woman he meets to "give [Mary] some weak wine and water, and a warm bath" (*Manuscripts* 1: 6). The young physician's humane approach makes him a support to his community. He knows how to take care of both the living and the dead (or nearly dead), and he knows how to heal both the mind and the body, to the point that he is able to reconnect his fanatical colleague to his feelings by showing him the grieving Major Sinclair weeping in the churchyard. He stands for the medical man who embraces also the social responsibilities that come with the power the position of surgeon gives. This explains why he is against the unnecessary exhumation of Mary Sinclair.

The position of the young physician on Musgrove's plans for the corpse of Mary underpins the medical discourse of "The Dead Restored". At the beginning of the narrative, it is clear that the young physician has been educated to consider exhumations necessary. Yet, he draws a line between acceptable and unacceptable exhumation, where unacceptable means it is based on the mere satisfaction of voyeuristic curiosity, and therefore represents an abuse of power. After all, voyeurism, that is the pleasure that comes from satisfying illicit curiosity – in this case towards the dead – is something that belonged to the purveyor of the series, which, as all penny bloods, catered to the reader's penchant for the excitement of "seeing" the blood and the dead. The physician's curiosity towards the dead, instead, is reassuringly policed by his moral code and is bound to his need for instruction. The popular narrative thus seeks a recalibration of the power relationship between its readership and the medical community, in which the poor

are not at the mercy of a fraternity of power-intoxicated butchers, but in the hands of knowledgeable healers who use their authority wisely. The use of the bodies of the pauper for dissection can be imagined to be actually *useful*, yielding medical men who are simultaneously humane and proficient.

The concept of "useful" dissection, for medical instruction and medical advancement purposes, emerges even more decidedly in the figure of the mature physician in "The Long Subject". The moral of the narrative is that, had the doctor not behaved like a bodysnatcher, Hannibal Jeffries would have died a most horrible death in his coffin. When the Jeffries thank him for restoring Long Hannibal to his family, the physician does not spare them a small bit of sarcasm: "I wonder you can condescend to notice me … Don't you know that I am a resurrectionist – a body-snatcher, and all that sort of thing?" … "Oh, sir," [Mrs Jeffries] said, "and happy it is for us you are ..." (*Manuscripts* 2: 61). The covert text in this exchange is that there cannot be medicine, healing, or good physicians without the study of anatomy.

The mature physician frames the narrative in the period of the anatomy wars, that is in the moment in which shortage of bodies "compelled" the surgeons "to get possession of the dead, in order that they might obtain useful knowledge for the living" (*Manuscripts* 2: 44). The medical men, who "had the reputation of being … some of the most daring of resurrectionists", would either participate themselves to the "attacks upon the sanctity of the grave" or bribe sextons and gravediggers to steal the bodies, while the bereaved relatives "kept watch and ward in the churchyard" to prevent the "too ardent sons of Esculapius" from turning their dead loved ones into subjects (*Manuscripts* 2: 44).[20] He contends that the anatomy wars marked a moment in which the subject of anatomy was not "well understood", but that subsequently "the march of education has made the subject of dissection be looked upon with more liberal eyes by all classes of society" (*Manuscripts* 2: 44). From these sentences, which appear at the very

[20] The physician also says that the bereaved relatives used to pour quicklime in the coffins "to hasten the process of decomposition", thus preventing body theft. I have not found evidence of the use of quicklime with this purpose in historical records. The use of quicklime to hasten decomposition is mentioned in Walker's *Second of a Series of Lectures*. Mr Whittaker, an undertaker who provided information about the management of the vault below Enon Chapel, stated that sometimes the interior of the coffins appeared to be strewed with quicklime. Walker believed it to be an expedient to allow the "reverend gentleman" who managed the chapel to dispose of the coffin, and of the remains in it contained, more quickly and with less expense, and not an anti-bodysnatcher stratagem.

beginning of the story, emerge what is probably the most notable feature of "The Long Subject", that is, the use of Utilitarian language and Utilitarian discourse.

The concept of "useful knowledge" was eminently Utilitarian, and characterized the discourse of promoters of the Anatomy Act from the Utilitarian fringe, such as Jeremy Bentham, Edwin Chadwick, and Thomas Southwood Smith. Smith, in particular, asserted that prejudices against dissection were fundamentally caused by a lack of understanding on the part of the uninitiated that could be overcome by allowing them to approach the process. He stated that, although at first the friends of the dead objected to his performing a dissection, he found that "by reasoning with the poor, and explaining to them the importance of [dissection], [he] could generally succeed in obtaining their consent" (*RSCA* 86). He also claimed that by allowing the family and friends of the deceased to be present during the dissection, he always managed to convince them "of its usefulness and importance" (*RSCA* 86). Now this may have been very optimistic of Smith, and Rosner points out that, in his willingness to open the doors of his dissection room to the public, he was more an exception than the rule (154-5). Yet, the philosophy underlying Smith's position is reflected in the scenario the mature physician illustrates, in which a chaotic past age of war and bodysnatching is replaced by a present time in which improved education, described as a triumphant march, allows the laypeople to acquire more "liberal" views on the subject of dissection.

The presence of Utilitarian language in a penny blood does raise questions, firstly about how intentional the use of this language could be, and secondly about the possible implications of this. Both questions can be answered by considering the author of the series, James Malcolm Rymer. Literary historians have grounds to believe he attended the Mechanics Institute. Hence, I would venture to say that he must have been familiar with, and possibly supportive of, the concept of useful knowledge, as the narratives seem to prove. Indeed, the Institute had a role in the anatomy debate of the late-1820s. Founded by George Birkbeck in 1823, in 1827 the Chancery building hosted a series of lectures on human anatomy given by Birkbeck himself, using "a real human corpse" (Richardson 151). With this bold initiative, the founder of the Institute wished to demonstrate that even the "rough" men who attended the lectures at the Mechanics' Institute were able to understand, and benefit from, a lecture on science, and observers did indeed notice

the interest and attention of the audience (Richardson 151).[21] Richardson concludes that Birkbeck's lectures attest to the existence of a consistent group, composed of working-class people and intellectuals, sufficiently open-minded to reject aversion to dissection and who embraced the idea of "the power of reason and the pre-eminent value of education" (Richardson 152).[22] The view of dissection, and, to an extent, of resurrectionism presented in the narrative provides grounds to suppose that Rymer subscribed to these ideas. As a civil engineer, he was better off, and certainly far better educated than a factory worker, and therefore he might have been open to an idea such as that of the importance of "useful knowledge". On the other hand, his work allowed him to come into contact with his own audience and therefore it is very likely he was aware of their feelings of powerlessness towards the Anatomy Act. As we have seen, Rymer believed in the importance of knowing one's audience in order to be able to write for it.

"The Long Subject" reflects the tension experienced by the intellectual fringes of the lower strata of society when faced with the need to balance the grey areas of anatomy and dissection, against its undeniable (to an individual who could afford the luxury of an education) usefulness. While the mature physician takes a stand against the distress bodysnatching caused to laypeople (body-theft is an "[attack] upon the sanctity of the grave" and the students and doctors who performed it are "too ardent sons of Esculapius"), he places greater emphasis on the fact that resurrectionism was done out of necessity. Furthermore, he alleges that the responsibility of bodysnatching rested mostly with the sextons and gravediggers, and that medical students took part in bodysnatching only rarely and out of fun. By contrast, not only is there no trace in the episode – and indeed in the whole series – of "professional" bodysnatchers[23], but the would-be resurrectionists in the episode are all medical men. It is worth noting that the

[21] The event attracted a mixed response from the government. Mr Warburton MP applauded it as a step towards beating the "prejudice", that is, the anti-anatomy feelings generated by ignorance and superstition, in the popular mind; Sir Robert Peel, on the other hand, regarded the matter with scepticism, arguing that none of the men who attended the lectures rushed to offer his body to science (Richardson 151).

[22] It is worth noting that the same categories constituted the radical faction that was trying to oppose the Act. The development of faith in the power of knowledge and in the scientific purpose of anatomy divided the radicals making their opposition to Warburton's Bills ineffective (Richardson 152).

[23] The word "bodysnatcher" is mostly used in the series as an insult to a surgeon, usually the physician himself. One example is in the episode "The Hope of the Family; or, a Slight Indisposition" (I. 157).

exhumation itself, which should have represented the climax of the narrative, is not given prominence. When the physician and the group of would-be resurrectionists reach the cemetery, the operation of snatching the body of Hannibal Jeffries from his grave is dispatched rather quickly:

> The exercise made me warm enough ... and, I think, never was a grave opened with greater expedition. Suddenly, the spade of one of the party struck against wood work … "All right," said Garratt; "clear some of the mould off the lid of the coffin, and then we will soon wrench it open with the crowbar, and have him out." (*Manuscripts* 2: 55)

Although the process is compatible with the actual method used by bodysnatchers to steal corpses (breaking the coffin and extracting the body by hauling it up with a rope), this passage seems almost hasty if compared to the laboured, detailed description the same operation takes in *The Mysteries of London*. Even the vocabulary conveys quickness of action and unwillingness to provide details. This suggests an attempt to minimize the importance of the act in itself: as in "The Dead Restored", the narrative seems more focused on the attitudes displayed by the medical men. Indeed, the solution of the conflict between the "need" of the medical community for the body of Long Hannibal Jeffries and his right to a peaceful rest, as well as the right of his wife to peace of mind, is placed in the capable hands of the mature physician.

The condition that the mature physician poses to his getting involved in the clandestine exhumation of Hannibal is that everything must be done so that no unnecessary distress is caused to the widow. This ultimatum frames him as a medical man who, although convinced of the importance of dissection for educational purposes, is aware of the deontological issues it poses and recognises the responsibilities of the medical community towards the public. The popular narrative thus solves the ethical conflict, representing a character whose favourable view of the use of the body of the pauper for dissection is policed by a strong deontological code. He believes dissection does have useful purposes, but at the same time he exercises surveillance over other characters who display less strong ethics, such as Garratt and his party. The character of the physician, set against a pre-Anatomy Act background, allows the readers of the post-Anatomy Act popular narrative to imagine that the use of paupers' bodies for dissection, not

only has a legitimate purpose, but is also overseen by people who follow an ethical code, and ultimately save lives. In fact, as in "The Dead Restored", the physician is able to bring the body of the person buried alive back to full health, unlike the medical characters who dismiss their ethical responsibilities. Through the character of the mature physician, moved by both Utilitarian principles and a strong deontological code, the narrative solves the conflict between the unbalanced power relation between the poor and the medical community and the necessity to instruct new generations of surgeons.

The Anatomy Act underwrote the unbalanced power relationship between the poor and the surgeons that marked the pre-Act era without solving the deontological problems it posed. The work of historians shows that the poor did perceive the unfairness of this situation, contrary to the common belief that they were incapable of such refined sentiments.[24] The two narratives here examined produce a counterintuitive representation of these power dynamics, as they cast a new perspective on them by adding to the equation the character of the physician. The blend of Utilitarian principles and strong ethical code that define him stirs the attention from the act of bodysnatching towards the positive outcome for the subject who had been buried alive. The theme of premature burial, ultimately aimed at provoking a *frisson* at the thought of what would have happened if nobody opened those graves, did certainly fit the commercial strategies of the penny blood genre. However, these narratives deploy the theme of resurrection/revivification also to solve the deontological conflict inherent in the use of paupers' bodies for anatomy. *Manuscripts*, therefore, I argue, represents an attempt to solve through sensational narrative the contrasts characterizing the figure of the doctor as related to working-class penny blood readers, creating the character of a medical man who owns the power that comes from the knowledge of human anatomy, and is able to use it for the common good.

Liminal spaces: superstition and rationality in cemeteries.

The representation of space in the narratives is based on a dialectic paradigm that juxtaposes rationality and superstition. The two narratives approach the theme of the resurrected body with a rather different spirit: dramatic and dark in "The Dead Restored", comic and thrilling in "The Long Subject". However, they both

[24] See Richardson 150 on the supposed "bestiality" of the poor respect to the other classes.

set it in spaces that were connected to medicine and resurrectionism. On the one hand, we have references in the texts to geospaces that would have called to the mind of the reader specific events and characters related to the world of anatomy and the body trade. On the other hand, both narratives set their climax in the space of the cemetery. Firstly, the connections of this space with death and burial rituals trigger the set of superstitious beliefs peculiar to the cultural heritage of both the characters in the narrative and of the reader outside the narrative. Then, the presence of bodies breaking the boundary between death and life, reverting their movement from the world of the dead below the ground to the world of the living above it, exploits the melodramatic potential of contemporary anxieties about premature burial, and simultaneously opens the ground for ethical discussion. The matter of the legitimacy of opening a grave and the spirit with which such an enterprise is undertaken are both scrutinized and evaluated, and the verdict is reflected in the consequences that befall the characters who open it. Finally, the presence of the physician in the space of the cemetery and his behaviour towards the "resurrected" bodies affects the cemetery itself, turning it from the space of irrationality and superstition into a space of rationality and healing.

"The Dead Restored" sets the character of the young physician, then a medical student, "early in the year 18- … at the university of Edinburgh" (*Manuscripts* 1: 3). As noted in the Introduction, the narrative space of Edinburgh in "The Dead Restored" bears some connections with the geospace of Edinburgh. In order to reinforce the Scottish setting, the author gives a Scottish accent to his characters, and peppers their speech with terms from the Scottish vernacular. For instance, the old woman who is assisting Major Sinclair in his grief explains to the young physician and Musgrove that there is a subscription "to place the poor bairn decently in the *kirkyard* …" (*Manuscripts* 1: 4).[25] The Scottish setting brings once again attention upon matters of authorship and Rymer's Scottish descent. A moderate acquaintance with the city's landscape and language, perhaps through tales heard from parents and relatives or visits to Scotland, may explain a relatively accurate representation of the geospace (for instance, the existence of a slum in the proximity of "the road to Leith") in which the gaps are filled in with fictional names such as Caulknows. However, and more importantly, such a

[25] My emphasis. "Kirk", in kirkyard, was used in literary Scots until the 17th century, although it is still used nowadays in colloquial Scots ("kirk" def. 1a).

setting would serve another purpose for an author such as Rymer. Edinburgh represented the quintessential sensational setting. The city's architecture, with its winding closes where inhabitants were all but buried alive, favoured the circulation of chilling ghost stories.[26] Furthermore, it would trigger in the mind of the reader the connection between the city and its history of murder and resurrectionism. The Burkers Case of 1828-29 had made the city the quintessential space of bodysnatching and murder.[27] This relationship was reinforced by subsequent events, such as the Lasswade cemetery case, which, Rosner reports, brought into the spotlight once again the ambiguous behaviour of the Edinburgh medical fraternity (42-53). In February 1829, three anatomists purchased subjects from a gang of resurrectionists without bothering to ascertain their provenance. They came from the cemetery of the nearby town of Lasswade, where the resurrectionists, due to a combination of disorganization and bad time management, had left the tombs in a ravaged state that had alerted the town. In the course of the investigations that ensued, the anatomists misplaced, made disappear, or disfigured the bodies, while refusing to answer questions in order not to incriminate themselves (Rosner 48). The case highlighted the privileged position of the Edinburgh surgeons regarding bodysnatching. They were used to being "treated very gently by the judicial authorities in their investigations" (Rosner 42), and their behaviour shows their arrogance. Therefore, in the early part of the century Edinburgh was consistently an arena where issues of ethics and power related to the medical fraternity and the way they obtained subjects for dissection were discussed. Musgrove's obsessive hubris is compatible with the idea of the medical community that the Burke and Hare homicides and their aftermath had shaped. The Edinburgh setting of "The Dead Restored" was therefore planned to call to the mind of the readers the negative associations between the medical profession and crime that the press and social commentators had formed about ten years previously.

[26] Edinburgh folklore suggests that the idea of being buried alive conveyed by the peculiar architecture of the close took a quite literal meaning in the popular mind. Mary King's Close, one of the (allegedly) most haunted spots of the Old Town according to the section "A Close Most Haunted?" in the website dedicated to it, The Real Mary King's Close, draws a considerable part of its legends from the belief that the inhabitants of the close had been walled up there during one of the plague outbreaks to prevent the spread of the disease. The historical veracity of this information is doubtful; nevertheless, the popular mind imagined the Close as a space where people could be entombed alive.

[27] It is worth noting that Hare's lodgings, where some of the murders were perpetrated, was in Tanner's Close.

"The Long Subject" is set in a generic "South of England" (*Manuscripts* 2: 45), possibly near London, since the Jeffries move there after Hannibal's "resurrection". Perhaps, the change of setting may have depended on a wish for a change of scenery, although penny blood authors and editors were not famous for their love of variety: the more the stories looked like each other, the better for the profits, since the audience had its tastes and the product must comply with them. Nevertheless, as "The Dead Restored" centred on real events that made it to the press and would therefore connect the space of the narrative to the readers' experience, so did "The Long Subject". "Long" Hannibal's skeleton is wanted because it is a curiosity, an interesting specimen. London was the home of famous collectors of specimens such as John Hunter and Sir Astley Cooper, and the space where the events related to Charles Byrne, the Irish Giant, unfolded. The emphasis on Hannibal's skeleton would remind the Victorian reader of the Irish Giant case.

The spaces of the two narratives, therefore, connected to geospaces that bore strong relationship with events involving death, medicine, and ethics. Although the actual locations are at the opposite sides of the country, there is a specific space that the two narratives share, both as a physical place and as an element of the story; that is, the cemetery. In general, the cemetery is the space that marks the threshold of life and death, the setting of an irreversible movement from one to the other, from the world of the living above the ground to the world of the dead below it. It is the space where death is perceived in all its finality. Yet, in the two narratives, the cemetery is a space pervaded with uncanny activity, where the boundary between life and death becomes blurred. The dead who are there interred are not actually dead and the movement from life to death is reverted. The presence of the doctor is crucial at the point at which the "resurrection" of the dead body assumes a literal meaning, rather than the figurative one implied in the term "resurrectionism". As discussed in the previous section, the narrative focuses on the positive sides of the physician's presence, on the positive aspect of the act of resurrectionism. The cemetery thus becomes a space in which it is possible to discuss issues of ethics, where the characters who get involved in resurrectionism, that is, Major Sinclair in "The Dead Restored" and Garratt and his party in "The Long Subject", experience the negative consequences of desecrating a tomb, while the presence of the physician on the scene is crucial to the survival of the "resurrected" person.

"The Long Subject", through the voice of the physician, defines resurrectionist activity as "attacks upon the sanctity of the grave" (*Manuscripts* 2: 44), and the young physician in "The Dead Restored" openly voices his disapproval of his friend's intentions. The characters who get involved in resurrectionist activities in both episodes suffer the negative consequences of the action in the form of a fright, which in the case of Major Sinclair proves fatal. Indeed, Mary and Hannibal appear as ghosts in the eyes of the guilty observer, provoking intense reactions of fear:

> "My God! what's this?" suddenly cried Musgrove.
>
> I looked around me … and the blood curdled round my heart for a moment as I saw the major's child sitting up with the grave clothes huddled around her, and her eyes wide open and fixed upon us. (*Manuscripts* 1: 6)

Mary's "resurrection", eerie and abrupt, exploits the terror inspired by the child ghost. The suddenness of the unseen movement – the reader left Mary's body dead on the ground, and the next moment she is sitting upright in the rain – and the emphasis on the "wideness" and "fixity" of the open eyes, gives the impression that the supernatural is at work. Indeed, this is the impression it makes on the Major: "'No, no, Mary,' he gasped. A gush of blood came from his mouth and he fell dead upon the grave mound" (*Manuscripts* 1: 6). Major Sinclair does not consider for a moment that this may be a miraculous recovery, or resuscitation. His reaction suggests he is horrified, and believes that his own child, whose sacred repose he has disturbed, has come back from the dead to haunt him. The fixed gaze of the girl suggests accusation, following a tradition that dates back to the staring spectre of Banquo in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The sight kills the Major on the spot, in a rather spectacular way that suits the dark, gothic atmosphere of the episode. Hannibal has a similar effect upon his would-be resurrectionists. The first to witness his "resurrection" is the mature physician. He is alarmed indeed, at first, but his reaction does not compare with the truly spectacular fright of Garratt and the other medical men. When they reach the spot answering the calls of the physician, they find that "Hannibal Jeffries had risen to his feet, and looked, in the garments of the grave, at least double his usual height … he stood just where he was, and moved not the right or to the left" (*Manuscripts* 2: 56). The sight of the revenant has a spectacularly comic effect:

"they with one accord turned and fled with a precipitation as ludicrous as it was in some respects alarming. They tumbled into the grave some of them [sic], and scrambled out again – over tombstones they went as if they were mad …" (*Manuscripts* 2: 56). If the grave robes had "huddled around" Mary's body, emphasizing the fragility of her age, they affect the appearance of Hannibal in the opposite sense. They "double" his size, turning him into a daunting, overwhelming presence. As in Mary's case, however, the grave robes emphasize the reversion of the movement from death to life; if the girl's body seems to bloom out of the shroud, the grave robes invest Hannibal's appearance with solemnity. Both bodies stand perfectly still, as if retaining the stillness of death and increasing the impression – in both the reader and the observers in the narratives – that they are in the presence of a revenant.

The physical presence of the "standing" and "staring" bodies of Mary and Hannibal in the spaces of the respective cemeteries triggers superstitious fears in the violators of their tomb. Their awareness of having done something "wrong" – something mad, in the case of Major Sinclair, and a selfish act against the sanctity of the grave, in Garratt's case – raises in them the terror of the revenge of the dead. Unlike the physician both young and mature, they have not "rubbed off the rust of prejudice", which in the two narratives has a flexible meaning spanning from "superstition" to its literal sense of "being prejudiced", but that in general we can conclude stands for "ignorance". Garratt too, notwithstanding his glorious plans for the skeleton, is put off by Hannibal's suddenly lively appearance. In "The Long Subject" in particular, all the surgeons on the scene show that they apparently did not benefit from the education they received and, confronted with something inexplicable, cannot cope with their cultural heritage relating to death and the dead. The space of the cemetery becomes, in the presence of the revenant dead, a space of judgement and indeed, they all receive punishment of the most terrible sort: they fill the graves they have emptied. In "The Dead Restored", this happens literally: "[p]oor Major Sinclair was buried in the same grave from which he had taken his child" (*Manuscripts* 1: 6). Sinclair fills the grave he has emptied, because he must compensate for his sacrilegious act towards the world of the dead. A similar fate befalls the resurrectionist party of "The Long Subject", although the scene is ludicrous rather than tragic. In their rush to flee from what they believe to be Hannibal's avenging spirit, they stumble and fall into his grave. Unlike Major Sinclair, their occupation of that grave is not final, as they

"scramble out" of it, but their fall, and their subsequent stumbling over the tombstones functions as a grimly comic *memento mori*. Anatomists were not indifferent to the idea of resurrectionism. Sir Astley Cooper, for instance, who died in 1841, disposed to be buried in a sarcophagus the size of which suggests he wanted to make sure not to fall into the hands of resurrectionists himself (Richardson 117). Therefore, the occupation, though brief, of the same grave of the corpse the surgeons meant to dissect works as a threat of retaliation from the supposedly vengeful revenant.

It is possible to see, then, how the material agents of the inversion between the world of death and the world of life receive a punishment in the narrative, coming either in the form of tragic death, or in the form of ludicrous exposure of their own lack of rationality and credibility. If the sacrilegious resurrectionists are punished with death, or with the idea of it, the bodies of Mary and Hannibal, the actual displaced objects that undergo the inversion of movement, display an uncanny vitality. The uncanny vitality of burial grounds was a serious issue for most of the nineteenth century, as it was before, due to the unreliability of the methods to detect death. Placing a piece of glass in front of the mouth (Richardson 227), or feeling the pulse, were common methods.[28] Twitchell explains that "[p]eople were buried in comas, in catatonic fits, and in shock, especially during plague years, when the hasty disposal of the body was of primary importance" (19). This applied, of course, also to the cholera outbreaks of the nineteenth century. Cholera was particularly deceitful from this perspective, since, as Richardson points out, signs of life and signs of death mixed in the diseased person: the muscular rigidity that affected the patient relaxed only after death, "causing sudden convulsions that could be mistaken for signs of life" (Richardson 227). On the other hand, the blue colour of the skin typical of cholera patients, the stiffness, low temperature of the body, and "heart and breathing rate so low as to be imperceptible" (Richardson 227) explained why sometimes "people … survived a medical diagnosis of death" (Richardson 227). This provoked considerable anxiety about premature burial – and premature dissection.

[28] These uncertain methods constituted a problem well before the 1800s. Indeed, premature burial was one of the elements that supported the belief in vampires: finding the occupant of a coffin in a twisted position, the shroud ripped and stained with blood upon opening a tomb was considered a symptom of vampirism. In fact it was the result of premature burial and a testament to the last, desperate moments of the person. What is also interesting for our discussion is that historians argue that the absence of a body from the coffin, also considered another a sign of vampirism, was instead to be attributed to bodysnatching. See Senf (23) and Twitchell (18–9).

Examining the *Times*, articles covering news of people buried alive, or nearly buried alive, and of cases of mass hysteria about premature burial can be found since the late 1700s and until well into the century, especially in periods of cholera outbreaks and, in general, periods associated with fever, both in England and abroad.[29] The geospace of the cemetery, therefore, was imbued with the idea of uncanny activity proceeding from tales of premature burial. The space of the cemetery itself was rather dangerous, in this respect, for another category of people, that is, the gravediggers. The necessity of digging deep pits, either to bury multiple coffins, or to prevent resurrectionists from stealing the bodies, exposed them to the risk of a collapse of the sides of the pit, which would literally bury them alive. In some cases, people nearby rescued the men in time, while others were less fortunate.[30] Considering the coverage that the issue enjoyed in the press, which is symptomatic of a deep anxiety regarding premature burial, it is unsurprising that popular fiction should exploit the melodramatic effect of the character "buried alive". The vitality of Mary and Hannibal in the narrative space of the cemetery transforms this space, turning it into an uncannily lively threshold that connects life and death in an unusual, subversive way. Mary, who descended into the grave and was in succession beautiful corpse, medical subject, horrible sight, and terrifying revenant, and was, in brief, the supreme element of death in "The Dead Restored", displays prodigious vitality and fertility. The story concludes with her nursing her fourth child. Although she hardly speaks in the whole narrative and she mostly stares, either through the stillness of her semi-closed eyelids as a corpse or through her wide-open eyes as a revenant, she turns from symbolizing death to being the quintessential symbol of vitality: the fertile woman, the mother. Her stillness and speechlessness, which place her, like Hannibal, in connection with the world of the dead, contrast with her four children, which come into the narrative almost as suddenly and prodigiously as

[29] In 1809, in Blackfriars, London, a mob attacked a cemetery when an old woman claimed she heard noises coming from the fresh grave of a fever victim ("The Neighbourhood of Christ-Church, Blackfriars ..." 2). In 1832, both in Birmingham ("Desperate and Fatal Affray" 3) and in Liverpool ("Cholera at Liverpool" 3), cholera victims were disinterred upon suggestion that they might have been interred alive, while an article from 1825 reports a dramatic piece of news from a Munich journal regarding the premature interment of a comedian ("BURIED ALIVE" 3).

[30] Two examples coming from the *Times* are the cases of the gravedigger of Acton Churchyard, Macclesfield, and Mr. Thompson, gravedigger of St Brid's churchyard in Fleet Street. The first man was extracted from the seventeen-feet-deep tomb by the mourners of the funeral that was about to take place ("Last Week an Accident Occurred ..." 3). Mr Thompson, instead, was crushed under the weight of the earth and also "of a tier of coffins piled on each other nearest [sic] the churchyard wall" ("Fatal Occurrence…" 6).

their mother came back to life in the cemetery. As for Hannibal, he comes back from the world of the dead a reformed man, an excellent husband and father who brings prosperity to his family through the wonderful inheritance of the uncle from the West Indies. His reward is a respectable position in society. The vitality of Hannibal and Mary, though, and the consequent transformation of the cemetery into a space of (uncannily) new life is possible only thanks to the presence of the heroic physician in that space.

Conforming to the dialectic nature of the narrative, whereas the presence of the maniac or ambiguous surgeon in the cemetery provokes an uncanny reversion of the movement from life to death, the presence of the physician, with his trained clinical gaze mitigated by a strong sense of ethics, is functional to restoring the resurrected patient to the world of the living. Indeed, the physician appears to be the only rational medical man within the boundaries of the two cemeteries. In both narratives, he is able to recover from his surprise quickly enough to act and save the "patients". He is, at first, shocked in beholding the dead come back to life, and he describes his feelings with great precision. When he beholds the upright, staring body of Mary Sinclair, "his blood curdles in his veins for a moment" (*Manuscripts* 1: 6). His agitation is even greater when he beholds Long Hannibal moving and moaning: "I felt a rush of blood come up to my head, and then go back to my heart, while a strange, tingling sensation pervaded my whole system. … I don't know how long I remained transfixed …" (*Manuscripts* 2: 56). However, in both cases he is able to regain his rationality soon enough. As Major Sinclair falls dead on the cemetery ground, he "starts to his feet": "reflection had come to my aid, and I fully comprehended everything now. The child had only been in a trance, and the cold shock of the rain upon her face had restored her" (*Manuscripts* 1: 6). Likewise, as Long Hannibal shakes his legs and groans, the mature physician exclaims: "By the great God of Heavens … he lives!" (*Manuscripts* 2: 56). By the time the whole company of failed resurrectionists has hurried away from the scene, he has recovered from the shock and made up his mind as to what must have happened:

> The first shock of seeing him, about whose death I had no doubt in the world … had passed away. … I never was very superstitious, and when that shock had gone from my mind, I came at once to the conclusion that

> Hannibal Jeffries had been buried in a state of catalepsy, which had so strongly resembled death as to deceive every one. (*Manuscripts* 2: 56)

The physician, then, is not indifferent to the sight of a revivified corpse and to the idea, reinforced through the space of the cemetery, that it might actually be a revenant. Again, he appears to be in touch with his human side, to be close to the reader in this perspective. What makes the physician stand out in the cemetery, compared to his colleagues and to the maniac Major Sinclair, is that his reaction to the sight of the dead come alive is mitigated by his rationality. The young physician asserts that his education freed him from "prejudice", that is, from that aversion to dissection that comes with the superstitious fear of the dead. As a mature physician, he specifies that he "never was very superstitious".

Both in youth and in mature age, the physician is able to overcome his instinctive fear before the revivified dead and to apply his rationality and knowledge to the case at hand. Indeed, he is able to formulate a diagnosis immediately: "trance" in one case, and "catalepsy" in the other, which match the causes of premature burial enumerated by Twitchell (19). His next step is engaging himself in action, a state that distinguishes his character in the whole series. The physician's prowess and mental agility is always evident, and in these two cases he sets about the restoration of the non-dead, who immediately switch from the state of corpses to that of patients. In "The Dead Restored", he sends Musgrove to alert the neighbourhood, while he envelops Mary in his coat, and later he gives instructions to a woman about how to take proper care of her (*Manuscripts* 1: 6). In "The Long Subject", he proceeds himself to administer to Hannibal some "brandy-punch" he had carried with him in a flask. The presence of the heroic and active, but simultaneously rational and cool-minded, physician in the space where the veil between death and life thins transforms the cemetery from a space of death, of superstition, and of the ghastly business of resurrectionism, into the space of positive action, rationality, and healing. The uncanny vitality of the revenant becomes the triumphant vitality of the dead restored, making the cemetery a space of rebirth that provides a second chance for the revivified character.

As we can see, the narrative space of "The Dead Restored" and "The Long Subject" elaborates the Scottish and southern-British geospace of burking, bodysnatching, and dissection into a setting in which is possible to discuss issues

of ethics related to anatomy and resurrectionism. The dialectic structure that characterizes the different elements of the two narratives emerges in the narrative space in the inversion of the movement from life to death and in the uncanny vitality of the resurrected body. The agents of the inverted, uncanny movement undergo a trial and punishment in the narrative that ultimately leads them to fill the same graves they have emptied. The narrative thus takes a position with respect to these characters, expressing a negative judgement on those who approach the dead body without respect. The mad father's sacrilegious disinterment of his child culminates in his death, and the surgeons who disinterred the body of Long Hannibal with almost cannibalistic purposes are scared away by their own lack of rationality. The presence of the rational, "good" physician, by contrast, transforms the cemetery into a space where rationality and medicine triumph. The space of the cemetery, therefore, becomes a scenery for the battle of science against superstition, of anatomy versus prejudice. The narratives suggest, in this way, that the progress of medical science, which is obtained also through resurrectionism, is fundamental in order to fight, and win, the battle against death and disease.

Conclusion

Manuscript engaged with a number of literary and artistic popular tropes in order to discuss issues of ethics and medicine. In so doing, the series tapped into the debate that saw the audience of the penny blood genre, as members of the working class, as the object of a deontological debate related to the study of anatomy. Certainly, making any conclusive assertion about authorial intention on this point would be foolhardy, considering the scanty information we possess on Rymer. Still, there is an obvious connection between the characters and events in the two narratives and the socio-cultural context related to the anatomy debate that in the 1840s and 1850s was still at its most vivid.

I would therefore venture that the elements that characterize the genre of the penny blood, such as stock, flat characters, melodrama, and sensationalism, are used in this series to translate for the audience the debate around the disposal of their remains, and to offer a narrative antidote to their powerless role in said debate. The construction of the positive character of the heroic doctor, or super-doctor, provides a medical figure who is both skilful and trustworthy, able to exercise his powerful medical gaze and simultaneously capable of retaining his

humanity. This figure is juxtaposed to medical figures that reiterated tropes of madness and monstrosity founded on the distrust of the recent development in medical studies. The narrative thus allowed the reader to imagine – that is, to pretend, a right ratified by the agreement on the suspension of belief implicit in the "manuscript" word in the title – to be under the protection of a wise and kind healer. Even the perspective of dissection after death is no longer terrifying, if framed within the narrative of the capable and trustworthy physician, told from his own very pen. In the debate around anatomy and ethics, trust and truth interlaced deeply and played an important role. Foucault argued that the clinical gaze endowed the medical man with a privileged relationship with truth; yet, in the popular mind, the figure of the surgeon was conspicuously untrustworthy.

The next chapter moves on to examine another penny blood from the 1840s that engages with issues of medicine and truth. *Varney the Vampyre*, unlike *Manuscripts*, exploits the theme of the supernatural by placing an actual monster at the centre of its plot. However, a number of episodes display a marked interest in the figure of the medical man, which is developed through discourses of madness and heroism remarkably similar to the ones of *Manuscripts*. Furthermore, the figure of the vampire facilitates the discussion of the inversion of the movement from life to death at the core of the ethical issues raised by resurrectionism. After all, a vampire is, first and foremost, a resurrected cadaver.

2. COPING WITH THE DISPLACED CORPSE: MEDICINE, TRUTH, AND MASCULINITY IN *VARNEY THE VAMPYRE*.

Extremely successful in mid-Victorian England, famous among both detractors and supporters in academia afterwards, *Varney the Vampyre; or: the Feast of Blood* (hereafter *Varney*) is the epitome of the penny blood. The swashbuckling and larger-than-life adventures of the villainous eponymous protagonist, the vampire baronet Sir Francis Varney, simultaneously show the love for sensationalism that would open the way to sensation fiction in the second half of the century and the deep Gothic roots of the genre. The plot is ridden with murky elements from the Gothic tradition, such as stormy nights, dungeons, found manuscripts, and hidden treasures; more importantly for the subject at hand, the figure of the mad scientist, the Frankenstein trope, is given prominence in the first part of the series. This chapter examines how the theme of medicine emerges in the plot of this prime specimen of the penny blood genre.

Helen R. Smith ascribes the authorship of *Varney* to Rymer, and the series was produced in roughly the same time-span as *Manuscripts*, between 1845 and 1847. While medicine is not the central theme of *Varney*, the two chief sagas[1] of the series, the Bannerworth and the Crofton saga, give medical men a prominent role, presenting both positive and negative versions of the figure of the doctor. In both versions it is possible to observe the influence of popular and literary forms of representation of the medical man (such as the Frankenstein trope), as well as of mid-century discourses around medicine. Of course, whereas in *Manuscripts* the medical man provides scientific explanations to apparently supernatural resurrections, in *Varney* the theme of science must come to terms with the quintessentially supernatural presence of the vampire. I would argue, though, that the element of supernatural embodied by the vampire contributes to, instead of clashing with, the discussion of the "rational" subject of medicine in the plot. The vampire is first and foremost a displaced corpse; therefore, its appearance next to a medical figure is significant if we consider the mid-nineteenth century debate around the relationship between doctors and resurrected corpses. By investigating how this relationship is represented in *Varney*, my purpose is to ascertain how the

[1] With this term, literary critics label sequences of episodes in *Varney* that revolve around a specific set of characters, such as the Bannerworths or the Croftons.

series relates to mid-nineteenth century discourses around medicine, anatomy, and medical experimentation.

Dr Chillingworth and Dr North appear in the Bannerworth and the Crofton saga respectively. The two sagas also open and close the series, and the narrative explicitly connects them, and the two doctors, at both thematic and structural levels. The first episode of *Varney* features the vicious attack of a vampire on beautiful Flora Bannerworth, in her own bedroom, during a stormy night. The Bannerworths, a noble family now living in reduced circumstances, is composed of Flora, her brothers Henry and George, and their mother. Suddenly, they find themselves prostrated by the repeated attacks of the vampire. Simultaneously, a Sir Francis Varney takes residence in the neighbourhood and seems bent upon purchasing Bannerworth Hall from Henry. Sir Francis bears an uncanny resemblance to a portrait hanging in Flora's bedroom, which represents an ancestor of the Bannerworths and who the girl swears to be the likeness of the vampire who attacked her. This is, of course, the truth, although Varney denies it at first. He is hunting for the hidden treasure of Marmaduke Bannerworth,[2] who was Varney's accomplice in his highwayman days. Marmaduke escaped with the treasure they had hoarded together, leaving Varney to the executioner's rope. Varney relentlessly attacks Flora in order to drive her family out of Bannerworth Hall and search for the treasure undisturbed. Through the saga, he breaks into Bannerworth Hall, fights duels, and imprisons Charles Holland, Flora's fiancée, when he hinders his plans. The climax of the saga corresponds to Dr Chillingworth's confession that he is responsible for resuscitating the vampire. When he was studying medicine in London, the family physician galvanized the body of a hanged felon in the hope of being the first to successfully revivify a body. When Varney came back to life screaming "Death, death, where is the treasure?" (*Varney* 1: 330), the ambitious student could not imagine that he had just unleashed a vengeful vampire on his friends. As with Musgrove in *Manuscripts*, Chillingworth is obsessed with Varney's body and describes his obsession as "monomania".

[2] The actual identity of Marmaduke Bannerworth is unclear. At first, he is the man in the portrait, who was identified as Runnagate Bannerworth, a debauched ancestor; then, he becomes Henry and Flora's father. Curtis Herr ascribes this and similar oddities to the fact that, soon after he started writing *Varney*, Rymer began working on nine more series (67).

The Crofton saga closes the long, successful career of the vampire baronet. Varney constitutes an interesting exception to nineteenth-century vampires as he is the first suicidal undead. Unable to cope with his un-life, he attempts suicide by drowning; however, in *Varney* vampires are revivified by moonbeams, and so it happens that the two sons of the influential Sir George Crofton find Varney's body while out fishing and bring it to the local bone-house. There, the moonbeams revivify Varney (giving a capital start to the sexton, who is caught by Varney himself in the act of stealing his rings). The vampire, enraged at the frustration of his suicide attempt, seeks revenge. He gains admission in the Crofton family pretending to be Mr Smith, grateful for the help of the Crofton brothers. Then, he attacks the Crofton sisters, particularly Clara, whom he kills. Not only is Clara one of the very few people Varney actually kills in two years of weekly publication, but she is also the only vampire he spawns. Clara's resurrection, and her annihilation at the hands of an unruly mob, constitute the climax of the saga. When Clara is killed, and during the uncanny events that precede her interment, the family is supported by Dr North, the family physician. As the men of the family, particularly the father, start showing signs of mental weakness and unmanly distress, Dr North manages to restore the order in the family. His cool, detached, and energetic reaction to the death of Clara keeps the family in balance.

Vampires, mad scientists, and heroic doctors: the inhuman and super-human paradigm.

Any discussion about monstrosity in *Varney* must necessarily consider the presence of an actual vampire in the plot. Critics tend to evaluate the other characters' greater or lesser degree of mischievousness taking Varney as a reference. For instance, Herr asserts that "[a]s Rymer's chapters involving the Bannerworth saga progress, many of the non-Vampire characters become more monstrous than Varney himself" (310).

While I do agree that human characters sometimes outclass the vampire in wickedness, I would argue that to appreciate the nuances of this process it is necessary to distinguish between "monsters" and "villains", taking Varney's condition as uncanny lively body as a reference point. Although there are several characters who gradually become villains, truly monstrous characters are associated with the unnatural inversion of life and death that constitutes the core

of *Varney* as a vampire narrative. While Mr Marchdale, the treacherous family friend who plots against Flora Bannerworth's fiancée to dispose of a rival to the girl's heart, is certainly a "villain", as Varney himself defines him (*Varney* 1: 285), to make a monster in *Varney* it takes, I would argue, quite the opposite intention to a murder, that is, bringing the dead back to life, perverting nature. In *Varney*, the concept itself of monster as a "repulsively unnatural" creature showing inhuman cruelty ("monster", def. 5) is indivisible from that of life-death inversion. In the series, two characters correspond to this concept: the vampire and the mad medical student, who share the essential feature of the definition of monstrosity above, that is, inhumanity. While Varney is, literally, not human, and therefore expected to be vicious, Dr Chillingworth is all the more disquieting because he does not display overtly monstrous features such as fangs and unnaturally long life: he actively chose, as a medical student, to pursue a course of action that could only be defined as monstrous, and therefore he generated a monster. This binds him, and Varney, to a popular narrative that medical and literary historians have connected with the changes in the medical field throughout the nineteenth century, that is, the story of Frankenstein.

Although he is no combination of body parts, Varney's vampiric nature acquires a particular meaning in the context of anatomy discourse. Unlike such supernatural manifestations as ghosts, his presence in the world of the living is physical. He is undeniably "here", moving and occupying space; he interacts with humans around him, intruding in their environment and affecting their lives. As an element from the world below subversively appearing in the world above, Varney represents a threat to the living, both physically and psychologically. Physically, he is a threat because he hunts the living and sustains himself on their blood. Psychologically, Varney is a revenant, and therefore not only does he hunt the living, but he haunts them. He haunts Bannerworth Hall and Flora Bannerworth, seeking revenge against Marmaduke Bannerworth, and in the Crofton saga he haunts the Croftons seeking revenge against the disturbance of his remains. In the Bannerworth saga, however, his presence also haunts an individual outside the family circle. Dr Chillingworth recognises Varney as the hanged felon he galvanized back to life several years back: "I suspected it, do you know ... His face *haunted* me … – awfully *haunted* me; and yet … I could not identify it"

(*Varney* 1: 301).[3] Unwittingly, but effectively nonetheless, Varney haunts the doctor with a different revenge spirit: he is Chillingworth's nemesis, his personal Frankenstein's Monster.

By the time *Varney* was being issued, the British reading public was not unfamiliar with such characters as Dr Chillingworth. Chris Baldick examines a story titled "The New Frankenstein" that appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1838 (141). Its protagonist was a medical student whose attempts at building a Creature by putting together pieces of brain of different illustrious characters result in the construction of a monster with monumental speech difficulties. Baldick argues that this element indicated that the narrative of *Frankenstein* had been "assimilated" in the culture and was now subject to "experiment and revision" (142). This, he holds, marked the rise in fiction of the "mad scientist cliché", which almost invariably concretized in a "young medical student" with delusions of grandeur, dedicated to galvanic experiments, and whose secluded lifestyle resulted in an "insensitive", when not downright "misanthropic", rejection of social conventions (142).

Varney subscribes to the contemporary practice of appropriation of the Frankenstein narrative and elaborates it in the figure of Dr Chillingworth. As Varney's attacks on the Bannerworths become bolder, Chillingworth must confess to the Bannerworths that he had a role in putting Varney on their path. Chillingworth explains that, when he was a medical student in London, he became obsessed, like Shelley's Frankenstein, with the idea of revivifying a corpse through galvanism, a scientific method that attempts to reanimate dead tissue using electricity. Herr notes that, as the use of electricity in bringing the Creature to life is implied in the text, galvanism is the same technique used in *Frankenstein* to bring the Monster to life (309). Further connections between the two narratives emerge in Varney's physical appearance and in his role with respect to the doctor responsible for his revivification. The vampire's body resembles that of the Creature in some respects: he is tall, so much so that his "full height" is "immense" (*Varney* 1: 81) and, when in human form, he is characterized by "a strange distorted look [...] that has arisen from a spasmodic contraction of the muscles, in consequence of his having been hanged" (*Varney* 1: 331). The monstrous traits peculiar to the vampire, such as the protruding fangs,

[3] My emphasis.

the eerie gaze, and the bloodless skin, are matched in Varney's body by a certain disproportion of features that reminds the reader of Frankenstein's Monster. Moreover, in both stories the doctor's role is that of the scientist whose hubris produces a monstrous creature that provokes destruction in the world of the living. The relationship between creator and creature, however, differs in one point in the two narratives: while the Monster gradually develops feelings of hatred and begins spreading chaos following Frankenstein's rejection, Varney is entirely disconnected from Chillingworth, and is born, or rather re-born, in an enraged and vengeful state. Spreading chaos is innate to him: being a vampire, an entity that does not belong to life and yet lives, he is a naturally disruptive presence.

The Monster purposefully hunts and haunts Frankenstein, while Varney's path only happens to coincide with that of Dr Chillingworth. Nonetheless, the effects of the meeting are powerful. Varney is a walking reminder of Chillingworth's folly, and compels him to reveal his shameful past. Since the revivification of vampires in *Varney* is usually quite peaceful, connected to nature and to moonlight, it is meaningful that in the first part of the series Varney, the chief displaced body in the narrative, is introduced to the reader as the product of a disastrous medical experiment. The scientific nature of the revivification performed by Chillingworth on Varney's corpse gives a distinctive medical-scientific nuance to the presence of the vampire. The monster's impact on the lives of the Bannerworths is the direct consequence of the experiments of a medical student on a corpse.

The series develops the figure of Varney rather counterintuitively, transforming it from villain into hero. It is likely that the audience found the swashbuckling, cunning vampire-baronet far more interesting than the good but colourless Henry Bannerworth and Charles Holland. Consequently, Varney progressively evolves into a rogue with a code of honour, while, conversely, other characters become increasingly villainous. Varney's transformation becomes evident from the point in which he starts empathizing with his victims. Although at the beginning he ruthlessly persecutes the Bannerworths, he then takes pity on them. He frees Charles Holland, whom he held captive in a dungeon, and shows contempt towards Mr Marchdale, the treacherous family friend who cooperated in the kidnapping and attempts to kill Charles before Varney can free him. This moment marks Varney's passage from villain to heroic rogue, culminating in his dramatic

display of grief and empathy after a mob kills Clara Crofton. In front of Clara's mangled and unburied body, he exclaims:

> [I]s this my work? Oh, horror! … I thought I had … completely crushed dove-eyed pity in my heart, but it is not so, and still sufficient of my once human feelings clings to me to make me grieve for thee, Clara Crofton, thou victim! (*Varney* 2: 844)

Varney's pity generates the narrative's core paradox, according to which deviant humans are worse than the monster itself. Notably, among the first characters who correspond to this paradox is a representative of the medical profession, whose members deemed inhumanity a necessary part of their training, a skill to develop together with their clinical gaze. The account of the behaviour of good Dr Chillingworth as a medical student is indeed "worth a chill" and tallies with the highly sensational style that characterizes the whole series; simultaneously, it taps into issues related to the medical world, both fictional and real, with which the readership was likely to be familiar.

The revelation is made in episode 77, well into the Bannerworth saga. Varney has already freed Charles Holland, displaying what Henry defines "a strange and wild kind of generosity" (1: 326). The men of the family and Dr Chillingworth are now trying to discover the reason of Varney's obsession with Bannerworth Hall, which the reader can imagine to be Marmaduke's lost treasure. Meanwhile, though, an old acquaintance that connects the vampire and the doctor has made his appearance in the neighbourhood, and is likewise in pursuit of the treasure. This is the former London's common hangman and, perhaps, it is his presence that compels the doctor to tell his story. Chillingworth begins by reminding his friends that he had started his studies very late in life, and therefore "was extremely anxious to do the most [he] could in a very short space of time" (*Varney* 1: 327). Unlike "the young men who affected to be studying in the same classes as [him]self", Chillingworth did not concern himself with "what they considered life in London", but "was indefatigable" in applying to his studies: "there was nothing connected with them which [he] did not try to accomplish" (*Varney* 1: 327).

By setting himself aside from his younger, lazy colleagues, and stressing his dedication to medical studies, Chillingworth tries to put himself under the best

possible light. In his remarks it is possible to read echoes of contemporary representations of medical students in the popular press, which described them as a parasitic and turbulent category of city denizens. Hurren examines a caustic article published on *The Penny Satirist* as an example of such representations (82-4).[4] Grainer, the author, uses the word "infested" to describe the neighbourhoods around hospitals where medical students rented houses (qtd. in Hurren 83), which immediately classifies them as parasites. He then proceeds to describe the medical student in its various environments, "at home", "abroad", and in the dissection room. "At home" the student is a shabby, cigar-smoking idle, devoted more to drinking than studying. When he goes out, he turns into an exaggeratedly elegant "dandy about town" (Hurren 84), wearing expensive clothes of Italian and French fashion. Finally, in the dissection room, he becomes a prankster clad in weird garments, bent over the more disgusting part of his studies.

Hurren connects this kind of representation to public concerns about the commitment of medical students, who appeared to neglect their studies (and the payment of their fees) and to prefer smoking and drinking instead (83). Dr Chillingworth's statements would call to the reader's mind the figure of the idle medical student, which is, however, eclipsed by the gradual appearance of the actual frightening figure of the doctor's tale: Chillingworth himself. He emphatically declares: "there was nothing connected with [my studies] which I did not try to accomplish" (*Varney* 1: 327). This statement, which should vouch for Chillingworth's zeal as a learner, denotes not so much enthusiasm as compulsive tendencies, which concretized in an attempt to accomplish the forbidden scientific endeavour, that of bringing the dead back to life. As in *Manuscript*, *Varney* introduces the figure that embodied on of the wider public's darkest fears regarding medicine and anatomy: the obsessed, mentally unstable doctor-in-training.

Chillingworth explains that he had become acquainted with the work of a Frenchman who managed, through galvanism, to resuscitate a dead man who had then lived for five weeks. This intelligence "inflamed [his] imagination" so much that nothing "seemed to [him] so desirable as getting hold" of a fresh corpse in order to attempt a resuscitation (*Varney* 1: 328). To achieve his purpose, he

[4] Grainer, J.L. "A Medical Student in Search of a Supper". *The Penny Satirist* 6 June 1840: 3-4.

approaches the public hangman, knowing he could provide him with "the body of some condemned and executed man, upon whom [he] could try [his] skill" (*Varney* 1: 328). His obsession with the idea of accomplishing a resurrection further connects Chillingworth with Shelley's Victor Frankenstein: like him, Chillingworth plans to defeat death, and to rise to the level of God. Rymer's doctor shares Shelley's doctor's hubris, the sin of arrogance committed against the gods by the man who fancies himself equal to them. Gilbert notes that the "ability to transcend individuality" of the mid-century fictional doctors (particularly mad-doctors) may lead them to claim for themselves a "god-like right to judgement" (189). Dr Chillingworth's embodiment of the arrogant doctor tainted with hubris, I argue, pre-dates the surgeons of the sensation novel. The Gothic roots of the penny blood in general, and of *Varney* in particular, allow the narrative to subscribe to ideas surrounding the medical figure that were already in the air, and that would be fully explored and exploited in the sensation novel. Free from the aesthetic and moral legacy that characterized the form of the novel,[5] the lowly form of the penny blood was ready to elaborate the medical figure of the Frankenstein narrative into an even darker figure, charged with the negative connotations the medical fraternity was developing in the popular mind as the century progressed.

Chillingworth appears to be, unsurprisingly, in favour of dissection, and at the beginning of his tale he frames his scheme to obtain a body for his experiment within the context of early-nineteenth century body shortage. His speech includes typical Utilitarian concepts underpinning the ideologies that espoused the Anatomy Act. He underscores the difficulties he experienced in procuring subjects for dissection when he was a student, asserting that "all sorts of schemes had to be put into requisition to accomplish so desirable and, indeed, absolutely necessary a purpose" (*Varney* 1: 327-28). His definition of dissection as "desirable" and "necessary" recalls Sir Astley Cooper's statement in front of the Select Committee in the summer of 1828. When asked how the surgeons felt about the necessity of employing resurrection men to get bodies for their anatomy lessons, Sir Astley answered apologetically: "we are obliged to employ very very faulty agents to obtain a desirable end" (*RSCA* 18).[6] Chillingworth's approach to

[5] See Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel* 12-13.

[6] Like Chillingworth and Frankenstein, Sir Astley also created his personal Monster, that is, Ben Crouch, the leader of the "regular" gang of bodysnatchers in early nineteenth-century London.

anatomy connects him also to Dr Robert Knox. Knox was not particular about the "agents" who procured bodies for his lessons, as long as he could count on the steady supply of cadavers to boost his prestige as an anatomist. Reaching the "desirable end" was paramount in his mind. In a way, therefore, Knox was as guilty of medical hubris as his literary counterparts, Frankenstein and Chillingworth, were. From this perspective, the character of Dr Chillingworth stands at the centre of a web of literary and historical characters who contributed to creating the discourse on medical studies, and he constitutes the narrative's input to such discourse. The detachment from both the dead and the living and the goal-oriented attitude that the medical world displayed are represented in Dr Chillingworth's perception of dissection as necessary and desirable, and in the means he adopted to obtain Varney's body. In order to achieve his purpose, Chillingworth employs his own faulty agent, that is, London's common hangman, a character almost as marginalised as the bodysnatchers were.

In his determination to achieve his personal "desirable end", Chillingworth shows appalling disregard for the life of the felon condemned to death. Varney was to be hanged for "highway robbery of a most aggravated character" (*Varney* 1: 328). Hanging would certainly break his neck, making a reanimation impossible, but Chillingworth obtains from the hangman the assurance that he would "manage to let him down gently, so that he shall die of suffocation, instead of having his neck put out of joint" (*Varney* 1: 328). Herr observes that this detail highlights Chillingworth's "questionable" ethics, as suffocation would have meant prolonged suffering, instead of a quick death (310). His carelessness in adding further pain to the death of another man implies that, to the medical student Chillingworth, the unknown felon is worth much more dead than alive. Only the experiments it will be possible to make on his corpse matter. Chillingworth's cruelty suggests that his character is a commentary on the ethics of medical experimentation. To mark the wrongness of his behaviour, at this point of the tale

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In *Life of Sir Astley Cooper*, Crouch is described as a sort of hulking underworld dandy, a pock-marked prize-fighter. Seldom drunk, although "most abusive and domineering" when so (Cooper 1: 413), he made sure to be the only sober member of the gang when it was time to give each man his share of the payment, so that he could cheat the others out of their money (Cooper 1: 413).

Crouch and Cooper "cordially hated" each other (Richardson 71). Richardson suggests Sir Astley was thinking of Crouch when he stated in front of the Committee that resurrection men were the "lowest dregs of degradation" (*RSCA*18), and argues that Cooper's testimony "aimed, in the long term, at denying Crouch and his ilk their livelihood" (71). Yet, she asserts, if truly Cooper introduced Crouch to the profession, then he was partially responsible for Crouch's corruption (Richardson 71).

the figure of the young Chillingworth starts departing from the sphere of rationality. To the executioner's suggestion, he answers: "'If you can but succeed in that,' said I, for I was quite in a state of monomania upon the subject, 'I shall be much indebted to you ...'" (*Varney* 1: 328-29). From a distance in years, Chillingworth explicitly describes his state of mind as "monomaniac", that is, insane.

As in *Manuscripts*, insanity, or "monomania", taps into issues of power, madness and necrophilia related to the figure of the medical student. The ambition of the medical student Chillingworth is that of becoming more "scientific" than men of science themselves. His aim is that of "imitating the learned Frenchman, who had published such an elaborate treatise on the mode of restoring life … to those who were pronounced by unscientific persons to be dead" (*Varney* 1: 330). Besides being shorthand for laypeople, the word "unscientific" in this context also suggests that Chillingworth deems those medical men not brave enough to challenge death to be as unscientific as laypeople. The medical student experiences a power delirium, in the same fashion of Shelley's Frankenstein. He does not reflect on the outcomes of his experiment over the dead. As he is "most anxious" to resuscitate his subject (*Varney* 1: 330), the hangman asks him if he has any plans for the revivified man. Chillingworth's answer is as adamant as it is revealing: "Not I" (*Varney* 1: 330). The hangman humbly suggests that he "consider[s] that it is really worth thinking of" (*Varney* 1: 330), but Chillingworth can "think of nothing but the success or the non-success, in a physiological point of view, of [his] plan for restoring the dead to life" (*Varney* 1: 330). He works "with … a vigour that promised the most completely successful results, if success can at all be an ingredient in what sober judgement would doubtless have denominated a mad-headed and wild scheme" (*Varney* 1: 330).

The carelessness implied in Chillingworth's answer, "Not I", and the use of the term "physiological", indicate that he is completely disconnected from the human dimension of the corpse. His comment suggests he is uninterested both in the individual human being and in the wider community, while he is entirely focused on the success of his experiment. Chillingworth's plans do not envisage a way in which the public will benefit from the experiment's results because not even the man he is trying to revivify interests him. The perception of the dead body as an object for medical experiment is the chief trait of the medical student Chillingworth and a pivotal element in his construction as a monster. His

character embodies what Emma Liggins defines as the ambiguity of the power wielded by nineteenth-century medical community: power to heal, but also power to harm, a "violent" power lacking ethical regulations (133). Combining this hostile perception of the liminal position of the medical fraternity with the popular figure of the mad medical student, *Varney* reiterates nineteenth-century anxieties about medical education and the values – or lack thereof – it underwrote.

The portrait of a medical community unable to reconcile its practices with the values of the community in which it operates is reinforced through the juxtaposition of Chillingworth and the hangman, a man empowered to give death who shows more consideration of life than the medical student who is trying to restore it. From a Foucauldian perspective, the hangman is an outcast in the society in which he operates, and therefore empowered to speak the truth. He can see that the chief flaw in Chillingworth's plan is the lack of empathy between doctor and subject, and he points it out to Chillingworth himself, inviting him to consider the humanity of the corpse. Finally, when Chillingworth's repeated attempts at revivifying Varney fail, the hangman comments on his failures with a grim joke: "I am afraid, sir, it is much easier to kill than to restore their patients with doctors" (*Varney* 1: 330). This sarcastic remark, confirming the conception of an ambiguous medical fraternity empowered to both heal and kill, connected to the idea diffused among the poorer strata of society, confirmed by mortality rates, that entering a hospital was more likely to result in death than in healing (Richardson 43–4). As explained in the previous chapter, charity treatment could become an opportunity for doctors to practice dangerous surgery or to test new cures on poor patients before practicing them on private, that is, richer, patients (Richardson 43-4). The popular form of the cartoon offers proof of this perception. Richardson examines the cartoon "Modern Medical Education: Practical Results – At Home", published in the *Glasgow Looking Glass* within the series titled "Essay on Modern Medical Education" (Fig. 1). The print shows a hospital whose entire staff, from the "fashionable" doctor to the nurses attending the patients, are skeletons (Richardson 44). The doctor in the foreground appears at ease in the depressing environment of the room, but Richardson notes he also seems completely oblivious of the patient lying at his feet, partly fallen out of the bed (Richardson 44).[7]

[7] For more information on the poor and hospitals, see Richardson 42-50.

Figure 6: Heath, William. Modern Medical Education: Practical Results – At Home. Cartoon, 1825. By permission of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

The connection between the medical world and death in the print, reiterated in the hangman's comment in *Varney,* drew force from the anxiety generated by the perception of the medical man "at ease" with death as monstrous. Dr Chillingworth embodies this image, and simultaneously makes it literal, as the ambiguity underpinning his character is made more grotesque by the inclusion of necrophilia in the portrait. As with Musgrove's determination to "possess [him]self" of Mary Sinclair's body (*Manuscripts* 1: 4), Chillingworth's speech when he discusses the chance of "getting hold" (*Varney* 1: 328) of a corpse has a strong necrophiliac edge. Necrophilia relates Chillingworth to the concerns about the inappropriate interest of students in dead bodies illustrated in the previous chapter, although at a level more specifically connected with the fear expressed by social critics that students might conduct experiments over patients (Hurren 83). By describing his state as monomaniacal at the beginning of the tale, Dr Chillingworth bluntly admits that conceiving and carrying out his project compromised his mental balance. This compromised state is emphasized through the words he uses to describe his feelings about the idea of obtaining a corpse. Human beings naturally tend to refrain from contact with dead bodies; the medical student Chillingworth, instead, not only is impatient of getting hold of one, but he becomes almost disturbingly poetic when he talks about it. As soon as he completes the setting of his scientific apparatus in the hangman's house, which, of course, is appropriately "old" and "ruinous looking" (*Varney* 1: 329), he starts

showing signs of a growing impatience that resembles that of a lover waiting for the visit of his sweetheart:

> "[A]t least another hour must elapse before there could be the least chance of my seeing him arrive, for whom I so anxiously longed. I can safely say so infatuated was I upon the subject, that no fond lover ever looked with more nervous anxiety for the arrival of the chosen object of his heart, than I did for that dead body." (*Varney* 1: 329)

As soon as he hears the cart of the hangman approaching, though, he "[runs] down the stairs to meet what ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have gone some distance to avoid the sight of, namely, a corpse livid and fresh from the gallows." (*Varney* 330)

As his narrative progresses, Chillingworth's language gradually becomes explicitly necrophiliac. The expressions "infatuated", "fond lover", and "chosen object of his heart" on the one side, and "dead body" on the other contrast grotesquely. In his "impatience" in running down the stairs he resembles a lover running towards the "chosen object of his heart", but then the doctor points out that most men would have been repelled by what he is so impatient to meet. Chillingworth emphasizes the wrongness of his desire, specifying that the object is "a corpse fresh from the gallows". This lurid detail conformed to the penny bloods' sensational style, and suited the audience's taste for the macabre. However, it also underscored the clash between the behaviour of sane human beings and that of the medical student, who not only does seek corpses, but is *attracted* by them. This detail addressed two concerns related to the world of medicine that Victorian fiction explored. Firstly, the issue of metal health. Discussing representations of male hysteria in sensation fiction, Gilbert notes that "[a]fter all, it was practically normal for a woman to be a little unbalanced, but the madman is a spectacle of horror as well as pity" (186). To this I would add that, in Chillingworth's case, madness is horrifying not only because it is a mark of unmanliness, but also because it impairs the healing power of the medical mind and increases its potential violence. Furthermore, the necrophiliac language of Dr Chillingworth reflects concerns related to the sexualisation of the medical gaze over the corpse, which we have already encountered in *Manuscripts*. Commenting on Foucault's theorization of the progressive eroticisation of the medical gaze on

the patient across the nineteenth century, Liggins suggests that this process makes the "social and medical dominance" of the medical practitioner similar to "the sexual dominance of the murderer" (132). She individuates a series of similarities in both actions – in the ability of both doctor and murderer to make the subject "silent" – and in lexicon, as both figures are "attentive, insistent, [and] penetrating" (132). Although Liggins applies this definition specifically to the relationship between doctor and female subject (132), I would argue that Chillingworth's speech suggests the idea was not gender-specific. Possibly, the insurgence of "feminine" madness in Chillingworth's mind provoked in him homoerotic feelings towards the male corpse on which he is about to experiment. Or, more simply, Varney's corpse stands for every corpse, silent and powerless under the necrophiliac gaze of the medical student as does the corpse of Thurtell in Rowlandson's print. The medical student is thus tainted with one of the greatest taboos of humankind, which singles him out as a different, monstrous creature.

Similarly to Musgrove in *Manuscripts*, the medical student Chillingworth is a blend of hubris and necrophilia. While his almost excessively grotesque character can be in part attributed to the penny blood audience's taste for gore and the macabre, the stress on his necrophilia and detachment implies a judgement on the medical fraternity that questions the genuineness of their claims on the "necessity" of dissection. The narrative seems to suggest that the practice is rather a tool in the surgeons' hands, which allows them to indulge with the complacency of the authorities in their monstrous tendencies.

As the series builds up its (final) climax, medical men assume again a central role. Varney, under the assumed name of Mr Smith, has gained admission into the Croftons' house and has attacked Clara. Dr North, who is already in the house to attend to Clara's fiancé, who is recovering from a fall from his horse, takes control of the situation. It is discovered that North is a descendant of Dr Chillingworth and, as his ancestor, his character shows clear Gothic roots: while Chillingworth is the re-elaboration of the Frankenstein narrative, North reveals his ancestry, as well as important information that could explain the Croftons' current predicaments, through the Gothic trope of the found manuscript. The doctor produces "some printed papers" cut from "a medical publication" containing an account written by "a distant relation of [his], likewise a surgeon" (*Varney* 2: 797):

> "The communication was so curious," [North] said, "that I cut it out of the old volume in which it appeared, and kept it ever since."
>
> "Pray," said Mr. Smith, "what was the name of your distant relation, the medical man?"'
>
> "Chillingworth."
>
> "Oh indeed; an odd name rather, I don't recollect ever hearing of it."
>
> "No, sir, it is not likely you should. Dr. Chillingworth has been dead many years…" (*Varney* 2: 797)

In his work, Chillingworth illustrates the attack of the vampire named Varney on his family friends. North explains that Chillingworth "of course suppressed names" in his story, and declared that "but for touching the feeling of living persons", he would have unveiled more "curious particulars" (*Varney* 2: 797). It is possible to detect some similarities between the use of this gothic trope in *Varney* and the narrative formula of *Manuscripts*, which provides further grounds to speculate on the influence of *Manuscripts* on *Varney* and its representation of medical men, most evident in the juxtaposition of the "bad" and "good" doctor.

Dr North is an exceptionally cool, rational individual, whose remarkable character is ascribed to his medical training. When Clara Crofton is found dead, North immediately takes charge and, while he does display detachment towards the corpse, he seems to do so to maintain order in the family circle, as its men prove themselves unequal to the task. When he urges the girl's father and siblings to leave the room and the distracted father protests that he cannot leave his child, Dr North's answer is categorical: "That … is not your child" (*Varney* 2: 798). Suddenly, by the power of the words of the medical men, who can speak truth and create truth, Clara Crofton ceases being Clara and becomes a corpse. Unlike Mary Sinclair in *Manuscripts*, or the body of Varney in Chillingworth's story, her corpse does not inspire any fascination in Dr North. In his view, she is now something separate, inanimate, an unfeeling object, which her family must not regard with affection. He sternly rebukes the distracted father: "[y]ou are in grief, sir, and know not what you say. These were not else the words that would fall from the lips of a man as you are" (*Varney* 2: 798). As with the young physician's exhortation to Major Sinclair to be "more a man" before the death of his daughter, Dr North takes upon himself the duty – and the power – to

regulate the display of grief according to the Victorian norms that gendered the display of grief.

Excessive display of grief, as well as (and akin to) irrationality and lack of mental balance, was considered to be typically feminine, hence inappropriate in a man. Hurren relates the 1890 case of Mary Huckle, a pauper who appeared in court for withholding the body of her dead husband, Tom, for four days and three nights, "sleeping with [the] corpse" (qtd in Hurren 205). The judges finally put down her behaviour to "eccentricity" (qtd in Hurren 206). Mary was thought, in brief, to be not entirely in her wits, which tallies with Gilbert's argument that mental unbalance was considered normal in a woman. The verdict in the Mary Huckle case was founded on the idea that, even in grief one must display balance, both of demeanour and of mind; her behaviour, consequently, must denote insanity. Examining the ideological biases and cultural stereotypes underpinning the conception of disease as based on gender in the nineteenth century, Jane Wood underscores the efforts of the Victorian medical community to frame male nervousness "within constructs of masculinity" (60). Doctors tended to fall back on gender stereotypes when defining nervous disease, in order to promote the new ideals of masculinity as characterized by vigour and self-control (Wood 64). The result was that both medical and literary representation of male nervousness portrayed a patient "femininized by the very nature of his disease" (Wood 60). Wood adds that one important element that emerges from literary reiterations and challenges of this image of feminized nervous man is that, as the century progressed, medicine took it upon itself to establish what could be considered gender-appropriate features and attitudes (64). I would argue that not only does Dr North in *Varney* correspond to the idea of the doctor as responsible for establishing "normal" masculine behaviour (as well as what constitutes deviation from such a norm) but also that his knowledge of the appropriate parameters of masculinity makes him the paradigm of appropriate manliness. His person, strong and tough-minded, is the physical embodiment of appropriate masculinity, which endows him with the authority to police the Crofton men's attitude towards grief.

The Crofton men show a dangerously feminine amount of grief. Herr notices that "as the serial progresses, the Crofton men's constitution becomes increasingly frail", while "[h]yper-sensitivity is generally linked with feminine characteristics" (728). This is, he contends, an effect of the "Vampire's infection", which causes "reversals of gender code expectations, resulting in the destruction of the family

unit" (728). The feminization of the Crofton men tallies with the Victorian gender-determined behavioural codes, as well as with images of men emasculated by their own nervousness that appeared in Victorian fiction examined by Wood. In an attempt to induce them to show some stamina, Dr North explains to them that the appropriate (i.e. manly) way to grieve is to adopt a philosophical attitude and to show "what amount of resignation you can" in front of "that stroke of destiny which you cannot control" (*Varney* 2: 798). He notes that, while death might be "an evil to [them] in [their] loss", is actually the end of all pain and suffering to "her who has gone from [them]", and therefore she should not be pitied. After all, he points out, "she has but gone a few years … earlier than usual" (*Varney* 2: 798). This exceedingly detached speech, in which the doctor does not even call Clara by her name, has, surprisingly, an immediate relieving effect on the men of the family. The narrator declares that this kind of speech "was sure to have its effects upon persons in the habit of conversing coolly and calmly upon general subjects", such as the Crofton men should be (*Varney* 2: 798). The doctor achieves his purpose of making them "exhibi[t] the rational grief of men" (*Varney* 2: 798). He can do this because he possesses the toughness that was thought to characterize the male mind. He is not the neurotic medical student of the Bannerworth saga, whose mind is "inflamed" by delusions of grandeur and necrophiliac thoughts, but a true man showing stamina, whose mind is lucid and clear, conforming to the modern, un-romantic Victorian ideal.

Notably, the narrative seems to connect Dr North's manliness to the clinical detachment he developed through his profession. The connection is established in the moment in which he needs to get in physical contact with the dead, at which point his character assumes superhuman undertones. When Clara's corpse is found inexplicably lying on the floor, out of the bed, after the men have unsuccessfully tried to chase Varney, the father and the two brothers are again frantic, helpless, at loss about how to react. Dr North saves the situation once more, turning them all out of the room and then, "having professionally lost all dread of the dead", he "lift[s] the body upon the bed again, and dispose[s] of it properly" (*Varney* 2: 804). The "professional" loss of the "dread of the dead" is obviously the clinical detachment developed by surgeons through their anatomy training, and defines the moment in which North, physically "lifting" Clara's corpse from the floor, appears simultaneously strong, brave, and sensible. Clinical detachment singles out the doctor from the other men in the Crofton saga: it freed

him from the subjection to his nerves to the point that he can achieve what no other man in the narrative seems capable to do, that is, to keep full control over his emotions before death, the supreme element of distress. Unlike the repulsive attraction that characterized Chillingworth's touch on Varney's body, North's physical contact with the dead body is functional to showing the strength and coolness which the Victorians ascribed to the male, as opposed to the female, mind. I would venture that the narrative is suggesting that medical training is what made Dr North a true manly man: his ability to exercise a clinical gaze over the dead body, unencumbered by the nervous emotions, endows him with the "power of decision and intervention" that Foucault identifies as the defining trait of the medical figure (*The Birth of the Clinic* 109). Consequently, the narrative puts him in charge of the situation, making him the leader of the family in the moment of crisis. The power mania displayed by the neurotic medical student Chillingworth is reversed into the positive physical and mental power of the leader embodied by Dr North.

Notwithstanding the two-year lapse between the characters of Chillingworth and North in *Varney*, the narrative explicitly connects them making them distant relatives, calling to the reader's mind Chillingworth's past as a mad medical student just before showing the reader an entirely opposite kind of medical man. As with *Manuscripts*, *Varney* presents a polarized view of the medical practitioner, which, among other things, would confirm Smith's conclusions on authorship. The similarity could be simply ascribed to the fact that penny blood plots tended to be repetitive. However, this would not explain satisfactorily the deliberateness with which the narrative connects, indeed juxtaposes, the two doctors. I would suggest that such deliberateness rather expresses an intention to engage with the mid-century debate around medical education.

Sparks notes that around mid-century the medical fraternity was interrogating itself on the challenges posed by the developments in medical education. As surgery and the rise to prominence of anatomy made medicine increasingly invasive, the medical community found itself divided between upholding traditional medical education based on "gentlemanly ideals" and endorsing a new type of education based on experimentation (Sparks, *Surgical Injury* 14). Terrie Romano underscores how the "gentlemanliness" underpinning the classical education adopted in medical curricula thus far, which corresponded to the aspirations to gentility of the medical fraternity, also defined the intrinsic

manliness of the profession (228-9). Both Sparks and Romano point out that the debate reached the wider public, fostering anxieties regarding the departing of medical education from the moral and ethical codes that regulated the rest of the society.[8] Simultaneously, as both Richardson (44) and Hurren (82-3) note, the wider public was also openly expressing concerns about the possibility that surgeons might experiment with patients, especially poor ones. While the narrative form of the novel started engaging with these themes only later in the century, the penny blood genre's openness to disturbing and unsavoury themes allowed the debate on medical education to find its way into the pages of *Varney*. Chillingworth and North are literary elaborations of two opposite consequences of the "necessary inhumanity", in Hunterian words, that characterized medical training. While Chillingworth, conforming to the Gothic cliché of the mad medical student, shows unethical behaviour and signs of madness and consequently appears monstrous, North uses his clinical detachment to guide his community and reach his full masculine potential. He makes, thus, the jump from inhuman to superhuman, which still singles him out from other men, but rather as a model to imitate and a leader to follow, than a monster to shun. The medical student Chillingworth – and, consequently, Chillingworth the doctor – cannot fulfil that potential, because irrational behaviour is perceived as an eminently feminine component. As a nervous individual, he can only spread chaos, and never re-establish order.

The hyperbolic nature of the penny blood genre re-elaborates the Frankenstein narrative into a monstrous medical student who grotesquely embodies Victorian concerns about madness and necrophilia, concretizing anxieties about deviation from ethics in medical practice and the rising field of experimental medicine. To his figure is juxtaposed the equally hyperbolic Dr North, a super-doctor in the same fashion of the physician of *Manuscripts*. Unlike in *Manuscripts*, in *Varney* the contrast between medical men encompasses discourses of gender. While the mad medical student, unable to control his nerves, becomes a necrophiliac with distinct homoerotic traits, breaking in this way two taboos simultaneously, the seasoned practitioner is a paradigm of masculinity, which the narrative directly connects to his medical training. Consequently, he has the power to invigilate over the masculinity of other male characters, claiming for himself the role of leader.

[8] See Sparks (*Surgical Injuries* 14-22) and Romano (245-6).

I would venture that this indicates that not only does the narrative reiterate the increasing authority of medicine in establishing the parameters of gender-appropriate behaviour noted by Wood (64), but it ratifies it, simultaneously juxtaposing it to a negative image of insane, unreliable, and unethical experimental science. This representation of the medical figure suggests that *Varney* took a position in the debate of gentlemanly versus experimental science discussed by Romano (227-9), underwriting Victorian values of masculinity and gentlemanliness against the suspicious figure of the experimental scientist, whose power is perceived as dangerous because he is mentally unstable. At the same time, the narrative counterintuitively sublimates the "necessary" inhumanity derived from the development of pathological anatomy as the origin of North's mental strength and of his success as an effective doctor and leader. Rather than espousing monstrosity, North transcends humanity, which empowers him to re-establish order where the undead brought chaos. The narrative thus attempts to balance the concerns about the ambiguous power of the medical fraternity to both hurt and heal, providing a narrative solution in the character of the super-human doctor.

Truth and ambiguity: the language of power and medicine.

In *Varney*, the ambiguity of medical power emerges also in the relationship its embodiments entertain with truth. The nineteenth-century medical man merged two important points that Foucault individuated in the relationship between society, knowledge, and the control of discourses, that is, the access to knowledge and the regulation of other people's access to that knowledge.

As explained before, the manifest increase of the power of the medical gaze to pierce into what was concealed, and the exclusivity of this ability, were a source of anxiety for the wider public (Liggins 133; Sparks, "Surgical Injury" 2). In *Varney*, this aspect of the medical figure must be considered, as with monstrosity, against the presence of the supreme metaphor of power in the narrative, that is, Varney. A figure connected to abusive, tyrannical power both in lore and in literature, the vampire manifests his ability to reduce other characters to subjection by skilfully controlling the transmission of knowledge in the plot. Moreover, being undead, he embodies the uncanny reversion from death to life; it is worth noting that in *Varney* truth is at its most blurred when this reversion takes place, in which moment characters display greater or lesser ability to "see" the

truth. Within this frame, the narrative juxtaposes Chillingworth, whose clinical gaze is impaired by madness, to the clear-sighted Dr North. The Bannerworth saga also discusses the gaze on death and its ability to access truth in relation to a third element, that is, the uninitiated, ignorant mob, who, lacking any kind of medical training, cannot benefit from engaging visually with death.

The role of Varney as *the* liar in the story is established since the beginning of the Bannerworth saga. Every word Varney utters sounds dangerous, and he displays a singular ability in twisting words. The other characters attempt to defend themselves from him and outsmart him, always unsuccessfully. His first meeting with Henry Bannerworth, after Flora has been attacked, provides a clear example of the disparity of power between him and the other characters. Meeting his new neighbour, Henry is aghast to discover that he is the living image of the portrait whose subject Flora swears to be her assailant. Henry is terrified, while Varney behaves with the greatest innocence and politeness; throughout the scene, the narrator stresses the "bland, musical" voice of the baronet, and the "mellifluous" tone that "seemed habitual with him" (*Varney* 1: 61). The greater the distress Henry displays, the greater the sweetness of Varney's voice. This is a red flag for the reader, and builds up a feeling of uncanniness, giving the impression that the voice of the vampire anaesthetizes his listeners, frustrating and confusing them. A further eerie component is added when Varney excuses himself from the partaking of refreshments he offers his guests, explaining that he is "under a strict regimen": "[t]he simplest diet alone does for [him], and [he has] accustomed [him]self to long abstinence" (*Varney* 1: 63). While these statements have the ring of truth, the reader can catch their subtle second meaning (particularly in the comment on his diet, which bears a remarkable similarity to the feeding habits of vampires, with which the English public was acquainted since John William Polidori's *The Vampyre*[9]). Consequently, the reader can connect the baronet to the vampire who attacked Flora. By contrast, the characters in the story cannot ascertain the truth and, for the time being, they must take the words of Sir Francis at face value.

The vampire's innocent demeanour causes the other characters to doubt their own senses, as Henry does when Varney assures him that he can have no connection with his family, although the resemblance between the vampire and

[9] See Senf 34.

the portrait is plain to the young man. Varney seems to derive pleasure from upsetting the other characters. He purposefully disregards Henry's earnest request never to visit Bannerworth Hall, on account of his aspect, which may disturb Flora. When the girl meets him, she is terrified (as was arguably Varney's purpose), even though he addresses her with the "winning accents", "bland tones", and "courtly" manners (*Varney* 1: 76) of a "well-bred, gentlemanly man" (*Varney* 1: 77). After Flora repairs to her apartments, the Bannerworth brothers, Charles Holland, and Mr Marchdale (who has not yet betrayed the family), engage in a duel of words with Varney. Charles attempts to take the baronet by surprise by asking him, subtly, at first, and then openly, about vampires. Varney, however, is a much more skilled player. He answers with an earnest gaze that, Charles suspects, suggests familiarity with "cross-questioning" (*Varney* 1: 78). Meanwhile, the vampire taunts his victims, regretting the departure of Flora and alluding to his love for "young persons of health" and their "rosy cheeks. Where the warm blood mantles in the superficial veins, and all is loveliness and life" (*Varney* 1: 79). When Charles makes stronger accusations, Varney questions his sanity, all the while maintaining perfect manners (*Varney* 1: 80). Charles must admit defeat, as if giving up "some contest in which he had been engaged" (*Varney* 1: 79).

Without realizing it, the other characters are drawn into a game of power during which the vampire is careful not to provide any intelligence that could be used against him. Simultaneously, he asserts his power over them by taunting them with half-truths, leading them to question their own behaviour by a disarming display of civility, and casting doubts over their sanity when they come dangerously close to truth. The emphasis placed on the vampire's voice identifies him as the one who takes for himself the right to speak, the one whose words establish what is true, relegating all the other characters to the subordinate position of listeners. This dynamic conforms to other literary representations of vampires. Victorian fiction consistently constructed the vampire as a metaphor of power. Carol A. Senf notes that the Brontë sisters created their metaphorical vampires in the figures of Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* (75–93) and Bertha Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (94–110). In Dickens's *Bleak House*, both Vhole and Krook are life-suckers, as the first feeds on Richard Carstone and the second on other people's secrets (Senf 104–120). All these characters act as emotional vampires exercising psychological and social power over other

characters.[10] The use of the vampire as a metaphor of social power, Senf maintains, comes from the very first representations of vampires in literature: Polidori's Lord Ruthven, LeFanu's Countess Carmilla Karnstein, Stoker's Count Dracula and, of course, Rymer's Sir Francis Varney (43). Not only, Senf argues, is Varney an aristocrat, and therefore a metaphor of social (tyrannical) power (43), but, being "a creature from the past who enters the present to influence it", he also doubles as the power of the past over the present (44).

Therefore, Varney's own nature as a vampire symbolizes exploitative power. His aristocratic role determines his social power, and his use of language shows the first signs of the psychological power exercised by vampiric characters in nineteenth-century fiction. There are grounds to suppose that, had the series not run on for so long, Varney would have turned out as cunning and malicious a villain as Sweeney Todd, who shows similar speech patterns and the same tendency to assert his power over other characters by distorting the truth while sadistically enjoying the process. However, while Todd is consistently evil, Varney's maliciousness tends to change in accord with his transformation from villain into rogue with a code of honour. I would argue, though, that the combination of his embodying a metaphor of power with his nature as a revenant offers another angle for interpreting his mastery of word manipulation and truth distortion. He, the displaced body par excellence, is reticent about his own identity, is the subject of medical experiments, and displays a general vengeful attitude towards humanity. He thus embodied the vengeful revenant that the characters of Mary Sinclair and Long Hannibal in *Manuscripts* expressed only in potential, and served as an uncanny reminder of the countless bodies that were denied a peaceful rest for the sake of medical studies, still at the time in which *Varney* was being issued.

Opaqueness and secrecy were typical traits of the nineteenth-century medical world, which extended also to its language. Foucault notes that the development of the clinical gaze as the key to a privileged access to truth evolved into the idea of a "speaking eye" that would be "pure Language" and "master of truth" (*The Birth of the Clinic* 141). The formulation of this concept, he argues, favoured the revival of a certain "medical esotericism": the language of the eye would be only

[10] Senf points out that the possibility of Catherine, Heathcliff, and Bertha being actual vampires is never explicitly denied in the narratives.

understandable to the "initiated", enacting a dynamic in which seeing the truth and knowing the language were mutual (*The Birth of the Clinic* 141). A byproduct of this dynamic was that the medical community spoke an obscure language that concealed knowledge. Its utmost expression was the Anatomy Act itself. The Act displays a number of features that resemble the way in which Varney used language to establish relationships of power with the other characters. As only the vampire knew the actual meaning of his words, only the government, the medical fraternity, and workhouse masters knew the actual meaning of the Anatomy Act. In this way, they maintained a position of power over their counterparts, the other characters on the page and the poor in reality, who were baffled by obscure language and twisted sentence structure, and found themselves involved in a challenge the rules of which escaped their comprehension. Both the characters in the series and the readers of the Act were made powerless by being denied the full understanding of both the information and the code through which communication was passed. They were unable to control their own destiny, which, in the case of the pauper, included the disposal of their own remains.

Reticence and tendency to omit vital information characterizes the speech of Dr Chillingworth. The narrative of his sensational revivification of Varney's remains enabled the author to indulge in grotesque and dramatic descriptions to his audience's satisfaction, but it also gave a glimpse of the doctor's mind and of how he shared or withheld information in a life and death situation. Ultimately, this is revealing of Chillingworth's views regarding anatomy, both as a student and as a practitioner, and of his attitude towards the dead body. From his story it emerges that he is a supporter of dissection, and that he considers obtaining corpses to dissect a "desirable" and "necessary" purpose (*Varney* 1: 328). Besides resembling Sir Astley Cooper's statements in front of the Select Committee, the concepts of "desirability" and "necessity" expressed by Chillingworth were typical of such forms of pro-anatomy discourse as were being made available to the public, such as T.S. Smith's "The Use of the Dead to the Living". It was first published as an article in the *Westminster Review*, and then reprinted as a pamphlet in 1824, to inform the members of Parliament who were to deliberate on the reforms concerning anatomy studies (Smith iii). It was purposefully written so that the general public could understand it (Smith iii). In the pamphlet, Smith defined the creation of legislation that would grant medical schools a steady supply of bodies for dissection a "desired object" (50). Similarly, he stated that

the faculty of medicine and the Hôpital de la Pitié in Paris provided the pupils with "all the facilities for dissection that can be desired" (51). Alongside the idea of desirability, Smith endeavoured to stress the concept of "necessity", particularly when referring to corpses. Parisian legislation, he wrote, provided the students with "the bodies which are necessary for teaching anatomy" (50); a few lines below, he explained that "the subjects that are necessary for teaching anatomy" were taken from the hospitals, and that practices and regulations of the city secured "the necessary number of bodies" (50). To support his argument, he tapped into the concerns regarding experimentation, claiming that, if the medical students were unable to access "the necessary information" by dissecting the dead, they would have to acquire it by experimenting on the living poor (53). He maintained that it was "absolutely necessary" for the surgeon to be acquainted with the internal organs of the human body (4), and that a successful operation was determined by the "necessary" coexistence of proficiency in anatomical knowledge and command of the surgical tools (18). Resurrectionists were included in this set of necessities, because they provided the "subjects necessary for dissection" (33).

Smith's insistence on the necessity of providing more corpses for the study of morbid anatomy was possibly rooted in the concept of "necessary inhumanity" formulated by Hunter, in which the knowledge of anatomy, and the dehumanization of the medical student as its byproduct, were essential to the instruction of a proficient surgeon. Dr Chillingworth reiterates the image of the surgeon supporter of the necessity of dissection, while at the same time embodying the threat implicit in this ideology in the eyes of the wider public. The inclusion of pro-anatomy discourse in his speech would be particularly relevant to the working-class readership of *Varney*, who were in a powerless position before the Act and perceived the medical fraternity as hostile, violent, and dangerous. These traits would necessarily be transmitted to the fictional doctor in the moment he proclaimed himself a supporter of dissection, which makes it unsurprising that his character is necrophiliac. His emphasis on the desirability and necessity of anatomy concretizes the wider public's anxieties about the idea of dissection – and indeed inhumanity – as necessary, and the conviction that this concept bespoke a dangerous lack of ethics. The new esotericism of the language of medicine, as Foucault defines it, provoked trust issues.

As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, Hurren notes that the Anatomy Act conveyed to the reader the impression that "something was being withheld" regarding its true implications (28), and Chillingworth's account of his revivification of Varney conveys the same impression. We can consider the account both from the perspective of Chillingworth's reticence to sharing vital knowledge, and from what implicit information he does provide. The "confession" the doctor makes to his friends has "several times ... trembled on [his] lips" (*Varney* 1: 327), but he did not make it until events compelled him. His emphasis on the fact that he possesses information about "him who has caused you so serious an amount of disturbance" (*Varney* 1: 327), meaning Varney, deflects attention from his own responsibility: his secrecy about his disturbing past practices jeopardized his neighbours. Obviously, he prioritized withdrawing information that might lead to questions on his professional ethic over the safety of his friends (and patients), which characterizes him as ambiguous and untrustworthy. He hid his knowledge of the true nature of Varney, his acquaintance with the hangman, and most of all his role as the mad scientist whose hubris enabled the monster to hunt the family. He also hid his past neurosis so that his current authority could not be challenged. However, the information he provides in this regard allows the other characters, and the readers, to infer something about him as a practitioner.

Chillingworth describes the ideas of his younger self as "mad-headed" and "wild" (*Varney* 1: 330), and his state as one of "monomania" (*Varney* 1: 328). He claims it was a direct result of his indefatigable application to medical studies, which apparently conflated anatomy and dissection with lack of ethics. However, what emerges from his narrative is that the real threat was not the study of medicine *per se*, but rather the unstable mind of the medical student Chillingworth, who approached a potentially destabilizing discipline without possessing the correct attitude from the beginning. Chillingworth's nervousness prevented him from benefiting from his medical training, from forming the rational, detached frame of mind typical of the proficient surgeon. The detachment he developed was imperfect, as it allowed him to experiment over human remains without qualms but not to see the truth, that is, the wider implications of his experiment and its potential (negative) consequences. He can see no further than his own dreams of glory, which obfuscate and over-excite his mind. Therefore, his medical gaze is myopic, forever impaired by its delusions. His character replicates

on the page the unreliable and monstrous medical practitioner who meddles with nature with dangerous results.

By contrast, Dr North's clear-sightedness reflects on the power of his words. Whereas he is not entirely successful in fighting Varney – after all, a vampire is a figure associated with lore and superstition, while North is a man of science – he is the first to suggest that the family might be under the attack of a vampire. Notwithstanding his own scepticism, unlike Chillingworth he immediately discusses his suspicions with the Croftons, preventing Varney from killing again. He can see truth more clearly than the other characters, and he acts conforming to what he sees. When he finds the marks of Varney's teeth on Clara's throat, he alerts the family; when Clara dies, he deliberately points to her corpse and tells Sir Crofton that "that is not [his] child" (*Varney* 2: 798). Not only does this statement invite the father to come to terms with the death of his daughter, but also contains a greater truth that the doctor, although he is not positive about it, may at least infer: Clara is now a vampire.

His privileged access to truth allows him to control information and endows him with the authority to lead the family through the death of Clara. Dr North is very careful in choosing his interlocutors. He manages to soothe Clara during the brief recovery preceding her death by drawing her into the secure space of the patient-doctor relationship. When Clara wakes up in a delirious state exclaiming "I – am mad!" (*Varney* 2: 795), he invites her to "tell [him] freely, as [her] medical man, what has happened", assuring her that "if any human means can aid [her], [she] shall be aided" (*Varney* 2: 795-6). The words have an immediate relieving effect upon Clara's mind; in the dialogue with Dr North, she becomes the patient, and takes the passive role object to be gazed upon. It is the task of "her medical man" to use his superior knowledge to find a way to help her. After listening to her story, North deliberately proclaims her and her sister Emma, who heard her screams and was first on the scene, to be under the influence of nervousness and suggest they both take a rest together in the same room. However, when he is left alone with the other men, he asserts he does not believe the two girls to be delusional, and formulates his theory about the vampire attack. Hence, while apparently acting in compliance with the Victorian habit, noted by Wood, of giving ideological biases precedence over the diagnosis, he regulates the distribution of knowledge according to what he believes to be appropriate for the benefit of the small community he is aiding. Granted, he behaves according to

gender biases, as he supposes that Emma and Clara could not bear with hearing his theory on vampire attack; however, his biases only influence his policy of knowledge distribution, not his diagnosis. The peace of mind of his unnerved patients is paramount, as was the tranquillity of Long Hannibal's widow to the mature physician in *Manuscripts*. His withholding information, therefore, is the rational choice of a medical man acting in his patients' best interest.

Likewise, he deliberately excludes from knowledge all characters that he judges to be too weak to receive it. As the Crofton men develop the nervousness that had so far characterized the women of the family, the doctor progressively curtails communications with them. After he has taken care of lifting Clara's corpse from the floor and putting it back on the bed, Sir George asks him to explain to him the meaning of what is happening. Dr North answers: "Do not ask me … I cannot tell you; I confess I do not know what advice to give you, or indeed what to say to you" (*Varney* 2: 804). While this answer may simply be an admission of ignorance on the part of the doctor, and consequently a refusal to pronounce himself on what he does not know, the wording suggests something more. He "cannot tell" what he thinks to Sir George, he does not know how to give him advice or how to talk to him, and I would argue this is because Sir George does not represent a credible interlocutor for the doctor. Not only does he not possess a knowledge of the code through which North communicates – what Foucault defines the pure "Language" of the medical gaze – but he also proved himself irrational and subject to his own passions. Dr North's refusal to speak to Sir George may actually be a refusal to make him privy to a knowledge the medical man believes him unable to bear. Though unfair, it is the doctor's right to do so. Throughout the episodes that relate the attack upon Clara and her death, the word of Dr North is final, and this is connected with his greater ability to "see" the truth, which explains why the Crofton men are assuaged by his philosophic speech on death. He is the authoritative repository of knowledge, hence his words are endowed with the status of truth and the other characters act in compliance with them.

Ironically, the interlocutor Dr North chooses is Varney. The narrative specifies that the vampire shows mastery of several scientific subjects, as well as "no small amount of skill and theoretical information upon medical matters", to the extent that North allows him in the chamber of Clara's fiancé (who, as mentioned above, is recovering from a fall from his horse), while "perhaps he would have objected

to anyone else" (*Varney* 2: 792). At this point, the narrator indulges in a comment on the fact that "Varney the vampyre could fascinate when he liked" (*Varney* 2: 792). Varney's charm mainly consists in being able to find the correct code to communicate satisfactorily with the other characters, and he is able to speak the language of medicine. After all, he is a resurrected cadaver, the object that perhaps more than any other engaged in communication with the medical gaze, its key to truth. Varney is aware of Dr North's power to penetrate truth. Perhaps, although unable to resist to the temptation to engage in one of his covert battles for superiority with the most dangerous character in the family circle, he realizes that North represents a threat for him, and makes sure to lock him into his room before attacking Clara. This shows he knows that the doctor, although he enjoys his conversation, cannot be fooled. Events will prove him right.

To conclude my discussion of truth and knowledge in *Varney*, it is necessary to turn, though briefly, on a third element, the mob, which the narrative examines in terms of its understanding – or, more accurately, lack thereof – of truth as related to the dead. The crowd as a disruptive element that provokes chaos is present in both the Bannerworth and the Crofton saga. Indeed, in one of the last episodes of the series they will cause the annihilation of Clara in her vampire form. However, it is in the Bannerworth saga that the mob is explored at length as an element ultimately incapable of "seeing", and therefore accessing, the truth, an inability which is ascribed chiefly to the ignorance of the individuals in the mob and its collective expression.

In chapters 44 and 45, the presence of Sir Francis Varney drives the neighbourhood into a state of vampire hysteria.[11] Townspeople suspect that the spawns of the vampire will soon attack them. "There was Miles, the butcher", they say, "you know how fat he was -- and then how fat he wasn't" (*Varney* 1: 202).[12] They unanimously decide to storm the cemetery and disinter Miles the butcher. The mob in *Varney* is generally a brutal, blind, and dumb entity, subject to sudden and terrible bursts of rage. This mob, however, is particularly stolid and

[11] Vampire hysteria, or "vampire epidemic" (Senf 20), was a phenomenon that sparked in 1600s-1700s eastern and central Europe, and consisted in the belief that actual vampires were spreading, killing, provoking epidemics, and spawning more vampires. On suspicion of vampire activity, crowds would storm cemeteries and dig up corpses to ritually kill the "vampires". See Senf 20, and Twitchell 18-19.

[12] During the vampire plague, several ordinary diseases such as porphyria, pernicious anaemia, tuberculosis, cholera, and even cancer were believed to be symptom of vampirism. The sentence implies that Miles the butcher had wasted away, which suggests he might rather have died of tuberculosis or cancer, and also that Rymer was aware of vampire folklore. See Twitchell, 19.

gullible, as they fall for the words of a fanatic preacher, Mr Fletcher "the ranter" (*Varney* 1: 205); as we have seen in *Manuscripts*, in Rymer's fiction this is an unpardonable sin, as it was in the fiction of many Victorian writers, most notably Dickens. In the course of the scene, Mr Fletcher works up the enraged populace with a speech in which he compares them to "vampyres …men who walk in the darkness when the sunlight invites [them]", who "listen ... to the words of humanity when those of a diviner origin are offered to [them]" (*Varney* 1: 205). The agenda behind his solemn speech becomes apparent when he states that, whatever discovery they make by opening the coffin, the result shall be the same: if they find the butcher "decaying … [they] shall gather from that a great omen, and a sign that if [they] follow [him] [they] seek the Lord". Should they find him "looking fresh and healthy … [they] shall take it likewise a signification that what [he] say[s] to [them] shall be the Gospel, and that by coming to the chapel of the Little Boozlehum, [they] shall achieve great salvation" (*Varney* 1: 205-6). In brief, Mr Fletcher is presenting himself as the depository and dispenser of the words "of a diviner origin" that should enlighten them. Moreover, the self-interested preacher sanctions the desecration of a tomb with his speech. He provokes a disruption of the cycle of life and death for his own personal gain,[13] manipulating the mob, exploiting their superstitious fears. His speech is based on obviously shaky premises, but it nonetheless incites the mob to violate the religious values of the community. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the much advertised "sunlight" should fail to manifest itself to the crowd, as the opening of the tomb of Miles the butcher brings them no closer to the truth.

After opening the tomb, they find its only occupant is, quite inexplicably, a brick. The narrative does not elaborate on the origins of such interesting phenomenon, whereas it focuses on the behaviour of the crowd before and after the discovery, arguing that the mob lacks the intellectual means to achieve any useful knowledge from the observation of death. While the narrator acknowledges that human nature shows "a natural craving curiosity" towards the dead, it holds that only a certain type of individual is able to benefit from it, namely those men "of education and endowment" who would undertake long journeys to attend the

[13] Londoners were not unfamiliar with this type of dynamic. A famous case in which a man of the church sanctioned the disinterment of corpses to speculate over burial fees was that of Enon Chapel, covered by the press and brought to public attention by Dr George Walker. The case will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

exhumation "of someone famous in his time", in which case curiosity takes a "refined and sublime shape" (*Varney* 1: 203). To this figure, the narrator juxtaposes "the vulgar and ignorant", who display the same sentiment in a "grosser and meaner form", conforming "with their habits and thoughts" (*Varney* 1: 203). The narrator may or may not have alluded specifically to doctors and their refined education when eulogizing the attitude of the first set of men; however, the narrative emphatically stresses the mob's ignorance, their inability to use their own gaze to reach simple truths that are in plain sight, and their spite, in fact, for whomever attempts to do so. The only person in the mob who tries to use logic and observe facts is a boy, who is rebuked by the mob and receives several boxes in the ears for asking questions. To the boy is juxtaposed the man the mob elects as its spokesperson, Dick, who is characterized by his repeated attempts at using scientific language without success. While the boy asks sensible questions based on observation (for instance, he asks how could the butcher possibly leave a coffin that lays so heavily under the mud, and receives a cuff for not minding his business), Dick accuses him in rapid sequence of ignorance and excessive curiosity. This fight between sight-based curiosity and blind ignorance reaches its apex when the boy asks doubtfully, looking at the brick: "you don't mean to say that's the butcher, Dick?" Dick taps him on the head with the brick and exclaims "There … that's what I calls occular [sic] demonstration. Do you believe it now, you blessed infidel?" (*Varney* 1: 208). In one move Dick, the spokesman for the mob, shows that he does not know what an ocular demonstration actually is, and confuses science with blind belief. He goes so far as to predict the death of the boy, stating that he is such an "inquiring genius" that he will "get [his] head in some hole one day, and not be able to get it out again and then [he, Dick] shall see [the boy] a kicking" (*Varney* 1: 210). This prophetical statement, which might be simply picturing a ridiculous scene, as well as alluding to the image of a body hanging from the executioner's noose, indicates Dick's spite for curiosity.

The cemetery scene in the Bannerworth saga, therefore, is a précis of how the narrative portrays the approach to knowledge. Characters such as Mr Fletcher cannot pass any type of knowledge, because their words are false, informed as they are on the individual's personal agenda. It must be noted that Mr Fletcher is duly rewarded for his pretence of truth: as the mob enthusiastically sets to disinter Miles, the "rather … capacious" mouth of Mr Fletcher is filled with a "descending lump of mould of clayey consistency", which almost causes the preacher to take

out his own teeth in the attempt to remove it (*Varney* 1: 206). In the same way, an entity such as the mob, and its single individuals, cannot approach the truth: their falling for the duplicitous words of the preacher, and for his threats of damnation, makes their blindness apparent. They do not know the language of science because they are unable to use the chief scientific organ of investigation, the gaze. While the character of the boy conveys the idea that even an untrained gaze, if used properly, can lead to truth, the people in the mob are unable to exercise their gaze, and hence their discernment. When their eyes show them an empty coffin and a brick, they accept Dick's makeshift explanation that a "transmogrification" must have happened that made Miles "consolidify" himself in a brick (*Varney* 1: 208). Notably, the chance that it might have been the action of bodysnatchers is not even suggested by either the characters or the narrator; the core point is that the mob does not possess the intellectual means to access truth, as opposed to the men of education whose curiosity towards death is acceptable.

As a whole, the mob episode synthetizes the way the narrative engages with processes of access to, and transmission of, knowledge, praising sight-centred curiosity and education, which are the only means to reach the truth, as it is extant in the character of Dr North. In *Varney*, the gaze is the supreme channel of truth, in a paradigm that tallies with Foucault's theorization of the speaking eye as pure Language in nineteenth-century medical discourse (*The Birth of the Clinic* 140-1). When displaced bodies appear around medical men, the language of knowledge in *Varney* is the language of science, in which the trained eye, as the master of truth, creates the code, constructing the new medical esotericism Foucault describes. Chillingworth is the extreme interpretation of this gaze, and represents the distortion of its principle. His speaking eye is myopic, as it is impaired by his lack of rationality, and instead of policing the distribution of truth wisely, he jealously keeps vital truths to himself for fear of antagonizing the other characters, ultimately jeopardizing them. North, by contrast, embodies the positive clinical gaze. While he achieves and maintains a position of power thanks to the privileged access to knowledge his trained gaze allows him, he is a reliable man who speaks the truth and controls the distribution of knowledge in everyone's best interest. Unlike his ancestor, he is a healer, and represents the new medical science, enlightened and enlightening. He speaks the language of science, which is the language of truth par excellence, and he is able to have a positive influence on the other characters, particularly the male ones. The mob's ignorance, instead,

prevents them from seeing the truth at any level: their inability to exercise their gaze shows that blindness, which stands for ignorance, is incompatible with the language of science.

Life-death inversion and the gaze: disruptive effects of the untrained gaze on the corpse.

If the blindness of the mob makes it impossible for it to access the truth, its impaired gaze nonetheless focuses – or attempts to do so – on the dead body. The narrative frames the gaze of the medical man as the source of truth; it follows that the act itself of gazing over death plays a crucial role in the plot. Notably, not only does the series discuss the appropriate application of the medical gaze, but it also explores the consequences of the application of a defective gaze, that is, an untrained gaze, on death.

When the uncanny disruption of the cycle of life and death occurs, it usually causes the gaze of the untrained individual to fix over the displaced body. Naturally, this is more likely to happen in the spaces of the cemetery and the vault. As in *Manuscripts*, these are peculiarly restless spaces, in which tombs are discovered to be empty, corpses are found out of place, and where the word "resurrection" acquires a literal meaning due to the supernatural presence of the vampire. Unlike in *Manuscripts*, by contrast, the uncanny inversion of movement from death to life yields no positive outcome. In the world of *Varney*, the inversion is always synonym of chaos and disruption, either in the form of a violation of the values underpinning the relationship between death and society, or in the form of the vampire's supernatural agency in the world of the living. The gaze of the untrained observer reflects the inversion's intrinsic uncanniness, as it is either inappropriate, or horrified. Voyeurism is a crucial component of the untrained, defective gaze on the corpse, underpinning the negative results it produces.

Two instances of this type of gaze are instrumental in illustrating this point: the gaze of the mob on Miles's coffin in the Bannerworth saga, and the gaze of Will Stephens, the sexton, on Clara's displaced body in the Crofton saga.

In the case of the mob in the cemetery, the narrative explicitly frames the event as propelled by morbid curiosity, holding that such curiosity is natural in the human being (*Varney* 1: 203). However, the narrator's tone remains undisguisedly derogatory as the mob digs up Miles's coffin, and indulges in the gory and

repulsive aspects of the behaviour of the mob. As the spade touches the lid of Miles's coffin, the excitement of the crowd increases, and "the earth [is] thrown out with a rapidity that seem[s] almost the quick result of the working of some machine" (*Varney* 1: 206). The people near the brink of the grave "[crouch] down" to get a better view of the coffin, and they are so focused that they do not notice "the damp earth that [falls] upon them, nor the frail brittle and humid remains of humanity that occasionally [roll] to their feet" (*Varney* 1: 206). The scene, the narrator asserts, "only want[s] a few prominent features in its foreground of a more intellectual and higher cast than composed by the mob, to make it fit for a painter of the highest talent" (*Varney* 1: 206).

Perhaps, the narrator is referring to such Hogarthian works as "The Idle Apprentice Executed at Tyburn" from *Industry and Idleness* (1747), or "Noon" from *The Four Times of the Day* (1738). The emphasis placed on the "frail brittle of humanity" seems planned to raise disgust, and I would venture that the narrator's attempt at stirring the disgust of the reader before the voyeuristic excitement of the mob, combined with the allusion to a visual representation of the scene, suggest the author might have been drawing inspiration from real events. Though it is impossible to make any conclusive assertions as to whether or not Rymer was ever a spectator of such a scene, desecration of burial grounds at the hands of unruly mobs were not unlikely in nineteenth-century London. As we have seen, the upturning of graves was common during cholera outbreaks, and the press covered such events. Moreover, in direct connection with the displacement of cadavers, mobs figured also in newspaper reports of resurrectionist apprehensions. An issue of the *Times* from 1832 – soon after the passing of the Act – reports the arrest of a gang of resurrectionists in Hereford. As the prisoners were escorted to the house of the Mayor for interrogation, "a large mass of persons" gathered "anxiously waiting" the verdict, "but still more anxious to catch a glimpse of the resurrectionists", as though they believed that bodysnatchers "must present a different appearance from their fellow-men" ("HEREFORD, Sunday" 7). When the prisoners were moved to the county gaol, "an immense crowd" followed them and "assailed with the most vociferous expressions of disgust and contempt" ("HEREFORD, Sunday" 7). Four months later, a similar scene happened in Kent, where three men were found with two bodies packed on a cart. The mob in this case was even more violent, on account of the suspicion that the three men might be burkers. The crowd that quickly assembled around the

station house was allegedly composed "of several thousand persons" and called for the police to surrender the "Burkites" "in the most menacing and outrageous manner" ("Apprehension of a Gang of Resurrectionists" 4). Such was the intensity of the agitation of the mob, the reporter claimed, that for a moment "it was thought that the station-house would be completely pulled down" ("Apprehension" 4). When the men were escorted outside by the police, the crowd "commenced an attack upon them with stones, bricks, and missiles of every description … and the hooting, execrations, and yellings [sic] of the mob, might have been heard nearly half a mile off" ("Apprehension" 4). The police, of course, was caught in the fire, and apparently had "the utmost difficulty to prevent their prisoners being sacrificed by the indignant multitude" ("Apprehension" 4).

Both articles are at pains to frame the mob as a dangerous element. The journalists describe the crowd as uncannily vast – "several thousands", "large mass", "immense crowd" – and in a state verging on hysteria. They also emphasize its disregard for authority, as they follow and/or attack the police. The officers appear helpless in front of the enraged mob, who in turn is (allegedly) capable of almost destroying the station house. The term "sacrifice" applied to the prisoners, which is suggestive of tribal behaviour, implies a regression of the mob to a savage state.[14]

This portrait is unsurprising, as radicalism, and the political turmoil this provoked, made the Victorians profoundly distrustful of large crowds, a distrust that also emerges, for instance, in Dickens's writing. In *Oliver Twist*, as Oliver runs for his life from the frenzied crowd that accuses him of pickpocketing, Dickens comments on the "passion for *hunting something*"[15] that characterizes the human being (*Oliver Twist* 74). The comment suggests a regression of the individual to a primeval, savage state, as much as the cemetery scene in *Varney* expresses the mob's transgression of the cultural norms that regulated the relationship between the community and its dead. The threat posed by the disruption of boundaries between the surface and the underground, with the subsequent invasion of the world of the living by dead matter, is identified with a regression from civilisation to savagery.

[14] This word also positions the bodysnatchers, quite unusually, as victims: all social classes despised bodysnatchers, and yet, they become sacrificial victims if compared to the enraged crowd.

[15] Dickens's emphasis.

Inverting the regression proves itself difficult. As the superstitious fear of the dead starts worming its way into the collective mind of the mob, their determination falters. They try to reassure themselves that they are not, in fact, committing a sacrilege, but exercising their right to access the truth: "if he's a vampyre, we ought to know it; if he ain't we can't do any hurt to a dead man" (*Varney* 1: 207). They even wonder whether they should read the service for the dead, at which point the boy, the voice of reason, mocks them: "Yes … I think we ought to have that read, back-wards" (*Varney* 1: 207). The blasphemous suggestion of the boy exposes the pretence of religious feeling the mob is endeavouring to sustain, triggering a rush of hypocritical indignation that deflects attention from the actual desecration that is being committed and from the voyeuristic curiosity that propelled it.

The disruption of the rest of the dead in the space of the cemetery in *Varney*, therefore, could not possibly yield positive results, because it is founded on superstition and on the voyeuristic exercise of an untrained gaze. Unlike in *Manuscripts*, where the gaze of the clinician transforms the space of death into the space of life, the collective defective gaze of the unruly mob in *Varney* transforms the space of the cemetery in the ultimate space of chaos. Drawing from contemporary representations of the disruptive effect of frenzied crowds in the geospace of Britain, which taps into deeper anxieties about popular commotion, the narrative presents the results of the uncontrolled application of the untrained gaze into the space of death as a mark of savagery. It is not surprising, therefore, that the mob is denied the sight that they so craved, and that all they can see in the violated tomb is a brick.

The episode concerning Clara Crofton's resurrection as a vampire merges these points with a supernatural component which suggests that not only does the untrained gaze yields disruptive results, but the contemplated object itself may impact negatively on the untrained eye. The inverted movement is represented through the dead literally ascending from the space of the tomb, curtailing the distance between death and the living in a way that overwhelms the beholder. Proximity to death is not for the layperson's gaze, as the narrative points out through the character of Will Stephens, the sexton of the village in which the Croftons live.

The sexton, is, unsurprisingly, a greedy, untrustworthy character. As mentioned in the previous chapter, sextons were often associated with bodysnatchers and

body displacement. The anonymous bodysnatcher A.B. was very clear on this point with the Select Committee for Anatomy, declaring that if a bodysnatcher meant to "get subjects for any constancy out of any burying-ground", the only way to do it was by bribing the staff (*RSCA* 71). The one thing that could dissuade a sexton or a gravedigger from accepting a bribe from the bodysnatchers, A.B. added, was the danger of losing their job. If the current gravedigger, sexton, or guardian was replacing a man who had been fired after his partnership with resurrectionists was discovered, he would categorically refuse bribes (*RSCA* 71). Although the narrative does not clarify whether or not Will Stephens is in league with resurrectionists, he makes no exception to the rule that sextons are dodgy individuals. Sir George Crofton paid him to put sawdust in Clara's vault, but Will pockets most of the money and purchases a small amount of sawdust with what is left. Moreover, he stops to enjoy a few drinks before attending to the task Sir Crofton assigned him. This brings Will to the church at the appropriately solemn time of midnight, on an appropriately dismal night, conforming to the Gothic tone of the series and to the melodramatic style of the penny bloods. The first instalment that covers Will's adventure in the tomb concludes abruptly on Will nursing his beer and a strange dark figure, apparently endowed with superhuman strength, forcing its way into the church. The narrator prepares the reader for what is to come by announcing imminent frightful events "that require the closest attention" and will happen "in the vaults" (*Varney* 2: 807). He specifies that they are guaranteed "to fill the reflective mind with the most painful images, and awake the sensations of horror at the idea that such things can really be, and are permitted tacitly by Heaven to take place on the beautiful earth destined for the dwelling place of a man" (*Varney* 2: 807).

Such a melodramatic hint, albeit not leaving much to the imagination of the readers, was guaranteed to secure their attention and, naturally, their purchase of the next instalment. A detail, however, that is worthy of closer attention, is the emphasis placed on the spatial frame of the event, the vault, and the statement that what will happen there will have an impact on the "beautiful earth" that is the "dwelling place of the man", that is, the world of the living. The event is framed as something opposed to the idea of "Heaven", hence of holiness, of sacred; it will be, in brief, a distortion. The narrator, of course, is alluding to Clara's resurrection as a vampire. As the emphasis on the space of the vault hints, the ensuing episode focalizes on the absence of the corpse from the coffin, and indeed from the vault

altogether. After a few humorous accidents, including fancying himself murdered when he trips and falls on the bag of sawdust, Will finally descends into the Crofton family's vault. Here, he spots a coffin lid at his feet, which he recognises as that of "the coffin of Miss Clara Crofton" (*Varney* 2: 819). Will immediately starts "trembling and turning over in his mind all the most frightful explanations of [sic] what he saw … . 'Has she been buried alive? Have the body snatchers been after her? …'" (*Varney* 2: 819). It is curious that resurrectionists should appear in *Varney* only at this point, while they would have explained very well the disappearance of the body of Miles the butcher.[16] Possibly, the presence of a sexton, a figure commonly associated with the resurrectionists, favoured the introduction of the subject. Gazing over the misplaced coffin lid, Will thinks about "all" the possible frightful explanations for the situation, which, in the end, are two: either Clara has been buried alive, or she has been stolen by bodysnatchers.

It is hard to imagine that someone, even a stronger person than the delicate Clara Crofton, could awaken from a coma and, in the agony of suffocation, find the strength to force open the lid of a coffin; yet the idea of premature burial, as we have seen in the previous chapter, alarmed the Victorian public and fascinated authors.[17] Will resolves to ascertain whether the body is still there, which would mean that "she had been buried alive, and had just strength enough to force open the coffin … and then to die in that horrible place" (*Varney* 2: 819). However, when he looks into the coffin, it is empty. The sexton stares at the empty coffin "as if there was something peculiarly fascinating in it, and most attractive, and yet, nothing was in it, no vestige even of the vestments of the dead" (*Varney* 2: 818). Besides focusing on yet another character displaying fascination with the contents – or lack thereof – of a coffin, the emphasis on the casket's emptiness indicates that something is amiss. The absence of burial clothing excludes immediately the possibility of resurrectionists: resurrectionists took only the naked body and left the shroud in the coffin, in order to avoid being arrested for theft. The idea of the supernatural starts forming in Will's mind and he suddenly

[16] Although, they would not have explained the brick found in its place. I could find no record of bodysnatchers replacing bodies with other objects.

[17] This is also a recurrent theme, for instance, in the writing of Edgar Allan Poe (Kennedy 165). In particular, the short story "The Premature Burial", which presented a cataleptic man terrorised by the idea of being buried alive by accident, was published on *The Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper* in 1844 (Kennedy 177), therefore rather close to *Varney*.

becomes aware of the fact that he is inside a tomb with an open, empty coffin. The living sexton fears the ghostly presence of the dead girl; the empty coffin suggests that he may be doomed to replace the dead in the vault. He makes a sudden – though clumsy – dash for the stairs and manages to make it to the floor above, where he finds, to his great relief, "that the night has turned out so fair and beautiful" (*Varney* 2: 812).[18] Ascending from under the earth, the space of the dead, to the light above the ground is of immediate relief to the living man. Yet, Will discovers soon that he is not the only one who left the space of the tomb, and that the dead are walking on the space above. He perceives the presence of someone else in the church. He climbs to the gallery, to be at once in a safer position and in a better spot to survey the church for potential foes. From there, he hears Varney's voice beckoning Clara, exhorting her to awaken, and automatically directs his gaze to where the sound comes, that is, downwards. In the space below, "in a pew just beneath him", he spots a human form "lying in a strange huddled up position"; the moonbeams fall upon it, and to the "experienced" eyes of the sexton it appears clear that "it [is] arrayed in the vestments of the dead" (*Varney* 2: 813).

Will Stephens's eyes are used to the sight of the dead; they are by no means prepared, however, to cope with the displacement of a body and the subsequent disruption of the safe distance between him, a living person, and dead matter. There are two points to make in this regard, and they both pivot on the fact that Will's gaze upon the dead body of Clara is out of place in the church. Firstly, Will's point of view, looking down from a higher position on a pew with a corpse stretched over it, resembles the gaze of the medical student in the operating theatre: the gaze of the observer is directed downwards, from an elevated position, onto the slab (or pew) where the subject lays. The sexton, however, is no clinician, and the position he is maintaining is not appropriate for his gaze. Secondly, the Victorians had their methods to satisfy their voyeuristic curiosity towards death while at the same time maintaining a safe distance from it, and they all involved the staging of death. Staging granted safety boundaries, which Will's position breaks.

[18] As the Dover edition is a reprint of the original penny blood, we encounter here one of the typical issues of cheap serialized fiction, that is, mistakes in page sequence. After page 819, the page numeration starts again from 812.

The staging of death deeply pervaded nineteenth-century popular culture. Besides the gruesome spectacle of hangings, and, earlier in the century, public dissections, staging death also related to what Hurren terms "the dissection room drama" (74). This expression signifies the sensational, dramatized representations the press made of dissection rooms, which the medical community promoted to advertise medical studies among the middle class (Hurren 75). The public dimension of staged display of the dead, instead, took the form of the anatomy museums, which allowed the layperson to behold, that is, to observe, a sanitized version of the results of dissection (Hurren 75). The anatomical Venus, examined in the previous chapter, was part of this staging, which, Hurren argues, allowed the viewer to engage with the actual dismemberment of the body from a safe distance (75).[19] Interest towards the staged display of the dead finds confirmation also in the British accounts of the Parisian morgue, where the eager public – including the British tourist – could see the bodies of unclaimed suicides or homicide victims.[20] While criticising the barbaric foreign custom of showing the dead, the British onlooker could indulge their own voyeurism, which emerged in the minutely detailed, lurid descriptions of the travellers (Vita 241). On both sides of the Channel, death and the dead were, more or less overtly, a show to look upon; the staging removed the onlookers to the position of spectators, not directly involved in the drama. Paul Vita considers the traveller's report as the ultimate removal operation, which turns the show, and therefore death, into "a matter of vicarious readings, not personal experience" (242).

The vicarious experience the episode of Clara Crofton's resurrection produces for the reader differs from the account of morgue experiences: through Will's gaze on Clara's dead body stretched on the pew, the reader experiences not the satisfied gaze of the voyeuristic morgue visitor, but the dread of the sexton beholding the displaced corpse. Clara's body lacks the stillness characterizing corpses exposed in the morgue, the museum specimens, and the recumbent, sensual anatomical Venus. Stillness, and the subsequent certainty that the distance in space between the observer and the dead body would remain the same, were

[19] See also A.W. Bates 17.

[20] At the time in which *Varney* was being issued, the British traveller would experience, and describe, the old morgue, situated in the Quai du Marché Neuf. There, the dead and the living were separated by a glass window, which guaranteed the safe distance between the living observers and the observed corpses (Vita 242). The new Paris morgue, built in the Ile de la Cité after the old morgue was demolished in 1867, added "curtains to conceal the changing of the scene", which reinforced the spectator's impression of watching a show (Vita 242).

essential to guarantee that the experience would remain, to use Vita's words, "essentially visual" (242). Clara's corpse, instead, moves from its place in the tomb towards the sexton, curtailing the distance between the living and the dead. The uncanniness of this proximity provokes in the sexton a terror vicariously experienced by the readers, who find themselves alarmingly close to the corpse. Will repairs to an elevated position in order to regain his role as a distant observer in the moment he feels uncomfortably close to the dead; Clara's resurrection as a vampire again annihilates the distance. The movement turns the sexton – and, by extension, the reader – from a removed spectator into an involved, but powerless, observer.

The only result of the exercise of the untrained gaze over the displaced corpse is, therefore, terror. The untrained eye perceives the proximity of death as a threat. The space of the vault in *Varney* and the disruptive movement of its contents expose the voyeuristic lay-eye of the reader to the sight of the displaced corpse, provoking the same terror raised in the sexton.

The supernatural component introduced by the vampire disrupts the rationality of the plot and transforms the space of the cemetery and the vault in spaces of un-rest, chaos, and anxiety, as cemeteries indeed were in the nineteenth century. The restlessness characterizing the geospace of the cemetery is reflected in the disruptive inversion from death to life that characterizes the narrative space of the cemetery/vault, which in turn brings forward the relationship between the untrained gaze and the dead body. The relationship is reciprocally disruptive: on the one hand, the voyeuristic gaze of the mob on the dead body is defective and can lead to no benefit. It dehumanizes the observer while desecrating the observed object, and conveys the message that the contemplation of the dead is not for the ignorant and superstitious mind. On the other hand, the sudden proximity of death horrifies the untrained gaze of the sexton, who, once he has curtailed the distance between himself and death, cannot regain his position of distant observer and is overwhelmed by the experience.

Through this representation, I argue, the narrative admonishes the voyeuristic gaze of the readers themselves: as the average purveyor of penny blood series would be driven by a high degree of voyeurism, the narrative suggests that the pursuit of the "show", the staged spectacle of death, may lead the untrained eye to survey sights with which it is not prepared to bear. The juxtaposition of the voyeuristic attitude of the mob with the aesthetic curiosity of the educated man

illustrated in the previous section and, more practically, the staging of Will Stephen's gaze over Clara's body as a "dissection room drama", implies that the gaze over the dead body is appropriate only in specific spaces, namely, the spaces of medicine. When removed to different spaces, it is not guaranteed that the superstition and ignorance that characterize the untrained gaze will not yield unexpected or unpleasant results.

Conclusion

Varney received damning criticism from scholars in its afterlife as a remnant of the penny blood era. In 1998, Richard Davenport-Hines labelled it "unreadable" (qtd. in Herr 17).[21] Yet, the analysis above shows that this long and convoluted narrative did engage, as regards the history of medicine, with very modern concepts that characterized the evolution of the discipline and how it was perceived by the public. Granted, the style was not overly refined, and the narrative did exploit its audience's voyeuristic taste for gore and thrill using elements from the Gothic roots of penny bloods, such as the Frankenstein story and the element of the supernatural. Moreover, the plot is typically melodramatic. However, *Varney* uses these components to build a rich discourse that includes several important aspects that Foucault and medical historians later individuated as pivotal to nineteenth-century medical discourse.

The exploration of the medical gaze and its language through the figures of the two doctors relates to the trust issues and power struggles that characterized the relationship between the medical fraternity and the public, more specifically the working-class. The series also portrays the pervasiveness of the medical discourse in other discourses, such as masculinity. This shows awareness, on the part of the narrative, not only of the existence of such pervasiveness, but also of the part it played in the unfolding of dynamics of power within society. Finally, in a historical moment in which the appropriateness of the medical gaze on the dead body was being discussed and evaluated, *Varney* questions the appropriateness of the untrained gaze over the same object, interrogating its motives. To sum up, *Varney the Vampyre* contributed to the circulation of the medical discourse(s) of its age, particularly of the debate around the ethics of medical education, among a

[21] Davenport-Hines, Richard. *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin.* New York: North Point, 1998: 248

category of people who were excluded from the conversation on medical education while being, to a meaningful extent, the object of the conversation.

Issues of inclusion and exclusion from certain discourses, as well as the question of the access to truth and circulation of knowledge, are explored in relation to the dismemberment and disposal of remains in one of the most famous narratives belonging to the penny blood genre. In Sweeney Todd's tonsorial parlour, with its ghastly mechanical chair and its secret passage to the basement of Lovett's pie shop, control over the spoken word is crucial to the thriving of the business.

3. UNDERGROUND TRUTHS: *SWEENEY TODD,* CANNIBALISM, AND DISCOURSE CONTROL.

The lurid story of human-flesh pies that appeared in Lloyd's *People's Periodical and Family Library* with the title *The String of Pearls – A Romance* is better known today as, simply, *Sweeney Todd*. Indeed, the eponymous string of pearls soon ceases to be the centre of the narrative, supplanted by the "demon barber" Sweeney and his ghastly business partnership with his pie-maker neighbour Mrs Lovett.

The barber murders his customers, the ones who will not be immediately missed, such as merchants or sailors, and who happen to be in possession of sums of money or valuables. Todd drops them in his cellar through a mechanical chair mounted over a trapdoor, breaking their necks; if they survive, he "polishes them off" with his razor. The bodies are then hacked to pieces and transformed into "pork" and "veal" steaks, which are stored in Lovett's cellar and there turned into meat pies by a cook unaware of the origins of the material. When the cook realizes he is actually a prisoner in the cellar, and perhaps starts suspecting where the "meat" comes from, Lovett informs Todd that it is time to "dismiss" him and get a new cook. The series actually relates the end of this partnership, following the murder of Mr Thornhill, a sailor who, unlike Todd's previous victims, has friends who come looking for him. The search also involves the beautiful Johanna Oakley, whose fiancée, Mark Ingestrie, should have returned from his travels at sea, and who was the reason why Thornhill was on land at all. He was meant to give Johanna a token from Mark, a string of pearls, and to bring her the news that the young man was lost at sea. Johanna impersonates a young boy, Charles, to take service at the barber shop when the police and the sailor's friends start focusing their investigations on the barber. The place of barber assistant has been vacant since Tobias Ragg, Sweeney Todd's previous apprentice, was shut away in a mad-house after he started suspecting his employer of murder. Tobias will finally manage to escape his prison, as will the current cook at Lovett's, Jarvis Williams. Williams, starving and destitute, applied for a job at the pie-shop in Bell Yard, and his timing was perfect: Lovett needed to replace her cook, and Williams took his place in the basement. After a while, though, Williams pieces together the truth behind the pie-making business, and plans a daredevil escape. He mounts on

the platform that hauls up the pies into Lovett's shop by way of a windlass, hiding under the tray of freshly-cooked pies. As he reaches the top, he jumps up and screams the terrible truth to the customers: they are gorging themselves on human flesh. Mrs Lovett dies, not because she is unable to cope with the events, but because Todd had poisoned her a few hours earlier. Conscience was starting to take its toll on the pastry-cook, which prompted Todd to make sure she never compromised his cover. Finally, Todd is hanged, and Johanna is reunited with Mark Ingestrie, who is revealed to be Jarvis Williams. The story closes on Lovett's last living customer, an old man who still needs a drop of brandy when he remembers how much he loved his "veal" pies.

The countless rewritings of this story make it probably the only penny blood to be famous outside academic circles, and inside academia *Sweeney Todd* is still an object of analysis and debate. Its authorship, for instance, is still controversial: traditionally, the text was attributed to Thomas Peckett Prest. While Helen Smith has produced convincing evidence in favour of Rymer, other scholars remain sceptical.[1] Crone takes yet a different stand, arguing that any debate around the authorship of penny bloods is pointless, unless it is aimed at highlighting the genre's overall "uniformity" (170). I do not entirely share Crone's view: as I have discussed in previous chapters, casting light on penny blood authors may open new perspectives for analysis of the narratives. However, it is not the purpose of this chapter to add to the authorship debate. What I propose to do here is to analyse the role of this highly successful penny blood as a vehicle of discourses connected with the world of medicine and dissection.

As illustrated in the introduction, there is a general consensus among literary scholars that *Sweeney Todd* was deeply rooted in the socio-historical context of the mid-nineteenth-century, and that it elaborated anxieties specific to the "lower-middle and working class", which Lloyd's productions explicitly addressed (Crone 171). Significantly, Powell, Mack, and Crone note the connection between the narrative of cannibalism and working-class concerns about physical integrity after death in the Anatomy Act era. We have seen that Powell connects the fears related to the metaphorical commodification and consumption of working-class bodies in the industrial era with the actual, physical threat of dismemberment the Anatomy Act ratified (45-6). Crone adds a further layer of analysis to this reading

[1] For an analysis of the debate, see Mack 145-8.

by interpreting Todd's murderous chair as a device for disposing of the "urban masses" (189). Mack, finally, notes the strength of the dissection-cannibalism connection in the popular mind, which was reinforced by the various practices and incidents connected to anatomy, that is, burking, resurrectionism, and the traffic in bodies (41-3).

Starting from the premises posed by Powell, Mack, and Crone, this chapter expands the analysis of the impact of the Anatomy Act in the narrative of *Sweeney Todd*. The medical discourse is more elusive in this than in the other penny bloods examined in this study, as there are no doctors amongst the characters. Yet, this very elusiveness is crucial to chart the medical discourse in *Sweeney Todd*, a story in which the impossibility of speaking about certain topics is the key to understanding the power dynamics between characters. London was already familiar with popular myths of butchery and cannibalism before the narrative was serialised.[2] Still, the presence of a barber cutting corpses into pieces in an underground space is meaningful in a historical context of underground dissection rooms and anxieties about the butcher-like procedures that characterized medical education and practice. Popular conscience likened the work of surgeons and the anatomists to butchery. Moreover, the burkers' incidents literalized the concept of retailing the human body as if it were butcher's meat. The combination of these elements triggered a set of anxieties about cannibalism, the idea of cooking and consuming human flesh, related to the world of anatomy. Furthermore, as early as 1948 Turner noticed the "grim *double-entendre*"[3] of the plot, a detail which, in Turner's opinion, subsequent adaptations of the story did not always succeed in imitating (Turner 42). This double-entendre, which characterises particularly the speech of the murderous couple Todd-Lovett, can be examined against the background of the obscure and complicated language of the Act. Finally, the murderous couple is a model of industrial, indeed Utilitarian, efficiency that resembles the way in which the Anatomy Act put the powerless members of

[2] Mack lists, besides the story of Sawney Bean, a few similar narratives from France, and even from Italy, among the possible antecedents of the London story. The most famous French version, which appeared in the monthly magazine *The Tell-Tale* in 1824, was set in Paris and related the murderous partnership between a barber and pastry-cook. It included also the detail of the dog, which in *Sweeney Todd* belongs to Mr Thornhill and puts his friends on the trail of the barber (Mack 159-61). The Italian version, instead, was recorded in Anthony Pasquin's *Life of the Late Earl of Barrymore*, 1793 (Mack 170-2). In this version, a murderous pastry-cook in Venice makes pies out of children, dropping their bodies in his cellar through a trapdoor.

[3] Turner's emphasis.

society in a position comparable to that of a portion of meat for a grinder, while benefiting chiefly, if not entirely, the more powerful echelons of society. Both Todd and Lovett's business and the Anatomy Act were perfect solutions: they ensured nothing was wasted, minimized the costs while maximizing the income, and were, in their efficiency, perfectly soulless, perfectly inhuman. Monstrous.

In this chapter, I suggest that *Sweeney Todd* reiterated anxieties about the underground space in relation to a moment in medical history that had long-lasting repercussions, especially if we consider that the Anatomy Act did not solve the intrinsic unfairness of the body trade. This matter, as Powell and Crone point out, was decidedly relevant to the readership of the narrative. Simultaneously, the narrative proposed an alternative, cathartic solution to the unfair system: instead of the secrecy and obscurity that characterized the language of the Act (Hurren 28), and the proceedings of the medical fraternity, the truth is seen, uttered, and believed, and the system that concealed it is dismantled.

A monstrous partnership: burking, dissecting, and pie-making.

Todd and Lovett, the managers of the narrative's monstrous system of production, seldom appear together in the original series, which, unlike later adaptations, did not suggest in any way a romantic connection between them. Yet, they are undeniably a couple, *the* couple: their business relationship propels the action in the plot, and they were the chief medium the original narrative used to convey the double-entendre mentioned by Turner. While later adaptations, particularly Bond's theatrical adaptation (Mack 262-73), tended to humanize Todd and Lovett, turning the slippage of meaning in their speech almost into a joke between the murderous duo and the audience in the theatre, the original 1840s penny blood was an altogether different matter. The element that emerges most forcefully throughout the whole narrative is that there is nothing human in Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett with which the reader can empathize. Whereas the intrinsic humanity of the theatrical Todd and Lovett creates a guiltless complicity between spectator and characters, the clues to the truth that the original narrative leaves for the reader produce an uneasy, unwelcome proximity to the couple's unspeakable crimes.

As in *Manuscripts* and *Varney*, the concept of monstrosity in *Sweeney Todd* implies lack of humanity, departure from nature. As with *Varney*, the heroes in the story play second fiddle to the monstrous villains, who are the undisputed centre

of the narrative. Unlike Varney, however, Sweeney Todd has no redeeming qualities to speak of, and Mrs Lovett, though in part a victim of the demon barber herself, does not awaken the reader's sympathies. This repulsion originates in the fact that the couple commit several unpardonable sins at once: they are serial killers who also involve other people in an act of cannibalism, which simultaneously contaminates the community and wipes away the identity of their victims. It is therefore not surprising that Sweeney Todd later acquired the sobriquet of "demon barber": the couple is repeatedly characterized as diabolical and, although neither of them is an actual supernatural monster, they display several physical and behavioural traits typical of preternatural figures.

The conspicuous eeriness of Todd and Lovett's physical aspect is the first clue the reader is given to solve the mystery of the narrative. The description of Sweeney Todd is not flattering: he is "a long, low-jointed, ill-put-together sort of fellow, with an immense mouth" and his "huge hands and feet" make him "quite a natural curiosity" (*Sweeney Todd* 4). The narrator does not spare irony stating that, considering his profession, the most extraordinary trait of the barber is his hair, which resembles "a thickset hedge, in which a quantity of small wire had got entangled" (*Sweeney Todd* 4). This description represents a purposeful attempt to frame the barber's body as disproportionate, a deviation from nature (Gasperini 136). The adjective "ill-put-together" suggests an artificial breach of the natural composition of the human body, as if Todd has been assembled, rather than born. Moreover, the emphasis on the disproportionate size of Todd's frame gives his figure an ogreish quality, particularly the "immense mouth", which ominously suggests the need for commensurate meals. His features seem planned to trigger the idea of the monstrous in the mind of the reader, connecting the barber's body to that of the widely popular figure of Frankenstein's Monster, a connection that is even more evident than the one found in *Varney*. In *Frankenstein*, descriptions of the Monster emphasize his "gigantic stature" (12; 56) and disproportionate frame. Frankenstein, who assembled his Creature with the intention to make it beautiful, discovers it to be quite the reverse once it comes to life, as "[h]is skin scarcely covered the work of the muscles and the arteries beneath" (*Frankenstein* 39). The Creature's aspect is deformed and "more hideous than belongs to humanity" (*Frankenstein* 56), which automatically identifies him as an alien, and Todd's "ill-put-together" body reiterated this type of characterisation.

Moreover, as the Monster is deformed, but gifted with superhuman strength, Sweeney Todd's disproportionate body is impossibly strong. When he flees from a crowd that believes him a thief, and soon after engages in a fight with a band of thieves (which, incredibly, lasts "for two or three hours" (*Sweeney Todd* 67)), Todd performs "perfectly prodigious" (*Sweeney Todd* 57) and "herculean" (*Sweeney Todd* 66) exploits (Gasperini 139). It is worth nothing that the Monster is intrinsically linked to the world of anatomy and body traffic, being the result of the assemblage of parts from different fresh bodies stolen from cemeteries, and this particular trait of the Monster's bodily history have a subtle impact on the monstrous aspect of Todd himself. The barber's awkward body looks as if it has been inexpertly pieced together; his daily activity consists in dismembering human bodies in a cellar with the purpose of destroying them completely. The idea of "ill-putting-together", and the apparently inevitably destructive tendency of the inaptly constructed subject seem to belong to both the Creature's and Todd's body.

The unnatural quality of Sweeney Todd's physicality emerges also in his voice and his eyes. Todd's laugh is peculiarly un-natural: it is "short", "disagreeable", "unmirthful", and "sudden", possibly triggered by the memory of "some very strange and out-of-the-way joke" (*Sweeney Todd* 4). The narrator compares it to the bark of the hyena, and claims it left the listener under the impression that it could not have come "from mortal lips", so that they looked "up to the ceiling, and on the floor, and all around them" (*Sweeney Todd* 4). While what they expect to see is not specified, it is assumed to be something supernatural and malignant. The inarticulate, but spontaneous sound of his laugh gives a glimpse of the barber's inhuman nature: Todd is at his most natural when he sounds most unnatural.

Todd's physical description closes on the observation that "Mr. Todd squinted a little to add to his charms" (*Sweeney Todd* 4). Victorian readers of popular fiction would be used to a reference to the eyes in a character's description. Some of the most famous Dickensian villains' eyes match their nature: Daniel Quilp's eyes are "restless, sly and cunning" (*The Old Curiosity Shop* 22), while the Artful Dodger has "little, sharp, ugly eyes" (*Oliver Twist* 53). His master Fagin's face is simply described as "villainous–looking and repulsive" (*Oliver Twist* 56). Penny blood authors adopted the same strategy and, usually, something odd in the gaze

gave away the villains, in the same way the eyes of the heroes and heroines mirrored their goodness. Johanna's eyes, for instance, are "of a deep and heavenly blue" (*Sweeney Todd* 12). The eyes of Sweeney Todd "squint". Primarily, this means that he is affected with strabismus; secondly, it suggests that he does not look directly at people or things. Hence, his eyes are simultaneously deformed and impossible to decipher; they can look without returning the gaze. They are, in brief, "simply wrong" (Gasperini 137).

Mrs. Lovett's wrongness also surfaces in her body and eyes. At first sight, the pastry cook is as sensual and charming as her pies. The inviting look and delicious taste of the pies and Mrs. Lovett's beauty are one thing, because "what but a female hand, and that female buxom, young and good-looking, could have ventured upon the production of those pies [?]" (*Sweeney Todd* 30). Mrs Lovett's body is sensual and, although it is not explicitly stated, her customers imagine that by eating her pies they are partaking of that sensuality. The pies themselves are described as peculiarly sensual, meaning they gratify the senses, primarily as culinary delicacies, but also and more subtly as an extension of Mrs Lovett's sensuality. The "construction of their paste" is "delicate"; the "small portions of meat" they contain are "tender"; they are "impregnated" with the delicious "aroma" of their gravy; the fat and meagre meat are "so artistically mixed up" that eating one of Lovett's pies is a "provocative" to eat another (*Sweeney Todd* 29). This description is constructed so as to be positively mouth-watering; yet, most of the adjectives, if taken out of context, are applicable to female beauty, as smallness, tenderness, delicateness, and proportionate appearance are highly appreciable qualities in the Victorian female body. Moreover, the "impregnated aroma" and the "provocative" trait of the pies would not be out of place in a boudoir scene. Lovett's pies are manufactured to be as captivating as is their cook. The narrator explains that all of Mrs Lovett's young customers, the clerks and law students from the Temple and Lincoln's-inn, were "enamoured" of her, and they toyed with the thought that the pie they "devoured" was made by Mrs. Lovett especially for them (*Sweeney Todd* 30). The implicit suggestion is that they are actually fantasizing about devouring the pastry-cook herself, in the more unchaste meaning of the word.[4]

[4] For further analysis of the language of cannibalism and desire in *Sweeney Todd*, see Mack 25-6.

This wantonness, though, is soon framed as something eerie, as the narrator explains that Lovett exploited her admirers' appreciation to induce them to buy more pies, smiling more often at her best customers (*Sweeney Todd* 30). This game was "provoking to all except to Mrs Lovett", while the "excitement" (yet another ambiguous word in an ambiguous context) it generated "paid extraordinarily well", inducing "some of the most enthusiastic admirers" to consume pies "until they were almost ready to burst" (*Sweeney Todd* 30). At this point, the narrator adds a darker layer to the picture, remarking that other customers "of a more philosophic turn of mind", who were only interested in the pies, judged Lovett's smile to be "cold and uncomfortable – that it was upon her lips, but had no place in her heart – that it was the set smile of a ballet-dancer, which is about one of the most unmirthful things in existence" (*Sweeney Todd* 30-1). Others still, while conceding the pies were excellent, "swore that Mrs Lovett had quite a sinister aspect, and that they could see what a merely superficial affair her blandishments were, and that there was 'a lurking devil in her eye'" (*Sweeney Todd* 31).

The comparison of Mrs Lovett to a ballet dancer could be extended to her whole physicality. The beautiful pastry-cook is performing a dance for her customers, made of ritualized, rehearsed movements, each one devoted to selling more pies. As the description of Mrs Lovett grows darker, the concept of artificiality, of something "ill-put-together" that resembles humanity but fails to fully succeed, surfaces in the body of Todd's business partner. The eyes are the only place where something of Lovett's true nature can be guessed, and what they show is peculiarly un-natural. Mack notes that, besides being "vaguely redolent" of such works as Byron's *Mazeppa*, the phrase "a lurking devil in her eyes" was typical of character description in Gothic fiction (126).[5] Therefore, Lovett's sensual and amiable façade disguises an evil soul.

I would add a further layer of analysis to the concept of "evil" in the characters of Todd and Lovett by examining their connection with the supernatural. The two are no vampires, and yet, the narrative hints at something preternatural about them, which, if it does not correspond to their actual nature (in the end, they are both human), is definitely something the two characters very closely resemble. Mrs Lovett's behaviour and some of the adjectives used to describe her connect

[5] See also *Sweeney Todd* 289.

her to the figure of the witch. With her smiles she charms her customers into eating more pies, keeping control over them and her invoices simultaneously. One of her customers even calls her "charmer" (*Sweeney Todd* 278), which is meant as a compliment on her beauty, but also defines her effect on people. She casts her spell by exploiting her victims' lust, using her sex-appeal to encourage her customers to eat more, giving the process of eating a sensual connotation. The malignity of the spell is announced: Lovett's customers gorge themselves on the pies until "they are almost ready to burst", as if the meat in the pies has preserved its cadaverous chemistry and emanates explosive gases.[6] As the victims of a spell in a fairy tale, they end up ruining themselves through the unchecked, sensual consumption of food that goes on in Lovett's premises. Since both the food and the cook are sensual, the sickness that ensues is doubly shameful: the customers yield to both gluttony and lust. The image of the "devil" lurking in the eyes of Mrs Lovett seals her characterisation as a witch, a dangerous and essentially monstrous character whose enchantment manages to deceive even the customers of "a philosophic turn of mind" who, although claiming to be immune to her charming looks, are deceived by the charm of the pies, and become unwitting participants in Lovett's ghastly cannibalistic banquet.

As for Sweeney Todd, the barber becomes increasingly vicious as the narrative progresses, until he is explicitly likened to the devil. In a moment of malicious happiness, Todd resembles "some fiend in human shape, who had just completed the destruction of a human soul" (*Sweeney Todd* 142). The use of the word "fiend" in this passage is meaningful. This ancient word basically means "enemy", which connotation also relates to the world of supernatural forces and magic, acquiring the definition of "demon or evil spirit, the devil itself as the enemy of mankind, and, finally, a person of supernatural wickedness" (Gasperini 140). The image of the "destruction of the human soul" reinforces the connection of Todd's character with the demonic in Christian sense. Not only does he perform mischief, but he actually enjoys it, as a devil would. Furthermore, Todd's characterisation as "enemy" with the meaning of "devil" becomes explicit after the reader has been given enough clues to suspect him of murder (Gasperini 140). He becomes "the arch-enemy of all mankind" (*Sweeney Todd* 163) in the eyes of

[6] Lee Jackson discusses the explosive tendencies of corpses in coffins in nineteenth-century cemeteries, explaining that "sextons and undertakers" usually "'tap[ped]' coffins in church vaults, drilling a hole to prevent them breaking open with explosive force" (116).

Tobias, behind whose shoulders he stands, unseen, making "no inept representation of the Mephistopheles of the German drama" (*Sweeney Todd* 163). During a conversation between the barber and Mrs. Lovett, the woman exclaims bitterly: "Oh. Todd, what an enemy you have been to me!" (*Sweeney Todd* 264).

Todd and Lovett's characterisation, therefore, includes elements of the devil and the witch, two interrelated figures of Christian folklore. This adds a further degree of monstrosity to their partnership, as if to single it out as peculiarly vicious. What makes it so is that it is a *commercial* association based on murder. Todd and Lovett are inhuman because they are disconnected enough to commit multiple murders *and* to recycle their victims as food. The couple's inhumanity emerges in all its devilishness as soon as it becomes clear that Lovett's pies are filled with the flesh of Todd's victims. This moment coincides with the scene in which the local tobacconist's wife, Mrs Wrankley, asks Lovett's permission to put up in her pie-shop a bill asking for information on the disappearance of her husband. The man has been killed by Todd, who remains "as impenetrable and destitute of all emotion as a block of wood" (*Sweeney Todd* 266) as Lovett reads the bill. Then, the barber comforts the woman and suggests that she buy a pie, eat it, possibly lifting the upper crust, declaring that she would "soon see *something* of Mr. Wrankley" (*Sweeney Todd* 266).[7] Although the widow (for that is what the narrator calls her, although she has not yet been notified of Mr Wrankley's death) is taken aback by the "hideous face" Todd makes, she accepts the pie because she is "hungry" and the pastry is "very tempting", and Todd's speech even raises her hopes (*Sweeney Todd* 266). The scene shows the full extent of the barber's monstrosity: by playing this macabre prank on the widow, of which only he, Mrs Lovett, and the reader can be aware, Todd enjoys raising the hopes of Mrs Wrankley as he feeds her, quite possibly, her own husband. Mrs Lovett, who but a few moments earlier protested that she hated her business partner, does not refrain from selling the pie to the widow. Powell argues that, although Lovett's active involvement in the actual killing remains uncertain, she "knowingly and ruthlessly" sells the final product, which diminishes her womanliness (53). Lovett's lack of womanly qualities such as love, tenderness, and compassion emerges clearly in her involvement in the cruel joke Todd makes at Mrs Wrankley's expense, which emphasizes her monstrosity.

[7] Italics in the original.

The characterization of Todd and Lovett as a murderous "couple", a commercial partnership, can be related to the commercial partnership formed by the Edinburgh and London burkers, which was also devoted to the commodification of dead bodies and had attracted the attention of the press between 1829 and 1832. In both cases, the men worked in couples, and had female partners whose degree of involvement in the murders remained uncertain. The news coverage of burkers' cases was massive, occurring almost daily in the month in which each case broke, which contributed to making burkers and bodysnatchers a substantial, and sensational, part of the life of the British public. The Italian boy case, particularly, was sometimes the subject of two, or even three articles in the same issue of a newspaper[8], besides inspiring ballads[9] and even a "genuine edition" of the trial by Pierce Egan ("The Murder of the Italian Boy – To-morrow will be published" 4).

In the subsequent months, newspaper reports of corpse stealing or of attempted burking abounded, tapping into the public's outrage and fear. In December 1831, right after the London burkers were discovered, the *Times* published an article about a spectacular cadaver theft in Dublin. A whole gang of resurrectionists allegedly broke into a first-floor apartment and stole "the corpse of an aged female, named Carroll" right in front of her mourners. The article claimed they made it downstairs before any of those present could stop them, and disappeared into the night, shamefully dragging the corpse by the shroud on the mud of the street ("An affair took place" 3). Richardson connects the daredevil quality of this theft to the increase in prices paid for corpses, which made the resurrectionists more daring (102); however, the way the article itself is constructed is significant. The detailed description of each trait that might contribute to portray the bodysnatchers as sacrilegious and disrespectful, such as the "revoltingly indecent" element of the body being dragged into the mud by the shroud ("An affair took place" 3), suggests that the piece actually aimed to stir up animosity towards resurrectionists.

[8] The *Times* issues of November 22 and 26, 1831 included two and three articles on the case respectively, while the issue of December 5 included two articles and the advertisement of Egan's edition of the trial.

[9] The *Times* issue of December 6, 1831 advertised "The Poor Italian Boy – a pathetic ballad". Although Italian boys were a common sight in London and attracted the pity of the public (Wise 90), considering the time frame and the proliferation of prints and images celebrating Carlo Ferrari, the Italian Boy, after his murder, I would state that, with a fair degree of certainty, the ballad advertised in the *Times* concerned him. See also Wise 240-6.

The press also contributed to spreading the idea that burking was practiced by "clapping" pitch plaster over the mouth and nose of the victim to suffocate them, the so-called pitch plaster myth. Sometimes, pitch plaster aggressions were made in jest.[10] In other instances, victims, especially children, reported having been attacked, usually by one or two men who placed plaster over their faces, as in the case of young Charles White, in November 1831 ("On Tuesday evening" 2). Notably, White stated that one of his assailants wore a smock-frock; analysing the article, Wise observes that the smock-frock was the detail of Bishop and Williams's outfits on which the newspapers focused their attention, creating a connection between these garments and burking in the popular mind (144). I would add that this attests to the pervasiveness of the press campaign against bodysnatching and burking, which portrayed the people engaged in the body traffic as demons disguised as common people. Crone notes that penny bloods tended to provoke a *frisson* in the reader by making their villains familiar, everyday figures (183), as is the case of Sweeney Todd, the barber. Although illustrations tend to represent Todd wearing an apron, rather than a smock-frock, *Sweeney Todd* catered to the idea, consolidated in the public's mind by the news coverage of the burkers' cases, that a monster bent upon making money out of murdered bodies could have the outward appearances of a common worker.

The female presence in the burkers' cases added to the repulsion they generated. In January 1829, the *Times* contemptuously described Helen M'Dougal, Burke's partner, as "utterly destitute of shame and common prudence, as she [was] of humanity", and her relationship with Burke was defined a "hideous sympathy" ("The Edinburgh Murders" 3). The same article announced that Hare and his wife were "still in custody" ("The Edinburgh Murders" 3). The reporter emphasized the Hares' status of married couple and did not disguise his certainty that both partners were guilty. The press, therefore, represented both Helen M'Dougal and Margaret Hare as the accomplices of their partner's crimes. As for the London burkers' wives, Sarah Bishop and Rhoda Williams, there is

[10] In 1829, a man clapped some treacle on the mouth of another one who was in the habit of getting him to pay for his drinks and, as his latest request was refused, called him a bodysnatcher ("Police"). Later, in 1831, William Burns was fined 50*s.* for scaring a little boy by applying a piece of tarred sack on his mouth. Burns only meant to take a small revenge against the neighbourhood urchins, who liked to torment him. He was harshly reprimanded, as he was "old enough to know that such practical jokes, at a time like the present, were calculated to rise the most serious alarm ("Police."). See also Richardson 194.

comparatively little newspaper material on them, as Wise notes (277), and what there is shows them as relatively cooperative. When they appeared before the magistrate on November 11 1831, both women released statements, although they were informed that these could be used to incriminate them ("Police" 4). When Rhoda was apprehended as an accessory to the murder of Fanny Pigburn, she wept "bitterly" upon hearing the charges and, though again she was informed that her statements could be used against her, she fully cooperated ("Murder of Frances Pigburn" 3). The press represented Sarah and Rhoda as quite docile, even scared, and did not ascribe to them the negative moral qualities that characterised the portrait of Helen M'Dougal and Margaret Hare. The judgment of the public, however, was harsher. After the trial, Sarah and Rhoda moved to the neighbourhood of Paradise Road; this was, Wise points out, particularly unattractive, and yet "the living condition that most worried the residents was the presence among them of the kin of burkers" (276). According to the newspapers, mothers would forbid their children to play outside as long as Sarah and Rhoda resided there (Wise 277).

The female presence in the burkers' cases might have contributed to the creation of the image of the "criminal couple" in the mind of the public, which made it easier for the audience to accept Todd and Lovett's murderous partnership. Mrs Lovett is a peculiarly un-loving, unwomanly woman, a trait that characterised also the burkers' companions, especially in the Edinburgh trial, and becomes melodramatically exaggerated in the fictional character. Cold, calculating Mrs Lovett cannot be a wife, nor can she be a paramour: her relationship with the devilish Todd is pure business.

The idea of business partnership is key to the connection between the burkers' cases and the narrative of *Sweeney Todd*. The element that singled out burking was that it was the first time homicide was committed as a commercial transaction. It literally put a price on the human *body*, equalling the individual to livestock. John Adolphus, speaking for the prosecution during the London burkers' trial, stated that "[n]othing but the sordid and base desire to possess themselves of a dead body in order to sell it for dissection had induced the prisoners … to commit the crime for which they were now about to answer" (*Trial, Sentence and Confessions* 13).[11] Similarly, Rosner notes that, while murder

[11] Wise discusses this part of the trial on page 191.

in Edinburgh was a relatively uncommon occurrence, and mostly passion-related (duelling, jealousy, and knife-fights in brothels being typical motives), the Burke and Hare murder generated panic because they were conspicuously *not* driven by passion, and suggested that there was "literally a price … upon every head" (24). Burking practically performed that "commodification" of the human body that, Powell convincingly argues (45), industrial economy performed metaphorically on the body of the workers.

The public was not easily distracted from the fact that the medical community was at the other end of the commercial transaction. The fact that Robert Knox was never tried for the Edinburgh murders was bitterly regretted, and indignation was voiced in several quarters. Sir Walter Scott, for instance, declined the requests of the surgeon's friends to be part of the committee appointed to prove Knox's innocence. Scott declared that he would not help to "whitewash this much to be suspected individual" (Rosner 254). The newspapers too, though not mentioning him directly, expressed outrage at the fact that Knox did not stand trial, thus increasing suspicions in the public's mind regarding the role of medicine in the murders. The *Times* emphatically proclaimed: "what tales still remain untold! Bodies, never interred, have been purchased without question or scruple. Is this also to pass without further investigation?" ("The Edinburgh Murders" 3). Another journalist hoped that "negligence and indifference" would be "exposed to the aversion and disgust of mankind" as well as murder ("The Edinburgh murders still continue" 2). Likewise, the title of the *Times* article reporting the trial, "The late Horrible Murders in Edinburgh, to Obtain Subjects for Dissection", reminded the public that burking and anatomy were directly connected. Two years later, the London burkers' incident linked medicine and murder again. The position of the medical community with respect to the homicides was not as ambiguous in this case – in fact, as soon as he suspected the corpse he was being offered could be a murder victim, Richard Partridge went for the police. Yet the case rekindled the debate around the shortage of subjects for anatomy courses, and revived the fear that criminal individuals may resort to killing to provide the commodity. From the press to cheap serialized fiction the step was short. In 1841, the *Newgate Calendar* published the first edition of *Murderers of the Close*, the account of Burke and Hare's crimes in Edinburgh. In 1846, the first episode of *The String of*

Pearls, a story about a murderous couple cutting homicide victims into pieces to sell them, was issued.

From this perspective, the profession of Sweeney Todd provides further ground for analysis, as it adds a further nuance to his participation in the process of butchering the "meat". When the first issue of *Sweeney Todd* was published, barely a century had passed since the Company of Barber-Surgeons split in 1745 following the surgeons' aspiration to "better professional recognition of their skills" (Hurren 79). Prior to this, in addition to the occasional razor cut, barbers shed their customers' blood also by performing minor surgery, tooth-drawing, and sometimes amputations (Mack 87). "Italian barber-surgeons", Mack points out, "carried out actual dissections under the casual administration of an attendant physician" (87). He notes that in the popular mind the connection was not so easily untied (87) and indeed, as we have seen, nineteenth-century popular culture likened the surgeon to the butcher. The cartoon "A Few Illustrations for Mr Warberton's [sic] Bill" (Fig. 7), by William Heath, explicitly connects the two professions. The print pictures a dystopic future under the Anatomy Bill, in which the jail, the workhouse, the hospital and the King's Bench have become retailers of human bodies that display price-per-weight placards in the same style as butcher shops. A doctor's servant purchases for his master pieces of human meat hanging from butcher's hooks, while the lower right hand corner vignette, titled "Studying", shows medical students savagely hacking a corpse with hatchet, hammer and saw.

Figure 7: Heath, William ('Paul Pry'). "A few illustrations for Mr Warbertons Bill". Print 1829. ©Trustees of the British Museum.

Sweeney Todd, being simultaneously a barber and a butcher of human flesh, summarizes the popular representations of the surgeon. The detachment he shows doubles as an extreme interpretation of the inhumanity that was considered necessary by the surgeons and the anatomists to perform their tasks. The demoniac barber Sweeney Todd is as dystopic a figure as the medical students in Heath's cartoon, one that embodies the frightful possibilities of the commodification of the human body for dissection purposes. A further element that reinforces this trait in the figure of Sweeney Todd are the "heads and bones" of his victims, which the police finds in the catacombs below St. Dunstan's (*Sweeney Todd* 281). These resemble the "disintegrating bone, brain, trunk and decomposing flesh" that were left of a human body after dissection (Hurren 67). The figure of the devilish barber, therefore, tapped into popular images of medicine and butchery, which explains the absence of medical characters in *Sweeney Todd*: the figure that relates to the world of medicine and its discourses in the narrative is actually that of the demon-barber.

If Todd's figure tapped into popular images that satirized the figure of the surgeon-anatomist, while simultaneously revealing the concerns it generated in the wider public (and, specifically, in the working class), then the Todd-Lovett couple embodied the mechanism that provided the surgeon-anatomist with bodies for dissection. Starting from Powell's and Crone's interpretations of *Sweeney Todd* as a metaphor of working-class anxieties about the effects of the Anatomy

Act, I would move on to consider more specifically the system implemented by the murderous couple in the light of the Act itself, and the Utilitarian philosophy that underpinned it. As emerges from Heath's print, representations of the Anatomy Act as a cannibalistic system pre-dated its being voted in, and were widely popular, and surface in the processes of killing, butchery, and cannibalism around which the plot of *Sweeney Todd* revolves.

Todd and Lovett's is a lucid and terrifying scheme in which both partners are committed to personal gain. Todd provides the commodity and rewards himself with his victims' possessions, which he hoards in his house. Tobias finds walking-sticks, some of which are "of a very costly and expensive character", umbrellas, swords, "boots and shoes, lying upon the floor, partially covered up, as if to keep them from dirt", as well as a bureau overflowing with jewellery (*Sweeney Todd* 146). Lovett applies herself to increasing the sales of the final product in order to make the most from the commodity, while simultaneously achieving the crucial purpose of eliminating the bodies of the victims. The system of feeding them to hungry customers tallied perfectly with London underworld's practicality, according to which the cows of London dairies were fed "spent mash from the breweries" and "market sweepings" (Flanders 207-8), and animals "awaiting slaughter", a pamphlet asserted, were fed "cag-mag", a mixture of rotten meat and meat of diseased or otherwise second choice animals (Wise 127-8)[12]. It is possible to detect in these dynamics, in the determination not to waste anything and devote everything to a useful purpose, an element of Utilitarian philosophy. That same Utilitarian philosophy eventually turned its attention to the problem of body supply for anatomy schools, individuating the perfect source of subjects in those human bodies that were perceived to represent a cost to the community. The Anatomy Act was an expression of this philosophy, indeed it was a masterpiece of Utilitarian thought. If not explicitly connected with the Anatomy Act in the narrative, Todd and Lovett's ultimate recycling enterprise, which disposed of "unknown" people who would not be missed and turned them into food, concretised the anxieties expressed in Heath's print.

In the narrative, the pies that are produced through the monstrous recycling system are consumed by a whole community that stubbornly refuses to acknowledge that something is amiss in the neighbourhood, even when a

[12] Anonymous pamphlet *Smithfield and the Slaughterhouse*, 1847 (qtd in Wise 128).

suspicious smell of decay starts rising from below the pavement of their own church. Their indifference in effect endorses the killing and butchering that goes on in the subterranean space of Todd and Lovett's shops, echoing the indifference to the impact of the Anatomy Act on the pauper that characterised the spirit of the legislation, and the lack of effective opposition to its passing. The key element underpinning community endorsement in *Sweeney Todd* is the hiding and tabooing of the truth. The transmission of information is carefully policed by the two murderous partners, whose business stands on a solid basis of doctored information and silence.

Truth, taboos, and dénouement: discourse control and power.

It could be stated that *Sweeney Todd* is essentially a narrative about truth: as the action unfolds, truth is concealed, ignored, and discovered, while characters and readers are made privy to different bits of truth. Most of all, truth in *Sweeney Todd* is unspoken: as long as it is not stated out loud, it is not visible and not real, even though palpably "there". As Turner's observation on the double-entendre characterising the story suggests, language plays a crucial role in this dynamic. Todd and Lovett manage to hide the truth about their partnership for a long time through careful control of language, both their own and that of people around them. Notwithstanding their precautions, though, the whole narrative leads, unavoidably, to the final dénouement, when truth is finally uttered out loud.

Todd and Lovett assert control firstly by preventing their interlocutors from understanding the actual meaning of their statements. As with characters in the Bannerworth saga of *Varney*, Todd and Lovett's interlocutors can only suspect that the two are withholding information, but do not possess sufficient information to ascertain this. Todd's speech is as maliciously ambiguous as Varney's, although the barber lacks all the charm the vampire baronet possesses. This ambiguity surfaces in Todd's words for the first time when the captain of the ship on which Mr Thornhill served comes to Todd's barber shop to inquire about the missing sailor. When asked if he has ever seen the gentleman in question, Todd answers: "Oh! to be sure, he came here, and I shaved him and polished him off", at which the two exclaim: "What do you mean by polishing him off?" But Todd innocently replies: "Brushing him up a bit, making him tidy" (*Sweeney Todd* 24). Like Varney, Todd is aware of his power over his victim's friends, and enjoys exercising it. The double-entendre that characterises the barber's speech emerges

in all its maliciousness in this exchange: as the reader well knows, the statement "I polished him off" means that Todd has killed Thornhill. However, the barber easily modifies the sense of his words by deploying a slippage of meaning, in the same way Varney does to provoke Henry Bannerworth about Flora. As he speaks, Todd modifies the rules of communication on the basis of his exclusive knowledge of the truth, of which he selects bits and pieces that are deprived of a finite meaning, disorienting the other characters and keeping control of the situation.

Mrs Lovett uses a similar technique, as she blurs the meaning of her sentences to such an extent that she gives the impression of speaking in riddles. When Jarvis Williams, alias Mark Ingestrie, is hired as the new cook at Lovett's, she tells him that the old cook "has gone to see some of his very oldest friends, who will be quite glad to see him" (*Sweeney Todd* 96). She adds that, should he accept the position, he must "live entirely upon the pies" and "agree never to leave the bake house", unless it is "for good" (*Sweeney Todd* 96). She also assures Mark that she "never think[s] of keeping anybody many hours after they begin to feel uncomfortable" (*Sweeney Todd* 96) and that "everybody who relinquishes the situation, goes to his old friends, whom he has not seen in many years, perhaps" (*Sweeney Todd* 98). She is telling the truth, in a way: there is only one way to leave Lovett's basement, and that is death, which comes shortly after the moment in which a cook understands the truth. Therefore, the "old friends" Mrs Lovett is referring to are the ones that await the cook in the hereafter. However, she carefully phrases her information so that what appears is that the former employees leave to go back to their families and friends.

This dynamic bears remarkable similarity to how the relationship between the Act, the institutions, and the poor worked in reality. Mark says he is entering Lovett's basement out of "poverty and destitution" (*Sweeney Todd* 96); his situation is as desperate as were the circumstances that compelled the poor to apply to the workhouse, which, after the passing of the Anatomy Act, made them candidates for the anatomist's slab. Moreover, Lovett's enunciation of the contractual clauses resembles the Act notices that were hung in the workhouses: while they summarized the Act's prescriptions, they were not explicit as to their meaning, which prevented the poor from understanding the full extent of the contract to which they were agreeing. Mark, the "unknown poor", is being locked

up and his name put down as a candidate for Lovett's meat grinder without him realizing it, because while she conveys the terms of the contract she manipulates the language, and Mark is not aware of this. Somehow, however, he perceives that he is not being told the whole truth. Noticing Lovett's cryptic phrasing, he wonders: "What a strange manner of talking she has! ... There seems to be some singular and hidden meaning in every word she utters" (*Sweeney Todd* 98). Being almost starved, Mark does not pause to reflect on his impressions. By contrast, his comment is a red flag for the reader: as with the reader of *Varney*, the reader of *Sweeney Todd* is gradually given enough clues to guess the truth, which puts them in a far worse position than that of the reader of *Varney*. The readers of *Sweeney Todd* become the unwilling accomplices of the demon-barber, as they suspect the truth but are prevented from revealing it. Eventually, Mark understands the truth, but the pastry-cook and the barber have their methods to prevent the spreading of knowledge.

In order to control the diffusion of truth, Todd and Lovett create taboos for the other characters. This expedient can be explained with the Foucauldian concept of "procedure of exclusion", that is, a strategy the person or persons who control discourse deploy to exclude other parties from power (*Order of Discourse* 52). Foucault observes that we are aware of the taboos placed on certain topics, as well as on the circumstances in which we are allowed to raise certain subjects, and argues that "[i]t does not matter that discourse appear to be of little account, because the prohibitions that surround it very soon reveals its own link with desire and with power" (52). Conforming to this principle, the first thing Sweeney Todd does as soon as Tobias enters his employment, indeed his very first action in the series, is to dictate that the boy is not to speak a word about "anything [he] may see, or hear, or fancy [he] see[s] or hear[s]" in the shop, or he will "cut [his] throat from ear to ear". To this, Tobias replies: "Yes, sir, I won't say nothing. I wish, sir, as I may be made into veal pies at Lovett's in Bell-yard if I as much as says a word" (*Sweeney Todd* 6). Unsurprisingly, the barber's "huge mouth" drops open, as he "look[s] at the boy for a minute or two in silence, as if he fully intend[s] swallowing him" (*Sweeney Todd* 6), giving the reader a first glimpse of the truth. The attempt to create a taboo for Tobias is followed by the boy accidentally coming dangerously close to the truth. The scene, particularly the detail of Todd's "huge" open mouth and the suggestion that he intends to eat the boy, are the very

first pieces that build the narrative's underlying discourse on cannibalism, the unspoken truth the barber strives to conceal. It is also the first clue the readers receive, which allows them to start immediately piecing together the truth. Tobias's simple remark puts the already eerie figure of the barber under a new light in the eyes of the reader, creating an uncanny connection between the pies, the barber, and cannibalistic eating as if the spoken word, by virtue of some creative power of its own, could make truth real for the listener.

Of course, the barber cannot afford for this to happen. From this moment onwards, Todd makes sure his apprentice is prevented from uttering the truth again, no matter how unwittingly. Firstly, he reduces Tobias to silence with physical violence. Then, he blackmails him, claiming to have witnessed Tobias's mother committing theft and threatening to report her to the police. It is noteworthy that even in this case Todd is twisting the truth: Mrs Ragg caught him stealing from the house where she worked. She talked him into giving back what he took and did not report him (*Sweeney Todd* 149). Twisting the facts gives them the sound of truth, and Todd manages to seal Tobias's lips. "You may think what you like, Tobias Ragg, but you shall only say what I like" (*Sweeney Todd* 34), he states. The threat works and Tobias exclaims: "I will say nothing - I will think nothing" (*Sweeney Todd* 34). He is true to his word. When the captain and the Colonel interrogate the boy, all they get from him is: "I know nothing, I think nothing", and "I cannot tell, I know nothing", a frightened "Nothing! nothing! nothing!" and a final "I have nothing to say ... I have nothing to say" (*Sweeney Todd* 89-90). Todd has successfully managed to assert control over Tobias: the boy's tongue is bound, his speech is completely annihilated, and he is deprived of volition. The meaning of his own language starts slipping: he claims he "cannot tell", which means both that he "does not know", which is a lie, and that "he is not allowed to tell", which is the truth he has no power to utter. Deprived of speech, Tobias is utterly powerless. Finally, however, when the awareness that Todd is a murderer becomes too heavy a burden for him, he resolves to tell the police. Then, Todd takes the ultimate step towards silencing him beyond recall: he shuts Tobias in a madhouse, a place where the truth, however loudly it is screamed, is never believed.

Confinement, as well as exclusion from knowledge, is the technique Todd and Lovett adopt with Mark Ingestrie as well. Being the cook, he is the person who

lives the closest to the truth; therefore, Lovett and Todd's policy prescribes his confinement to the basement, where he is doomed to die, eventually. Although he is a prisoner from the moment he sets foot in the cellar, he is not aware of his situation. Only when he becomes restless does he receive a note that officially notifies him of his status of prisoner. The moment Mark is *told* he is a prisoner, he knows it. Again, it is the power of the actual words, though in written form, that makes incarceration true for him. Until then, only Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett knew his true status, and deciding when to reveal it was their prerogative. Mrs Lovett points out as much to Mark when she hires him. All will be well as long as he will be "industrious", but, should he become "idle", he will "get a piece of information which will be useful, and which, if [he is] a prudent man, will enable [him] to know what [he is] about" (*Sweeney Todd* 97-98). What Lovett disguises as an exhortation to industriousness contains a death threat that Mark cannot grasp. The "piece of information" is that he is no longer master of his own destiny, and that his life is at stake unless he obeys. In a plot that works according to the synonymous nature of knowledge and power, Todd and Lovett sit right on top of the characters' hierarchy, preceding Foucault's theorisation of the connection between knowledge and power by more than a hundred years. Their exclusive access to truth, their control over the act of turning it into spoken or written words, assert the murderous couple's power over the other characters. Locking Tobias and Mark away, Todd and Lovett turn them into a lunatic and a prisoner respectively, a change of status which is consistent with Foucault's theory that truth belongs to the outcast of society.

Similar techniques of discourse control and exclusion marked the passing of the Act, and can be summarised in John Abernethy's statement that "the Act is uninjurious if unknown" (qtd in Richardson 219).[13] An exemplary instance of how these strategies were deployed is the "Nattomy Soup" case (Richardson 221-2). In May 1829, a new inmate of St Paul's workhouse, in Shadwell, had managed to carry with him a newspaper reporting parliamentary discussion of the Anatomy Bill. He read it to the other inmates, who grew alarmed; then, at mealtime, he voiced his "suspicion" that the soup might contain "human as well as animal remains" (Richardson 221). Richardson argues that the case bespoke the poor's persuasion that they were being "bestialised" to the point they were being turned

[13] John Abernethy. *The Dissector* Oct. 1827: 27.

into food *and* made "unwitting cannibals" (222). The troublesome inmate was sentenced to a House of Correction (Richardson 221), which punishment, Richardson underscores, was administered, not on the basis of the accusations the man made against the Anatomy Bill, but because he distressed the other inmates and made false claims about "the workhouse broth" (222). In short, the court never even mentioned the Anatomy Act. As with Tobias and Mark in *Sweeney Todd*, the troublesome inmate who disturbed the status quo, alerting the other inmates to frightful possibilities and challenging the system by making uncomfortable statements, was isolated, while the topic of anatomy was ignored. In pre-Act England, as in Todd and Lovett's London, the topics of human dismemberment and cannibalism were taboo.

The taboos Todd and Lovett create highlight the most conspicuous feature of truth in *Sweeney Todd*, which is its being unspoken. A feeling that truth simply cannot be uttered marks passages in the plot in which characters blatantly ignore the truth, even when this is, quite literally, under everybody's nose. This is most evident in the episode titled "The Strange Odour in Old St Dunstan's Church". St Dunstan's, with its peculiar clock, recurs in the story: characters stop to look at it, and Todd sometimes sends Tobias there to check the time (Mack 91). The church is attended by a peculiarly "pious" congregation; the word is repeated several times in the episode, and clashes with the hypocritical behaviour of the members. As the church slowly but steadily fills with a "strange and most abominable odour" (*Sweeney Todd* 49), people complain and protect their noses with a variety of aromatic contrivances, but otherwise remain peculiarly inactive. While they "generally [agree] … that [the smell] … must come … out from the vaults beneath the church", the "nuisance" does not "acce[de] any reply" (*Sweeney Todd* 151). The "pious and hypocritical Mr Batterwick" reasonably argues that "the present books" "satisfactorily pro[ve]" that no one has been buried in the vault of late, and therefore it would be "very odd" that "dead people, after leaving off smelling and being disagreeable, should all of a sudden burst out again in that line, and be twice as bad as ever they were at first" (*Sweeney Todd* 151). Of course, official records can shed no light on the actual problem: the smell arises from the bodies of the victims of Sweeney Todd, which the barber discarded in the vaults under St Dunstan's. Mr Batterwick's insistence on the official records mocks the want of firmness on the part of London's authorities – be they

governmental or parish authorities – in similar circumstances: as there are no official records of recent burials, neither there is an official reason that should prompt an inspection of the vaults. The narrator explicitly criticises this dynamic, stating that the problem of St. Dunstan's smell "began to excite some attention" only after several months, because "in the great city of London, a nuisance of any description requires to become venerable by age before anyone thinks of removing it; and, after that, it is quite clear that that becomes a good argument against removing it at all" (*Sweeney Todd* 150).

As they have found a reasonable objection to taking action against the smell, the congregation tacitly makes it a taboo topic. Not even the perspective of a visit from the bishop spurs them to action. Indeed, the churchwardens "flatt[er] themselves, that perhaps the bishop would not notice the dreadful smell, or that, if he did, he would … say nothing about it" (*Sweeney Todd* 153). The bishop, however, overrides the taboo and openly speaks about the smell, which finally makes it "necessary" for the churchwardens "to say something" (*Sweeney Todd* 153). Their excuses, however, do not impress the bishop: hearing their hesitant admission that they are "afraid" that the "horrid, charnel-house sort of smell" is always there, the bishop exclaims: "Afraid! … surely you know; you seem to me to have a nose" (*Sweeney Todd* 153). By uttering the truth and underscoring the congregation's dissociation from the reality of their sensorial experience, the bishop disrupts the precarious balance established by the silence that hung over the topic of the smell until that moment and prompts the church authorities to action. In the end, they take action only when their social status is in jeopardy: if the "frightful stench", the narrator reasons, "had been graciously pleased to confine itself to some poor locality, nothing would have been heard of it; but when it became actually offensive to a gentleman in a metropolitan pulpit, ... it became a very serious matter indeed" (*Sweeney Todd* 150-51). Interestingly, before the accident with the bishop, the only action the congregation took was that of "slinking" into Bell Yard to visit Lovett's pie-shop, and

> relieve themselves with a pork or a veal pie, in order that their mouths and noses should be full of a delightful and agreeable flavour, instead of one most peculiarly and decidedly the reverse. (*Sweeney Todd* 151)

The behaviour of St Dunstan's congregation connects truth as a problematic element in the narrative with the wider context of the Victorian metropolis, its scandals related to burial ground overcrowding, and its social organisation. There are fair grounds to suppose that the "St Dunstan's" episode draws in some measure from the Enon Chapel scandal, which broke in 1844, two years before the first episode of *Sweeney Todd* was issued. Enon Chapel, later known as Clare Market Chapel (Thornbury and Walford 3:31), was built in Clement's Lane, not far west from the spot in which the action of *Sweeney Todd* is set. Indeed, Mack lists the episode as one of the possible historical precedents for the narrative of Sweeney Todd (182–4), and underscores that the episode was part of the "'Shock-Horror' literature of the period" (182).

While the upper floor of Enon Chapel was used for masses, its vault was used as a burial place and, as the fictional St Dunstan's, was characterised by a noxious smell. The minister who managed the chapel speculated over burial fees, crowding into the limited space a number of coffins far exceeding its capacity. He would remove old (and not very old) bodies to make room for fresh ones, employing cartmen to dismember the remains and move them or flush them away through a sewer that conveniently ran under the vault. Perhaps later on he decided he could dispense with the services of the cartmen, as he took to removing the remains himself and burying them under his kitchen, which communicated with the vault through a door. In August 1844, the new owner of the house decided to lower the kitchen floor, as the ceiling of that room was strangely low. The man employed to do the job had a nasty surprise, finding under the upturned flagstones the bones of the Enon Chapel's dead. After several Sundays of work, he gave up, finding "the less destructible portions of this army of dead, although passive in their resistance, 'beyond his management'" (Walker, *Second of a Series of Lectures* 18), and the bubble of silence around Enon Chapel finally exploded.[14] Dr George Walker devoted a considerable part of his campaign against intra-mural burial to denounce Enon Chapel. He dedicated a substantial part of his report *The Grave yards of London* (henceforth *Grave yards*) to it, a report which he presented before the House of Commons, published in 1841, and he discussed it repeatedly in his later writings. In *Second of a Series of Lectures*, which contains a

[14] Walford gives a different version of the ghastly discovery of the "modern Golgotha", as something that was discovered during the construction of a new sewer under the chapel (3:31).

summary of Walker's work on Enon Chapel, he wrote that the "lower part, kitchen, cellar, or 'DUST HOLE'" was "devoted to the dismemberment and desecration of the dead" (*Second of a Series of Lectures* 15).[15] Mr Burn, the master cartman who used to clear the "dust" from the "hole" (*Second of a Series of Lectures* 16), bore witness to the offensive state of the chapel and the freshness of some of the bodies he removed. He also declared himself certain that the sewer was regularly used to dispose of the bodies (*Second of a Series of Lectures* 17). Whittaker, an undertaker who appeared before a Select Committee, also vouched for the freshness of the bodies removed from Enon Chapel, and he also testified to the use of quick-lime on the bodies to accelerate the process of decomposition (*Second of a Series of Lectures* 17). A cabinet maker named Pitts insisted on the dreadful smell of the place, especially over summer, when it became strong enough to provoke headaches (*Second of a Series of Lectures*16). It took sixteen years for the case to be discussed, which confirms *Sweeney Todd*'s narrator's observation that nuisances in London became "venerable by age" before any action was taken against them, especially if they concerned poor neighbourhoods, as Walker underscored was the case of Enon Chapel (*Second of a Series of Lectures* 15).

Mismanagement of burial grounds reserved for the poor was widespread: an article from 1846 titled "Desecration of the Dead" reported the case of the overcrowded burial ground behind St. Giles's workhouse, which was unearthed during the works to enlarge the building. The scene was similar to that presented by Enon Chapel: bodies in all stages of decomposition were unearthed, some pits containing as many as "14 [coffins]". The coffins and their "ghastly occupants" could "be traced within 13 or 14 inches from the surface", and the reporter expressed his concern about "the very fearful results to the sanitary condition of so densely crowded a neighbourhood [that] will follow the opening of the loathsome pit now exposed to view."[16]

The exasperated proximity to death and the dead that characterized the mid-Victorian city did not impact on all classes equally, and bodies of poor people

[15] Walker's emphasis.

[16] Especially in pauper's graves, and in the burial pits of workhouses and hospitals, it was common to find multiple coffins in the same pit, which contributed to exposing the corpses of the poor to the danger of being seized by resurrectionists. The anonymous bodysnatcher A.B. stated the bodies "of poor people buried from the workhouses" were a favoured prize, "because, instead of working for one subject, you may get three or four" (*RSCA* 72).

were disposed of differently than the ones of the members of the middle and upper class. Almost every church in the city of London had its own (severely overcrowded) burial ground (Flanders 219), which made the sight and smell of the dead commonplace. When new bodies were to be accommodated, the coffins of the poor were disinterred, the corpses broken with a spade and shovelled in a hole dug nearby. Anything that could be recycled, such as the nails, was resold, while the chopped coffins would be used as fire wood (Walker *First of a Series of Lectures* 16).[17] The denizens of poor neighbourhoods were more exposed to the sights and smells of death, and the dwellings surrounding the overcrowded cemeteries were unprotected against pollution from the decomposing matter that saturated the ground. The inferior standards of care that were reserved for the tombs of the poor emerges in the "St Dunstan's" episode, which shows that the perception of the very real problem of cemetery overcrowding, and its characteristic smell of decay, decreased as the spatial and social distance of the individual from poverty increased.

Considering the absence of the figure of the surgeon, which connects truth to sight, and considering the primeval nature of cannibalism, which constitutes the chief discourse in the narrative, it is unsurprising that smell should be the litmus test of truth in *Sweeney Todd*. Smell was a powerful component of life in Victorian London, and it influenced its literature. Analysing smell descriptions in novels from the 1860s, Janice Carlisle argues that, not only were smells part of the code through which Victorians constructed class, but also that Victorians, preceding twentieth-century scientific studies on smell, "accepted as common sense" the fact that smell had "less to do with thought than with feelings" (3-4). Its "inescapable materiality" was inferred by Victorians, de facto sanctioning its condition as a lowlier sense than sight (the sense of the medical man) and hearing (Carlisle 4). She also observes that the "stench of the poor", a mixture of "disease and death", typical of 1840s novels, is "almost entirely absent" in novels from the 1860s, which fact she connects to the attempts to "sanitize and deodorize public and private life" that characterised the mid-nineteenth-century process of sanitation (2). Indeed, Flanders notes that by mid-century, the destitute had turned into an "alien race" (*Victorian City* 182), which the middle and upper class

[17] Walker's discussion of the recycling of funerary paraphernalia will be examined in greater detail in Section 3 of the next chapter.

considered to be characterised by laziness and a tendency to criminality (171), and were progressively "quarantined" in circumscribed neighbourhoods that were constantly destroyed to build rich ones (188). The euphemistic vocabulary that defined this type of operation included such words as "improvements" and "ventilation" (Flanders, *Victorian City* 188). This second term is particularly meaningful, considering that the poor neighbourhoods were the places that produced the actual stinks: the powerful slaughterhouse stench (Flanders, *Victorian City* 132-3, 138-9), the reek of pigs kept in the house (Flanders, *Victorian City* 208), and the nauseous odour of unmaintained privies,[18] were typical slum smells, as well as the ghastly stench of overcrowded cemeteries. Furthermore, as Stephen Halliday notes, according to the miasmatic theory of contagion that prevailed for the best part of the nineteenth century, "disease was caused by inhaling air that was infected through exposure to corrupting matter" (*Death and miasma* 1469).[19] The conception of poor neighbourhoods as unsanitary spaces extended to the very air that could be breathed within their boundaries.[20] The "great unwashed" were perceived as a group naturally characterised by stink, which was also considered the chief channel of contagion, and were consequently isolated and subjected to the moral judgement of the middle and upper classes. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear St. Dunstan's "pious congregation" expressing concern about the smell of death and decay impregnating their church: the smell of poverty par excellence had moved to their respectable parish, curtailing their spatial and social distance from the poor. Their refusal to acknowledge the presence of something as unrespectable as stink within their circle underscores their hypocrisy, and their lack of response to the powerful, but "lowlier", stimuli that reach their noses allows the murderous Todd-Lovett partnership to operate undisturbed in their neighbourhood for a long time. Furthermore, by failing to acknowledge the truth hinted at by their instinctive olfactory response to the stench they get involved, though unwittingly, in the crime perpetrated. Their attempts to protect their social status by ignoring, that is,

[18] See Flanders 206-7 and Jackson 69-104.

[19] For a detailed history of the miasmatic theory, see also Halliday, *The Great Filth* 52-87.

[20] During the cholera epidemics of the 1840s, the German doctor Max von Pettenkofer developed the 'Telluric' theory of contagion according to which cholera originated from decomposing diseased bodies and faeces saturating the soil and releasing noxious miasmas (Halliday, *The Great Filth* 64). This reinforced the connection between stink and disease in the popular consciousness: as Halliday argues, members of communities visited by cholera were "all too familiar" with the smell of "raw sewage and decaying bodies" (*The Great Filth* 64).

not speaking about, the smell of death and decay in their church worsens the problem; it is only when the smell is brought into the powerful world of the spoken word that truth finally emerges.

The isolation to which the Victorian poor were subjected, and the moral judgment that accompanied this isolation, facilitated the passing of the Anatomy Act and its sanctioning of the connection between dying in poverty with dissection. The very expression used in the Act to indicate the eligible bodies, "unclaimed", implies distance, separation. Anonymity made it easier for the middle and upper class to relinquish any sense of responsibility for the exploitation of the bodies of the pauper, which on paper was devoted to the higher purpose of the common good, but actually implemented a service of which only the wealthy benefited. The pious St Dunstan's parishioners complain about the awful smell of decay, though not taking any concrete action about it, and then rush to Lovett's in Bell Yard to feast upon the pies produced with the same matter rotting under their church. Likewise, the middle and upper class alienated the "great unwashed" and the unappealing smell of their bodies, houses, and neighbourhoods; yet, quite ironically, the same bodies that could not be touched in life were to be touched in death by the apprentice surgeons perfecting their skills in view of exercising them on the patients who could pay for the service.

Although truth is hidden and unspoken, the plot of *Sweeney Todd* tends inevitably towards the final dénouement. Actually, the series tells the story of how the truth surfaces from the underground world of silence and slippages of meaning in which it is kept captive. The series culminates in a powerful upturning of the situation, in which the taboo discourses are spoken out loud by characters. Once the prohibition to speak the truth falls and the words are uttered, truth becomes visible, becomes *true* for everyone. The bishop in the "St Dunstan's" episode starts this process by overriding the congregation's tacit agreement to place a taboo over the topic of the smell. However, it is Mark Ingestrie who officially breaks the plot's greatest taboo. Throughout the story, the pies are often defined to be "Lovett's", and they are always "made *by*" an unknown, unspecified "someone". The pies are "Lovett's", and that is sufficient for Lovett's customers. As long as this situation is stable, the pies are praised for their taste and delicious smell, and are saluted as a medicament by the customers. This dynamic breaks when Mark Ingestrie manages to escape the pie-manufactory through the same

windlass that brings the pies upstairs in the shop, keeping the underground world of manufacture out of sight and out of mind. As he reaches the pie-shop, he springs out, like a jack-in-the-box, declaring:

> Ladies and Gentlemen – I fear that what I am going to say will spoil your appetites; but the truth is beautiful at all times, and I have to state that Mrs Lovett's pies are made of *human flesh!* (*Sweeney Todd* 280)[21]

In this crucial dénouement, the pies are finally made *of* something. Nobody wonders who this ragged stranger accusing the best pie-maker in London of unspeakable crimes is. He speaks the words and, as in the case of the bishop, the word is all-powerful: once uttered, it alters reality, and the ghastly flesh-pies become real. All of Lovett's customers feel sick simultaneously and spit the "clinging" portions of the pies crying "oh, the pies – oh, confound it!" (*Sweeney Todd* 280). Only afterwards does the policeman who is there to arrest Mrs Lovett speak to corroborate Mark's statement.

Such a spectacular conclusion fits very well the sensational style of the penny blood genre: a man secretly kept captive, gory deeds, ghastly poisonous food, all combine to create the perfect ending to the *Sweeney Todd* series. The marriage of Mark and Johanna creates the comforting happy ending that Crone identifies as typical of penny bloods (182-3). Yet, I would see Mark's statement that "the truth is beautiful at all times" as an attempt on the part of the narrative to do something more than simply provide a comforting ending, indeed as an attempt to leave readers a prompt for reflection, as an aftertaste, on the importance of knowing the truth. As the troublesome inmate of Shadwell's workhouse believed, knowing the truth, no matter how unsavoury, is crucial in order to be able to act in one's own best interest, in order not to participate in an involuntary act of cannibalism, neither as the eater, nor as the food.

Throughout the narrative truth consistently "emerges", that is, rises from below the ground. The space below the pavement of Bell Yard, St Dunstan's, and Fleet Street is where the truth is hidden, the place from which it tries to escape. Truth in *Sweeney Todd* inhabits the underground, conforming to the urban configuration of the Victorian city: London's subterranean space was deeply

[21] Rymer's emphasis.

rooted in the mind of its population as the space of darkness and monsters, of fear, and of truth.

The dreadful fall: death and survival in the subterranean space.

Contemporary novelist Neil Gaiman observed that, although the details of the different versions of the story of the demon barber change, each version is invariably "very location specific" (qtd in Mack 83). Mack expanded on Gaiman's comment, noting that the narrative displays an obsession with the "exceptionally heightened and narrow" representation of London's space (85). All versions and adaptations of the *Sweeney Todd* story consistently limit the action to an area of Fleet Street that encompasses "Temple Bar, St Dunstan's, Bell Yard, and the Precincts of the Inner Temple to Temple Stairs on the river", and stretches "along Fleet Street from just beyond Chancery Lane in the west, to Fetter Lane in the east" (Mack 89). Mack observes that such a degree of geographical precision increased the impression of realism in the story (89), and he also notes that Fleet Street was a peculiar spot in the Victorian city (86). It was the beating heart of the press business and city gossip, was placed in a strategic geographical position where the ships coming up the Thames and the City met, and the "labyrinthine series of courtyards and alleyways that spread … around it" promoted the encounter of people from very different social backgrounds to a degree that was not to be found in other areas of the city (Mack 86). Moreover, this geographical and social intersection had its own market and prison,[22] and was not very far from the infamous Smithfield Market, with the adjacent St Bartholomew's Hospital, as well as from Enon Chapel, as we have seen.

We can better understand how *Sweeney Todd*'s steep, circumscribed geography relates to London's geospace, and consequently better navigate it, by considering David L. Pike's theorisation of a "vertical model" for representing the landscape of the Victorian city (196). Pike notes that, as the social and spatial distance between classes increased, the "spatial segregation" strategies adopted to meet the logistic and sanitary challenges presented by the confluence of individuals from different social backgrounds in the space of the nineteenth-century metropolis caused "urban representations" to evolve decidedly towards "a vertically divided space" (196). Within this process, "the underground" came to be perceived as a

[22] Which were respectively relocated and demolished in 1848 (Flanders, *Victorian City* 76).

space that "carried specific identities applicable only to certain, now unseen, spaces", which in London concretised in a "discourse" around the "disposal of waste" (Pike 196). Within this discourse, anything that was perceived as refusal was "flush[ed] out of sight", including the "many remaining traces of precapitalist social structures", which, Pike contends, instead of being effaced by "the act of distancing and rejection", were empowered by it, both "as allure and as threat" (196). While he explains this process partially by embracing Stallybrass and White's psychoanalytic model that reads the subterranean space as the "unconscious" of society and the "locus of truth" (196), Pike emphasises the importance of not making the new vertical structure merely "an aspect of individual, middle-class experience" (197). An understanding of the nineteenth-century conception of the subterranean space must account, he argues, for two elements: firstly, the "mythic component of the descent to the underworld in search of truth", and secondly, for the lower echelons of society, who experienced filth in a counterintuitive way, forever torn between aspiration to "middle-class respectability" and "underground criminality", and who likewise contributed to the "production of the nineteenth-century city" (197). By applying this reading to *Sweeney Todd*'s glaringly subterranean world of cannibalism and dark forces, this emerges as a space in which the working-class readers could confront their anxiety about annihilation in a savage underground world, and vicariously concretise (through the characters) their aspiration to emerge from such space empowered by the awareness of their position and the capability of changing it. While in *Varney* and *Manuscripts* the movement between subterranean and surface spaces occurs chiefly upwards, *Sweeney Todd* is characterised by the eminently downwards movement of the precipitous fall through the trapdoor in the barber shop. This is suddenly overturned by Mark's final, triumphant ascent, through which the reader achieves catharsis. In order to understand this relationship between subterranean and surface space in *Sweeney Todd*, it is first of all necessary to consider the geospace of the Victorian city itself and the city dweller's perception of it.

Boundaries between above and below were constantly disrupted in nineteenth-century London. The overcrowded cemeteries spilled the content of the graves on the surface, and what did not re-surface sometimes leaked through the cemetery

walls in the form of liquid decaying matter.[23] Public works contributed to fuel anxieties about this uncanny inversion in the urban space. Wise notes that the "Metropolitan Improvements" of the 1840s uncovered the eerie hidden roots of the city, increasing the Londoner's "urban paranoia about subterranean spaces" (287-8). This concern pivoted on the popular image of the innocent person, possibly new in town, disappearing in the subterranean world, in which the burgeoning city is pictured as a monster that swallows up newcomers as if absorbing them through the ground. If the dead resurfaced on earth from the cemeteries, after all, why could not the living take their place under the earth? Sweeney Todd's customers, disappearing through the trapdoor on which the barber's chair is mounted, reiterated this type of anxiety. The trap-door chair fits naturally in an urban landscape that popular lore represented as a place where "the pathways on the streets [were] full of trap doors which dropd [sic] down as soon as pressd [sic] with the feet and sprung in their places after the unfortunate countryman had fallen into the deep hole ..." (Clare 132). The poet John Clare, new to London, believed this murky portrait of the city his artist friend Rippingille pictured for him, and behaved accordingly. He kept "a constant look out", imagining every woman on the street to be a prostitute ready to lure him "into a fine house were [sic] I should never be seen agen" (Clare 132). This must have been wonderfully entertaining for Rippingille, who, Wise suggests, was probably enjoying teasing his friend (173). Yet, it is noteworthy that his joke specifically framed the underground space as threatening and voracious.

As Mack notes (148-9), Dickens, the narrator of Victorian London par excellence, makes a similar representation. As soon as Tom arrives in London in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, he wishes "to have those streets pointed to him which were appropriated to the slaughter of countrymen" (568). Later, when he realizes he is late for an appointment, he is sure his friend will think that he has "strayed into one of those streets where the countrymen are murdered, and that [he has] been made meat pies of" (576). The narrator, however, reassures the reader that "Tom's evil genius did not lead him into the dens of any of those preparers of cannibalistic pastry, who are represented in many standard country legends as doing a lively retail business in the Metropolis" (577). Although it is tempting to

[23] Flanders notes that such was the case in the Portugal Street cemetery (*Victorian City* 221).

read in these lines proof of the demon barber's existence,[24] Mack suggests that they rather attest to the fact that the conflation of the burgeoning and "rapacious" urban space with fears about annihilation of one's individuality were a substantial component of the "urban zeitgeist in the early 1840s" (150). Notably, the fears that according to Mack underpinned the relationship of the Londoners with the underground space also included disappearance through ingestion (41-2). Rippingille informed Clare that after falling into the trapdoor, the countryman "woud be robd and murderd [sic] and thrown into boiling cauldrons kept continualy [sic] boiling for that purpose and his bones sold to the docters" (Clare 132). In this very detailed explanation surface the anxieties about subterranean space, cannibalism, and medicine that the geospace of the city generated, and which emerge forcefully in the narrative space of *Sweeney Todd*'s London.

The warning contained in Rippingille's murky portrait of London's underground was simple: falling below meant dying, and being cooked. *Sweeney Todd* reinforced this concept by representing living characters trapped underground as already dead. The unlucky cook murdered by Todd in Lovett's basement, the one Mrs Lovett told Mark Ingestrie "was gone to see some of his very oldest friends" (*Sweeney Todd* 96), is dressed

> but lightly … in fact, he seems to have but little on him except a shirt and a pair of loose canvas trousers. The sleeves of the former are turned up beyond his elbows, and on his head he has a white night cap. (*Sweeney Todd* 93)

This description resembles that of an underground worker, such as a miner, a sewer worker, or a man working near furnaces (as is the case): the sleeves are rolled up to find relief from the heat, and the cap prevents sweat from pouring into the eyes. However, the emphasis on the looseness and scantiness of the clothes adds a dark undertone to the description, as if this man does not need proper garments because his clothes will be his shroud. The fact that he is wearing,

[24] Which, as Mack observes, Peter Haining did in his 1993 study. Haining argued these were obvious hints to Todd's real story and that Dickens was not more explicit out of delicacy towards those relatives of the victims who might have been among his readers (Haining, Peter. *Sweeney Todd: The Real Story of the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. London: Boxtree Ltd, 1993. Qtd in Mack 149-50). Mack emphatically rejects these speculations, observing that the chief fallacy in this theory is that Dickens wrote *Martin Chuzzlewitt* long before the first instalment of *The String of Pearls* was issued (150).

specifically, a *night*cap, an item that could figure in the stock burial apparel (Richardson 20), reinforces this impression. The man in the basement, which is peculiarly "sepulchral" (*Sweeney Todd* 92), is already dead to the world, out of reach of anyone who might help him. Not only does the vast, monstrous city trap the unaware underground, but, as Crone notes, it also creates the anonymity necessary to prevent anyone noticing somebody else's disappearance (186). When Mark Ingestrie starts realizing he is not just Lovett's employee, but actually a prisoner in the sepulchral basement, he wonders:

> [i]s it possible that even in the very heart of London I am a prisoner, and without the means
> of resisting the most frightful threats that are uttered against me?" (*Sweeney Todd* 176)

Apparently, it was. In 1842, four years before the first episode of *Sweeney Todd* was issued, a man testified in front of a select committee that, when he "applied for relief" to a workhouse, he was "punished for his temerity" with a forty-eight hour imprisonment in a "Black-hole", a windowless "miserable dungeon", together with other five people (Flanders, *The Victorian City* 172). It was August, and the temperature soon grew unbearably hot; when the prisoners complained, "a board was nailed over their small air-hole" (qtd. in Flanders, *The Victorian City* 172).[25] Such stories fuelled anxieties about anonymity and disappearance in the urban space of the city, where it appeared that the sheer numbers of the population prevented anyone noticing – or caring – if someone disappeared. Surgeon George Guthrie capitalized upon this point in his 1829 open letter to the Home Secretary, in which he protested against the allegation that anatomists were secretive about dissecting-room proceedings. He wrote that the doors of "every dissecting room in London [were] always open" to the public, but that laypeople did not concern themselves about "what [was] going on": "in London", he stated, "... no one knows or cares what is going on, unless he is interested in it" (qtd in Wise 175). Although Guthrie's claim about the openness,

[25] The episode, discussed by Flanders, is reported in Walker's *First Series of Lectures* (30). The name "Black-hole" may bear connection with a 1756 incident: when the ruler of Bengal captured the city of Calcutta, the Europeans who tried to defend it were imprisoned in the claustrophobic Black Hole, Calcutta's prison for petty offenders, and about twenty of them died as a consequence of the imprisonment ("Black Hole of Calcutta", Encyclopaedia Britannica).

practical and metaphorical, of London's dissection rooms is debatable, as well as his statement that "many persons" would visit them (qtd in Wise 175), as Wise notes (175), his statements confirm the idea of a burgeoning urban population generally indifferent to what did not concern them personally. Guthrie was right only in part: the existence of cautionary tales indicates that at least a portion of the population may not have been entirely unreceptive, or unconcerned, about what went on in the city's underground space.

Rippingille specifies that one who fell underground would have his bones boiled and "sold to the docters". The meat and the pies, and consequently the dead cook in Lovett's basement, stemmed from the idea that had developed in the popular mind during the first decades of the nineteenth century according to which "the notion of boiling, cooking and consuming had become intermingled with the notion of dissection and anatomy" (Wise 173). In this respect, Wise brings in example the case of Caroline Walsh, an elderly woman who accepted the invitation of a neighbouring couple, Eliza Ross and Edward Cook, to occupy a bedroom in their house. Cook was known to be a resurrectionist, and Walsh's granddaughter, Anne Buton, warned her against accepting the invitation: "If you go to stay at the Cooks, they'll cook you!" (qtd in Wise 172). Soon after she moved in with the Cooks, Walsh disappeared. Buton then started searching for her grandmother and the newspapers took interest in her case, alleging that her grandmother had been "burked for the base object of selling her body for anatomical purposes" (qtd in Wise 172).[26] Twelve days before the Italian Boy case exploded, Eliza Ross was arrested and charged with murder. Her twelve-year-old son stated that his mother had single-handedly smothered the old woman, put her in a sack, and sold her to the London Hospital in Whitechapel. Ross was found guilty of murder and hanged.[27]

It is unlikely Walsh's body had been "cooked" by the Cooks. Yet, it was never found, and Anne Buton's macabre pun supports Wise's argument that anatomy

[26] "Mysterious Disappearance" *Globe and Traveller* 28 Oct. 1831.

[27] Wise notes a few obscure points in the case, particularly the incongruity of Ross's son claim that his mother sold the corpse to the London Hospital. Walsh disappeared in mid-August 1831, and anatomy courses usually stopped for the summer, since the heat accelerated decomposition (Wise 173). Indeed, Doctors Luke and Hamilton from the London stated that no corpses were brought or purchased in the days indicated by the defendants, nor in the rest of the month. Moreover, the lecturing and dissecting rooms were under repair ("Further Examination"). Furthermore, Buton described her grandmother as healthy and strong (Old Bailey Proceedings). Walsh was therefore an old woman with no interesting deformities, a subject hardly tempting enough for a surgeon to undergo the disadvantages of performing dissection during summer.

and cooking were connected in the popular mind. Rumours about dissection rooms favoured this association: intelligence of "[m]ysterious attics, rooms with opaque windows, creatures pickled in bottles, body parts in cooking pots, disappearances, strange goings-on after dark" (Wise 174-5) substantiated the idea that resurrectionists and doctors "cooked" people. Returning briefly to Rippingille's joke, it is meaningful that the cooking of the unaware countryman happens specifically in the *underground* space. The design of medical education spaces contributed to the elaboration of this particular concept in the popular mind, as the dissecting room was a distinctively subterranean location. To exemplify the type of glimpse laypeople were given of the spaces of anatomy and dissection, Hurren quotes an 1840 article that appeared in the *Penny Satirist* in which an art student related his experience in certain – unnamed – anatomy schools in the capital during the 1830s.[28] The student explained that "[t]he dissection room was underground and there was a museum of skeletons and hearts, livers, legs and lights upstairs", which made him uneasy, particularly after dark (qtd in Hurren 86). He then specified that the dissection room "was not down stairs but down *ladder* [sic]. It was simply a ladder through a species of trap door that we made our descent", and there was

> one room [in which there were] were the operators, and in another room a sort of back kitchen with a water pipe and sink, where the bodies were washed. In this sink there was generally a body lying, and the water running upon it. (qtd in Hurren 86)

The bodies, usually "a dozen", had been "stolen from churchyards or bought on the sly", and alongside them were "a number of amputated limbs, such as heads, arms & legs, &c. in various stages of *scientific preparation* [sic]" (qtd in Hurren 86). As is to be expected, the student was "always glad when [he] got at the top of the ladder" (qtd in Hurren 86). This description contains all the elements that can be found both in Rippingille's mocking cautionary tale and in the narrative of *Sweeney Todd*. There is an underground environment, a trap door, and mutilated dead bodies lying in a kitchen, which compose a frightful museum of horrors that seemed to have been conjured out of a nightmare. Moreover, as discussed above, laypeople associated anatomy and dissection with butchery, and butchery, for

[28] "A Dissecting Room". *The Penny Satirist* 7 Nov. 1840: 1.

practical reasons, was partially performed below the ground of the Victorian city, as was dissection.

Discussing the controversial space of Smithfield Market, Wise highlights the show of bloodshed that characterized the spot, as well as the habit of keeping (and butchering) cattle underground (133). Flanders observes that, while Clare Market was small compared to others, it still hosted twenty-six butchers who slaughtered several hundred animals each week, both above and below the market's ground (*Victorian City* 132). Adjacent to butchers, there may be a tripe boiler (Flanders, *Victorian City* 132), and boiling was also part of the activities of knackers' yards, where old or diseased horses were killed and butchered to produce cat food (Flanders, *Victorian City* 139). The process of boiling, therefore, was associated with butchery and medicine alike, making the step from anatomy to butchering-boiling-cooking and, henceforth, consuming a short one. Additionally, the secrecy the medical fraternity insisted on keeping about their practices reinforced the idea that something awfully wrong went on in dissection rooms. Butchery and dissection thus fuelled the Londoner's anxieties about the underground, turning into a space where a good person may disappear to be hacked into pieces and used as an anatomical subject by fiendish doctors and medical students. The dark subterranean space of *Sweeney Todd* hypostasized this self-sustaining set of fears.

The basement of Lovett's pie shop communicates with Todd's basement and with St Dunstan's vaults. This maze of connected subterranean spaces tapped into the Victorian paranoia that pictured the subterranean space of the city as a labyrinth of tunnels used by criminals to move unseen through the urban space. Wise observes that the cottages inhabited by the London burkers in Nova Scotia Gardens, later known as "burkers' hole", were rumoured to be connected to one another through a tunnel (280).[29] I would venture that *Sweeney Todd* mingles this concept with the Victorian tendency, noted by Pike, to "flush away" the repulsive-fascinating "filth" produced by the creation of the new social order to a subterranean space that was both geographical and metaphorical (196). The subterranean labyrinth of *Sweeney Todd* reflects the equally labyrinthine space above the ground in a way that allowed the reader to project into the imagined space terrors imagined in the geospace of the city. Dissection rooms were brick-

[29] Wise's analysis of the imagined labyrinthine underground space in Nova Scotia Gardens will be examined in more detail in relation to the *Mysteries of London*, in the next chapter.

and-mortar locations in the urban landscape, although the crossing of their threshold was, not only tacitly forbidden, but also undesirable. Accounts such as the one the art student gave to the *Penny Satirist* pictured the space of the dissection room as the stuff of nightmares, and the fear triggered by cases such as that of Catherine Walsh and the Italian boy fuelled a grim picture that became part of the collective memory of the city. The "nattomy soup" case conveys the terror the perspective of dissection raised and the fear of cannibalism it generated. The story of the demon barber, which is one of annihilation through mutilation and ingestion, includes both the trauma and the recovery from it.

In the basement, the victims of Todd's trap-door-chair are butchered and their bodies are cut into lumps and steaks. The human flesh is undistinguishable from animal meat, and Mark exclaims: "I never could tell the pork from the veal myself, for they seem to me both alike" (*Sweeney Todd* 174). When asked about the source of the meat, Mrs Lovett answers: "that is no business of yours" (*Sweeney Todd* 97), echoing the way the men in the crowd rebuke the curious boy in the cemetery scene in *Varney*, saying "what business is that of yours?" (*Varney* 207). Something's, or someone's provenance is irrelevant below the ground: butchery effaces individual identity, exactly as dissection turned the individual's body into an anonymous subject, a piece of meat on the dissecting table. After being cut, the human flesh is cooked in Lovett's pie factory "beneath the pavement of Bell-yard", where "gleaming lights seem to be peeping out from furnaces", and a "strange, hissing, simmering sound" hints at the cooking of pies (or perhaps at unseen horrors whispering in the dark), as a "rich and savoury vapour" impregnates the air (*Sweeney Todd* 92-3). Although fire, and not water, is the core element of this hellish representation, the markedly underground location, and the "kitchen" connotation of the environment connects this space to the one the art student described for the *Penny Satirist*. Further, Lovett's customers both relish the pies for their rich flavour, and attribute to them medical powers. One asserts that, since his stomach is upset from overeating, he will have a pie "to settle" it (*Sweeney Todd* 278), while another considers them a good omen for the birth of his child. His pregnant wife "won't fancy anything but one of Lovett's veal pies ... to have the child marked as a pie" (*Sweeney Todd* 278-9). This detail was likely meant to shock the reader, who could guess the truth by now and understand that the pregnant woman, and therefore her child, have developed a

craving for human flesh. The narrative is suggesting, not only that a new cannibalistic society is developing, but also, and more subtly, that the act of cannibalism is attributed healing properties by the eater. Mutilated bodies can cure those who can access the cure they produce. This was a tangible reality in the context of the 1840s, in which the Anatomy Act and its aftermath attested to a recent past of burking, resurrectionism, and (still technically active) body traffic. Specifically, as the "nattomy soup" incident demonstrates,[30] the working-class readers of *Sweeney Todd* imagined themselves more as potential mutilated bodies, than consumers of the cure.

The circumscription of the action to a limited space that precisely matches the geospace of the city allowed the removal of the fear of the subterranean space to an imagined underground in which horrors can happen. The high degree of geographical precision keeps the reader simultaneously safely distant and dangerously close to the action, to the mechanical chair, to the meat cleaver and the grinder, allowing them to imagine themselves as both the pie and the eater. At the same time, when Mark Ingestrie leaves the claustrophobic, suffocating subterranean space through the windlass, the reader can participate in the freedom of the captive cook, which is both verbal and spatial. Mark's spectacular apparition, theatrically springing up and sending pies flying all around, reminds one of the theatrical device of the *diabolus ex-machina* and contributes to the staged feeling pervading the whole plot, which perhaps favoured its swift adaptation into a theatrical performance. However, Mark is no demon: as Varney, he is a revenant that emerges from the underground world of death and mutilation to haunt the living with the truth. The presence of Mark in the world above the ground after his journey in the subterranean world is disruptive, but the narrative also presents it as necessary. Pike argues that the underground can be defined a "spatial heuristic" where are relegated the unspeakable, "unpalatable" truths that do not fit in the rational organization and discourses of the world above; the "vertical framework" thus formed makes the truth visible, but it does not make it real, so that any mysteries that may emerge can be solved "only in underground commonplaces of plot, never in aboveground apportionment of responsibility" (Pike 18). The conclusion of the narrative of *Sweeney Todd* disrupts this vertical

[30] For further information on lower-class protest against the Anatomy Act, see Richardson 219-38.

scaffolding; Mark's upwards movement through the windlass challenges the downwards look, the one-way gaze from the "mainstream ideology" viewpoint that Pike identifies as the weakness of the vertical structure (18). Truth leaves the subterranean world, allowing the literally unpalatable truth of cannibalism to meet the rationality of the world above and be solved. To an extent, it is certainly true that, as Crone argues, penny bloods tended to console their readership with the belief in the existence of a "larger moral order", rather than inciting them to revolution (191). Nevertheless, I would argue that the catharsis Mark's escape provided may have been meant as an alert for the readers about the possibility of saving themselves from the cannibalistic dungeon by seeking and learning the truth about their position in the vertical social space.

Conclusion

Todd and Lovett hypostasize a set of fears deeply rooted in the English cultural heritage as well as inherent to the specific historical-geographical context of the Victorian metropolis. As monstrous bodies that draw from the mythical-folkloric figures of the devil and the witch, they synthetize anxieties related to the threat the new order of the industrial era posed to the physical body and the intellectual and spatial freedom of the lower-class individual. The loose physicality of the demon-barber, observed at the beginning of the chapter, can therefore be read as the physical manifestation of Victorian society's monstrous self: as Frankenstein's Monster is composed of different parts of decomposing bodies, so Sweeney Todd is an assemblage of all the ideas, philosophies, and people that mainstream society discarded in the process enacted by the industrial revolution. Todd's ability to move through the underground and the surface and to put the two worlds in connection, trapping and killing the unaware underground, represent the monstrosity of the system in place: through his huge mouth, Todd assimilates people gone astray, whose absence will not be noticed, and who represent everything that mainstream society (i.e. the middle- and upper-class) find encumbering. Todd and Lovett's narrative bespeaks the dread of annihilation through mutilation and ingestion that certainly stemmed, as Powell, Crone, and Mack note, from the exploitation to which the industrial economy subjected the bodies of the workers. I would argue, however, that it also originated in the threat that dissection, in the sense of breaking the body in its different parts, posed to the paupers' bodies both before and after the Anatomy Act.

Sweeney Todd, a post-Act popular narrative, appears in a context in which law itself ratified such physical threat, concretizing concerns related to seizing and controlling power. The narrative embraces this topic through the sensational elements of mutilation and unwitting cannibalism, discussing issues of discourse and power within the safe space of the fictional narrative. Further, anxieties of annihilation and body consumption related to the monstrous new urban space produced within the city's geospace an imagined, equally monstrous underground. The narrative space of *Sweeney Todd* safely removed the experience of mutilation and annihilation to the imagined underground, while simultaneously bringing it closer to the reader through the detailed replication of the city's geospace. I would venture, therefore, that the *Sweeney Todd* narrative, while invading the urban geospace and becoming the glaringly "London" story Mack celebrates, constructed a relatively safe narrative space where unspoken terrors could be enacted and faced, where taboo topics such as the use of the bodies of the pauper under the Anatomy Act could be tackled.

Although, as Mack observes, "very few" nineteenth-century narratives can match the *Sweeney Todd*'s geographical precision (89), G.W.M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London* certainly shows an equal degree of obsession, not only for the accurate representation of the geospace of the Victorian city, but also for the representation of a labyrinthine and threatening underground world of trapdoors and tunnels to match the maze of the grim London slums. The next chapter discusses the world of *Mysteries*, a narrative as rambling as the convoluted streets where middle-class characters lose themselves and meet a monster that almost matches Sweeney Todd's malicious cunning. Perhaps thanks to his trade, which makes him as much a part of the world of the living as of that of the dead, Anthony Tidkins, the Resurrection Man, is as dangerous above the ground as he is below it.

4. THE UNKNOWN LABYRINTH: RADICALISM, THE BODY, AND THE ANATOMY ACT IN *THE MYSTERIES OF LONDON*.

Soon after its appearance on the literary marketplace, *The Mysteries of London* by G.W.M. Reynolds (henceforth *Mysteries*) became one of the most popular and most discussed (read, harshly criticized by the cultural élite) penny bloods. Nowadays, it is one of the most widely researched specimens of the genre. Its intrinsically contradictory nature, which reflected on the response it elicited and on subsequent academic criticism, originates in the contradictions of Reynolds himself. Middle-class born, prominent radical and then Chartist, head of a publishing empire, inveterate bankrupt, held in contempt by middle-class commentators and radicals alike, Reynolds's stated purpose in writing the series was that of instructing the working masses on the gap existing between the rich and the poor in London. In a "Letter to the Industrious Classes" appeared in the *Reynolds's Miscellany* in 1847, he commented on his own tendency to include current affairs and politics in his fiction, writing that his digressions aimed to enforce "the necessity of ameliorating the conditions of the industrious masses. I want to see you well educated, and your position also improved" (qtd in Haywood, *The Revolution* 172).[1] This idea is consistent with the stated aesthetic purpose of Chartist fiction, which was "to elevate the marginalized and repressed majority of society" (Haywood, *The Literature of Struggle* 4). The first series of *Mysteries*, with which this study is concerned, pre-dates the official beginning of Reynolds's career in Chartist politics. Nevertheless, it shows unmistakable signals of the radical ideas Reynolds developed during his stay in Paris between 1830 and 1837, which would finally lead him to Chartism.

It is virtually impossible, and rightly so, to separate *Mysteries* from Reynolds's politics, nor is it possible to overlook the tension between his politics and his successful career in mass-publication. His contemporaries, including a number of radicals, considered him a hypocrite at the best of the times, a shrewd businessman who exploited the animosity of the masses and the principles of

[1] *Reynolds's Miscellany*, I: 199-200.

Radical politics for economic gain.[2] Still in the 1970s, scholars such as Berridge[3] and Williams[4] read Reynolds's participation in mass-market production as ultimately rooted in bourgeois culture and politics, and maintained that his businessman spirit outweighed any radical ideas he might have had (Haywood *The Revolution* 172-3). A short time later, however, Anne Humpherys proposed an alternative reading of Reynolds's contradictory character, arguing that it provided him with a powerful "negative capability", a capacity to "absorb the contradictory impulses and desires of the populace" that allowed him to balance exceptional entrepreneurial success with the ideals of radical politics ("G.W.M. Reynolds: Popular Literature & Popular Politics" 83). More recently, Haywood emphatically rejected as simplistic the view of Reynolds as a bourgeois posing as a revolutionary for economic gain. He underscored the force of Reynolds's radical message and the presence of bourgeois villains in his stories, as well as the fact that melodrama was "by no means a class-exclusive discourse", but one that appealed to a readership encompassing individuals of diverse social extractions, which also included "genteel" women (*The Revolution* 173).

The purpose of this chapter is not that of examining the traces of Reynolds's Chartism in *Mysteries*. Instead, it focuses on how the political aesthetic of the author interlaced with, and discussed, issues related to the Anatomy Act and the disposal of paupers' bodies. The narrative does not mention the Act explicitly, nor was it explicitly mentioned in Chartist protests, because the target of indignation was rather the New Poor Law. Yet, Richardson explains, this actually included the Anatomy Act as it was perceived as an "advance clause" of the New Poor Law, and the two were inseparable in the popular mind (270–271). The chapter examines the passages in the series that concentrate on issues related to the Act as a piece of clockwork of the great injustice machinery Chartist fiction attacked. After all, one of the most prominent characters of *Mysteries* is a resurrectionist.

The plot of volume I of *Mysteries* is long and convoluted, but revolves around a handful of main characters. The hero, Richard Markham, is a young man from

[2] His chief contemporary opponent was certainly Dickens, whose *Household Words* was meant as a "respectable" alternative to *Reynolds's Miscellany* (Haywood, *The Revolution* 171).

[3] Berridge, Virginia. "Popular Journalism and Working-Class Attitude 1854-1886: A Study of *Reynolds's Newspaper Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* and the *Weekly Times*", 2 vols. Diss. U of London, 1976.

[4] Williams, Raymond. "Radical and/or Respectable". *The Press We Deserve*. Ed. Richard Boston. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970: 14-26.

an impoverished middle-class family. His rebellious brother Eugene leaves the family house after a quarrel with their father, although he promises to come back to Richard in twelve years, by which time, he assures him, he will be a rich man. A few years later Richard, now orphaned and alone, leaves his secluded life in the suburbs for the city, where his naïveté makes him easy prey for a few fashionable gentlemen with a penchant for gambling. In the circle of the fashionable gentlemen Richard meets elusive and charming Walter Sidney, a youth who seems desirous of becoming his friend. Walter is actually Eliza Sidney, posing as her deceased brother to comply with her benefactor's plans to gain her access to her inheritance. Of course, the "benefactor" is actually scheming to seize Eliza's money, and the plan is more illegal than the girl has been led to believe. Her seclusion and disguise expose her to danger: while roaming alone in the streets in the first period of her life in disguise, she gets lost in the terrible neighbourhood of Smithfield, where she is almost killed by criminals. Later, she becomes the target of the lustful plans of a certain George Montague, who plays a role in the self-proclaimed benefactor's scheme. Montague's name recurs in the story wherever a fallen woman or a dilapidated family appear, and the narrative gives clear hints that he is no other than Eugene, Richard Markham's rebellious brother, who is building his wealth by ruining anyone who crosses paths with him.

As a consequence of their alleged friends' machinations, both Richard and Eliza are committed to serve time in Newgate prison. Here, Richard meets Anthony Tidkins, alias, the Resurrection Man. This cadaverous, ominous character foreshadows difficult times ahead for Markham. Not only is he a professional bodysnatcher, but he is also a housebreaker and a burker. When they meet again after they have both left Newgate, the young man is struggling to rebuild his reputation and is harbouring hopes towards the beautiful Italian Countess Isabella Alteroni. Markham makes the mistake of antagonising Tidkins, for fear he should taint his name. This unhappy move makes the Resurrection Man Richard's sworn enemy, a threat to both his reputation and his life throughout the series.

On one occasion, Tidkins' attempt to kill Richard is thwarted by Ellen Monroe. Ellen is the daughter of Richard's guardian, who coincidentally was indirectly responsible for Richard's ruin, as well as his own, through bad investments suggested to him by Mr Montague. Ellen and her father end up in the ironically

named Golden Lane, a miserable slum in which the girl strives to earn a living as a seamstress and becomes prey of a procuress, who aims at making a courtesan out of her. She finds for Ellen odd jobs that progressively impair the girl's modesty while precipitating her from moments of economic independence to periods of dreadful poverty, until the girl accepts the card of a gentleman (who happens to be Mr Montague). Thanks to Richard's help, Ellen and her father will be rescued from poverty, and Ellen will become a dancer, as well as a gender-shifter in the same way Eliza Sidney is. In her male disguise, she is able to follow Richard and save his life.

Starting from this premise, and adopting the narrative's political agenda as the background of the analysis, the chapter explores how the characters and the spaces of *Mysteries* are deployed to discuss the issue of the disposal and dismemberment of dead bodies in mid-Victorian London.

Mephistopheles, Faustus, and Ghouls: monsters of anachronistic injustice.

The urban labyrinth of *Mysteries* is crowded with dangerous characters. While some of them, such as George Montague, are mischievous, others are distinctly monstrous in nature. The Resurrection Man and his gang, and Mr Jones, the gravedigger of Globe Lane cemetery, are creatures whose deformed soul surfaces in their eerie physicality and beastly habits. Their monstrosity also impacts to an extent on the surgeons who purchase bodies from Tidkins. This triad of characters, bodysnatchers-gravedigger-surgeons, constitutes the propelling force of one of the chief sensational components of *Mysteries*, that is, the displacement, dismemberment, and commodification of corpses. Notably, they replicate in the narrative the group of figures that managed the body traffic in the pre-Anatomy Act era: surgeons created the demand, bodysnatchers provided the commodity, and gravediggers accepted bribes from the bodysnatchers to grant them access to burial grounds and steal corpses undisturbed. The chief feature of this triad of characters, therefore, is its anachronism.

Volume I of the first series of *Mysteries* run between 1844 and 1845, about twelve years after the passing of the Act, which was celebrated as the measure that put to an end to the body traffic. As we have seen, however, matters were different in practice. The convoluted wording, as well as the assumption that it

would impact on the pauper's body only (Richardson 237), made the Act all but an official authorisation of the trade in the body of the pauper, which became apparent with the *Rex versus Feist* scandal at the end of the following decade. Considering this discrepancy between the theory and the practice of the Anatomy Act, I would suggest that *Mysteries* deliberately deployed the anachronistic monstrous triad to underline the effective continuity between pre- and post-Anatomy Act era in the management of the disposal of the bodies of the pauper.

The Resurrection Man of *Mysteries* is one of the most outstanding villains ever produced in the penny blood genre. His name, almost as much as that of Sweeney Todd, has become synonymous with the genre, although his character is more complex. Unlike Todd, Anthony Tidkins has a past as a humble youth with aspirations to respectability; society, however, rejected him and brutalised him to the point that he became the fiendish Resurrection Man.

Tidkins' ominous sobriquet characterizes him, connecting him indissolubly to death, poverty, and medicine. The definite article "*the*" before his nickname makes him the epitome of the resurrectionist. Everything about him speaks of bodysnatching, from his name to his physical aspect. The reader sees him for the first time through the eyes of Richard Markham, in Newgate prison. The description takes a mere few lines, and yet, they are enough to create an eerie feeling around the "mysterious" stranger: he is a "very short, thin, cadaverous-looking man, with coal-black hair and whiskers, and dark, piercing eyes half concealed beneath shaggy brows of the deepest jet" (*Mysteries* 72). As I have noted elsewhere, the Resurrection Man's "cadaverous" look is his trademark. Being cadaveric is part of his essence: he is not pale, or haggard-looking, he explicitly bears resemblance to a corpse (Gasperini 138). Furthermore, Richard immediately notes that he tends to avert his gaze when he speaks, "as if he could not support the glance of the person whom he addressed" (*Mysteries* 72). In *Mysteries* as in *Sweeney Todd*, eyes are crucial in defining a character's personality. I have pointed out how Todd and Lovett's eyes reveal their monstrosity, and Todd's "squinting" eyes are somewhat as elusive as those of Anthony Tidkins'. Whereas the Resurrection Man's eyes are neither misshapen, nor overtly diabolical, they are definitely disquieting. They are piercing, inquisitive eyes that see more in the interlocutor than he would like to show, while at the same time they do not return the look. Anthony Tidkins' averted gaze is a

message: his eyes can penetrate his interlocutor's nature, but the interlocutor cannot to do the same. There are things of himself that this man does not wish to share, which creates an impression of threatening mystery around him (Gasperini 138).

In striking contrast with his averted gaze, the Resurrection Man is upsettingly frank. After having been accorded a favour by Richard, Anthony Tidkins introduces himself: "[I]f I can ever do you a service … you may reckon upon the Resurrection Man" (*Mysteries* 71). The "ominous title" startles Richard, but Tidkins explains, matter-of-factly:

> "Yes – that's my name and profession … you may know me as Anthony Tidkins, the Resurrection Man."
>
> "And are you really –" began Richard with a partial shudder …
>
> "A body-snatcher? … of course I am." (*Mysteries* 71)

As I noted elsewhere, Tidkins introduces himself by his nickname first, and then by his Christian name because resurrectionism is "his name and profession", which means it is his nature (Gasperini 138). In this respect, he challenges the figures of bodysnatchers that emerge from historical records. From the biography of the bodysnatcher James May in the appendix to the *Trial, Sentence, and Confessions* of the London burkers, it appears that May suffered the consequences of being too open about his line of business. At the beginning of his career, he boasted about the money he made from corpses raised from the burial ground of Portugal Street, behind St Clement Danes' workhouse. Soon, he realised he was "detested and despised by every person" (*Trial, Sentence, and Confessions* 49). May was cast out of his community, as if his profession was a catching disease, and moved to another part of the city, where he met Bishop and Williams, according to the author of the biography. Manifestations of hatred against bodysnatchers could be violent. An example is the accident of Holywell Mount Cemetery in Shoreditch, recorded by Bransby Cooper in the *Life of Sir Astley Cooper*: Whackett, sexton-gravedigger in the private burial ground of Holywell mount, was attacked by a mob after Hollis and Vaughan, two bodysnatchers to whom he had refused access to the cemetery, denounced his connivance with two rival resurrectionists in a police court full of people. When an enraged mob

reached the cemetery and, digging up the graves, found some of them to be empty, they almost buried Whackett alive in one of the pits (Cooper 373-7).

Professional bodysnatchers, therefore, would obviously tend to secrecy, and they would certainly not assume a nickname as revealing as "the Resurrection Man". By contrast, Anthony Tidkins, the literary epitome of the bodysnatcher, makes sure to imprint himself on the memory of those he meets by exploiting the horror that his name (and profession) raise. His straightforwardness is double-edged: Richard is made aware of what kind of individual Tidkins is, and that, for now, they are in good terms. However, his horror at Tidkins' frankness functions as a warning for the reader: the bodysnatcher's amiability will not last.

Tidkins' physical monstrosity concretizes Victorian anxieties about the physical and moral decay that proximity to death could provoke: he is a resurrectionist, a house robber, and, of course, a murderer. As we have seen, medical historians note the concern of the nineteenth-century public about the detaching effect of the study of anatomy on students (Hurren 83; Baldick 142). Documented evidence of the light-hearted, sometimes downright sacrilegious behaviour of gravediggers and other burial ground staff, such as Walker's reports and lectures, substantiated these fears. [5] Such reports also tapped into the annexed concern that the constant exposure to the death and decay of urban cemeteries, with their dangerous miasmas, not only did impair the neighbouring denizens' health but also their morality. Anthony Tidkins embodies the idea that the experience of physical decay might cause the decay of the soul: the bodysnatcher's constant physical contact with death corrupted both his body and his soul, making him inhuman both inside and outside. Early in the narrative, he proves himself a selfish, vindictive, and thoroughly detached character, dominated by anger and revenge, a portrait that reiterated the idea of bodysnatchers as thoroughly corrupted individuals diffused among all strata of Victorian society.

The construction of Tidkins as the epitome of a bodysnatcher encompasses all the attributes that defined this figure in the Victorian popular mind. The resulting portrait is, conforming to the style of penny blood fiction, exaggerated. For

[5] *Second of a Series of Lectures*, for instance, contains the witness of John Eyles, gravedigger in Portugal Street cemetery, who caught his colleagues disinterring the body of his own father (15). Also, Walker writes how the gravediggers of Spa Fields cemetery speculated over the bodies interred there, selling teeth, women's hair, and even burial clothes, which they would "tear off" during the night (23).

instance, in the early stage of their acquaintance, Tidkins informs Markham that, when he cannot find any work as a bodysnatcher, he "do[es] a little in another line" (*Mysteries* 71). When Richard asks what that "other line" is, the Resurrection Man graces him with one of his rare full-faced looks and answers evasively: "Crankey Jem on t'other side [of the wall] will tell you if you ask him" (*Mysteries* 71). The other line of business Tidkins is referring to is housebreaking, and it is not surprising that he should be less open about it than about resurrectionism: bodysnatching was considered a misdemeanour, because stealing a corpse was not theft, technically speaking. Housebreaking, though, was an altogether different matter. As A.B. stated in front of the Select Committee for Anatomy, thieves caught wandering at night would often pose as bodysnatchers in order not to be prosecuted (*RSCA* 71), which resulted in the assumption that all bodysnatchers were also thieves. From A.B.'s comments emerges his professional contempt for this idea, as he perceived himself to be a very distinct individual from the "petty common thieves" that were "ruining" the "business" (*RSCA* 71). Yet, in *Mysteries*, Anthony Tidkins the Resurrection Man both raises subjects and resorts to thieving when demand for bodies is scarce, tapping into the popular idea that the same category of people committed both crimes.[6] The inclusion of thieving in the Resurrection Man's curriculum, therefore, appears as an attempt to portray a "real" bodysnatcher, indeed, the quintessential bodysnatcher. Of course, such a representation must include murder.

In "The Mummy" (*Mysteries* 122-25), one of the most sensational episodes of the series, Richard Markham ends up in the Resurrection Man's lair in Bethnal Green, and discovers that Tidkins is a burker, who hangs his victims upside-down in a tub full of water until they drown and then sells their bodies for dissection. As mentioned in the introduction, Wise argues that the character of Anthony Tidkins bears obvious connections to Bishop and Williams, the London burkers: he lives in the same area of Bethnal Green where they lived and his modus operandi closely resembles that of the London burkers (285-7). The portrait of the arch-bodysnatcher is thus complete: Anthony Tidkins, the cadaverous-looking man, is simultaneously resurrectionist, thief, and murderer. He certainly is a superlative

[6] On the other hand, the events in the narrative unfold after the passing of the Act, and, as Tidkins himself states, he "can't get orders for the stiff'uns as [he] used to do" (*Mysteries* 114). Consequently, the series shows the resurrectionists turning more and more towards the other crime traditionally related to bodysnatching.

individual: none of the nineteenth-century professional bodysnatchers of whom we have record was *also* a burker, *and* a thief.[7] Still, the narrative adds yet another dark layer to the Resurrection Man's portrait by suggesting that Anthony Tidkins might not be entirely from this world, that he might be indeed other-worldly, a supernatural creature.

Disinterring dead bodies and bringing them back to the world of the living, where they do not belong, the "Resurrection" Man, as with Sweeney Todd and Varney, inverts the natural movement from life to death. His practices dehumanize him, turning him into something else, which shows in his physical aspect, as well as in his behaviour. In the famous episode "The Body-snatchers" (*Mysteries* 125-28), where the Resurrection Man and his gang perform the first bodysnatching expedition in the series, the gang uses a form of telepathic communication that frames them within a primeval, animal dimension (Gasperini 140). Tidkins forces open the door of the Shoreditch church where the body they are looking for is buried, while his accomplices and the surgeon who commissioned the body theft lie in wait nearby. At one point, "the Buffer thr[ows] himself flat upon his stomach, with his ear towards the ground" and finally "utter[s] a species of low growl as if he were answering some signal that caught his ears alone", which indeed is the case: "The skeleton-key won't open the side-door, the Resurrection Man says", he informs the others (*Mysteries* 126). Passages such as this represent the bodysnatchers as beasts: the position of the Buffer, flat on the ground like a snake, signifies that he debases himself to a lower station, closer to the animal state (Gasperini 140). Further, his first reaction to the inaudible message sent by the Resurrection Man is "a low growl", increasing the feeling of an animalistic component in his person. The same component appears later on in the series in "The Exhumation" episode (*Mysteries* 328-31), in which Tidkins and the Buffer disinter the body of a man in Globe Lane cemetery. Their eyes, the narrator says, "had become so habituated to the obscurity of night, in consequence of the frequency with which they pursued their avocations during the

[7] Bishop, the London burker, was also a resurrectionist (Wise 30), but there is no record he was a thief. His associate and son-in-law, Williams, had repeatedly served time in prison for theft, but he had only recently entered the bodysnatching profession when the Italian boy case exploded (Wise 47-51). Further, with only one exception for the theft of glass from a carriage window, no one in the gang of Ben Crouch was a professional thieve (Richardson 70). In general, "the evidence for an association between bodysnatching and crime seems largely to have been based on hearsay" (Richardson 70).

darkness … that they were possessed of the visual acuteness generally ascribed to cats" (*Mysteries* 330). The eyes, the central element of characterisation, in the bodysnatchers are peculiarly inhuman; they are feline eyes that grant night vision. This comparison implies a moral judgement on the resurrectionists, suggesting that their sacrilegious behaviour is not simply dehumanising, but is maiming their souls to the point of turning them into supernatural creatures (Gasperini 140).

The arch-bodysnatcher Anthony Tidkins, of course, possesses even more strikingly over-developed senses. In "The Body-snatchers", once the tomb is open, the surgeon explains that they are looking for an elm coffin covered with black cloth. Tidkins then penetrates with an iron rod the lid of a coffin into the vault, tastes the tip and declares, "smacking his lips": "Yes … the coffin in this vault is an elm one, and is covered with a black cloth" (*Mysteries* 127). As if he suffered from a bizarre colour-taste synaesthesia, the Resurrection Man can perceive colours with his tongue. His activities familiarised him with death to the point of modifying his senses, making him the preternatural product of prolonged sacrilegious contact with material decay.

The sense of something sacrilegious about the resurrectionists is conveyed to the reader through the eyes of the surgeon in "The Body-snatchers". As he watches the gangs' eerie, almost telepathic mode of communication as they work to open the tomb, the surgeon

> [cannot] altogether subdue certain feelings of horror … : the methodical precision with which they perfor[m] their avocations – and the coolness they [exhibit] in undertaking a sacrilegious task mak[es] a powerful impression upon his mind … his feelings of aversion were the same he would have experienced had a loathsome reptile crawled over his naked flesh. (*Mysteries* 126)

The powerful sensory stimuli the image of the "crawling loathsome reptile" conveys recall to the reader's mind the image of the Buffer prone on the ground, synthesising it with that of "the biblical Serpent" (Gasperini 141). The text suggests that proximity to death affected the bodysnatchers, effacing their reverence for the dead, and relegates them to the category of hardened sinner, beyond pardon or redemption.

Monstrosity defines the bodysnatchers of *Mysteries*, especially their supreme representative Anthony Tidkins. If we consider that the Resurrection Man shows a certain resilience in escaping death (Hackenberg 73), it could be ventured that Tidkins, the quintessential bodysnatcher, embodies the monstrous contradiction implicit in his profession, that is, the unnatural subversion of movement from death to life. He does not belong to the world of the living, nor to the world of the dead. Anthony Tidkins is a monster in limbo.

This liminality extends to Tidkins' relationship to the time of the narrative and the time of the intended reader. As noted above, his anachronistic presence in a post-Anatomy Act narrative draws attention to the grey area that was the disposal of the body of the pauper after 1832. Additionally, and significantly, Wise observes that the invention of a literary bodysnatcher suggested that "resurrection … remained a potent folk memory" (287). Considering the time in the narrative in relation to the time of the intended reader, it becomes apparent that the terror and threat embodied by the monstrous resurrectionist defy time constraints. The story begins in July 1831; then, there is a flash-forward to 1835. Finally, events progress until they almost reach the intended reader's time, that is, the 1840s. Hence, not only does the narrative annihilate the distance in space from the reader through the setting, which is not simply "London", but specific areas related to dissection and the anatomy murders, but it also progressively curtails the time distance between the reader and the monster through the series of flash-forwards. Consequently, the Resurrection Man becomes a monster for the "almost present", close to the reader in both time and space.

Sarah Hackenberg argues that the Resurrection Man, as Varney, symbolizes the haunting past: Tidkins is "the inescapable return of personal and political history" (73), the haunting double of the middle-class protagonist, infused with "republican energy" (71). I would expand Hackenberg's political reading by considering the Resurrection Man's tendency to survive, which makes him a revenant, as are Varney and Mark Ingestrie. As illustrated in the previous chapters, revenants in these narratives reveal underlying, unpalatable truths. The anachronistic figure of the Resurrection Man is powerfully symbolic of the injustice of the post-Anatomy Act situation concerning medicine and displaced corpses. He brings the past era of burking and resurrectionism dangerously close to the present era of (alleged) legal order, exposing the Anatomy Act as an

ineffective solution. The Act failed to bring the black market for cadavers to an end and, acting in lieu of the bodysnatcher and the burker, sanctioned the anatomist's scalpel's authority over the pauper's body. In this way, thirteen years after the passing of the Anatomy Act, the bodysnatcher becomes a literary monster, the symbol of the haunting past in which the ignominy of dissection threatened the working-class individual. His monstrous presence bears an indissoluble connection with the world of medicine, and therefore, when *Mysteries* introduces the first medical figure in the narrative, the surgeon of "The Body-snatchers", he already occupies an ambiguous position that the presence of Anthony Tidkins charges with negative connotations.

The body Tidkins and his gang resurrect in "The Body-snatchers" is that of a middle-class girl. The tomb, an elm coffin, covered with a black cloth, and buried in a vault closed with a marble slab inside a church, is revealing of the social standing of the girl. This was not the bodysnatchers' typical tomb of choice: A.B. explained that they preferred the shallow pauper's graves (*RSCA* 72). In part, the marble tomb can be explained with its intrinsic sensationalistic potential. Its opening proves a long and delicate task that allows the narrator to indulge in a minutely detailed description of the procedure, building up the tension to the climax, when, as was customary, the body of the girl is manhandled by the ruffians, stripped naked and thrust in a rough sack, tied head to heels. This image introduced a voyeuristic component that would satisfy the audience's demand for cheap sensation, and simultaneously tapped into concerns related to the medical gaze on the female body: Powell observes that the image implicitly suggests that "the snatching and dissection of the female corpse constitutes rape" (46). However, I would venture that the choice of a middle-class tomb, and hence of a middle-class corpse, exploits the voyeuristic component of the female corpse to problematize, not just the gaze, but the ethical position of the surgeon in the scene: differently from the counterintuitive way the same issue is addressed in *Manuscripts*, *Mysteries* openly questions the abuse the surgeon commits in opening the tomb.

Montgomery's early study on the relationship between surgeons and bodysnatchers in the Victorian era defined the bond as "a Faustian bargain" (532). I argued elsewhere that this definition automatically placed the resurrectionists in the opposite role of Mephistopheles, and that the Victorian medical fraternity

advertised and reinforced this juxtaposition (Gasperini 142). Sir Astley Cooper's statements in front of the Select Committee for Anatomy exemplify this type of reinforcement. He claimed that having to resort to the services of the bodysnatchers was hurtful to the surgeons as "men of character and education" (*RSCA* 18), a statement that framed the resurrectionists as the antagonists of an otherwise honest system, and the surgeons as their victims. To say that this representation was inaccurate would be an understatement. *Mysteries* seems, at first, to espouse this idea, but, as Hackenberg argues, the Resurrection Man, like Varney, "disrupt[s] any easy categorization of virtue and vice" (73), which also affects the position of the surgeon as a "virtuous" character: a deal requires two parties, and there can be no Mephistopheles without a Faustus (Gasperini 143).

The surgeon in "The Body-snatchers" is a Faustian figure. Although he is a family friend to the dead girl, he "called into action" demonic forces in order to quench his "thirst after science" (*Mysteries* 125), because, as with Chillingworth in *Varney*, his "earnest desire" to open the body overtakes his human feelings (*Mysteries* 126). Detachment, apparently, was a taint from which the medical fraternity had not yet redeemed itself thirteen years after the passing of the Anatomy Act: the science-obsessed surgeon was as much alive in the popular mind as the resurrectionist, to the extent that *Mysteries* represented him at the scene of the sacrilegious act. Historical records suggest this was a rare occurrence, which only characterised the early stages of professional resurrectionism.[8] The surgeon's perception of the resurrectionists strikingly contrasts with his involvement in the snatching. In his eyes, the bodysnatchers become demonic entities speaking their own alien language, as he places himself in the role of a passive observer, similar to the surgeons who testified in front of the Select Committee. Yet, the expression "called into action" questions his contemplative position. As Faustus, he had the active role of summoning agent, someone who deliberately sought the help of famously dark forces. His Cooperian distress before the bodysnatchers is not credible. While he is terrified by the forces he unleashed, he is unable, or rather, unwilling to dispense with their services.

His professional figure appears increasingly impaired as the episode progresses. He reveals that the girl's family explicitly forbade him access to her body, which makes her, technically, "claimed". Her "nearest known relatives"

[8] See Rosner 36-7.

paid for her funeral and made an official statement forbidding the dissection of her remains. The doctor overrides the family's (that is, his friends') legal rights and hires the bodysnatchers to steal the corpse. He urges the Resurrection Man to cancel all traces of the violation because, should it be discovered, "[s]uspicion would immediately fall upon [him]; for it would be remembered how earnestly [he] desired to open the body, and how resolutely [his] request was refused" (*Mysteries* 126). This detail characterises the surgeon, not simply as detached, but as a criminal breaking the law. As Chillingworth in *Varney* and Musgrove in *Manuscripts*, he gives his own scientific endeavours precedence over everything else. His connection to the girl's family increases the impression of something callous about him, representing the medical figure as simultaneously untrustworthy and unethical. When he describes what coffin they should haul up from the tomb, he remarks that he has this information because he "gave the instructions for the funeral [himself], being the oldest friend of the family" (*Mysteries* 126). The figure of the Faustian doctor, therefore, adds to the component of the haunting past by projecting the idea of a medical fraternity that is still the detached, career- and corpse-obsessed group whose "thirst" for dead bodies triggered the black market for cadavers and the anatomy murders.

The events unfolding in the following decade confirmed, to an extent, this idea. In 1858, in a letter to the *Times* entitled "The Difficulties of Dissection", the anonymous correspondent R.H.M. commented on the *Rex versus Feist* case. While he deplored Feist's actions, he observed that the case highlighted the problem of shortage of corpse supply for anatomy schools, and stressed that it was "a very serious matter to the public" that the supply should be so scarce as to compel the schools to resort to bribery ("The Difficulties…" 9). Therefore, as late as 1858, the medical fraternity still complained that the current legislation, consisting of the combined force of the Anatomy Act and the New Poor Law, did not provide enough subjects for the anatomy schools, fulfilling the early prophecy of "The Body-snatchers". Already in 1844-5, *Mysteries*, a popular fiction for the working class, implied that the new legislation would not satisfy the requests of the medical fraternity, which, if unheard, might lead to resuming the body traffic, leaving the population exposed. As *Rex versus Feist* would prove, this was the case. The narrative, through the figure of the Faustian surgeon, called for an admission of responsibility on the part of the medical fraternity in the

anachronistic post-Anatomy Act situation. Even after the Act was passed, the threat of a barbaric past era of burking and resurrectionism hovered over the citizens of London because the surgeons still needed (wanted?) more than they were allotted.

The third component of the triad of individuals traditionally associated with resurrectionism, that is, a member of the burial ground staff, is introduced with the second bodysnatching expedition the Resurrection Man undertakes. The target is the body of an unknown man who died in the Globe Lane area, and the theft is followed through different episodes from its commissioning by a private anatomist to the delivery of the body. Mr Jones, the gravedigger of Globe Lane Cemetery, is crucial to the actual snatching phase of the plan, and appears in the episode appropriately titled "The Gravedigger" (323-6). Similarly to the bodysnatchers, he displays several monstrous traits: like them, his work contaminates his body and soul, making him an agent of the system that protracts the gap between the social classes beyond death, and he concretises Victorian anxieties about proximity to death and decay. His most outstanding monstrous feature, which singles him out as particularly hideous, is a consequence of this proximity: unlike any other monster in the narrative, he is a necrophage.

The Globe Lane burial ground, where Mr Jones works, is a sickening spot. The "damp" soil emanates a "nauseous" smell so pervasive that it penetrates "every house … and the clothes of the poor inmates smel[ls], and their food taste[s], of the damp grave!" (*Mysteries* 323). The manager of Globe Lane cemetery has the goal of "crowd[ing] the greatest possible quantity of corpses into the smallest space", which makes the soil so replete with human relics that it is difficult to distinguish them from earth (*Mysteries* 323-4). Smoke rises constantly from the chimney of the "bone-house" on the cemetery ground, and its "pest-bearing breath" (*Mysteries* 324) ominously hints at the nature of the fuel, explaining how the burial ground owner makes room for new bodies. Even making due allowance for the sensationalism of the genre, historical records suggest that this description did not stray much from that of actual burial grounds in London's poor neighbourhoods. Actually, the fictional Globe Lane burial ground bears a remarkable similarity to the scandalous Spa-Fields cemetery.

The Spa Fields case broke early in 1845. On February 26, the *Times* reported that the residents of Clerkenwell brought before the magistrate the condition of

severe overcrowding of the ground and the practices that were employed to make room for more bodies, which included disinterring the remains and burning them in the bone-house ("Police"). George Walters, the engine keeper of the parish, was repeatedly called to extinguish the fire of the bone-house. There, he found "as many coffin boards as three men could carry, and a great deal of pitch[9]" in the chimney, as well as a tell-tale smell of burnt decomposing flesh ("Police"). Residents complained about the dreadful smell of the burial ground, especially when the chimney of the bone-house released its fetid smoke, and voiced their concerns about the impact this had on their health. Also, they regularly spotted the gravediggers disinterring and mangling human remains, and then either mixing them again with the soil or carting them to the bone-house. Harriet Woods, a woman living next to the ground, witnessed the gravedigger jumping onto the coffins of her own children, and when on another occasion she "called to him" he answered with "a threatening language" ("The Spa-Fields Burial Ground" 7).

Although it had no impact on the legislation[10], the Spa Fields case reached the attention of the authorities. The parish of the fictional Globe Lane cemetery, instead, ignores the requests for intervention coming from the dwellers of the adjoining houses against the offensive spot. As for Mr Jones, except when his rod taps a coffin that releases a particularly foul smell, he seems undisturbed by his working conditions and digs bare-armed into the sickly mud to disinter old, or not very old, coffins to make room for new ones.

Historical records suggest that real-life gravediggers were not so detached: in order to perform their "disgusting" work, they often resorted to alcohol and sometimes sang to cheer themselves up (Walker, *First of a Series* 17). This behaviour appeared insensitive in the eyes of laypeople and raised the suspicion that their work made gravediggers indifferent to death, a conviction that cases such as Spa Fields reinforced. The fictional Mr Jones's attitude towards the bodies he disinters reiterates this idea. The narrative indulges in graphic, gory details of the "not entirely decomposed" bodies that the gravedigger breaks into pieces with

[9] Pitch was used to insulate coffins. According to Walker, the great amount of pitch found in the chimney of the Spa Fields bone-house proved that coffins burned there regularly (*Burial Ground Incendiarism* 14).

[10] Jackson remarks that the Spa Fields case "was something of a hollow victory for Walker and [the MP William] Mackinnon": it yielded no concrete results in terms of legislation, nor did it cause any exemplary punishment to befall the staff that could function as a deterrent against future transgressions. Most significantly, Spa Fields itself was not closed (123).

his pickaxe (*Mysteries* 324). The central element of the scene is the "upper part of a skull, with the long, dark hair of a woman still attached to it" which, it is suggested, was once "a valuable ornament" (*Mysteries* 324).[11] The sentimental value attached to the hair contrasts with the "coolness" with which Mr Jones picks it up with the skull and throws it in the fire, where it "hiss[es]" as it burns until "the voracious flames li[ck] up the thin coat of blackened flesh which had still remained on the skull; and lastly devo[ur] the bone itself" (*Mysteries* 324). Again, the female corpse, represented here by the hair, a symbol of female beauty, is manhandled by an unfeeling male character dedicated to the desecration of graves. The femininity of the dead body, connected to the Victorian idealization of the woman as a source of tenderness and good feelings in the man, underscores the gravedigger's lack of emotional response.

The extent of his indifference becomes apparent when he prepares his victuals. As he makes his coffee on the fire of the bone-house, the narrator notes that he keeps his water, his coffee-pot, and his coffee in the same "foul place" where he burns the remains of the dead, and that he consumes his food in front of the same fire that he "fed with human flesh and bones!" (*Mysteries* 325). The ominous suggestion is that the cinders and ashes of the dead are contaminating his food, and therefore he is ingesting dead human bodies, which makes him a necrophage. Again, the historical source for this gruesome detail of Jones's professional routine can be traced to Spa-Fields: in *Second of a Series of Lectures* Walker writes in disgust that "the watchman (?) of the [Spa-Fields burial] ground … was accustomed to eat his food in the *bone-house*, during the performance of his duties" (26). Whereas he gradually "became more fastidious", and ultimately ceased this habit (*Second of a Series of Lectures* 26), Mr Jones of Globe Town cemetery has no such scruples. On the contrary, there is an eerie connection between him and the personified fire, which, like a "voracious" carnivorous beast, "licked up" and then "devoured" the female scalp, and is "fed" with human flesh and bones. By proximity, the gravedigger participates in the fire-beast's voracity by cooking on it and therefore, implicitly, feeding on the same fuel. This suggests that Mr Jones's detachment originates in physical contamination, which hardened

[11] This detail represents a further link with the Spa-Fields case: the *Times* issue of February 26 1845 reports the statement of Catherine Murphy, a Clerkenwell denizen who spotted the gravediggers lifting a corpse by the hair ("Police").

his soul. The constant contact with death, unmitigated by human feelings of respect for the dead, dehumanized him.

The narrator stresses that Mr Jones's activities are sacrilegious, bitterly observing that, while the bereaved console themselves with the idea that their loved ones are experiencing the "*quiet slumber of the tomb*",

> the *last home* is invaded – the *quiet resting place* is rudely awakened with sacrilegious echo … and the corpse is snatched from the *quiet slumber of the tomb* to be cast in the all-devouring furnace of the Bone-House. [12] (*Mysteries* 325)

Expressions such as "sacrilegious" and "the body is snatched" appeared also in "The Body-snatchers", connecting the two episodes and, consequently, the Resurrection Man and his gang on one side and Mr Jones on the other. The narrator reinforces the connection, observing that the "long flexible iron rod" Mr Jones uses to test the ground before digging is "similar to those which we have already described as being used by the body-snatchers" (*Mysteries* 324). Still well into the 1840s, therefore, the figure of the gravedigger was associated with that of the resurrectionist in the popular mind. In this association, the gravedigger was regarded as the corrupt and corruptible party, another nuance of the character that *Mysteries* reinforces. Indeed, while he is untouched by the decay that pervades his workplace, like Will Stephens in *Varney* Mr Jones is rather sensitive to money. He usually enforces the rules of Spa Fields cemetery, which include the desecration of the tombs, because "surely his superiors must know what was right and what was wrong!" (*Mysteries* 325). However, he can make exceptions in case a better prospect presents itself, and Mr Banks, the local undertaker, is able to offer him one. Upon request of the Resurrection Man, Mr Banks has managed to access the body of the unknown stranger dead in the lodgings of the aged widow Mrs Smith, and to introduce to her the Resurrection Man disguised as the priest who will stage the fake funeral for the dead man. Now he only needs to bribe Mr Jones to make sure Tidkins can snatch the body undisturbed. Jones appears determined not to transgress the rules of the burial ground, until Banks capitulates and offers to pay the gravedigger twice the sum he already takes (*Mysteries* 325).

[12] Reynolds' emphasis.

Mr Jones's work ethic (or lack thereof) frames him as an agent of the power that ensures that the gap between the well-off and the pauper is protracted in death. He accepts the status quo, unless he can bend it to his own advantage. The proximity to decay that hardened him, and perhaps contaminated his physical body, also contaminated him from the moral and spiritual point of view. His character resembles that of the ghoul, the Arabic demon that becomes a cemetery-dweller, grave robber and corpse-eater in English lore, and "is described (by Edgar Allan Poe) as 'neither man nor woman … neither brute nor human'" ("Ghoul", Encyclopædia Britannica).[13] His presence in the narrative underscores the Londoners' blindness and anosmia about the state of urban cemeteries. Conversing with Mr Banks, Mr Jones remarks on the obliviousness of "persons which dwells up in decent neighbourhoods … and seems exceedin' proud of their fine houses and handsome shops" about "the foul air that comes from places only hid by a low wall or a thin paling" (*Mysteries* 325). The emphasis on the "low" wall and "thin" paling stresses the proximity between the dead and the living in Victorian London, of which the poor are constantly aware and the rich are blissfully, if not willingly, ignorant. Yet, Mr Jones alleges, the West End cemeteries "pursues just the wery same course as we does here" (*Mysteries* 325). Indeed, the infamous Enon Chapel was decidedly towards the western side of the metropolis, and Mr Banks cites it as an example (*Mysteries* 326).

Further, the ghoulish gravedigger is part of a systematic process of disrespect for the dead poor that in reality was endemic to post-Act London – or England. The offensive state of intra-mural burial grounds combined with the assumption, sanctioned by the Anatomy Act, that the right of the poor to a decent interment was inferior to that of middle- and upper-class people tacitly authorises the fictional Jones to desecrate the tombs in his ground and to take bribes to allow others to do the same. The connection between Mr Jones and the Resurrection Man is significant from this perspective: both connive, both perform similar activities, and, most notably, as with the other monsters examined so far, Jones also disrupts the boundaries between life and death bringing dead matter back to the world of the living. Consequently, he is in the perfect position to "resurrect" the practice of bodysnatching. Thirteen years after the passing of the Anatomy Act, the figure of the gravedigger could still be marketed as a sacrilegious and

[13] Poe's description of the ghouls appears in the poem "The Bells" (1849).

untrustworthy party involved in the black market for cadavers. After all, was the medical fraternity not demanding yet more bodies?

The three monsters the bodysnatching episodes of *Mysteries* present originate in the connection between displaced bodies and anatomy studies that existed in the popular mind since the beginning of the century. In the narrative, the triad builds a sensational exposé of social injustice, as each of its elements contributes to extend the gap between the rich and the poor to the disposal of the remains after death. Mephistopheles, Faustus, and the Ghoul cater to the fears of the working- and lower-middle-class audience of the series about the ignominy of the anatomist's scalpel, curtailing the distance between the pre-Anatomy Act era and the audience's present time through connections with such recent scandals as Enon chapel and Spa Fields. Unlike in *Manuscripts* and *Varney*, anatomy has no redeeming features in *Mysteries*: there are no heroic doctors, and bodysnatching has no higher purpose than that of satisfying a greedy, voyeuristic surgeon, and is performed by monstrous individuals.

Such a grim picture contributes to *Mysteries*' larger teleological purpose, which is possibly its most prominent feature: notwithstanding its use of sensation and melodrama, this is a narrative with a political agenda.

Poverty and wealth, language and power: the Anatomy Act and political discourse.

Medical discourse in *Mysteries* is strongly influenced by the narrative's political undertones, which constitute the core of the series from the opening prologue. The text calls the reader's attention on the social gap between the rich and the poor, which by the 1840s had become the trademark of Victorian society, and on its most famous product, the metropolis of London:

> There are but two words known in the moral alphabet of this great city; for all virtues are summed up in the one, and all vice in the other: and those words are
>
> WEALTH. | POVERTY. (*Mysteries* 2)

This opening concept becomes the paradigm of the whole work. A line visually separates the words "wealth" and "poverty" in the body of the text, while the full stops signify their finality. Stephen J. Carver observes that the juxtaposition

between social classes in Reynolds' series constitutes "the recognizable duality present in all urban writing", while "the additional language of class war" singles out *Mysteries* in this subgenre (153). In contrast with the penny bloods' tendency, noted by Crone, to reconcile the reader with the status quo (190-91), *Mysteries* sent a revolutionary message to its readership, which is compatible with the agenda of all Chartist fictions. Haywood explains that, maybe more than anything else, the Chartist movement found purpose in the fight against the 1832 Reform Bill and its "treacherous" disempowerment of the working class (*Literature of Struggle* 1). Consequently, he contends, Chartist fiction can rightfully be defined "propaganda" as it was "more aggressive" in proposing a solution to the socio-political prevarications than other contemporary forms (*Literature of Struggle* 4). Chartists were aware of the "ideological role of literature": to them, "art was an expression of the political condition, not its antithesis or its imaginary solution" (Haywood, *Literature of Struggle* 4). From this perspective, then, the first series of *Mysteries* can certainly be considered Chartist fiction, as it expressed explicitly, perhaps more than any other penny blood, the injustice inherent in the current socio-political situation.

The series' sensationalism somewhat undermined its political intentions in the eyes of the educated reader, both coeval to the series and future, and Reynolds's use of melodrama indeed cost him his reputation for a long time.[14] However, Haywood notes that the use of melodrama, instead of impairing the political value of the narrative's radical message, promoted its reaching a wider, more diverse audience than other forms of fiction (*The Revolution* 173). Significantly, this message included discourses related to anatomy and dissection. From a medical-historical perspective, the discourse on social injustice can be broken down into two different sub-discourses. Firstly, as in *Sweeney Todd* and *Varney*, in the brutal society of *Mysteries* knowledge is power. Secondly, although the Anatomy Act is not explicitly mentioned in *Mysteries*, the series questions its effectiveness in enforcing legality and guaranteeing the safety of the public.

[14] Haywood notes that the antagonism of "commentators and critics" towards Reynolds and the "fusion of popular politics and fiction" that characterised his work (*The Revolution* 171) lasted from Reynolds's times until recently. Dickens, as Haywood observes, was "Reynolds's first great enemy" in his days (*The Revolution* 171), while, as noted above, still well into the 1970s scholars such as Berridge and Williams questioned the integrity of Reynolds's purposes in writing popular fiction with political undertones (Haywood *The Revolution* 172-3).

The chief trait that distinguishes the Resurrection Man from Sweeney Todd and Varney is that, while the vampire and the barber endeavour to conceal the truth about themselves, Anthony Tidkins is very open about himself, and often about other people, especially if this grants him a position of power. This difference originates in the fact that Tidkins hardly ever feels threatened by truth, while he is the one who threatens other characters with the disclosure of dangerous truths. Unlike Todd, Tidkins never bluffs when he asserts he might ruin a character with a piece of information he possesses. When he is in danger of being prosecuted, he does not hesitate to turn in his accomplices and, after Richard antagonizes him, he taints his reputation revealing his past as a Newgate convict in more than one occasion. The Resurrection Man can be read as a piece of walking truth, the ugly truth that cannot be silenced, and this is not limited to his revealing other characters' secrets: as a product of the social inequality that regulates the city, he embodies the uncomfortable truth of the injustice underpinning the Victorian metropolis itself, as Reynolds represents it.

Since London will not acknowledge Anthony Tidkins' uncomfortable existence, he makes his presence undeniable by becoming a ubiquitous, dangerously active entity in society, one that transcends social boundaries. Taking this point a step further, it could be said that the threat Tidkins poses to middle-class characters symbolizes the possibility that, though the current socio-political situation primarily harms the poor, its consequences may befall the middle class as well. The Resurrection Man's profession is as obsolete as the exclusion of the lower strata from government and the legislation that subjects them to the anatomist's scalpel. Suggestive as he is of the dark times of resurrectionism and burking, Anthony Tidkins signifies the insubstantiality of the idea that the Anatomy Act can provide a solution to the anatomists' demand for bodies, and the threat it poses to individuals regardless of their station in life.

Haywood's analysis of adverts in Reynolds's publications shows he was aware of the variety in the composition of his audience, both in terms of social extraction and gender (*The Revolution* 189). As noted in the Introduction, Haywood contends that the most damning feature of cheap serialised fiction produced by Lloyd and Reynolds for "respectable" Victorians was that its appeal "transgressed conventional … boundaries" (*The Revolution* 140). Therefore *Mysteries*, and the penny blood genre more broadly, was undesirable in that it was the tangible proof

of the permeability of social barriers, which was proven to be just as thin as the vertical line between the words "wealth" and "poverty" that appeared in the "Prologue". This subversive concept underpinned the plot of *Mysteries* itself, suggesting that the boundary that excluded the working class from view and from power would not shield the upper and middle classes from the consequences of this exclusion, which would find their way through the social barrier in the same way the lurid *Mysteries* series did.

The narrative conveys discourses about the danger of social inequality by physically and socially moving the characters between the two apparently separated states of wealth and poverty. Haywood explains the tendency of authors such as Reynolds to "degra[de] heroes and heroines" as an attempt to "personify" "frustrated respectability" of the working class (*The Revolution* 146). Ellen Monroe and her father, but also Richard and, to an extent, Eliza, are instances of this narrative strategy. The movement of an individual from wealth to poverty was, after all, an event still in the realm of possibility. The actual *frisson*, however, is constituted by the Resurrection Man and his gang's eerie ability to break socio-geographical boundaries, reaching out from the world of poverty and crime and threatening the world of wealth. Tidkins' transgression of socio-geographical boundaries reflects the genre's transgression of social and cultural norms. He and his gang constantly infringe the social conventions that forbade their trespassing in the space of respectability and wealth. The first tomb they open in the narrative is that of a middle-class girl; they almost kill Richard Markham and Eliza Sidney, two upper-middle-class characters; and they go as far as attempting to break into Buckingham Palace, which to them is "no more than another crib to crack" (Carver 159). No place is too high for Anthony Tidkins, not even the very heart of the British Empire, and neither the property, nor the secrets of his social betters are out of his reach.

Mysteries is a penny blood with a resurrectionist villain, and it is therefore natural that the threat posed by the permeability of the illusory boundary should concretise in physical destruction, more precisely annihilation through dismemberment. The narrative poses this danger as directly connected to the lack of communication between the two worlds, particularly to the middle-class characters' ignorance of the language of poverty. From several episodes it emerges that characters from the world of poverty react to the threatening power

of the middle and upper classes by creating their own code of communication. As in *Sweeney Todd*, this separate code grants its speakers the power of excluding others from discourse. Richard and Ellen ignore the code of poverty and suffer the consequences of their ignorance; furthermore, the narrative seems to suggest that, to an extent, their ignorance is a shortcoming on their part.

Richard, honourable to a fault, refuses to assume any honourable intent in Tidkins when he meets him near Count Alteroni's villa, and treats him as his social inferior. He knows nothing of Anthony but that he has a past as a Newgate convict, a past which they share, and which makes their positions in society not very different after all. This is something Richard does not wish to acknowledge. Therefore, when Anthony asks him what he is doing in that neighbourhood and who was the girl with whom he was talking, he is outraged: "surveying the ruffian with mingled indignation and disgust", he exclaims "And by what right do you dare to put those insolent queries to me?" (*Mysteries* 112). His gaze averted, the Resurrection Man "coolly" replies that, in that case, "[he] can precious soon ascertain all the truth for [him]self" (*Mysteries* 112). Instead of perceiving the threat in these words and acting accordingly, Markham displays his middle-class outrage at being treated as a peer by a former Newgate convict. As Anthony turns towards the house of the Alteronis, he cries:

> "Wretch! What do you mean to do? … you do not know that that abode is sacred – that it is the residence of probity, innocence and honour – that if you were to breathe a hint who [sic] and what you are, you would be spurned from the door?" (*Mysteries* 112-13)

By defining Isabella's house as a "sacred" place where "probity, innocence and honour" reside, Richard is implying Tidkins' foreignness to these virtues, which makes him unwelcome among *respectable* people. He marginalizes Anthony, reminding him of his low, *disreputable* social station. This is a mistake. Since Richard associates power with social standing, he fails to see that Anthony's knowledge gives him power, and that his position is far from subdued. Tidkins bitterly replies that he is "accustomed to *that* in this Christian land", and then adds that he may just

> "ask for alms … at that house, and thereupon state that the gentleman who was just now walking with the young lady … was a companion of mine in Newgate – a communication which will tend to preserve the innocence, honour, probity and all the rest of it, of that family." (*Mysteries* 113)

To Richard's protests that he cannot be "so base" as to "betray" him and "ruin his reputation", Anthony retorts: "And why should I have any regard for you, since you receive and treat me as if I was a dog?" (*Mysteries* 113). Of course, Tidkins blackmails Richard to keep silent with the Alteronis about Newgate, asking for a sum that would leave the young man ruined. "Why do you persecute me in this way?" Richard asks, "[W]hy should you seek … to annihilate all my hopes of again establishing myself in an honourable position in society?" (*Mysteries* 114), at which Tidkins ferociously replies: "My law is the law of the world – *the oppression of the weak by the strong*; and my right is also that universal practice – *the right of him who takes what will not dare to be refused*" (*Mysteries* 114).[15]

This exchange marks the reversal of roles between Markham and the Resurrection Man, and the moment in which Anthony Tidkins becomes Richard Markham's nemesis. Richard's alienation from the world of Anthony Tidkins made him unable to communicate with a lower-class individual. His rhetorical speech on virtue and rights and his emphasis on his efforts to regain a "honourable", that is, *respectable*, position in society antagonise Tidkins, who has been excluded from the right to respectability by the class to which Richard Markham belongs. His own upbringing led him to perceive the supposed moral superiority and justice of the middle class as an oppressive power, which he resents and transforms into his own, distorted code of oppression, which he mercilessly applies the moment he finds himself in a position of power. Tidkins' awareness of the power of knowledge has obvious Chartist undertones, since it emphasizes the importance of knowledge to the oppressed in order to overcome the oppressor. He thus becomes a subversive entity in the narrative: he is the powerless individual who manages to overpower his social betters using knowledge as a weapon.

[15] Reynolds's emphasis.

Markham's ignorance of this type of knowledge, and of the code of communication of the world of poverty, almost costs him his life on other occasions. Since poverty and its knowledge are the key to understanding not only the language, but also the space of poverty, he gets lost in the slums where the Resurrection Man lures him, and repeatedly falls in his traps. The first time, Markham is imprisoned in the Resurrection Man's house, where he is almost killed and sold for dissection. The second time, a message written by Tidkins, posing as his long-lost brother Eugene, asks Richard to keep an appointment at a place ominously called Twig Folly. Although the message sounds strange, Richard reflects: "Who could wish to injure *me?* Who would wish to take *my* life? … The idea is preposterous!" (*Mysteries* 321).[16] On the next page, Richard is falling into the river, pushed there by the Resurrection Man, and he escapes death again thanks to the help of his friend Ellen Monroe in male disguise.

Similarly to Richard, Ellen ignores the code of poverty in consequence of her secluded middle-class life. The only daughter of "fond, but too indulgent parents" who raised her "in the lap of luxury (*Mysteries* 167), when she falls into disgrace and becomes a destitute seamstress in Golden Lane, she cannot communicate with the dwellers and does not understand who she can or cannot trust, which makes her the target of the "old hag" who lives in the same building. When she approaches Ellen for the first time, the narrative underscores the failure in the communication between the two women. To Ellen, her neighbour's words are "a strain" that she can "scarcely comprehe[nd]"; although it is clear that she is being offered "a more pleasant and profitable mode of earning money", she instinctively recoils and "tremble[es] at the words that issu[e] from the crone's mouth" (*Mysteries* 168).

The scene frames Ellen as a foreigner in the environment of the slum, unfamiliar with its language and costumes. Notably, the narrator defines the failure in communication, and Ellen's status of foreignness, on the basis of moral parameters: "[t]he words of the old woman were … unintelligible to [her]" because "[t]he soul of Ellen was purity itself" (*Mysteries* 170). In their second meeting, Ellen fails again to understand the woman, and listens "as if she [is] hearing a strange language which she [is] endeavouring to make out" (*Mysteries* 172). This passage explicitly compares the two estranged classes to two foreign

[16] Reynolds's emphasis.

cultures characterized by different linguistic and moral codes. When Ellen finally understands (although it is not stated explicitly) she is being offered to become a prostitute, she reacts according to the code of Victorian middle-class female respectability, covering "her blushing cheeks with her snow-white hands" and bursting into tears (*Mysteries* 172). In the world of poverty, though, the middle-class code does not work, and her innocence becomes naiveté, exposing her to the old woman's plans. In order to strengthen her grasp on the girl, the old woman finds her a series of temporary occupations among artists – a statuary, a sculptor, a painter, a photographer, and an illusionist. In all these works Ellen is in contact with men unchaperoned and, on most occasions, she must pose naked for them. The instalment, appropriately named "The Road to Ruin" (171-6), shows Ellen selling herself piecemeal, corrupting her soul in the process. Even the narrator, who was praising her virtue only a few pages earlier, coldly concludes:

> Suffice it to say that … [a] tainted soul now resided in a pure body. Every remaining sentiment of decency and delicacy was crushed … Pure souls have frequently resided in tainted bodies … but here was essentially a foul soul in a chaste and virgin form. (*Mysteries* 175)

However, Ellen is only in part responsible for her state, according to the narrator: her ruin is to be ascribed to

> dire necessity – that necessity which became an instrument in the old hag's hands to model the young maiden to her purpose. … The wretch knew the world well, and was able to calculate the influence of exterior circumstances upon the mind and the passions. (*Mysteries* 175)

Ellen's transformation from "solitary lily in the midst of a black morass swarming with reptiles" (*Mysteries* 170) into prostitute contributes to the narrative's discourse on the power of knowledge. Whereas Ellen's secluded, pampering life made her dangerously ignorant of the world and unprepared for a social fall, the old woman from the slums "knows the world well". The hostile environment where she lives hardened her nature and gave her sufficient knowledge to pose a threat to whomever arrived in that environment unprepared.

Characters such as Richard and Ellen attacked the foundations of a middle-class reader's sense of safety. They conveyed the subversive message that the

power of social standing is an ineffective defence against poverty, both as a condition in which individuals may fall and as a source of threats for the unaware individual. This message underpins also the narrative's anti-Anatomy Act discourse.

As the juxtaposition of the knowledge of the poor to the ignorance of the middle-class character suggested that the boundary between wealth and poverty was permeable, so did the graphic scenes of misery, corruption, and filth that constituted the narrative's anti-Anatomy Act discourse. These scenes suggested that destructive effects of the Act on the poor were not as safely distant as the middle-class imagined, and reiterated practices from the dark days of anatomy studies that could easily cross social boundaries.

Richardson notes the failure of the Anatomy Act to produce a change from the era of burking and bodysnatching (208), a point that emerges forcefully in the discourse on the injustice of the current legislation on the disposal of the remains of the poor *Mysteries* constructs. The series of episodes relating the theft of the body of the unknown man in Globe Lane are key to understanding this discourse, as they revolve around the set of characters that in real life propelled, more or less overtly, the mechanism of the Anatomy Act: an unknown body; a poor woman; an undertaker and a gravedigger; and a bodysnatcher.

The old man who dies in Mrs Smith's lodgings had been ill for a while, and the widow nursed him, helped by the wife of the Buffer, one of Anthony Tidkins' accomplices. As soon as he dies, the Buffer's wife immediately reports the death to her husband and the Resurrection Man, together with the news that the surgeon who examined the body let her understand that he would pay her husband generously for disinterring the body. The Resurrection Man takes the matter in his hands, and contacts Mr Banks, the undertaker of Globe Town, who sets off to Mrs Smith's house. The widow does not suspect she is letting in an undertaker: the solemnity with which Mr Banks declares that "the least we can do is to show a feeling of weneration [sic.] for our deceased friends by consigning them in a decent manner to the grave" (*Mysteries* 313) induces her to think that he is a relative, or a minister. She is relieved that someone is there to "superintend the funeral", because "it's a great tax on a poor lone body like [her] to have such an undertaking to attend to", and Mr Banks slyly reassures her: "I'll *undertake* the undertaking" (*Mysteries* 314). His attitude convinces Mrs Smith that he must have

"some legitimate authority for his present proceeding", and she shows him the body. Finally, when she understands she is talking to an undertaker, her reaction – "'Undertaker!' ejaculated the widow" (*Mysteries* 314) – is not too different from Richard Markham's surprise at hearing Anthony Tidkins' profession at Newgate.

Indeed, neither Tidkins nor Banks is suspect until he announces his profession, until they name themselves. Undertakers were deemed to be rather untrustworthy, and the *Rex versus Feist* case in 1858 would confirm these suspicions. The woman's reaction challenges the legitimate authority of the undertaker: he is neither a relative, nor any form of parish or religious authority, so he has no right to access the body. Still, the woman is happy to be guided, and the fact that she refers to herself as "a poor lone body" is meaningful. The expression, typically Scottish and probably absorbed in the English language, is generally a substitute for the pronoun "oneself" and may entail "sympathy" ("Body, *n.*", Dictionary of the Scots Language). In this case, the expression suggests she is akin to the unknown dead man in her lodgings: being a pauper and a widow, she is a very likely candidate for the surgeon's slab, especially if she ends up in the workhouse.

As he has gained the widow's trust, Mr Banks invites a minister of his choice to perform the funerary rites, and this is of course the Resurrection Man in disguise.[17] In the course of his visit to Mrs Smith's house, the widow and the resurrectionist have a conversation in which she asks him whether he thinks "there's such people as resurrection men now-a-days?" (*Mysteries* 316). Tidkins brazenly replies that "society has got rid of those abominations" and now surgeons get their bodies "[f]rom the hulks, the prisons, and the workhouses" (*Mysteries* 316). Mrs Smith "revolts" at the idea, and exclaims: "Well for my part … I think it's wery hard if, after paying rates and taxes for a many – many year, I should be obleeged to go to the workus, and then be cut up in a surgeon's slaughter-house at last" (*Mysteries* 316). The widow did not know that the workhouses were currently a source of bodies for anatomy studies, and her distress upon receiving the information is obvious, because she knows that a person like her is likely to enter the workhouse. Her first reaction is of

[17] This is yet another connection between the Globe Lane episodes and the Spa-Fields case: on March 20 1845 the *Times* reported that a straw-bonnet maker named Brown "was in the habit of officiating as a clergyman, and perform the funeral services", upon request of the managers ("Police" 8).

indignation: she is, after all, a ratepayer who, in her poverty, always paid her "rates and taxes".

This remark undermines one of the founding principles of the Anatomy Act, which considered the use of the pauper's bodies for dissection as a payment for their dependence on parish (that is, on the ratepayers') support in life. Besides the obvious lack of sympathy, the fallacy of this principle was the assumption that all the paupers who ended up in the workhouse had always been a burden on the parish, whereas records prove that this was not always the case. A family might fall into poverty after the death, illness, or injury of one or more of the people who provided the income, or perhaps illness might force a pauper to seek medical care at the workhouse infirmary. Such was the case for Charles Greenland, one of the people whose remains were wrongfully dissected in the *Rex versus Feist* case. Illness had made Charles unemployed, and his family decided that "their best option" would be for him to receive medical care in the workhouse infirmary (Hurren 12), where he died. Charles's remains were sent to Guy's hospital for dissection and his family was "kept ignorant" not only of the transaction, but also "of the fact that accepting a pauper funeral meant agreeing to dissection and dismemberment" (Hurren 14). Before falling ill, therefore, Charles did not depend on the parish, and yet, he became a subject for dissection at Guy's. Although preceding the case of *Rex versus Feist* by almost a decade, the Resurrection Man's dialogue with Mrs Smith questions both the solution the Act provides and the people who demanded this solution, namely, the anatomists.

Mrs Smith's horror at the idea that people from the workhouse should end up being "cut up in a surgeon's slaughterhouse" indicates that the image of the butcher-surgeon was still current in the late 1840s. *Mysteries* exploited the sensationalistic undertones of this image to convey the idea of an inhumane medical fraternity still engaged in butchering the poor and powerless. The tone of this representation was set during Mr Banks' first visit, when Mrs Smith wonders at his kindness:

> "I always heerd [sic] say that butchers and undertakers was the most unfeelingest of men. They never let butchers set on juries; but I'm sure if undertakers is so milk-hearted, *they* may set on juries." (*Mysteries* 315)

Mrs Smith's opinion on butchers influences the subsequent comparison of dissection rooms to slaughterhouses and, indirectly, of anatomists to butchers, including surgeons among the "most unfeelingest of men". This image suggested that the current legislation enforces the role of the surgeon as butcher by subjecting the most exposed individuals in society to the further humiliation of dissection, and in so doing wronging honest citizens.

The political discourse on the disposal of the remains of the poor maintains the focus on the unfairness the law with the introduction of the gravedigger Mr Jones in the narrative. The management of Globe Lane burial ground deprives the people who are interred there of a dignified conclusion to their life, and yet, the parochial authorities dismiss the complaints of the residents and tell them to "prefer an indictment at the session" (*Mysteries* 324). The narrator grimly remarks that with this move the authorities prevent the poor from being able to take action:

> Such a process is only accessible to those in possession of ample means; for the legislature has purposefully rendered law, – that is the power of obtaining justice … – a luxury attainable only by money. … [W]ho ever thought of legislating for the poor? Legislate *against* them, and it is all well and good: heap statute upon statute … encumber the most simple form with the most intricate technicalities – diversify reading and expand in verbiage until the sense becomes unintelligible – convert the whole legal scheme into a cunning web, so that the poor man cannot walk three steps without entangling his foot in one of those meshes of whose very existence he was previously unaware, and whose nature he cannot comprehend … do all this and you are a wise and sound statesman; for this is legislating *against* the poor – and who, we repeat, would ever think of legislating *for* them? (*Mysteries* 324)[18]

With this comment the narrator illustrates the procedures of exclusion of the poor from the discourse of law: they cannot speak the language of law, which is the language of wealth, where education grants access either to the code itself, or to people who can interpret it. In the same way as Richard and Ellen cannot

[18] Reynolds's emphasis.

survive in the slums, the poor cannot survive in this world, and become the hapless prey of the system.

Passages such as this are typical of Reynolds's own radical propaganda incursions in his fiction. Humpherys observes that Reynolds's "strident, imperative, and frequently hyperbolic narrative voice" could sound remarkably like Reynolds's own tone, as he used it in his own Sunday newspaper *Reynolds's Weekly* ("Generic Strands and Urban Twists" 461). This technique created a continuity between the literature of information and the literature of escapism he provided for his audience, and contributed to building what Humpherys terms the "exposé of institutions" ("Generic Strands and Urban Twists" 457) that constituted Reynolds's purpose in writing *Mysteries*. His aim, Humpherys argues, was that of "educating generally lower-class readers about the depredations made upon them" ("Generic Strands and Urban Twists" 462). Haywood also notes Reynolds's use of the narrative voice to intrude in the narrative to "demystify the action, and to remind the reader that all plots are socially and politically generated" (*The Revolution* 176). Melodrama, Haywood continues, facilitated this process as it enabled the narrative voice to bring the political and social affairs of the present time to the story, exploiting "what Peter Brooks calls melodrama's 'hermeneutic excess'" (Haywood 176).[19] Reading the passage above from the perspective of the disposal of the remains of the poor, it can be stated that the narrative-propagandistic strategy exposes the ambiguity of the language used in the Anatomy Act, which left plenty of room for interpretation and made it "the bureaucrat's bad dream" (Richardson 239). The narrative thus extends the paradigm of reciprocal foreignness of language and knowledge between classes created by the social gap to the discourse around anatomy, the poor, and the law. The passage illustrates the procedures of inclusion and exclusion from said discourse, highlighting the lack of balance in power the Anatomy Act creates, contributing to maintain the working class in a subject position.

Mysteries represented law as twisted and unintelligible, and made so on purpose by a system that had no interest in protecting the working class. The right to justice does not belong to the pauper, because its discourse and language belong to the class in charge. "The Gravedigger" episode resonates with the

[19] Peter Brooks. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995, 40.

echoes of the inability of the poor, observed by Hurren (21), to understand the ambiguous text, and therefore the full meaning, of the Anatomy Act. The emphasis on the complications of the legal language – "*encumber* the most simple form with the *most intricate* technicalities – *diversify reading* and *expand in verbiage* until the sense becomes *unintelligible*" (*Mysteries* 324)[20] – is remarkably compatible with the effects of the text of the Act on the semi-literate reader. Law and its unintelligible language are represented as a weapon in the hands of the middle and upper classes "against" the poor, used to hide from them knowledge of their rights regarding the disposal of their own remains. Its language is the language of literacy and education; it is the language of power.

The Resurrection Man is the only character in the narrative who escapes the exclusion from discourse that regulates the dynamics of power between the rich and the poor. He avoids the unintelligibility trap thanks to his extremely plain, intelligible speech, which testifies to his alarming ability to move through the vertical layers of Victorian society, deploying all his resources to gather information that he can later use to his own advantage. The Resurrection Man and his subversive reverse justice code pose a threat to the middle-class Richard Markham, and to the inviolability of the graves of different people in the narrative, regardless their social station in life, because he does not respond to the language of law, nor is he subject to it. Anthony Tidkins and his boundary-breaking language represents the terrible possibility that the unfairness of a socio-political organisation that regulates the life of individuals to the grave and beyond according to wealth and poverty might rebound on the unsuspecting middle class.

Mysteries shows the lower and the middle class engaged in using language to vie for supremacy: as the poor could not understand the language of legality, so the rich could barely understand the language of the poor classes. In reality, however, in the arena of government and legislation, the poor lose the battle. Their power was confined to the slums. Conforming to this dynamic, *Mysteries* systematically represents the poor as voiceless, unintelligible, and the legislation regulating the disposal of their remains as written *against* them. The intent of the narrative in representing this lack of balance in power and its connection to language is that of raising awareness in the readers of their position with respect

[20] My emphasis.

to it, while at the same time translating the unintelligible language of law for them.

The geographical movements that accompany the characters' experience of different social contexts constitute the spatial scaffolding of the discourse on power, knowledge, and dissection in the narrative. In *Mysteries*' labyrinthine London, space speaks of the anxieties about dismemberment and annihilation that haunted the geospace of the Victorian city.

The fall and the labyrinth: mapping the way to truth.

Similarly to *Sweeney Todd*, *Mysteries* strives to create a perfect superimposition of the Victorian metropolis in the narrative to the geospace of Victorian London. This process includes the construction of the urban landscape on an "imaginative diagram" of "oppositions" in order to expose social contrasts, which Humpherys notes was a strategy used also by several authors of fiction, most notably Dickens and Pierce Egan, and by "political cartoonists" ("The Geometry of the Modern City" 72). In so doing, Reynolds endeavoured to represent the space of his readers with its connections to the different aspects of their life, including their anxieties and frustrations.

In the narrative space of *Mysteries* we encounter locations that are directly connected with the history of anatomy in the metropolis, through which the narrative explores the role of medicine in enforcing social inequality. These spaces become a highly sensational, graphic landscape in which dramatic scenes of poverty and crime unfold. A representative instance is the use of Bethnal Green, the area where the historical London burkers lived, as the narrative the abode of the Resurrection man. The powerful historical charge of spaces such as Bethnal Green contributed to constructing the narrative's urban space as a reflection of the unbalanced distribution of power in the metropolis, and this representation could not but focus on the area of the East End. Within this narrative space, Reynolds rewrote the tropes of the trapdoor and the labyrinth, which, as we have seen in *Sweeney Todd*, had become part of metropolitan culture and tapped into anxieties related to the city's destructive potential. While they contributed to the discussion of the social chasm in the story, these tropes also exploited and reinforced popular discourses around death, crime, and medicine in the space of the London East End. The narrative space of *Mysteries* thus became a

social-geographical commentary inscribed within an exciting narrative, which was meant to create in the reader the illusion of living into their narrative space.

The East End was synonymous with poverty, unsanitary housing, and precarious health; logically, therefore, the Anatomy Act had a strong impact on its inhabitants. Notably, it was also the space of hospitals: South, the London Hospital in Whitechapel; West, St Bartholomew's in Smithfield; North, St Luke's Lunatic Asylum, adjacent to the slum of Old Nichol, and the private anatomy schools of Little Windmill, next to Bethnal Green; and, further South, St Thomas and Guy's Hospital, located in the analogous area of Southwark. The evolution of the geography of the city caused the hospitals to become part of the degraded scenery of the Victorian metropolis because, in fact, they were originally built to serve the poor: St Bartholomew's and the St Thomas's and Guy's were founded to provide health care for the pauper, and St Luke hosted specifically the lunatic poor. The London Hospital in Whitechapel, built in 1740 under the name of London Infirmary and moved to Whitechapel in 1752, was meant to treat "the sick poor among 'the merchant seaman and manufacturing classes': the east End community of the time" ("Our History", Barts Health). This geospace of medicine and poverty became the space of *murder* connected to medicine and poverty when the Italian boy case exploded. It is therefore unsurprising that this area should become in the narrative a space in which the crimes that the Anatomy Act should have dispelled are instead uncannily alive.

The presence of Anthony Tidkins pervades the narrative space of the East End. Indeed, Hackenberg suggests that the reader, as the characters in the story, is threatened with encountering him at every "turn of the page" (64). Although his address varies slightly across the narrative, the fictional Tidkins lives in an area that corresponds to the geospatial Bethnal Green where Bishop and Williams lived. The house in which he imprisons Richard Markham is near Birdcage Walk, which merges with Crabtree Row, bordering the Nova Scotia Gardens, where the London burkers lived. Later on, Tidkins himself will give his own address as "the Cambridge Road corner of Bethnal Green Road" (*Mysteries* 311). Bethnal Green Road is south, and slightly further east, of Birdcage Walk, but it is still, unmistakeably, Bethnal Green, East London. Shoreditch, where he snatches the corpse of the girl, is immediately west of Bethnal Green, and it is also the site of the Holywell Mount cemetery, which, as we have seen, had record of being a

bodysnatching site. Fanny Pigburn, one of Bishop and Williams's victims, was also from Shoreditch. Finally, Globe Town, where Tidkins resurrects the body of Mrs Smith's late tenant, borders Bethnal Green and Whitechapel, where the London Hospital was rebuilt in 1752.

The systematic superimposition of the narrative space of the Resurrection Man on the geospace of burking and bodysnatching makes the narrative resonate with the echoes of a newspaper report. Furthermore, as Haywood observes (*The Revolution* 179), and as shown in the previous sections, Reynolds tended to include in his fiction a considerable amount of non-fictional material. The extensive discussion of Enon Chapel between Mr Jones and Mr Banks in "The Grave-digger" is a perfect example of this operation. The Enon Chapel scandal was discussed in the newspapers as late as 1847 and in 1842 *The Times* dedicated a series of articles to the case, which included passages from George Walker's report *The Grave yards of London*.

In *Grave yards*, Walker wrote that in Enon Chapel, during the summer months, an insect "which had the appearance of a common bug with wings" was observed "crawl and fly" through the building (9). It was assumed to come from the festering bodies that were piled up to reach the thin floor board, and the children of the Sunday school had named it "body bug" (*Grave yards of London* 9). In *Mysteries*, Mr Jones and Mr Banks describe the appalling conditions of the chapel's vault with great accuracy, down to the shape of the "body bugs", an insect "just like the common bug, and with wings" produced by the decomposing bodies under the chapel (*Mysteries* 326). Furthermore, Walker wrote in *Grave yards* that "second-hand coffin furniture, (nails, more especially) may be found by the hundredth weight, at many of the 'dealers in marine stores'" and that "*coffin wood has been extensively used as an ordinary fuel in low neighbourhoods*" (19);[21] the *Times* reported this passage verbatim in October 1841 ("BURIAL of the DEAD in the METROPOLIS").[22] In *Mysteries*, Mr Jones boasts about the

[21] Walker's emphasis.

[22] Regarding the body-bugs, the earliest reference I could find in the *Times* was in a letter to the editor titled "The Dead versus the Living" and signed "ANTI-PESTILENCE". The writer, who claimed to "have heard … from authority [he] cannot question that a peculiar insect has been generated in this place of corruption, crawling through the boards, and spreading themselves over the chapel". I could not find the precise passage from *Grave yards* in the *Times*; however, *Second of a Series of Lectures* reports the statement of the witness Samuel Pitts, who describes "some insects, similar to a bug in shape and appearance, only with wings, about the size of a small bug" (16). While we cannot be sure whether or not Reynolds ever read *Grave yards*, it is likely that he read, or heard, about the body bugs elsewhere.

"sight of coffin nails [he] sells every month to the marine-store dealers", and claims to feel like a fool for not selling "the coffin-wood for fuel, as most other grave-diggers does" (*Mysteries* 326).

The inclusion of non-fiction material, combined with the superimposition of the narrative space on the geospace, gives the impression that the events narrated are happening *as* the series is being published. Reynolds embedded his fiction so deeply in his reader's reality that the barrier between the two thinned. Consequently, such passages as the conversation between the gravedigger and the undertaker could raise the readers' indignation. Likewise, the crimes of the Resurrection Man, in theory suppressed by the Anatomy Act, could be imagined to be happening in the readers' reality.

The scenes in which Anthony Tidkins performs acts of burking and bodysnatching are always sensational and crude, but they always include details that anchor them to the intended reader's reality, such as the uncanny similarity between his modus operandi and that of Bishop and Williams. Such a degree of realism made it easier to imagine that Tidkins was perpetrating *at the moment* crimes that theoretically belonged to the barbarous past of the London burkers. Medical men in the narrative are represented requiring his services, as the actual medical fraternity did when they purchased murdered and stolen bodies coming from the same locations the narrative described. The annihilation of the space-time distance between readers and events narrated hinted at the ominous possibility that in the geospace equivalent to the narrative the exploitation of the dead poor was still going on. This operation constructed both the fictional and geospatial East End as the locus of danger that threatened the integrity of the body, a liminal space that rejected legality and was intrinsically deadly. These features emerge both in the labyrinthine design of this narrative space and in the movement the characters perform through it.

Mysteries exploits the trapdoor trope explicitly connoting the fall as both geographical and social. While from the spatial point of view it represents a sudden drop from the world of life above to the world of death below, its association with murderous/criminal characters also defines it as a movement from respectability to social ruin. The fall is also the chief movement of the narrative and it opens the series: in chapter one, Eliza Sidney (disguised as Walter), is lost in the terrifying neighbourhood of Smithfield, is caught in a storm

and seeks shelter in an ominous-looking old house. After a rather gingerly exploration, she finds that in one of the rooms, "in the middle of the floor – only three feet from the spot where he [stands] – there [is] a large square of jet blackness", and immediately "[a]n indescribable sensation of fear [creeps] over him" (*Mysteries* 4). Eliza perceives, feels, rather than sees, the deadliness of the plunge into darkness the black square represents, similarly to the protagonist of Poe's tale "The Pit and the Pendulum". Poe's tale, pre-dating *Mysteries* by two years, likewise shows a panic-stricken protagonist in a dark, underground space, on the verge of a dark "pit" with water at the bottom. While Poe's protagonist avoids the jump into darkness, by the end of episode three (the title of which, "The Trap-door", clarifies the nature of the black square on the floor) Eliza is pushed by two villains into that "ominous blackness" which is "the mouth of a yawning gulf" on the Fleet Ditch (*Mysteries* 7). Before falling, Eliza cries: "Do not – *do not murder me!*" (*Mysteries* 7),[23] confirming that the plunge in the trapdoor brings death. Only three instalments later the reader learns that she survived the fall, and that her miraculous escape led her to a tour of the slums, inclusive of a visit to a rookery, during which she learns about the miserable lives of its inhabitants.

Richard Markham also experiences, and survives, the fall in the Resurrection Man's lair, where Tidkins left him for dead with his terrible Mummy. Taking the woman by surprise, Markham tries to learn from her the name of the unknown corpse he saw laying in the kitchen. She tricks him into entering a dark room, where a trapdoor gives away under his feet. In the next chapter, though, the readers learn from a furious Tidkins that the Mummy plunged Markham, not towards death, but towards safety: "Did I not tell you a month or so ago that the wall between the hole and the saw-pit in the empty house next door has given away!" (*Mysteries* 127). Richard manages to escape and to reach a station house, where he asks for help. As with Mark Ingestrie in *Sweeney Todd*, Eliza and Richard emerge from the plunge in the underground bringing back truth about an unseen reality of misery and death. However, Richard's account of the horrors of Birdcage walk yields hardly any results, because he is unable to guide the police back to Anthony Tidkins' house. After his escape, he ran at break-neck speed for one hour, covering "many miles of ground" (*Mysteries* 129), the prolonged effort

[23] Reynolds's emphasis.

of the run conveyed through the three-time repeated phrase "He ran – he ran" (*Mysteries* 128). In this mighty effort he pursues "tortuous paths and circuitous routes" (129), and emerges in the district of Wapping, south of Whitechapel, in the docks area east of the Tower of London. From there, he is unable to trace his way back. The downwards movement of the fall in the East End thus appears to be closely related to the unmappable tortuous space of the slum, which Richard and Eliza experience both before and after the (supposedly) deadly plunge.

Mysteries middle-class characters' ignorance of the language to communicate in the slum is matched by their lacking the geographical map to navigate its labyrinth. The labyrinth is the intrinsic nature of the East End: being synonymous with the unknowable, the concept expressed the dangers (imagined and real) and lack of logic that defined the geospace of the East End. The middle-class character is lost in the twisted streets of the narrative labyrinth, as helpless and as exposed to fatal danger as a Gothic heroine. Eliza/Walter, reaches the old house after getting lost in the "labyrinth of narrow and dirty streets which lies in the immediate vicinity of the north-western angle of Smithfield-market" (*Mysteries* 3). To her middle-class eyes, it seems impossible that "human beings could dwell in such fetid and unwholesome dens", and she beholds in shock the "labyrinth of dwellings whose very aspect appeared to speak of hideous poverty and fearful crime" (*Mysteries* 3-4). The twice-repeated word "labyrinth" strengthens the feeling of a twisted, threatening space unknown to the middle-class character, who is emotionally overwhelmed and almost killed by it. The only reason Eliza survives the fall is that her character breaks conventions on many levels: she is a gender-shifter and, although good at the core, she is an unwitting party in a criminal scheme. Being far more nuanced than the typical helpless heroine of Gothic and popular fiction, she survives both the fall and the dreadful tour of the slums that ensues.

Similarly, Richard loses his way in the maze of Bethnal Green before falling into the trapdoor in the Resurrection Man's house. Ironically enough, he gets lost immediately after a heated discussion with Tidkins, in which he announces that he is no longer willing to be blackmailed. Richard declares: "[o]ur ways lie in different directions, both at the present and in the future" and that he "shall know how to be upon [his] guard" against Tidkins' revenge (*Mysteries* 122). Eventually, he is unable to put either statement into practice: he takes precisely the way that

leads to the Resurrection Man's neighbourhood, where Tidkins follows him, catching him off guard. As Richard loses his way and penetrates deeper and deeper into Bethnal Green, the narrator reiterates that "[t]he district of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green was totally unknown to Markham" (*Mysteries* 122). Of course, it is midnight, the streets are "nearly deserted", and "[t]he lamps … only ma[ke] darkness visible, instead of throwing a useful light upon the intricate maze of narrow thoroughfares" (*Mysteries* 122).

While Richard meant to reach Shoreditch and there find a coach home, "[e]merging from Brick Lane, he crossed Church Street, and struck into that labyrinth of dirty and dangerous lanes in the vicinity of Bird-cage Walk", where he soon realises he has taken the wrong way, as he "flounder[s] about in a long narrow street, unpaved, and here and there almost blocked up with heaps of putrescent filth" (*Mysteries* 122). As in Eliza's case, the narrative builds up the feeling of a dangerous and claustrophobic space, which is compared again to a "maze" and a "labyrinth", "long and narrow", "blocked up" with filth. The East-end Londoner would have recognized Markham's mistake: after coming out of Brick Lane, he should have turned left in the direction of Shoreditch, instead of crossing Church Street and straying north into Bethnal Green. The narrative shows yet another middle-class character lost in uncharted territory, a terra incognita that is, by contrast, the natural environment of the Resurrection Man. Through Richard's eyes, the East End becomes an unfamiliar, dangerous space for the reader as well, also because of the presence of Anthony Tidkins, a criminal whose deadliness transcends social and spatial boundaries. His presence is ominously suggested by the "footsteps behind [Richard]", which appear and disappear so that Richard concludes he is either deluding himself or, worse, "the person whose steps he heard stopped when he did" (*Mysteries* 122).

If Bethnal Green is a labyrinth, Anthony Tidkins is the monster that haunts it, its very own Minotaur. The appearing and disappearing of the footsteps suggests the chilling possibility that the he may have his own private path in the maze, perhaps some hidden trapdoor in an empty house, which allows him to stalk his prey without being noticed. This suggestion, which seems to find confirmation in Richard's discovery of the tunnel connecting Tidkins' house to the one next to it, alludes to a subterranean labyrinth that reflects the one above the ground, connecting the Resurrection Man's narrative space in Bethnal Green with the

geospace of Bethnal Green inhabited by Bishop and Williams. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Italian boy case originated the myth that the two cottages in Nova Scotia Gardens were connected through "a warren of cellars and subterranean passages", which, Wise contends, is a powerful example of the belief that London criminals "were felt to be able to move around unseen along secret pathways of their own making" (280). Although never mentioned explicitly, Bishop and Williams hover threateningly over the narrative when Richard, unnerved by the sound of footsteps behind him, reflects on the infamous events that established the notoriety of the neighbourhood in which he is walking. He remembers stories about "the mysterious disappearance of persons in the east end of the metropolis", and also recent "fell deeds of crime" that have been discovered "in the very district where he [is] now wandering" (*Mysteries* 123).

Therefore, the narrative replica of the Bethnal Green geospace is charged with the negative memory of the London Burkers' homicides. As in *Sweeney Todd*, this connects the narrative space to anxieties about disappearing below the ground and being there dismembered, that is, dissected. The scene in the house of the Resurrection Man reinforces this connection: Richard, who is playing dead in the hope of saving his life, listens to the Buffer recalling a previous victim that they sold to the same "sawbones", i.e. surgeon, who commissioned the theft of the body of the girl in Shoreditch. When they "caught hold of a feller that was walking so comfortable along, looking up at the moon", the Cracksman had the idea of "holding him with his head downwards in a tub of water … until he was drowned" (*Mysteries* 124). The Buffer exclaims proudly:

> "and now we've reduced it to a reg'lar system. Tub of water all ready on the floor – hooks and cords to hold them chaps' feet up to the ceiling; and then, my eye! there they hangs, head downwards … like the carcasses in the butchers' shops …" (*Mysteries* 124)

This detailed description marks the kinship of the fictional burkers and the London burkers, and reiterates images of dissection and medicine that date back to the pre-Anatomy Act era: the "hanging carcasses" of the burkers' victims and the reference to butchery recall such popular representations of anatomy as Heath's print *A Few Illustrations for Mr Warburton's Bill*. Markham escapes the fate of the unknown corpse he saw in the kitchen in the attempt to discover his

name and address from the Mummy and prevent its anatomy sale. The narrative therefore connects the idea of identity, and losing one's identity in the maze, with death and dissection, intermingling it with the anxieties attached to the underground space.

The works for Brunel's Tunnel first, and for the London Underground later, disrupted the foundations of the city for the best part of the century, stirring atavistic fears connected with the subterranean space as the space of death and dark forces.[24] At the time when *Mysteries* was being issued, the Tunnel under the Thames had been open only two years, after almost twenty years of intermittent construction. On the occasion of its opening, Charles Pearson suggested the possibility of creating an underground railway (Pike 33). His idea was derided; nevertheless, it was discussed recurrently in the subsequent decades, and its detractors adopted in their discourses a range of images that spanned from hellish cosmology, to lampooning humour, to catastrophic conjectures about tunnels collapsing by the sheer weight of the streets above them (Pike 33–35). Pike notes that the middle class pictured movement below the ground as dangerous, an unlikely alternative to orthodox channels of urban movement, because they perceived the subterranean space to be unsafe and uncivilized (36). Flanders similarly argues that the representation of the slums as unmappable and unsafe originated in the middle-class perception of that space, which rested on the physical, economic, and cultural distance between the middle and the lower classes (*The Victorian City* 183-4). Therefore, the representation of the slum space as terra incognita, threatening the physical and moral integrity of the middle-class individual, reflected the negative moral connotations attributed to both the subterranean space and to the lower class.

These concepts emerge forcefully in the spatial representations of *Mysteries,* which is, after all, a sensational narrative written by an essentially middle-class, though Chartist, author. Eliza describes the people of Smithfield as a mass of "ferocious-looking men and brazen-faced women", who cheer as they watch two women fighting "like wild cats" (*Mysteries* 23). The inhabitants of the rookery that she unwillingly ends up visiting consists of "males and females evidently of the most wretched description", as girls are "almost naked, without shoes, or stockings" and the men are "hatless and shoeless", which clashes with their

[24] See Wise 287-88.

apparent "boisterous mirth" (*Mysteries* 23-4). Similarly, the neighbourhood of Wapping where Richard emerges after his escape from the Resurrection Man's lair "swarm[s] with crimps ever ready to entrap the reckless and generous-hearted sailor", and is plagued with miserable pubs selling "vile adulterated beer" to "poor half-starved coal-heavers whose existence alternates between crushing toil and killing intoxication" (*Mysteries* 129). Finally, the descending path to ruin of middle-class Ellen Monroe also happens when misfortune confines her to Golden Lane in St Luke, yet another labyrinthine spot immediately west of Shoreditch. The East End thus also becomes the space of the moral fall, where the individual is dragged towards the deadly pit from a geographical, social, and spiritual perspective.

The quintessentially inexplicable and confusing nature of the maze pervades the space of the East End in *Mysteries*, connecting its superficial and subterranean environments via the negative values of criminality and moral and physical decay. The labyrinthine slum becomes the space of the physical, social, and moral fall where only poverty provides a map, and therefore a chance of survival, sustaining the alternative knowledge that emerges in the narrative as a reaction to the unfair social dynamics that characterised both fictional and geospatial London. The social structure affected the distribution of the population in the geographical space of the city, progressively segregating the poor in overcrowded slums that jeopardized physical health and annihilated personal dignity. Annihilation was protracted after death by the resurrectionists, first, and by the Anatomy Act later on. Consequently, *Mysteries* represents the space of the slum as a space that tests both the regular dweller and the occasional (middle-class) visitor.

Nevertheless, even the unknown and unmappable labyrinth has the function of mapping out the world for the reader. The vertical socio-geographical space of *Mysteries* has its geospatial correspondent in the Victorian city, and reflects its clearly delimited cultural boundaries. Further, the narrative explicitly connects the space of the East End as the space of the actual and metaphorical fall of the individual, which envisages death as the ultimate outcome, to dangers related to anatomy and dissection. In the labyrinth of the East End, both residents and unwitting foreigners become potential preys of the burkers, hence candidates for the scalpel. Similarly to Mark Ingestrie in *Sweeney Todd*, characters precipitate in the pit below the ground of the city, where their fate is annihilation. Yet, again

similarly to Mark, all three of the middle-class characters that experience the labyrinth and the fall in *Mysteries* are allowed to survive. None of them can change the situation they witnessed: Mark is unable to find his way back, Eliza can only dismally relate what she saw, while Ellen strives to collect the fragments of herself and rebuild her identity. However, by representing the socio-geographical fall of the characters and allowing them to ascend from it and relate their experience, the narrative invites the readers to use the knowledge thus provided to act in their turn. In so doing, the narrative performed the educational purpose Reynolds intended for his fiction, exposing the social, political, and geographical injustices of the management of the metropolis, which influenced the disposal of an individual's remains. Dismemberment and the effacing of one's identity were indissolubly connected to the spaces of poverty, and the specular extension above and below the ground of *Mysteries*' London symbolizes the merging of social and physical death in the Anatomy Act. Hence, *Mysteries* created for its readers a map to navigate their own apparently illogic space, tracing its origins in the power unbalance that characterized their society and inciting them to take action.

Conclusion

Although the series never explicitly mentioned the Anatomy Act, the story discussed it and problematized its consequences on the lower strata of society, conforming to the Chartist principle of instructing the masses to bring them closer to respectability and power. To this end, *Mysteries* exploited familiar figures from the folklore of the city, rewriting them in a sensational narrative. Their anachronistic presence in the almost-contemporary fictional London of *Mysteries* highlighted the inadequacy of the system in effect and its violation of the right of the poor to a dignified conclusion of their life.

To reinforce this point, the narrative discussed the power roles characterising the discourse around anatomy and dissection, systematically representing the poor as voiceless in a debate they do not possess the code to understand. The code is the language of legality, which the narrative posed as the language of the oppressor, a tool used against the poor to exclude them from the conversation. As a reaction, the poor develop their own alternative code, which grants them some power within the boundaries of the space of poverty. This linguistic gap in the

narrative corresponded to the actual inability of the Victorian poor to understand the language of the Act which, as historians note, put the power of deliberating over the disposal of their own remains beyond their reach.

The replication of the geospace of medicine and murder in the narrative, and the obsessive preoccupation with the physical and social fall into the unmappable labyrinth, were functional to the critique of the exclusion of the poor from respectability, even in death. Simultaneously, these representations catered to eminently middle-class anxieties about loss of respectability, about the fear of sharing the same fate of the powerless, dispossessed pauper.

The only exception to the segregation of spaces and discourses was the Resurrection Man, the quintessential monster of anatomy, whose anachronistic presence threatens equally his social peers and social betters. His reiteration of crimes that law should have stopped and his uncanny ability to transcend boundaries made him the embodiment of the terrible possibilities the inadequate system presented. His cadaveric presence suggested that the existence of a law that disregarded the dignity of the weaker portion of the population would rebound on the whole society without distinctions.

CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to analyse a set of specimens of penny blood literature from the point of view of medical history, with the goal of providing an examination of a cross-section of the genre in relation to its historical context. The ultimate purpose was that of contributing to a better understanding of the relationship between the working class and the medical community in the post-Anatomy Act era, while simultaneously challenging the still prevailing view of the penny blood as a genre of no significant literary or historical value. The analysis aimed to detect continuities, discontinuities, and patterns in the narratives examined, with a view to answering three core questions: firstly, how did penny bloods engage with issues of medicine and anatomy and promoted the debate around them? How did they elaborate and circulate discourses related to power and anatomy? And finally, how did they use space to map out discourses of poverty and dissection?

Dissection report: patterns of medicine and ethics.

The examination of the narratives identified common elements in the plots that allow comparisons and contrasts regarding the way they discussed matters of dissection and ethics. Conversely, some elements emerged in all four penny bloods here examined that allow the development of a more unified theory of the strategies this genre adopted to discuss, translate, and map out issues of medicine and body dismemberment for their audience.

Let us first examine the elements that allow for an appreciation of continuities and discontinuities among the narratives examined.

Manuscripts and *Varney* stood out for the remarkable similarities between their representations of medical practitioners, which basically worked on the juxtaposition of a "good" vs. a "bad" doctor. The heroic "super doctor", who combined excellence in medical practice with a compassionate attitude towards both the living and the dead, contrasted with the mad medical student, a figure based on popular tropes rooted in the diffused distrust in the medical community's ostentatious detachment from their poor patients and dead subjects. Both *Manuscripts* and *Varney* show more markedly Gothic roots than *Sweeney Todd* and *Mysteries*: they are set in a past, "barbaric" (i.e. pre-Anatomy Act) era and crucial scenes happen in desolate spaces outside the urban environment. *Varney*

also introduces a supernatural element in the narrative by making ample use of staple figures of the Gothic genre, that is, Frankenstein and his Creature, and the vampire. In both series, the space of the cemetery and the tomb become the arena of an uncanny inversion from the subterranean world to the surface, from death to life, which is always somehow connected to the medical world. In this way, both narratives question the ethical basis of resurrectionism and, consequently, of the dissection of the resurrected corpse. They also address the matter of the gaze over the dead body: the medical gaze is evaluated in the narratives depending on how it relates to issues of gender and power. The medical man who exercises it, consequently, is evaluated depending on whether he respects or departs from the values and behavioural codes of the community in which he operates. The untrained gaze is also a source of discussion in the two narratives: the inexperienced and mad medical student, but also, and more importantly, the layperson, cannot possibly look upon the dead body and draw useful knowledge or produce useful results in so doing. The two narratives seem rather to suggest that the only eye fit for surveying the dead body is that of the "positive" medical man, whose gaze is regulated by the awareness of the moral code that regulates the relationship between the living and the dead. Finally, in both narratives the positive medical man, or "heroic doctor", provides the readers with a reassuring solution to their anxieties regarding medicine and bodily annihilation after death. He embodies positive medicine: he masters the practice, his mind is balanced, and his actions are regulated by his full subscription to an ethical code. The heroic doctors of *Manuscripts* and *Varney* are aware of the power that comes with medical practice and wield it with authority mitigated by sympathy towards the living and the dead.

A different type of representation is offered in *Sweeney Todd* and *Mysteries*. The first element that distinguishes these two narratives from the previous two is their strikingly urban landscape: the Gothic forlorn countryside cemetery is replaced with the urban jungle par excellence, Victorian London, in which characters lose both physical and moral integrity. The image of the dismembered body in these two narratives bears a strong connection to matters of power, knowledge, and truth. In the urban jungle of these two narratives, characters strive to learn the truth. There is no positive medicine to reassure the reader: only the knowledge of truth represents a solution, however unsavoury or disheartening it may be. *Sweeney Todd* also stands out for its metaphorical treatment of the issue

of medicine and anatomy: the uncanny reminder of fears connected to dissection are represented by the barber(-surgeon) "butchering" the dead under the ground, an image that was already rooted in the mind of the nineteenth-century popular fiction reader. Notwithstanding its use of disquieting images of imprisonment and bodily annihilation, the gruesome narrative of cannibalism culminates in a reassuring solution: the truth is revealed to both the fictional Fleet Street community and the readers. Once the truth is discovered, appropriate measures can be taken to protect Fleet Street from the predators who hunt its denizens, a conclusion in which the reader can find relief. *Mysteries*, instead, distinguishes itself by openly criticising the medical fraternity as part of an oppressive and unjust system. The story offers no chance of redemption to the negative medical figures it introduces, nor does it propose a positive solution to their actions. I would therefore venture that, in contrast to Crone's theory that penny bloods tended to provide reassuring conclusions that did not incite the reader to contest the status quo, *Mysteries* denies reassurance to its readers and sets as its own goal informing them of the injustice to which they are being subjected. In so doing, the narrative allows, or perhaps invites, the readers to choose what to do with the information they received – including, potentially, taking action against the system.

While they do differ on this point, *Sweeney Todd* and *Mysteries* use a similar technique to introduce the idea of death, dismemberment, and annihilation in the plot: they both frame the treacherous mechanical device of the trap-door as a gate to the subterranean world, which is depicted as the space of destruction, but also of truth. It is possible to read in this element an awareness on the part of the two narratives of the connection between the subterranean world and dissection that existed in the popular mind. Again, the two series differ in the way in which characters are allowed to move between the underground and the surface, a difference that can be related to the particular solution that, as noted above, each narrative provides for the reader. *Sweeney Todd* allows only one character to preserve his bodily integrity and resurface, revealing the truth, while the other victims are discovered in the underground as dead matter, silently accusing their murderer with their material, decaying presence. Mark Ingestrie's final ascent allows the reader to achieve closure about the anxiety generated by the mysterious disappearances, frightful smells, and appalling violence that preceded the revelation of the pies' true content. In *Mysteries* instead, trapdoors tend to give up

their victims more often: the sudden drop becomes a life-changing experience for the character, who resurfaces with his/her body intact, having acquired an awareness of the truth that lies below the surface of his/her world. This tallies with the narrative's harsh, all-encompassing criticism of the system in place, which cannot possibly be resolved in one single revelation, but has to be gradually uncovered dreadful descent by dreadful descent, narrow escape by narrow escape.

Making allowance for this distinction, it is possible to note that in both narratives the underground functions as the "locus of truth", to borrow Stallybrass and White's concept (Pike 196). This representation is compatible with Pike's conceptualization of the Victorian city's underground representations as, at least in part, a "mythic" voyage into the unknown "in search of truth" (197). As there is no reassuring way to cope with the terrors presented by the narrative, the working-class reader is compelled to plunge with the character into the darkness underground. S/he survives the reality of poverty and death that characterizes the subterranean space, re-emerging from the pit in possession of the knowledge of the truth about the conditions of their own class. The vicarious descent-ascension experience also suggests to the working-class reader that such conditions can be changed: a different ending from complete annihilation in the underground is possible, once the reader has learned the truth through the eyes and the voices of the characters.

While the set of elements discussed so far marks the traits that are distinctive in each narrative, another set of features that emerge from all penny bloods examined indicates a more cohesive pattern in their discussion of issues of medicine, dissection, and ethics.

The analysis shows that all four narratives made ample use of popular discourses around medicine and dissection, both in terms of characters and in terms of spaces. These elements show that the narratives engaged with the complex, broader milieu of early-to-mid-century popular culture forms, and participated in popular strategies to represent and discuss lower-class anxieties and beliefs about the medical world. Each narrative shows interest in issues relating to the developments in medical studies that characterised the first part of the century, actively questioning their ethics and highlighting the power struggle implicit in the change brought about by the Anatomy Act. In so doing, they develop their own discourse about medicine, one that uses images and tropes familiar to their audience in order to analyse the threat posed by the new law to

the integrity of their readers' bodies. The development of images of monstrosity worked as a tool for displacement, as a channel to represent the fears and distress that the Anatomy Act generated in the working class, as studies in medical history such as Richardson's and Hurren's show. In so doing, all four narratives suggest to the reader a way to cope, to face, to react to the monstrous system in place that threatens their right to decent interment: the belief in the existence of positive, sympathetic and honest medical figures (*Manuscripts* and *Varney*); the importance of discovering the truth in order to achieve closure (*Sweeney Todd*); and finally, the necessity of knowing the faults of the system in place (*Mysteries*).

The analysis of the use of space in the narratives, with respect to the elements of the displaced/dismembered body and of figures related to the world of medicine and the body trade, showed a general tendency to sensationalise spaces of death and medicine, both real (as in replications of geospace) and metaphorical or imagined (as in the operating-theatre-like staging of Will Stephen's gaze over Clara Crofton's corpse, or Sweeney Todd's underground slaughterhouse/dissection room). In this way, the four series built a narrative space whose very position on the page made it a "safe" arena for their readers to face sensitive and complicated issues regarding the power that the medical fraternity (for better or worse) exercised over them. The narratives attribute slightly different meanings to these sensational spaces: in *Manuscripts* and *Sweeney Todd* the spaces of death and medicine are the scene of a dramatic, but just, solution to the conflicts of power between characters (and, vicariously, between the reader and the medical fraternity). In *Varney* and *Mysteries* the same type of space is the stage of horror: the dramatic vampiric revivification in *Varney* and the ghastly deeds of resurrectionism and burking in *Mysteries* provide the reader with the vicarious experience of the trauma, but leave the solution of the conflict suspended.

Furthermore, the vertical movement I noted at the onset of my research between the subterranean space and the surface is used in all four narratives to discuss matters of class and ethics. Bodies emerge from the underground world and exercise their revenge over the characters who provoked their fall or disturbed their rest, particularly in Rymer's works. In Reynolds, the vertical movement has the twofold purpose of both commenting on the ease with which the urban space provokes the fall (physical, moral, and social) of the individual, and of discussing anxieties about bodily annihilation in the urban subterranean space. In all four

narratives, class is an important element that marks the bodies that resurface from under the ground: little Mary Sinclair, Long Hannibal Jeffries, Sweeney Todd's victims (including Mark Ingestrie, the survivor), and Mrs Smith's unknown tenant in *Mysteries* are all part of the lower orders of society, people whose right to burial without dissection was not protected by the law either before or after the Anatomy Act. Varney became the subject of Chillingworth's galvanism experiment because he was a hanged felon, and therefore belonged to a category that was traditionally associated with dissection and anatomy in the popular mind, even after the Anatomy Act. Clara Crofton and the unnamed, but obviously middle-class girl of "The Body-snatchers" episode represent middle-class anxieties about suffering the fate of the lower class after death.

I would therefore state that the displaced/dismembered body resurfacing from a subterranean space becomes in the four narratives a powerful representation of the fearful possibility of becoming a subject of medical study after death, losing one's identity for the benefit of science and the wider society. The classes that manage power, that is the middle and upper classes, indeed, carelessly (and silently) sanction the sacrifice of certain bodies. The displaced/dismembered bodies and their movement through space also become a channel for a commentary on the medical fraternity, depending on how they react to the dead body and its movement, and how they position themselves in the spaces of medicine and the spaces of death (i.e. cemeteries, vaults, and rooms where corpses are laid). These images and commentaries are offered to the reader in the form of entertaining literature, a type of literature, we must remember, that was located outside, and possibly against, mainstream culture. This literature managed to circulate among working-class readers information about discourses from which they were excluded, as they did not belong to the class that dictated the social, spatial, and political rules that regulated the new industrial society. In this way, a revolutionary discourse reached the working class, the revolutionary nature of which did not consist in inciting to revolution, but in circulating topics otherwise wrapped in silence and unintelligible language among the social constituency that was interested in knowing them. By stating this, I do not mean to claim that the penny bloods purposefully, successfully, and beyond doubt instructed the working class on the Anatomy Act. I would rather assert that the simple act of *circulating* the discourse around medicine and dissection through more or less metaphorical medical figures acting in narratives alongside cadavers kept the topic alive in the

minds of readers, quite possibly increasing awareness about the issue. In this way, the penny bloods here examined acted against mainstream culture in a revolutionary way, allowing their underprivileged, underrepresented, and socially powerless readership to know, think about, and perhaps even discuss the issue of anatomy and dissection, which the establishment attempted to make unintelligible for them.

Scholarly implications.

Overall, this study confirms my initial hypothesis about a connection between the recurrence of medical men and displaced/dismembered corpses and the history of the Anatomy Act. Consequently, it also confirms the hypothesis advanced by advocates of the genre that the penny bloods are more complex narrative objects than may appear at first sight. In 1963, in his seminal study *Fiction for the Working Man*, Louis James argued for the necessity of approaching popular literature differently than "'classical' literature" (45), as it required to be evaluated on the basis of whether or not it "succeed[ed] in its intention and function in a particular time and for a particular range of readers" (45).

Simultaneously, James continued, it is necessary to consider the position of this fiction "within the total framework of literary achievement" (45). The case studies conducted by scholars such as Humpherys, Powell, Mack, and Crone were crucial to the creation of the different, popular-fiction-specific approach invoked by James. The present research represents a purposeful attempt to move beyond the case-study approach towards considering (and therefore arguing for the importance of) the whole genre within its context. The approach adopted to achieve this purpose puts James's suggestion into practice and focuses on what the four narratives examined reveal about the "intention and function" (James 45) of the penny blood genre in its time and for its readers, placing the genre within the context of the unprecedented changes that connected anatomy, death, and the working-class reader in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In this regard, the study confirms Powell's 2004 claim, reiterated to an extent by Mack in 2007, that the topic of the Anatomy Act was "relevant" to the penny bloods' working-class audience, and expands it by making it the starting point of a larger-scale analysis. The penny bloods examined, which, as noted in the Introduction, were all successful series in their time, consistently display an interest towards the issue of dissection and medicine that included the market

dynamics explored by Powell and the connections with real events and popular culture examined by Mack, but that also went far beyond them, encompassing the wider social and political implications of the Anatomy Act. The set of specimens examined incorporated popular tropes regarding medicine and dissection and adapted them to the narrative strategies of the genre, producing a commentary on the ethics and dynamics of the Anatomy Act in society. In this respect, this study partially confirms and partially departs from certain conclusions Crone drew from her 2010 analysis of *Sweeney Todd* in *Violent Victorians*. The present research demonstrates that Crone's approach to penny blood fiction as part of anti-establishment culture is crucial to understand its function towards its readers, and it extends that argument to issues of social and political power and of physical integrity that do not apply exclusively to *Sweeney Todd*. By contrast, the analysis conducted in the present study suggests the impossibility of applying to the whole genre Crone's conclusion that the bloods' happy ending "appeased" the reader but "offered no solutions to the social problems [the readers] experienced" (190-91), and that, more crucially, "they did not suggest the readers should protest against the established order", but rather "aimed at gently assimilating them into their new environment" (191). While *Manuscripts* and *Varney* did invite the reader to trust in the reassuring image of the heroic physician, *Sweeney Todd* and *Mysteries* made more marked and harsher critiques of the establishment. They explicitly suggest that truth and knowledge were being controlled, hidden, and manipulated. From the analysis of their treatment of the figure of the surgeon and of the displaced/dismembered body, the sensational narratives emerge as channels for highlighting, and criticizing, the control of the establishment over the lower-class individual physical integrity. If they did not explicitly suggest that the readers should rise up, the analysis shows that neither did they invite readers to simply accept their position with respect to dissection.

In brief, this study supports and expands the argument that the penny blood genre's true complexity still has to be appreciated by providing a practical example of what can be obtained from a cross-section study performed from a specific point of view, such as that of medical history. The most significant contribution of this study, perhaps, is that of showing that the penny blood genre performed, more or less declaredly, the social and political function of "mapping out" complex issues for their readers, and did so by building an underlying discourse around social and political power. The fact that these narratives may

appear unrefined to the eyes of twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars should not distract us any more from this evidence. The examination of the narratives alongside a variety of popular culture items and contemporary non-fictional documentation has shown that they entertained a dynamic, creative relationship with the everyday reality of their readers. While at first sight the penny blood seems to be merely interested in providing readers with enough violent, unsophisticated entertainment for their penny, this study has shown that the writers of these texts used popular culture tropes and images to develop their own way of discussing issues crucial in the lives of their audience. Therefore, while it can be argued that this study offers but one point of view, that of medical history, it nonetheless constitutes a starting point in the process of re-thinking the way scholars approach the penny blood genre.

Suggestions for further research.

Further research based on the same principle as this – that is, a cross-section analysis with a context-focused angle – could yield further exciting results when a gender, radicalism, or class approach is substituted for the medical history approach here applied. Also, as this research has demonstrated, a thorough study of sets of narratives may lay the foundations of studies on authorship. The contribution this study has been able to make towards expanding our knowledge and understanding of the elusive, but extraordinarily active James Malcolm Rymer could be furthered using a similar approach to other works ascribed to him, placing greater emphasis on what documentation is available on his life and exploring more thoroughly such moments of his life as the years in which he supposedly attended the Mechanics' Institute.

This study may also open new research perspectives on contemporary popular fiction and its connections with its Victorian antecedent – in short, the legacy of the Victorian penny blood in current crime and supernatural-themed TV series, particularly ones set in the Victorian era. Scholars are starting to discuss this connection and to explore possible angles of analysis. Papers on the topic have been presented in recent Victorian Popular Fiction Association conferences and to the 2016 European Society for the Study of English Conference, which suggests that the area is likely to expand significantly. The similarities between the bloods and TV series of the type mentioned above are indeed impossible to miss: both are serialised tales for a mass-audience that rely heavily on sensational, repetitive plots, perhaps culminating in a cliff-hanger. Showtime's *Penny Dreadful* (2014-

16) constitutes a meaningful example, which also explicitly refers in its title, and in several episodes, to the tradition of cheap serialised Victorian fiction. It is crucial that Victorian (popular) fiction scholars do not let these connections go unnoticed. This study is timely from this point of view, as it appears at a moment in which the wider public is also rediscovering the literary tradition of the penny blood and penny dreadful. This is an excellent occasion to start a dialogue on the topic between academia and the public at an international level, and it is vital that scholarly contribution to the discussion should be based on a thorough appreciation of the role penny blood literature played towards its audience.

The present research starts this process. It shows that the adventures of the Physician, Varney the vampire, Sweeney Todd the demon barber, and Anthony Tidkins the Resurrection Man were, among other things, the outward symptom of a broad and complex discussion about the disposal of their readers' remains. These characters spoke to the voiceless, powerless pauper who read *The Mysteries of London* and dreaded the surgeon's slab. The horrifying image of the displaced and dismembered corpse, with the ambiguous medical man hovering over it, was the key to a code that guided the working-class reader through his/her post-Anatomy Act reality.

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